

POLS/COM 467: PUBLIC OPINION AND POLITICAL COMMUNICATION
Fall Semester, 2008 **Dr. Graber**

The course focuses on the role played by public opinion in today's America. It addresses important, complex questions such as: How is public opinion formed? Why does it change? How sound are various opinions? Who thinks what, about what, and for what reason? Most importantly, what impact does public opinion have on American politics?

The first five weeks of the course cover the general nature of public opinion, public opinion polling, and the substance of U.S. and foreign opinions. This is followed by a more intensive study of the major social forces that influence the dynamics of public opinion formation and affect the intensity and stability of opinions. The final five weeks of the course deal with the impact of public opinions on public officials and public policies.

The books listed below are required reading for this course; you should buy them.

1. Herbert Asher, Polling and the Public: What Every Citizen Should Know. 7th ed., Washington, D.C.: CQ Press, 2007.
2. Theodore L. Glasser and Charles T. Salmon, eds. Public Opinion and the Communication of Consent. New York: Guilford Press, 1995.
3. Doris A. Graber, Processing Politics: Learning from Television in the Internet Age. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001.
4. James A. Stimson, Tides of Consent: How Public Opinion Shapes American Politics. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008.

Additional assignments will be made from the following books:

W. Lance Bennett, Regina G. Lawrence and Steven Livingston, When the Press Fails, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007.

W. Lance Bennett and David L. Paletz, eds. Taken by Storm, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994.

Russell J. Dalton, Citizen Politics, 5th ed. Washington, D. C.: CQ Press, 2007.

Carroll J. Glynn, Susan Herbst, Garrett J. O'Keefe, Robert Y. Shapiro, Public Opinion, Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1999.

Graduate Students should also read John R. Zaller, The Nature and Origins of Mass Opinion, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992.

The bibliographies in your assigned texts and many social science journals are rich data sources. Public Opinion Quarterly and the International Journal of Public Opinion Research are especially useful for discovering recent public opinion research. The Internet is a treasure trove for locating public opinion polling data. There are polls published by news organizations, by specialized groups like PIPA (Program on International Policy Attitudes) and PollingReport.com which covers U.S. opinions. Public opinion data can also be retrieved from surveys gathered by the Inter-University Consortium for Political and Social Research (ICPSR), the National Opinion Research Center (NORC), the Pew Research Center for the People and the Press, and the University of Connecticut's Roper Center. For listings of websites, see the Asher book, pp. 219-220

EXAMINATIONS AND REPORTS

Open-book exams (1 hour) will be based on lectures and assigned readings. The first exam, on Sept. 25th, will cover topics 1-5. The second, on Oct. 30th, will cover topics 6-10. The third, on Dec. 4th, will cover topics 11-15. Exams count for 45% of the grade. In addition, three

brief reports, which will be described in class, count for 45% percent of the grade. The remaining 10% of your grade will reflect your participation in class discussions. All

assignments must be completed on time and will NOT be accepted after the due date. Graduate Students must prepare a literature review (5-10 pages) for a research project dealing with the interaction of public opinion and politics in an area chosen by each student.

Tentative Time Schedule and Reading Assignments

Class discussions will be based on the assignments

<u>Due Date</u>	<u>Topic and Assignment</u>
Aug. 28	1. The political significance of political communication systems. What is public opinion? Comparing mass and elite publics. <u>Read:</u> Glasser, Intro & ch. 1, 2.
Sept, 4	2. The context for public opinion polling. <u>Read:</u> Glasser, ch. 3-6.
Sept. 11	3. Opinion measurement techniques and their successes and failures. <u>Read:</u> Asher, ch. 1-5.
Sept. 18 1 st report	4. Measuring public opinion – current theories and practices. <u>Read:</u> Asher, ch. 6-9; Glasser, ch. 18.
Sept. 25 1 st exam	5. The substance of public opinions about public policies. <u>Analysis:</u> Using PEW and/or PIPA polling data, analyze Americans' and foreigners' opinions about one public policy issue. Be prepared to report your findings in class.
Oct. 2	6. The impact of agents of political socialization. <u>Read:</u> Glasser, ch. 8; Glyn, ch. 4.
Oct. 9	7. Creating and maintaining belief systems; the impact of opinion change. <u>Read:</u> Glyn, ch. 5-6, Glasser, ch. 16.
Oct. 16	8. Information-processing research and findings. <u>Read:</u> Graber, ch. 1-4; Glasser, ch. 9, 10.
Oct. 23 2 nd report	9. Cross pressures in opinion formation. Dealing with multiple interests. <u>Read:</u> Graber, ch. 5-7; Glasser, ch. 11, 13.
Oct. 30 2 nd exam	10. The impact of mass media on opinion formation. <u>Read:</u> Bennett/Paletz, ch. 8, 9, 10; Bennett et al. ch. 4, 5
Nov. 6	11. Consensus and dissensus and their effects on governmental performance. The tactics of protest movements. <u>Read:</u> Glasser, ch. 12, 17; Dalton, ch. 3, 4; Bennett et al., ch. 6
Nov. 13	12. Linkage of public opinion to governmental performance. <u>Read:</u> Glasser, ch. 7, 14-16.
Nov. 20	<u>Graduate Student Literature Review due.</u> 13. How public opinion shapes politics. Is it democracy or manipulation? <u>Read:</u> Stimson, ch. 1, 2, 3.
Nov. 27	14. THANKSGIVING -- NO CLASS. 3 rd report due Dec, 2 nd or before. <u>Read:</u> Stimson, ch. 4, 5, 6.
Dec. 4 3 rd exam	15. Conclusions: Does the idea of popular government still make sense? <u>Read:</u> Three relevant articles published in Political Science journals. Be prepared to report your findings in class

Instructor's office: 1110 BSB. Office hours: By appointment. E-mail:dgraber@uic.edu.

AN ECLECTIC SHORT LIST OF GOOD READINGS ABOUT PUBLIC OPINION

- Scott L. Althaus, Collective Preferences in Democratic Politics: Opinion Surveys and the Will of the People. New York: Cambridge U. Press, 2003.
- R. Michael Alvarez and John Brehm, Hard Choices, Easy Answers. Princeton: Princeton U. Press, 2002.
- Barbara A. Bardes and Robert W. Oldendick, Public Opinion: Measuring the American Mind. Belmont: Thompson/Wadsworth, 2003.
- Adam J. Berinsky, Silent Voices: Public Opinion and Political Participation in America. Princeton: Princeton U. Press, 2004.
- George F. Bishop, The Illusion of Public Opinion: Facts and Artifacts in Public Opinion Polls. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2005.
- James N. Druckman and Lawrence R. Jacobs "Lumpers and Splitters: The Public Opinion Information That Politicians Use," *Public Opinion Quarterly* 70:453-476, 2006.
- Robert M. Eisinger, The Evolution of Presidential Polling. New York: Cambridge U. Press, 2003.
- Morris P. Fiorina, Samuel J. Adams, and Jeremy C. Pope. Culture War? New York: Prentice Hall, 2005.
- James S. Fishkin, The Voice of the People: Public Opinion and Democracy. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995.
- Sheldon R. Gawiser and G. Evans Witt. Twenty Questions a Journalist Should Ask about Poll Results, 3RD ed. , National Council on Public Polls, 2006.
- Martin Gilens, Why Americans Hate Welfare. Chicago: U. of Chicago Press, 2000.
- Benjamin Ginsberg, The Captive Public: How Mass Opinion Promotes State Power. New York: Basic Books, 1986.
- Lawrence R. Jacobs & Robert Y. Shapiro, Politicians Don't Pander: Political Manipulation and the Loss of Democratic Responsiveness. Chicago: U. of Chicago Press, 2000.
- Scott Keeter, "The Impact of Cell Phone Noncoverage Bias on Polling in the 2004 Presidential Election," *Public Opinion Quarterly* 64:125-148, 2006.
- Paul M. Kellstedt, The Mass Media and the Dynamics of American Racial Attitudes. New York: Cambridge U. Press, 2003.
- V. O. Key, Jr. Public Opinion and American Democracy. New York: Knopf, 1961.
- Jeff Manza, Fay Lomax Cook and Benjamin Page, eds. Navigating Public Opinion: Polls, Policy, and the Future of American Democracy. New York: Oxford U. Press, 2002.
- William G. Mayer, The Changing American Mind: How and Why Public Opinion Changed between 1960 and 1988. Ann Arbor: U. of Michigan Press, 1992.
- John Mueller, Policy and Opinion in the Gulf War. Chicago: U. of Chicago Press, 1994.
- Kurt and Gladys Lang, The Battle for Public Opinion: The President, the Press and the Polls during Watergate. New York: Columbia University Press, 1953.
- Elisabeth Noelle-Neuman. "The Spiral of Silence: A Theory of Public Opinion," Journal of Communication, 24:43-51, 1974.
- Benjamin I Page and Robert Y. Shapiro, The Rational Public: Fifty Years of Trends in American Policy Preferences. Chicago: U. of Chicago Press, 1992.
- Robert P. Putnam, Bowling Alone. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2000.
- Tom Rosenstiel, "Political Polling and the New Media Culture: A Case of More Being Less," *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 69:698-715, 2005 (Special Issue).
- Tom W. Smith, "An Experimental Comparison of Knowledge Networks and the GSS," *International Journal of Public Opinion Research* 15:167-178, 1984.
- John R. Zaller, The Nature and Origins of Mass Opinion. New York, Cambridge U. Press, 1992.