

POL 312 – Public Opinion  
Spring 2019  
Tuesday-Thursday, 12:35-1:50 PM  
Schroeder 208

**Instructor:** Dr. Carl L. Palmer  
**Office:** 433 Schroeder Hall  
**Office Hours:** Tuesday, 2-4, Thursday 2-3, or by appointment  
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**Course Objectives:**

This course is designed to be an overview of the topics in the field of public opinion. The goal of this course is to familiarize students with the research literature in public opinion. The foundations of public opinion and its implications for democratic politics are quite broad; this course will serve as an introduction to these concepts. As part of this discussion, we will discuss conceptual issues and issues of measurement in public opinion, the individual-level factors which influence citizen opinion, and the ways in which opinion may be shaped by political elites. By the end of the course, students should be able to critically evaluate theoretical arguments regarding the measurement of and factors that influence opinion, articulate arguments about these issues both orally and in writing, identify normative concerns regarding citizen behavior based upon the arguments we have read, and be capable of synthesizing research literature on a given topic in order to identify lacunae in the literature and conduct a research study to bridge those gaps.

**Required Readings:**

- Clawson, Rosalee A., and Zoe M. Oxley. 2017. *Public Opinion: Democratic Ideals, Democratic Practice*. 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition. Washington DC: CQ Press.
- Additional readings will be made available via ReggieNet (or can be downloaded from [www.jstor.org](http://www.jstor.org)).

**Course Policies:**

1. Exams must be taken at the times specified in the syllabus; makeup exams will be given only in the most extreme circumstances, with provided documentation of the absence. Makeup exams will consist of four essay questions. If you know you cannot make any one of the exam dates listed in the syllabus, you should not take this class.
2. Students will be expected to bring all readings to class to facilitate discussion. Coming to class unprepared will negatively affect a student's participation grade.
3. Academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. Please see the university's policies regarding plagiarism and cheating online at the Dean of Students Office website.
4. All assignments must be submitted *at the beginning of class* on the due date in the syllabus; late assignments will lose 10% credit per day late. All assignments *must* be typed unless otherwise instructed.

5. To be considered for a regrade assignments or exams must be accompanied by a no greater than 1 page (single spaced) memo detailing your claim. Memos must provide justification for a change of grade using examples from course material, and will only be accepted after a 24-hour *cooling-off* period. Memos must be submitted within one week of the initial return date for the assignment or exam.
6. Usage of cell phones in lecture will not be permitted. Please silence all cell phones before coming to class. If I see anyone using a cell phone in class I will administer a pop quiz which will affect your participation grade. Laptop computers and tablets are permissible so long as they are used for *academic* uses during lecture.
7. Students may not photograph or use audio or video devices to record classroom lectures or discussions or visual materials that accompany them (e.g., lecture slides, whiteboard notes/equations). Students with disabilities who need to record classroom lectures or discussions must contact Student Access and Accommodation Services to register, request and be approved for an accommodation. Students who violate this policy may be subject to both legal sanctions for violations of copyright law and disciplinary action under the University's Code of Student Conduct.
8. If you have special needs that require accommodation for exams, please let me know early on so that the appropriate measures can be taken. You will be required to provide documentation of your requirements.
9. If you have any questions at any point in the class, PLEASE ask. I will be happy to answer any questions about the course material. This includes if lecture is moving too quickly, or simply do not understand something. Keep in mind that this is YOUR responsibility.
10. Email: I strongly encourage email questions and comments. However, when you write you are expected to write as you would in any professional correspondence: Capital letters to start the first word of a sentence, "Dear Professor Palmer" (or "Hi Professor Palmer") to open the email, correct spelling, capital letters in the correct places, punctuation, etc. ("Hey" is not appropriate.) It is likely that I will not answer emails phrased inappropriately or that include misspellings, etc., or I may give you a two-word response, "Course Expectations," meaning that you should re-write your email in a more appropriate form and resend it. I will not answer questions that can be answered if you read the syllabus. I will either not answer or write back a one-word response: "syllabus". See <http://www.phdcomics.com/comics.php?f=1795>.
11. Lecture slides will not be posted online. Students missing class will be expected to obtain notes from other students in the class.

### **Course Requirements:**

There will be 100 total points available in this course. Final grade breakdowns are as follows:

- A: 90-100
- B: 89-80
- C: 79-70
- D: 69-60
- F: 59 and below.

Final grades will **not** be rounded

Points for the course will be allocated as follows:

*Participation/Reading Quizzes (10%): 10 pts*

While the course will primarily involve lecture, we will make time for active engagement with, and discussion of the readings. Students are expected to bring all readings to be discussed to each class meeting. Failure to come prepared will negatively reflect participation.

Additionally, pop reading quizzes will be administered. Students must be present for the quiz to receive credit, and the quizzes may not be made up.

*Assignments (10%): 10pts, 2.5 pts per exercise*

There will be a series of exercises utilizing the Survey Documentation and Analysis website ([sda.berkeley.edu](http://sda.berkeley.edu)) that will walk you through analyzing and interpreting opinion data in preparation for the final paper assignment. Generally, the exercises consist of multiple-choice and short-answer questions. On these assignments, you are welcome to work with other students; however, each student must turn in their own assignment. Assignments unless otherwise noted must be typed. Due dates for these problems sets are listed in the syllabus.

*Final Paper (20%):*

There will be a required 8-10 page (double-spaced, 1 inch margins, 12 point font) research paper, due at the time of the final exam. In preparation for the research paper, you are required to submit your paper topic for approval (1pt), an annotated bibliography (2pts), and a research design (2pts). The paper topic will be of your own choosing, but must somehow relate to public opinion. The final paper should consist of a literature review, testable hypotheses based upon your review of the literature, a research design, and data analysis based upon either existing opinion data, or data from a survey that you conduct, and will be worth 15pts.

Due dates are listed in the syllabus. **Final papers will not be accepted from students failing to complete all assignments related to the paper. Assignments related to the paper will not be accepted any later than two weeks after the original due date.**

*Exam 1 (20%): 20pts*

Multiple choice, identification, and short answer questions.

*Exam 2 (20%): 20 pts*

Multiple choice, identification, and short answer questions.

*Exam 3 (20%): 20 pts*

The final exam *will not* be cumulative, and will consist of multiple choice, identification, and short answer questions.

**Course Schedule:**

### **Week 1: What is Public Opinion?**

Jan. 15 – Introductions and syllabus

Jan. 17 – What is Public Opinion?

- Clawson and Oxley. *Public Opinion*, chapter 1.
- <https://www.ameliahoovergreen.com/uploads/9/3/0/9/93091546/howtoread.pdf>
- <http://blogs.swarthmore.edu/burke/permanent-features-advice-on-academia/how-to-read-in-college/>

### **Week 2: Measuring Public Opinion**

Jan. 22 – Polling

- Clawson and Oxley. *Public Opinion*, pp. 29-42.
- Asher, Herbert. 2017. *Polling and the Public: What Every Citizen Should Know*. Washington DC: CQ Press. Chapter 8
- Silver, Nate. 2012. “Which Polls Fared Best (and Worst) in the 2012 Presidential Race.” *New York Times*. November 10. Online at: <http://fivethirtyeight.blogs.nytimes.com/2012/11/10/which-polls-fared-best-and-worst-in-the-2012-presidential-race/>

Jan. 24 – Sampling and Error

- Asher, chapter 4.
- Groves, Robert M. and Lars Lyberg. 2010. “Total Survey Error: Past, Present, and Future.” *Public Opinion Quarterly*. 74(5): 849-79.

### **Week 3: Measuring Public Opinion continued**

Jan. 29 – Interviewer Bias

- Davis, Darren W., and Brian D. Silver. 2003. “Stereotype Threat and Race of Interviewer Effects in a Survey on Political Knowledge.” *American Journal of Political Science*. 47(1): 33-45.
- Palmer, Carl L., and Rolfe D. Peterson. 2016. “Halo Effects and the Attractiveness Premium in Perceptions of Political Expertise.” *American Politics Research* 44(2): 353-82.

Jan. 31 – Attitudes and Nonattitudes

- Asher, chapter 2.
- Zaller, John, and Stanley Feldman. 1992. “A Simple Theory of the Survey Response: Answering Questions versus Revealing Preferences.” *The American Journal of Political Science*. 36(3): 579-616.

### **Week 4: Citizen Sophistication – Paper Topics due 2/7**

Feb. 5 – Knowledge and Attention

- Clawson and Oxley. *Public Opinion*, chapter 8.
- Bartels, Larry M. 1996. “Uninformed Votes: Information Effects in Presidential Elections.” *The American Journal of Political Science*. 40(1): 194-230.

Feb. 7 – Heuristic Shortcuts

- Boudreau, Cheryl. 2009. "Closing the Gap: When Do Cues Eliminate Differences between Sophisticated and Unsophisticated Citizens?" *The Journal of Politics*. 71(3): 287-306.
- Lupia, Arthur. 1994. "Shortcuts versus Encyclopedias: Information and Voting Behavior in California Insurance Reform Elections." *The American Political Science Review*. 88(1): 63-76.

### **Week 5: Political Persuasion and Attitude Change – exercise 1 due 2/14**

Feb. 12 – Attitude Stability and Change

- Clawson and Oxley. *Public Opinion*, chapter 4.
- Cobb, Michael D., and James H. Kuklinski. 1997. "Changing Minds: Political Arguments and Political Persuasion." *American Journal of Political Science*. 41(1): 88-121.

Feb. 14 – Misinformation and Competence

- Kuklinski, James H., Paul J. Quirk, Jennifer Jerit, David Schwieder, and Robert F. Rich. 2000. "Misinformation and the Currency of Democratic Citizenship," *The Journal of Politics*. 62(3): 790-816.
- Kuklinski, James H., Paul J. Quirk, Jennifer Jerit, and Robert F. Rich. "The Political Environment and Citizen Competence." *American Journal of Political Science*. 45(2): 410-24.

### **Week 6: Origins of Opinions – Exam 1 2/21**

Feb. 19 – Political Socialization

- Clawson and Oxley. *Public Opinion*, chapter 2.
- Jennings, M. Kent, Laura Stoker, and Jake Bowers. 2009. "Politics across Generations: Family Transmission Reexamined." *Journal of Politics*. 71(3): 782-99.
- Sears, David O. and Nicholas A. Valentino. 1997. "Politics Matters: Political Events as Catalysts for Pre-adult Socialization." *American Political Science Review*. 91(1): 45-65.

Feb. 21 – Exam 1

### **Week 7: Origins of Opinions continued**

Feb. 26 – Partisanship and Ideology

- Clawson and Oxley. *Public Opinion*, chapter 5.
- Bartels, Larry M. 2002. "Beyond the Running Tally: Partisan Bias in Political Perceptions." *Political Behavior*. 24(2): 117-50.

Feb. 28 – Values, Self-Interest

- Clawson and Oxley. *Public Opinion*, pp. 173-79.
- Feldman, Stanley. 1988. "Structure and Consistency in Public Opinion: The Role of Core Beliefs and Values." *The American Journal of Political Science*. 32(2): 416-40.
- Green, Donald P. and Ann Elizabeth Gerken. 1989. "Self-Interest and Public Opinion toward Smoking Restrictions and Cigarette Taxes." *Public Opinion Quarterly*. 53(1): 1-16.

### **Week 8: Origins of Opinions continued – Annotated Bibliographies due 3/7**

Mar. 5 & 7 – Social Groups and Group Identity

- Clawson and Oxley. *Public Opinion*, chapter 7.
- Kinder, Donald R., and Nicholas Winter. 2001. “Exploring the Racial Divide: Blacks, Whites, and Opinion on National Policy.” *American Journal of Political Science* 45(2): 439-453.
- Sapiro, Virginia, and Shauna Shames. 2009. “The Gender Basis of Public Opinion.” In Barbara Norrander and Clyde Wilcox (eds.), *Understanding Public Opinion*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition. Washington, DC: CQ Press. pp 5-24.

### **Week 9: Spring Break**

Mar. 12 & 14 – no class

### **Week 10: Media Effects – exercise 2 due 3/21**

Mar. 19 & 21 – Psychological Effects of the Media

- Nelson, Thomas E., Rosalee Clawson, and Zoe Oxley. 1997. “Media Framing of a Civil Liberties Case and Its Effects on Tolerance.” *The American Political Science Review*. 91(3): 567-84.
- Miller, Joanne M., and Jon A. Krosnick. 2000. “News Media Impact on the Ingredients of Presidential Evaluations: Politically Knowledgeable Citizens are Guided by a Trusted Source.” *American Journal of Political Science*. 44(2): 301-15.
- Valentino, Nicholas A., Vincent L. Hutchings, and Ismail K. White. 2002. “Cues That Matter: How Political Ads Prime Racial Attitudes During Campaigns.” *The American Political Science Review*. 96(1): 75-90.

### **Week 11: Media and Campaign Effects – Research Design due 3/28**

Mar. 26 – Public Opinion and the Media

- Clawson and Oxley. *Public Opinion*, chapter 3.
- Dalton, Russell J., Paul A. Beck, and Robert Huckfeldt. 1998. “Partisan Cues and the Media: Information Flows in the 1992 Presidential Election.” *American Political Science Review*. 92(1): 111-26.

Mar. 28 – Public Opinion and Political Campaigns

- Kam, Cindy D. 2006. “Political Campaigns and Open-Minded Thinking.” *Journal of Politics*. 68(4): 931-45.
- Kam, Cindy D. 2007. “When Duty Calls, Do Citizens Answer?” *Journal of Politics*. 69(1): 17-29.

### **Week 12: Democratic Ideals – Exam 2 on 4/2**

Apr. 2 – Exam 2

Apr. 4 – MPSA meeting, no class

**Week 13: Polarization**

Apr. 9 – Support for Civil Liberties and Civil Rights

- Clawson and Oxley. *Public Opinion*, chapter 9.
- Clawson and Oxley. *Public Opinion*, chapter 10.

Apr. 11 – Are Opinions Polarized?

- Fiorina, Morris P. and Samuel J. Abrams. 2008. “Political Polarization in the American Public.” *Annual Review of Political Science*. 11: 563-88.
- Hetherington, Marc J. 2009. “Putting Polarization in Perspective.” *British Journal of Political Science*. 39(2): 413-48.
- Iyengar, Shanto, Gaurav Sood, and Yphtach Lelkes. 2012. “Affect, Not Ideology: A Social Identity Perspective on Polarization.”

**Week 14: Expressions of Opinion – exercise 3 due 4/18**

Apr. 16 – Public Opinion and Foreign Affairs

- Berinsky, Adam J. 2007. “Assuming the Costs of War: Events, Elites, and American Public Support for Military Conflict.” *Journal of Politics*. 69(4): 975-97.
- Gartner, Scott Sigmund. 2008. “The Multiple Effects of Casualties on Public Support for War: An Experimental Approach.” *American Political Science Review*. 102(1): 95-106.
- Hayes, Danny, and Matt Guardino. 2011. “The Influence of Foreign Voices on U.S. Public Opinion.” *The American Journal of Political Science*. 55(4): 830-50.

Apr. 18 – Public Opinion and Poverty

- Federico, Christopher M. 2004. “When Do Welfare Attitudes Become Racialized? The Paradoxical Effects of Education.” *The American Journal of Political Science*. 48(2): 374-91.
- Gilens, Martin. 1998. “‘Race Coding’ and White Opposition to Welfare.” *The American Political Science Review*. 90(3): 593-604.

**Week 15: Expressions of Opinion continued**

Apr. 23 – Public Opinion and Abortion

- Huckfeldt, R. Robert and John Sprague. 2000. “Political Consequences of Inconsistency: The Accessibility and Stability of Abortion Attitudes.” *Political Psychology*. 43(1): 57-80.
- Strickler, Jennifer, and Nicholas L. Danigellis. 2002. “Changing Frameworks in Attitudes toward Abortion.” *Sociological Forum*. 17(2): 187-201.

Apr. 25 – Trust in Government

- Clawson and Oxley. *Public Opinion*, chapter 11.
- Hetherington, Marc J. 1998. “The Political Relevance of Political Trust.” *American Political Science Review*. 92(4): 791-808.

**Week 16: Final Conclusions – exercise 4 due 5/2**

Apr. 30 – Public Opinion and Political Elites

- Clawson and Oxley. *Public Opinion*, chapter 12.
- Shapiro, Robert Y. 2011. “Public Opinion and American Democracy.” *Public Opinion Quarterly*. 75(5): 982-1017.

May 2 – Conclusions

- Clawson and Oxley. *Public Opinion*, chapter 13.



## **POL 312 Syllabus Contract**

To acknowledge that you have read and accepted the course syllabus and that you understand your responsibilities for this semester you must upload a digitally signed syllabus contract. To digitally sign your syllabus contract download this page and type your name and below. Signed syllabus contracts should be uploaded as a pdf to ReggieNet by Tuesday, January 22, 2019, at the beginning of class.

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Name

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Date