

**The University of Western Ontario
Department of Political Science
Political Science 3337G
Comparative Public Opinion
Winter 2015**

Instructor: Cameron D. Anderson

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Course Description:

This seminar course will critically assess the topic of public opinion within politics and the study of political science. The course addresses topics including the definition and measurement of public opinion, how citizens determine and organize their attitudes and beliefs, the relationship of public opinion and citizen competence, the interaction of public opinion and policy, the influences of political communication on public opinion, whether public opinion exhibits stability or change and why as well as the nature of public opinion on contemporary issues.

Learning Objectives:

By the end of the course students will:

- Be able to demonstrate understanding of issues relating to the meaning and measurement of public opinion
- Be able to demonstrate understanding of diverse theories of and approaches to the study of public opinion
- Be able to analyze public opinion data

Course Readings:

Berinsky, Adam (ed.). 2012. New Directions in Public Opinion. Routledge: New York.

Additional Readings available through course page on OWL or online through the Western Library's website.

Course Requirements:

Participation 15%

Public Opinion Analysis 15%

Research Paper Proposal 5%

Research Paper 30%

Final Exam 35%

DISCUSSION OF COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

1.) Participation (15%): As this is a third-year seminar course, there will be a mix of lecture and classroom discussion. Students are expected to actively participate each week. The participation grade will be based on attendance, the quality of comment, evidence of preparation, willingness to challenge accepted ideas and concern for the views expressed by others. If unable to attend, please inform the instructor in advance. Students will be given a preliminary grade for participation in the seventh week of the course. The final participation grade may change based on whether student performance improves, declines or stays the same.

2.) Public Opinion Analysis (15%): This assignment invites you to engage with real live (!) public opinion data housed at the Canadian Opinion Research Archives (CORA) (<http://www.queensu.ca/cora/index.html>) (or other suitable source of public opinion data). You are required to write a 4-5 page paper (double-spaced pages using 12-point font). The assignment should seek to chronicle trends in public opinion on some issue of public policy. A host of different issues are listed on the 'Trends' page at the CORA website (<http://www.queensu.ca/cora/3trends.html>). Alternatively, you may consider public opinion data from another country that is publicly available. You should choose an issue of interest to you and consider the nature of opinion at multiple time points (at least 3 (three)) that are separated by at least 5 (five) years. Questions which your paper should seek to answer include: what is the policy issue and why was it chosen; what are the survey questions and are there any problems with them; what is the nature of public opinion on this issue at different points in time; has opinion changed over time; if so, in what direction; why do you think opinion on this issue has changed/or remained constant? You should consult and cite at least 2 (two) academic sources (refereed books and journal articles) which are relevant to the issue of public policy you have chosen. This paper will be due at the beginning of class on **February 3, 2014**.

3.) Research Paper Proposal (5%): Due in class on **March 3, 2014**. This proposal should consist of a 1 page outline of the paper which includes an introduction of the topic, a thesis statement, tentative plan of the paper and a working bibliography of at least **6 (six)** academic sources (refereed books and journal articles).

3.) Research Essay (30%): You are required to write a research paper of 10-12 double-spaced pages in length using 12-point font. This paper will be due at the beginning of class on **March 31, 2014**. The intent of this assignment is to have you write a research essay which probes some topic of relevance within the field of public opinion. You may choose to further delve into a topic covered in class or you may find something outside of the class which is both of interest to you and within the broad subject nature of the class. As this is a research essay, you will be expected to utilize a minimum of **10 (ten)** academic sources (books and refereed journal articles) to develop and support your arguments/ideas.

4.) Final Exam (35%): A final exam to be scheduled during the April examination period.

Important Course Policies

TURNITIN:

Assignments are due at the beginning of class. All written assignments (including each of the public opinion analysis, research essay proposal and research essay) are subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com (<http://www.turnitin.com>). Assignments **must** include a copy of the originality report generated by **Turnitin.com** to be accepted. Students must submit their work to Turnitin through the course web site, in the folder labelled "Submit Assignments to Turnitin". **Therefore, to reiterate, a completed assignment will include a paper copy of the assignment and the Turnitin originality report.**

PENALTIES FOR LATE ASSIGNMENTS:

Assignments handed in after the due date and time (beginning of class) will be subject to a 5% penalty off the final grade out of 100%. The penalty for each day after the due date will be 2.5%. Exceptions will only be granted for valid and documented health reasons, at the discretion of the Professor. Should a situation arise nearing or at the due date of an assignment, please see Academic Counselling in the Social Science Centre. They will receive your information and make a recommendation for accommodation to me (and other professors as needed). I can only act on recommendations for accommodation given from Academic Counselling.

Course Topics and Readings:

I. Introducing Public Opinion:

Week 1 (January 6) Introduction and Overview

Berinsky 'Introduction'

II. Issues in Public Opinion:

Week 2 (January 13) Defining Public Opinion

Berinsky 'Chapter 1'

Glynn, C. et al. 2004. Public Opinion. 2nd edition (Chapter 1)

Week 3 (January 20) Issues in Measurement and Survey Response

Asher, H. 2012. Polling and the Public. 8th edition. (Chapters 2 and 3)

Berinsky 'Chapter 2'

Week 4 (January 27) Citizen Competence I

Berinsky 'Chapter 3'

Converse, P. 1993. "The Stability of Belief Systems over time" in Niemi and Weisberg (eds.) Classics in Voting Behavior. CQ Press: Washington, D.C. (pp. 54-61)

Week 5 (February 3) Citizen Competence II

****** Public Opinion Analysis Due******

Althaus, S. 1998. "Information Effects in Collective Preferences" American Political Science Review, 92, 3, 545-58.

Page, B. and R. Shapiro. 1992. The Rational Public. University of Chicago Press: Chicago. (pp. 1-36)

III. Explaining Public Opinion

Week 6 (February 10) Genes, Personality and Opinion

Alford, J. and J. Hibbing. 2010. "The Ultimate Source of Political Opinions: Genes and the Environment" in Norrander and Wilcox (eds.) Understanding Public Opinion, Congressional Quarterly Press. (pp. 43-56)

Berinsky 'Chapter10'

Week 7 (February 24) Group Differences in Opinion

Atkeson, L. and C. Maestas. 2010. "Race and the Formation of Attitudes: Responses to Hurricane Katrina" in Norrander and Wilcox (eds.) Understanding Public Opinion. CQ Press: Washington, D.C. (pp.105-22)

Berinsky 'Chapters 6 and 7'

Recommended not required:

Anderson, C. 2010. "Regional Heterogeneity and Policy Preferences in Canada: 1979-2006", Regional and Federal Studies. 20, 4, December.

Week 8 (March 3) Socialization and Opinion

******Research Paper Proposal Due******

Berinsky 'Chapter 8'

Erikson, R. and K. Tedin. 2011. American Public Opinion. (8th ed.) Longman. (Chapter 5)

Week 9 (March 10) No Class

Week 10 (March 17) Partisan and Ideological Differences in Opinion

Berinsky 'Chapter 5'

Cochrane, C. 2010. "Left/Right Ideology and Canadian Politics", Canadian Journal of Political Science. 43, 3, 584-605.

Recommended not required:

Berinsky 'Chapter 4'

IV. Public Opinion and Politics

Week 11 (March 24) Political Communication and Public Opinion

Berinsky 'Chapter 12'

Scheufele, D. and D. Tewksbury. 2007. "Framing, Agenda Setting, and Priming: The Evolution of Three Media Effects Models", Journal of Communication. 57, 9-20.

Week 12 (March 31) Stability and Change in Public Opinion

******Research Paper Due******

Berinsky 'Chapter 13'

Soroka, S. and C. Wlezien. 2004. "Opinion Representation and Policy Feedback: Canada in Comparative Perspective" Canadian Journal of Political Science, 2004, 4, 530-59.

Week 13 (April 7) Public Opinion, Public Policy and Representation

Erikson, R. and K. Tedin. 2011. American Public Opinion. (8th ed.) Longman. (Chapter 4)

Stimson, J. 2004. Tides of Consent: How Public Opinion Shapes American Politics. Cambridge University Press: New York. (pp. 1-22)

**APPENDIX TO UNDERGRADUATE COURSE OUTLINES
DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE**

Prerequisite checking - the student's responsibility

"Unless you have either the requisites for this course or written special permission from your Dean to enroll in it, you may be removed from this course and it will be deleted from your record. This decision may not be appealed. You will receive no adjustment to your fees in the event that you are dropped from a course for failing to have the necessary prerequisites."

Essay course requirements

With the exception of 1000-level courses, most courses in the Department of Political Science are essay courses. Total written assignments (excluding examinations) will be at least 3,000 words in Politics 1020E, at least 5,000 words in a full course numbered 2000 or above, and at least 2,500 words in a half course numbered 2000 or above.

Use of Personal Response Systems ("Clickers")

"Personal Response Systems ("clickers") may be used in some classes. If clickers are to be used in a class, it is the responsibility of the student to ensure that the device is activated and functional. Students must see their instructor if they have any concerns about whether the clicker is malfunctioning.

Students must use only their own clicker. If clicker records are used to compute a portion of the course grade:

- the use of somebody else's clicker in class constitutes a scholastic offence,
- the possession of a clicker belonging to another student will be interpreted as an attempt to commit a scholastic offence."

Security and Confidentiality of Student Work (refer to current *Western Academic Calendar* (<http://www.westerncalendar.uwo.ca/>))

"**Submitting or Returning Student Assignments, Tests and Exams** - All student assignments, tests and exams will be handled in a secure and confidential manner. Particularly in this respect, leaving student work unattended in public areas for pickup is not permitted."

Duplication of work

Undergraduate students who submit similar assignments on closely related topics in two different courses must obtain the consent of both instructors prior to the submission of the assignment. If prior approval is not obtained, each instructor reserves the right not to accept the assignment.

Grade adjustments

In order to ensure that comparable standards are applied in political science courses, the Department may require instructors to adjust final marks to conform to Departmental guidelines.

Academic Offences

"Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at the following Web site:

<http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/handbook/appeals/scholoff.pdf>."

Submission of Course Requirements

ESSAYS, ASSIGNMENTS, TAKE-HOME EXAMS **MUST** BE SUBMITTED ACCORDING TO PROCEDURES SPECIFIED BY YOUR INSTRUCTOR (I.E., IN CLASS, DURING OFFICE HOURS, TA'S OFFICE HOURS) OR UNDER THE INSTRUCTOR'S OFFICE DOOR.

THE MAIN OFFICE DOES NOT DATE-STAMP OR ACCEPT ANY OF THE ABOVE.

Note: Information excerpted and quoted above are Senate regulations from the Handbook of Scholarship and Academic Policy. <http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/handbook/>

Students registered in Social Science should refer to <http://counselling.ssc.uwo.ca/> <http://counselling.ssc.uwo.ca/procedures/havingproblems.asp> for information on Medical Policy, Term Tests, Final Examinations, Late Assignments, Short Absences, Extended Absences, Documentation and other Academic Concerns. Non-Social Science students should refer to their home faculty's academic counselling office.

Plagiarism

"Plagiarism: Students must write their essays and assignments in their own words. Whenever students take an idea, or a passage from another author, they must acknowledge their debt both by using quotation marks where appropriate and by proper referencing such as footnotes or citations. Plagiarism is a major academic offence." (see Scholastic Offence Policy in the Western Academic Calendar).

Plagiarism Checking: "All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com (<http://www.turnitin.com>)."

Multiple-choice tests/exams: "Computer-marked multiple-choice tests and/or exams may be subject to submission for similarity review by software that will check for unusual coincidences in answer patterns that may indicate cheating."

Note: Information excerpted and quoted above are Senate regulations from the Handbook of Scholarship and Academic Policy. <http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/handbook/>

PLAGIARISM*

In writing scholarly papers, you must keep firmly in mind the need to avoid plagiarism. Plagiarism is the unacknowledged borrowing of another writer's words or ideas. Different forms of writing require different types of acknowledgement. The following rules pertain to the acknowledgements necessary in academic papers.

A. In using another writer's words, you must both place the words in quotation marks and acknowledge that the words are those of another writer.

You are plagiarizing if you use a sequence of words, a sentence or a paragraph taken from other writers without acknowledging them to be theirs. Acknowledgement is indicated either by (1) mentioning the author and work from which the words are borrowed in the text of your paper; or by (2) placing a footnote number at the end of the quotation in your text, and including a correspondingly numbered footnote at the bottom of the page (or in a separate reference section at the end of your essay). This footnote should indicate author, title of the work, place and date of publication, and page number.

Method (2) given above is usually preferable for academic essays because it provides the reader with more information about your sources and leaves your text uncluttered with parenthetical and tangential references. In either case words taken from another author must be enclosed in quotation marks or set off from your text by single spacing and indentation in such a way that they cannot be mistaken for your own words. Note that you cannot avoid indicating quotation simply by changing a word or phrase in a sentence or paragraph which is not your own.

B. In adopting other writers' ideas, you must acknowledge that they are theirs.

You are plagiarizing if you adopt, summarize, or paraphrase other writers' trains of argument, ideas or sequences of ideas without acknowledging their authorship according to the method of acknowledgement given in 'A' above. Since the words are your own, they need not be enclosed in quotation marks. Be certain, however, that the words you use are entirely your own; where you must use words or phrases from your source, these should be enclosed in quotation marks, as in 'A' above.

Clearly, it is possible for you to formulate arguments or ideas independently of another writer who has expounded the same ideas, and whom you have not read. Where you got your ideas is the important consideration here. Do not be afraid to present an argument or idea without acknowledgement to another writer, if you have arrived at it entirely independently. Acknowledge it if you have derived it from a source outside your own thinking on the subject.

In short, use of acknowledgements and, when necessary, quotation marks is necessary to distinguish clearly between what is yours and what is not. Since the rules have been explained to you, if you fail to make this distinction your instructor very likely will do so for you, and they will be forced to regard your omission as intentional literary theft. Plagiarism is a serious offence which may result in a student's receiving an 'F' in a course or, in extreme cases in their suspension from the University.

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Adopted by the council of the Faculty of Social Science, October, 1970; approved by the Dept. of History August 13, 1991

Accessibility at Western: Please contact poliscie@uwo.ca if you require any information in plain text format, or if any other accommodation can make the course material and/or physical space accessible to you.

SUPPORT SERVICES

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to Mental Health@Western

<http://www.uwo.ca/uwocom/mentalhealth/> for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.