

PSC 401F
Public Opinion and Political Behavior
Fall 2005

Instructor: Dr. David Damore
Time: Tu and Th 2:30 – 3:45
Location: CBC-C235

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Scope and Purpose:

This course offers an in-depth understanding of the antecedents and consequences of public opinion and political behavior in American politics. Particular emphasis is given to the theoretical and methodological approaches central to scholarship in this area. The course is divided into three sections. Part one serves as an introduction and examines the normative and empirical underpinning of public opinion and the classic model of individual opinion and behavior. Part two focuses on revisionist models and approaches to the study of individual and collective opinion and behavior. Part three examines the processes and institutions (i.e., elections, political parties, and interest groups) by which public opinion is aggregated, infused, and diffused into the governing and policy-making processes.

Readings:

Asher, Herbert. 2004. *Polling and the Public: What Every Citizen Should Know*. Washington DC: Congressional Quarterly Press.

Delli Carpini., Michael X, and Scott Keeter. 1996. *What Americans Know about Politic and Why it Matters*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Erikson, Robert S. and Kent L. Tedin. 2005. *American Public Opinion*, 7th ed. New York: Pearson Longman.

Fiorina, Morris P., with Samuel J. Abrams, and Jeremy C. Pope. 2005. *Culture War?* New York: Pearson Longman.

Requirements:

1. Exams (75%) – Three in class exams consisting of multiple choice questions, identifications, short answer, and essays. Exams occur after each section and are not cumulative in nature. Highest exam score counts for 30% of course total; middle exam score counts for 25% of course total; and lowest exam counts for 20% of course total.
2. Paper (20%) – A six to eight page paper. Details forthcoming.
3. Classroom Contribution (5%) – Determined by students' attendance and willingness to enter into discussions as they arise.

Policies and Miscellaneous:

1. The honor code is strictly enforced. Any evidence of collaboration, plagiarism, or other violations of the honor code will be immediately referred to the proper authority.
2. UNLV requires all members of the university community to be familiar with the honor code and to follow copyright and fair use requirements. You are individually and solely responsible for violations of copyright and fair use laws. UNLV will neither protect nor defend you nor assume any responsibility for employee or student violations of fair use laws. To familiarize you with copyright and fair use policies, visit the University’s copyright web page (<http://www.unlv.edu/committees/copyright>).
3. Make-ups are granted for documented illnesses or deaths in the immediate family (documented as well). If the assignments for this course conflict with other obligations, plan ahead and either adjust your schedule or study habits accordingly. If you need to miss class because of observance of a religious holiday or because you represent UNLV at any official extracurricular activity you must notify me no later than week three of the semester.
4. Lecture begins at 2:30 and ends at 3:45. If you choose to attend lecture, plan to do so for its duration. Do not disrupt class by showing-up late, leaving early, or talking. Repeated interruptions, including ringing cell phones and pagers, will adversely affect your final grade. It is your choice to take this course; if the subject matter is not of interest to you or you are unable to meet its expectations, do not enroll in this course.
5. It is expected that assigned reading will be completed prior to lecture.
6. The successful completion of course assignments require more than simple regurgitation of material presented in lecture and readings. Rather, students are expected to synthesize course material in a coherent and succinct manner that demonstrates both the depth and breadth of their understanding (e.g., you will need to think and apply yourself to do well in this course).
7. If you have a documented disability that requires assistance, you need to contact Disability Service (DS) for coordination of your academic accommodations (the DS is located within the Learning Enhancement Services office in the Student Services Complex, Room 137, 895-0866, www.unlv.edu/studentlife/les).
8. Cut-offs for final grades:

A = 100–93.0	B = 86.9–83.0	C = 76.9–73.0	D = 66.9-63.0
A- = 92.9–90.0	B- = 82.9–80.0	C- = 72.9–70.0	D- = 62.9-60.0
B+ = 89.9–87.0	C+ = 79.9–77.0	D+ = 69.9– 67.0	F = 59.9-0

Course Calendar and Reading Assignments

Date	Topic	Reading
August 29	Course Overview	
September 1	No Class	
Part I: Normative and Empirical Underpinning and the Classic Model		
September 6	Normative Underpinnings and Empirical Testing	Delli Carpini and Keeter: 1 Erikson and Tedin: 1
September 8, 13	Survey Research Methods	Asher: 1 – 7 Erikson and Tedin: 2
September 15	Political Sophistication and Political Socialization	Delli Carpini and Keeter: 2 Erikson and Tedin: 5 Fiorina: 1
September 20, 22	Beliefs, Ideology, and Opinion Formation	Erikson and Tedin: 3 Fiorina: 2
September 27, 29	Evidence of Political Sophistication	Delli Carpini and Keeter: 3, 4
October 4	Exam 1	
Part II: Revisionist Models of Individual of Opinion and Behavior		
October 6, 11	Alternative Criteria for Opinion Formation	Erikson and Tedin: 7 Fiorina: 3
October 13	Rational Choice Models of Individual Behavior	Delli Carpini and Keeter: 5 Fiorina: 4
October 18, 20	Political Psychological Approaches	Delli Carpini and Keeter: 6 Fiorina: 5
October 25, 27	Macro Level Processes	Erikson and Tedin: 4
November 1	Exam 2	

Part III: Aggregation, Infusion, and Diffusion of Public Opinion

November 3	Institutions and Public Opinion	Delli Carpini and Keeter: 7 Fiorina: 6
November 8, 10, 15	Infusing Public Opinion into the Governing Process	Erikson and Tedin: 8, 9 Fiorina: 7
November 17, 22, 29	Government Responsiveness to Public Opinion	Erikson and Tedin: 10
December 1, 6, 8	Political Trust and the Future of Democracy in the United States	Erikson and Tedin: 6, 11 Fiorina: 8
December 13	Exam 3 (3:10 – 5:10)	