

PUBLIC OPINION AND VOTING

GOV2050

Instructor: Dr. Chryl Laird
Office: 204 Hubbard Hall
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Classroom: TBA
Class Meetings: Mon. & Wed. 11:40AM-1:05PM
Office Hours: Tues. 10:00-11:30AM and Thurs. 1:30-3:00PM
Sign up for office hours: <https://claird.youcanbook.me/>

Course Introduction

Welcome to Political Behavior! In this course, we will examine the causes and consequences of political behavior in America. We will explore several basic tenants of democracy, from the idea that the public needs to be educated to make political decisions to the creation of important political opinions to the interactions between the political masses and political elites. Next, we will examine public opinion and the factors that influence its formation. Where do political beliefs and attitudes come from? How come some people hold very different beliefs than others? Do neighbors or groups of friends tend to hold similar attitudes? Does media influence public opinion, and if so, how and when can it be the most effective? How did public opinion influence the 2018 election? Why do people vote (or, more interestingly, why *don't* people vote)? Are certain groups of people more likely to vote than others? How does the media and how do elites influence voting behavior? Why don't young people vote? What is social capital and why is it seen as such an important political resource?

Required Textbooks

1. Erickson, Robert S. and Kent L. Tedin. *American Public Opinion 9th edition*. Routledge. Taylor and Francis Group.
2. Flanigan, William, Nancy H. Zingale, Elizabeth A. Theiss-Morse, Michael Wagner. *Political Behavior of the American Electorate 13th Edition*. CQ Press.
3. Masuoka, Natalie and Jane Junn. 2013. *The Politics of Belonging: Race, Public Opinion, and Immigration*. The University of Chicago Press.

I will also be posting required readings on the Blackboard website for the course or emailing them to the class.

Additional Readings

Political behavior is going on EVERYDAY. I encourage you to read an article every day related to some aspect of political behavior out of a major newspaper or news magazine (i.e. The Washington Post, New York Times, LA Times, Newsweek, The Economist, etc.)

I AM PREGNANT! We are all in for an interesting semester.

Student Assistance

I want my students to do well in this course. I am open to answering questions, clarifying materials, offer suggestions for studying, assisting with paper writing and addressing any concerns you may have about the course. I have assigned office hours listed in the syllabus, but I can also make arrangements to meet at alternate times if you unable to attend office hours. Questions and concerns can also be raised in class and I encourage you to do so.

Classroom Behavior

In class discussions will be a central part of this course. These discussions will be based on the assigned readings as well content brought up in lecture. I believe that these discussions can benefit students in a variety of different ways. Students will not only enhance their critical thinking skills but they will also be exposed to alternative opinions related to a particular issue. Students will have to learn how to defend their view in a rational way when presented with an opposing view. Many of these issues could be considered controversial and/or sensitive. Students should feel free to express their opinions. At the same time, we must remember to respect one another and maintain a constructive and civil dialogue. If you are unable to engage in conversation in this manner you will be dismissed from the discussion.

Academic Integrity and Honor Code

I expect all students to abide by the Bowdoin Academic Honor Code, which can be accessed online at: <https://www.bowdoin.edu/studentaffairs/student-handbook/college-policies/index.shtml>. If you have any concerns or questions about how to cite work appropriately, please consult me or a reference librarian.

Disability Services

Students who have documented learning disabilities with the Office of the Dean of Student Affairs may be entitled to various accommodations. It is your responsibility to initiate with me any conversion over accommodations. Further information can be found at: <https://www.bowdoin.edu/studentaffairs/student-handbook/college-policies/accommodation-policy.shtml>

Writing Services

I encourage you to take advantage of the Writing Project @ Bowdoin. Getting feedback benefits all writers! Trained writing consultants can help with any writing, multimedia project, or oral presentation. During one-on-one consultations, you can work on everything from brainstorming and developing ideas to crafting strong sentences and documenting sources. Bring your assignment description, and a few goals, to the consultation! For more information, or to make an appointment please visit: <https://www.bowdoin.edu/writing-project/>

Assignments and Grading

	Percentage
Midterm	25%
Recorded Reactions (4)	25%
Final Project	40%
In-Class Participation/Attendance	10%
TOTAL	100%

Exams:

The midterm will be an in-class exam. The exam will be short answer and essay based. It will cover all material discussed prior to the midterm.

Recorded Reactions:

Recorded reactions are audio file reactions to the readings. You are to complete these prior to the class period in which we will be discussing the readings. You should upload your audio file on Monday by 11:30AM to Blackboard. **Once the material has been discussed in class, a late submission for that week will not be accepted.** You can decide to do the recorded reaction for any week, but **two must be submitted before the midterm and two after the midterm.**

Final Project

The Final Project for the course will be a group project. Each group will be assigned an electoral race from the 2018 midterms. They will be required to do detailed research analysis on polling, public opinion, campaign advertising and voting behavior. The project will be completed in three parts. An initial proposal laying out your plan of action as a group (5%), the group presentation (10%), and the final group paper (25%). Each group member will also individually be privately submitting an assessment about their group members performance. More details will be provided

In-Class Participation

I will also be grading you on in-class participation. During class discussion, I will be taking note of students that participate. The assessment will be based on your participation throughout the entire semester. Your attendance record will also be as a way to assess your participation. **You are expected to attend every class. If you are absent, a lot then you can also anticipate that this will reflect in your participation grade. You will be permitted two unexcused absences. After that, each additional unexcused absence will lower your participation grade by one letter grade. If you miss 60% of classes, you will fail the course. You are responsible for ALL material covered during missed classes.**

Pop Quizzes

Pop Quizzes will be administered if it becomes apparent that students are not doing course readings. These pop quizzes will count towards your participation grade. There are no make-ups for pop quizzes. These will count towards your participation grade.

Extra Credit

Extra credit opportunities will be at the discretion of the instruction. You will be notified of these opportunities if they become available.

LATE ASSIGNMENT POLICY

Assignments submitted late will lose 1/3 letter grade for any late submission within the first 24 hours. Each additional 24 hours results in another 1/3 letter grade reduction. Exceptions to this policy will only be made for emergencies or health challenges that are documented by the College administration (the Dean's office).

Final Grade Scale

Letter Grade	Percentage	Letter Grade	Percentage	Letter Grade	Percentage
A	≥ 92.5	B-	≥ 79.5	D+	≥ 66.5
A-	≥ 89.5	C+	≥ 76.5	D	≥ 62.5
B+	≥ 86.5	C	≥ 72.5	D-	≥ 59.5
B	≥ 82.5	C-	≥ 69.5	F	< 59.5

If you have chosen to take the class as Credit/D/F, I will only grant a Credit grade if the student has completed all of the work for the class.

Tentative Class Schedule

Below is a tentative class schedule.

The schedule is subject to change based on the needs of the class.

Weeks	Readings
Week 1 (Aug 29)	No Class – APSA Conference
Week 2 (Sept 3 & 5) Public Opinion and Democratic Societies	Sept 3: Course Introduction Sept 5: Erikson & Tedin Ch.1
Week 3 (Sept 10 & 12) Polling: The Scientific Assessment of Public Opinion	Erikson and Tedin Ch. 2
Week 4 (Sept 17 & 19) Microlevel Opinion: The Psychology of Opinion-Holding	Erikson and Tedin Ch. 3 Flannigan et al Ch.4
Week 5 (Sept 24 & 26) Macrolevel Opinion: The Flow of Political Sentiment	Erikson and Tedin Ch. 4 Flannigan et al Ch. 5
Week 6 (Oct 1 & 3) Political Socialization and Political Learning	Erikson and Tedin Ch. 5 Flannigan et al Ch. 6
Week 7 (Oct 8 & 10) MIDTERM	Oct 8: FALL BREAK-NO CLASS Oct 10: MIDTERM
Week 8 (Oct 15 & 17) Public Opinion and Democratic Stability	Erikson and Tedin Ch. 6
Week 9 (Oct 22 & 24) Group Differences in Political Opinions	Erikson and Tedin Ch. 7
Week 10 (Oct 29 & 31) <i>The Politics of Belonging: Race, Public Opinion and Immigration</i>	Oct 29: Masuoka and Junn Chapters 1-3 Oct 31: Masuoka and Junn Chapters 4-6
Week 11 (Nov 5 & 7)	Erikson and Tedin Ch. 8 Flannigan et al Ch. 7
Week 12 (Nov 12 & 14) Electoral Context and Strategy	Flannigan et al Ch. 2 & 3
Week 13 (Nov 19 & 21)	Nov 19: Erikson and Tedin Ch. 9

Elections as Instruments of Popular Control	Flannigan et al Ch. 8 Nov 21: THANKSGIVING BREAK-NO CLASSES
Week 14 (Nov 26 & 28)	Nov 26: Erikson and Tedin Ch. 10 Nov 28: Erikson and Tedin Ch. 11
Week 15 (Dec 3 & 5)	Dec 3: GROUP PRESENTATIONS Dec 5: GROUP PRESENTATIONS

Final Project Due December 7, 2018 by 11:59PM to Blackboard