

## Surveys, Public Opinion, and Public Policy

Instructor: Allyson L. Holbrook  
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Office Hours: By appointment  
Time: Monday 3-6 pm

Course Overview and Objectives: The goals of this course are to understand the relations between surveys, public opinion, and public policy. The course will focus on these relations in a variety of ways. Issues to be addressed include: (1) the normative question of whether public opinion should influence public policy, (2) whether public opinion does influence public policy and the means by which this effect is likely to occur, and (3) whether policy leaders influence public opinion and the processes by which such influence is likely to occur. These questions will be addressed by examining historical examples of changes in public opinion and public policy and relevant scientific research.

Assignments: Assignments due during this course are designed for you to (1) demonstrate your understanding and mastery of the concepts discussed in class; (2) apply these concepts; and (3) prompt your discussion and questions. (Note: Due dates for assignments are annotated in the course schedule. Assignments will be provided at least one (1) week before their due date.

*Leading Class Discussion:* Each class will be divided so that some portion of the class is dedicated to lecture and some portion is dedicated to class discussion. On weeks when assignments are due, the discussion portion will be used to have students summarize their assignments and discuss them. On weeks when there is not an assignment due, a student or group of students will be assigned to lead the discussion. For the week to which you are assigned, you will be responsible for generating discussion questions relevant to the assigned readings for the day and initiating and facilitating class discussion of these questions. The goal of this assignment is NOT for you to summarize the readings for the week for the rest of the class. You will be graded on the quality of the questions and the discussion generated.

*The Polls:* Select two articles of interest from the "Polls" section of POQ. In 1-2 pages, summarize the findings of the paper and critique it. You will also be asked to give a 5-minute summary to class of the articles you choose.

*Initial Idea Summary:* You will be asked to submit a brief (2-3 pages) proposal describing the policy you will examine in your final paper as well as sources of information you plan to use in the final paper.

*Election assignment:* Watch 1 hour of election day coverage. Provide a brief description in your paper (one paragraph) of the news source(s) you watched. What policy issues were mentioned in the coverage of the election? How were they tied to the election outcome? Was public opinion or survey data described or analyzed? Was the use of

survey data appropriate? Why or why not? This paper should be approximately 2 pages and should reflect your response to the election coverage. Copies of your paper should be distributed to the instructor and other members of the class by the Friday before the next class (November 5). These papers will be used as the basis for a discussion in class the week after the election.

*Final Paper.* A final paper is due at the end of the semester. This paper should provide an in-depth examination of the role of public opinion and surveys for a policy issue. For example, one might examine the role of public opinion during the policy debate about government-subsidized health care that occurred early in the Clinton administration. This paper should draw on information from a variety of sources relevant to both public opinion and policy. For example, you might use media reports of public opinion polls or books written by insiders about the policy decision process (20-25 pages).

Course Policies:

*Deadlines:* All assignments are due at the beginning of class on the day they are due. Students will lose 10% credit for each day that an assignment is late. In addition, do the assigned readings before they are discussed in class.

*Extensions for assignments:* Extensions for assignments are at the discretion of the instructors and should be requested *before* the deadline. Emergencies will be considered on a case-by-case basis. If you have a question about an extension, please *talk to the instructor*.  
 Plagiarism or cheating: Don't do it. It's not worth it. Guidelines regarding academic integrity at UIC are available online <<http://www.uic.edu/depts/sja/integrit.htm>>, and sanctions for academic dishonesty are also available <<http://www.uic.edu/depts/sja/chpt3.htm#3>>. Please don't put us in a position where we need to learn more about these policies.

*Attendance:* Five points will be assigned based on attendance and participation. If you must miss a class, please let the instructors know in advance. Class attendance is strongly encouraged. Active involvement in class is also expected.

<u>Assignment</u>	<u>Number of Points</u>	<u>Percentage of Grade</u>	<u>Due Date</u>
The Polls #1	<b>15</b>	<b>15</b>	September 13
The Polls #2	<b>15</b>	<b>15</b>	October 25
Election day thought paper	<b>10</b>	<b>10</b>	November 8
Initial idea summary	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>	October 4
Leading discussion	<b>10</b>	<b>10</b>	Various
Class participation and attendance (when no discussion leader)	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>	Various
Final paper	<b>40</b>	<b>40</b>	December 6

### August 23: Introduction to Surveys and Public Opinion

#### Readings:

Krosnick, J.A. (1999). Survey Research. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 50, 537-567.

Burnstein, P. (2002). The Impact of Public Opinion on Public Policy: A Review and an Agenda. *Political Research Quarterly*, 56, 29-40.

Chapter 16 of Sage Handbook of Public Opinion Research (Scheufele): Spiral of Silence Theory

Chapter 20 of Sage Handbook of Public Opinion Research (Weisberg): The Methodological Strengths and Weaknesses of Survey Research.

Chapter 21 of Sage Handbook of Public Opinion Research (Traugott): The Uses and Misuses of Polls.

### August 30: Should public opinion influence public policy?

#### Readings

Federalist Papers #10 and #51 (see [www.foundingfathers.info](http://www.foundingfathers.info))

Galston, W. A. (2001). Political Knowledge, Political Engagement, and Civic Education. *Annual Review of Political Science*, 4, 217-34.

Chapters 1-2 of Delli Carpini, M. X. and Keeter, S. (1996). *What Americans Know about Politics and Why it Matters*. Yale University Press.

Borch, C. A. and Weakliem, D. L. (2005). *Unequal Influence? The Effect of Public Opinion on Policy in the U.S.* (available at [www.allacademic.com](http://www.allacademic.com))

***Discussion Leader: Matthew Berry***

September 6 – NO CLASS

### September 13: Does public opinion influence public policy?

#### Readings

Baum, M. A. and Potter, P. B. K. (2008). The Relationship Between Mass Media, Public Opinion, and Foreign Policy: Toward a Theoretical Synthesis. *Annual Review of Political Science*, 11, 39-65.

Chapters 13, 14, and 15 of Corbett, M. (1991). *American Public Opinion*.

Monroe, A. D. (1998). Public Opinion and Public Policy, 1980-1993. *The Public Opinion Quarterly*, 62, 6-28.

Chapter 45 of Sage Handbook of Public Opinion Research (Eisinger): The Use of Surveys by Governments and Politicians

***Discussion Leader: Alicia Frasier***

### September 20: The Role of Public Opinion Polls and the Media

#### Readings:

Chapter 18 of Sage Handbook of Public Opinion Research (Kepplinger): Effects of the News Media on Public Opinion

Chapter 41 of Sage Handbook of Public Opinion Research (Weaver): Attitudes of Journalists toward Public Opinion Research

Chapter 44 of Sage Handbook of Public Opinion Research (Brettschneider): The News Media's Use of Opinion Polls

***"Polls" Report #1 due.***

***Discussion Leader: Maria Tejada (tentative)***

September 27: The Role of Interest Groups and Lobbies

Readings

Danielian, L. H., & Page, B. I. (1994). The Heavenly Chorus: Interest Group Voices on TV News. *American Journal of Political Science*, 38, 1056-1078.

Wiggins, C. W., Hamm, K. E., & Bell, C. G. (1992). Interest-Group and Party Influence Agents in the Legislative Process: A Comparative State Analysis. *The Journal of Politics*, 54, 82-100.

Walker, J. L. (1983). The Origins and Maintenance of Interest Groups in America. *The American Political Science Review*, 77, 390-406.

Chapter 4 of Sage Handbook of Public Opinion Research (Lang and Engel Lang): Advocacy: An Alternative Expression of Public Opinion

Chapter 5 of Sage Handbook of Public Opinion Research (Hoffmann-Lange): Studying Elite vs. Mass Opinion

***Discussion Leader(s): Dan O'Connell***

October 4: The Role of "Direct Democracy": Initiatives and Referendums

Readings

Gamble, B. S. (1997). Putting Civil Rights to a Popular Vote. *American Journal of Political Science*, 41, 245-269.

Gerber, E. R. (1996). Legislative Response to the Threat of Popular Initiatives. *American Journal of Political Science*, 40, 99-128.

***Initial Idea Summary Due – Discussion of Assignment***

October 11 (Week 7): Can policy-makers influence public opinion?

Readings

McGraw, K. M., Best, S., and Timpone, R. (1995). What They Say or What They Do?" The Impact of Elite Explanation and Policy Outcomes on Public Opinion. *American Journal of Political Science*, 39(1), 53-74.

Lawrence, E., Stoker, R. and Wolman, H. (2010). Crafting Urban Policy: The Conditions of Public Support for Urban Policy Initiatives. *Urban Affairs Review*, 45, 412-430.

***Discussion Leader: EJ Shin***

October 18: Difficulties in Influencing Public Opinion

Readings

Pp. 215-265 of Pratkanis, A. and Aronson, E. (1991). *Age of Propaganda: The Everyday Use and Abuse of Persuasion*. W. H. Freeman and Company.

Hyman, H., & Sheatsley, P. B. (1947). Some reasons why information campaigns fail. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 11, 412-423.

Mendelsohn, H. (1973). Some reasons why information campaigns can succeed. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 37, 50-61.

Page, B. I., Shapiro, R. Y., & Dempsey, G. R. (1987). What moves public opinion? *The American Political Science Review*, 81, 23-44.

***Discussion Leader: Teresa Krzyzanowski***

October 25: Agenda-setting, Priming, and Framing Functions of the Media

Readings:

Chapters 30, 31, and 32 of Iyengar, S. & Reeves, R. (1997). *Do the Media Govern?* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Nelson, T. E., Clawson, R. A., & Oxley, Z. M. (1997). Media Framing of a Civil Liberties Conflict and Its Effect on Tolerance. *The American Political Science Review*, 91, 567-583.

Chapters 7, 8, and 11 of Graber, D. (1994). *Media Power in Politics*. Washington D. C.: CQ Press.

Chapter 19 of Sage Handbook of Public Opinion Research (Roessler): Agenda-Setting, Framing, and Priming.

***“Polls” Report #2 due***

***Discussion Leader: Marla Parker***

November 1: Other Influences on Public Opinion

Readings:

Downs A. (1972). Up and Down with Ecology – The ‘Issue Attention Cycle.’ *Public Interest*, 28, 38-50.

Mueller, J. (1993). American Public Opinion and the Gulf War. Some Polling Issues. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 57, 80-91.

***Discussion Leader: George Martin***

November 8: Public Opinion about Policy and Elections

***Election assignment due – class discussion about election***

November 15: Student Presentations

November 22 – NO CLASS

November 29: Student Presentations

***Final Paper Due December 6 by 5 p.m.***