Basic Information
Class meets: Tuesday and Thursday, 11:00-12:15, Bryant 111
Instructor: Professor Ondercin
Office: 233 Deupree
E-mail: ondercin@olemiss.edu
Office Phone: 915-7218
Office hours: Tuesday 1:00-2:30, Thursday 9:00-10:30, and by appointment.

I’m usually not hard to find. I’m on e-mail all of the time, and will try to check my voice mail at least once a day. I will try to respond to your message as soon as possible. But if you do not receive an instant reply don’t panic. I welcome visitors during office hours – this is your time, and I enjoy the company and the chance to get to know you. If you would like to talk in person but my office hours don’t work for you, let me know and we can find a different time that works for both of us. Please do not hesitate to be in touch if you have any concerns about the class, or if you want to talk about other stuff.

Course Description

The basic premise of democratic government is that the government should be responsive to the wishes or opinions of the people. But how does government know what these opinions are? How are these opinions formed? Can these opinions be changed? And is government really responsive to the public’s wishes? We will investigate these and several more questions throughout this semester to gain a more complete understanding of the scholarly research on public opinion in the U.S. political system.

This class is a survey of the scientific study of public opinion in the United States. We will critically analyze work conducted in political science and the other social sciences on the attitudes and beliefs of the U.S. electorate. This survey will include works that examine public opinion at both the micro-level (individual) and macro-level (aggregate or the entire electorate). We will begin our discussion with how public opinion is measured. Then we will examine how individuals form political attitudes and what causes these attitudes to change in individuals and in the aggregate. We will also explore the connection between an individual’s attitudes and how they evaluate candidates for elected office, react to new events, and participate in politics. Finally, we will look at the connection between public opinion and government.
Course Objectives

- Through classroom learning and discussions, assigned readings, and exams students will analyze the roles public opinion plays in the U.S. political system.

- Through classroom learning and discussions, assigned readings, and exams students will think critically about how public opinion is measured and used in the United States.

- Through classroom learning and discussions, assigned readings, and exams students will analyze contemporary research in political science and other social sciences to develop a deeper understanding of how public opinion is formed and changes.

- Through homework assignments and exams students will analyze public opinion in the United States as a way to apply the material covered in class and assigned readings.

What You Can Expect of the Course

The class meets twice a week. I expect you to be there at all times. I will not formally take attendance in the class; however, not attending class will negatively influence your grade. A large portion of your grade is based on participation in class discussion and you are not able to participate if you are not in class. Material not covered in the readings will be covered in class. There is no other place to gain this information other than being in class.

You can expect a mixture of lecture, class discussion, small group projects, and individual projects. At all times, my aim will be to help you achieve a deep understanding of the material. Since so much of what I want you to learn will be dealt with only in class, it is important that you attend. Two things are very important to the success of this class: 1) your participation in every class; and 2) that you have completed the readings before the class in which we will discuss them. You cannot learn from each other, and I cannot learn from you, if you are not prepared for class. I encourage you to ask questions you may have about lectures, class discussions, readings, and things you see in the news. Do not be passive; class will be much more interesting and you will learn the material better if you are an active participant.

I expect you will observe common courtesy when you are in class. Please come on time: lateness is very rude! Please turn off cell phones and pagers. Please leave the newspaper, crossword puzzles, and other work at home. NO LAPTOPS ALLOWED. I do not teach in your bedroom; therefore, please do not sleep in my classroom. I expect you to be mentally present as well as physically present in class; this is the best way to ensure that you learn the course material. If I see you using electronic devices or engaging in inappropriate classroom behavior you will loose 1% of your participation grade. If this happens more than 3 times you will receive a 0 for participation.
This is a class about the study of public opinion and political attitudes. It is not a class about politics. However, in this class we will engage in discussions about politics and policies. During our discussions I want everyone to feel free to share their opinions. Each of us brings a unique perspective to the class and we can all learn from this diversity. In order to make this possible you need to be respectful of other people’s opinions, even if they are the direct opposite of your own beliefs. I will not tolerate personal attacks on one another or the use of disrespectful language. There is no room for an atmosphere of intimidation, and I will not tolerate it in this class. If there are any issues that you feel uncomfortable with please feel free to talk to me.

I will not discuss or send grades via e-mail. E-mail is not a secure form of communication, meaning anyone can read your messages. In order to protect your privacy I will not e-mail you your grades. However, I am happy to discuss your grades with you in person anytime during office hours or by appointment.

Required Books

Three books are required for this class and are listed below. Any additional readings can be found on BlackBoard. When a readings is on BlackBoard it is indicated with a BB in the course outline.


Grading

Grades for the class will be based on participation, homework, and two exams. A total of 100 points are available. Below you will find a description of each of the factors that go into the final grade, the due dates, and the grade distribution.

**Participation** Participation is worth 15% of your final grade. You are expected to be engaged in class discussions, ask questions, and contribute to group work. Participation is not simply about quantity or quality. You should participate on a regular basis in a meaningful way. Additionally, there will be short assignments that you are expected to complete in class. Completion and performance of these assignments contribute to your participation grade. You cannot make-up work completed in class if you are absent.
**Homework** A series of homework assignments will be worth 30% of your final grade. Each homework assignment is weighted equally when calculating the homework portion of the final grade. There are approximately 10 homework assignments, thus each assignment is worth about 3% of your final grade. Homework assignments will come primarily from the workbook *Conducting Empirical Analysis: Public Opinion in Action*. The due dates for the assignments are noted below in the course schedule. Please turn in the original pages from the workbook unless otherwise instructed. Assignments not completed on workbook pages will receive a 0. Make sure your answers to questions on the homework should be clearly written with complete sentences. If you need to turn in multiple pages, please STAPLE the pages together. Failure to follow these basic instructions will result in your score being lowered a full letter grade. Assignments will be picked up in class on the dates noted in the syllabus. Assignments are due in class. I will not accept assignments dropped off at my office, placed in my mailbox, e-mailed to me, or turned in by one of your classmates or friends. Assignments are due the first 10 minutes of class. Assignments turned in after the first 10 minutes of class will be considered late and one letter grade will be deducted for every 10 minutes they are late. If you are absent you cannot make-up missed assignments.

You are required to turn in the analysis you conduct for the assignments. The analysis you conduct for the assignment should be combined into a single pdf and uploaded to blackboard. Your name and the homework number should appear in the name of the pdf. For example “Dan Jones HW1.pdf” You will receive a zero if you fail to submit the work associated with the assignment.

All work on the homework assignments should be completed by you and only you. Working with others to complete these assignments is not permitted. If I find evidence of group or collaborative work on the homework assignments I will report it to the University as a case of academic dishonesty.

I recognize that there are sometimes legitimate reasons why you might have to miss class preventing you from turning in a homework assignment. As a result, I drop your lowest grade on the homework assignments.

**Exams.** There will be two exams in the class. The mid-term exam is worth 25% of your
Table 2: Homework Assignments and Due Dates

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Due Date</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HW1 Chapter 1 CEA &amp; Supplement</td>
<td>February 5th</td>
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<tr>
<td>HW2 Chapter 2 CEA, Exercise 2-1 and 2-2 and Further Exploration</td>
<td>February 10th</td>
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<tr>
<td>HW3 Chapter 7 CEA, Exercise 7-1, 7-2, 7-3, and 7-4</td>
<td>February 19th</td>
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<td>HW4 Chapter 4 CEA, Exercise 4-1 and 4-2, and Further Exploration</td>
<td>February 26th</td>
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<td>HW5 Chapter 5 CEA, Exercise 5-1, 5-2 and 5-3</td>
<td>March 19th</td>
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<td>HW6 See BlackBoard</td>
<td>March 24th</td>
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<td>HW7 Chapter 6 CEA, Exercise 6-1, 6-2, 6-3 and 6-4</td>
<td>April 2nd</td>
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<td>HW8 Chapter 3 CEA, Exercise 3-1 and 3-2</td>
<td>April 16th</td>
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<td>HW9 Chapter 12 CEA, Exercise 12-1, 12-2, 12-3</td>
<td>April 21st</td>
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<td>HW10 Chapter 12 CEA, Exercise 11-1, 11-2</td>
<td>April 28th</td>
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final grade. The final exam is worth 30% of your final grade. Exams will be a mixture of short-answer and short-essay questions. You will need to bring a blank bluebook to class. While grammar and spelling is not graded in the exam you will be expected to write clear, complete, and legible sentences. Make-up midterm examinations are only authorized for documented reasons involving personal medical or family emergencies. Ideally students need to inform the instructor of such events before the scheduled exam. If advance notification is impossible, then the student must inform the instructor as soon as reasonably possible. If such notification and documentation is provided, it is up to the instructors discretion to grant a make-up exam. If a make-up exam is approved by the instructor, its content and format may significantly differ in format from the scheduled exam.

**Grade Appeal.** I will not discuss changes in grades on exams or papers for 24 hours after a paper or exam has been handed back. If you feel that I missed an important point that you made or there is some other problem with your grade, after 24 hours you may submit a grade appeal. Your appeal should be a typed argument for why your grade should be changed. It should be no longer than 1 page. You will need to hand the appeal and the original paper or exam back into me for review. I will then ask you to schedule a time to meet or come in during office hours to discuss the appeal. Appealing the grade does not mean that I will automatically increase your grade.

**Extra Credit.** Extra credit will not be given on an individual basis. Everyone in the class has the opportunity to earn extra credit by completing the extra credit assignment listed on BlackBoard. You can earn up to 3 points of extra credit. Simply completing the extra credit does not guarantee that you will receive a full 3 points.

**Other Important Policies**

All students are expected to work independently on all assignments. Group and collaborative work is not permitted unless specific instructions are given. If you are not clear on how
Table 3: Grade Distribution

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Range</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>100 – 93</td>
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<tr>
<td>A−</td>
<td>92–90</td>
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<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>89–87</td>
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<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>86–83</td>
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<tr>
<td>B−</td>
<td>82–80</td>
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<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>79–77</td>
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<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>76–73</td>
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<tr>
<td>C−</td>
<td>72–70</td>
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<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>69–60</td>
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<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>59 and below</td>
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to properly give credit to others, please see me before turning in any assignment. I take this issue very seriously and will check all things turned in to me for signs of plagiarism. Remember if you can find it on the Internet, so can I. Proper citations must be used to acknowledge any ideas, concepts, theories, organizational formats, and writing that is not your own.

Students with disabilities: Reasonable accommodations will be made for any student with a documented disability to ensure that the student is able to participate in class to the best of their abilities. If you anticipate needing any type of accommodation in this course or have questions about physical access, please tell the instructor as soon as possible. Reasonable accommodations will be made for all students with disabilities, but it is the student’s responsibility to inform the instructor early in the term. It is also the student’s responsibility to register with the disability services office on campus. Do not wait until just before an exam to decide you want to inform the instructor of a learning disability; any accommodations for disabilities must be arranged well in advance.

If you did not attend the first day of class and/or added the class late, all class policies apply equally to you. It is your responsible to find out any information gone over during the class periods you missed. Deadlines will not be adjusted on an individual basis.

Tentative Course Outline

Week 1: Introduction to the Course

- Thursday, January 22nd. Introduction to the course.
  - Syllabus

Week 2: Democracy and the Study of Public Opinion

1Any changes to this schedule will be announced verbally in class. It is the student’s responsibility to note changes and adhere to the new schedule.
• Tuesday, January 27th. Democratic Theory and Basic Vocabulary.
  – Chapter 1: Public Opinion in a Democracy, Clawson and Oxely.
• Thursday, January 29th. Democratic Theory versus Theory Grounded in Reality.

**Week 3: Measurement of Public Opinion**

• Tuesday, February 3rd. Sampling.
  – Appendix to Chapter 1: Public Opinion in Democracy, Clawson and Oxely
  – Bring question from iPOll to class.
• Thursday, February 5th Measurement.
  – “Wording and Context of Questions” *Polling and the Public* by Herbert Asher BB.
  – Homework 1: Chapter 1, Conducting Empirical Analysis, plus supplement posted on BlackBoard.

**Week 4: Political Socialization**

• Tuesday, February 10th Agents of Socialization.
  – Chapter 2: Political Socialization, Clawson and Oxley.
• Thursday, February 12th. Generational Units, Generational Effects, Period Effects, and Life-cycle effects.

**Week 5: Political Knowledge**

• Tuesday, February 17th. What we know about politics.
  – Chapter 8: Knowledge, Interest, and Attention to Politics, Clawson and Oxley
  – Print off and bring the results of this quiz to class. [http://www.pewresearch.org/quiz/the-news-iq-quiz/](http://www.pewresearch.org/quiz/the-news-iq-quiz/)
• Thursday, February 19th. Does what we know matter?
  – Homework 3: Chapter 7, Conducting Empirical Analysis. Exercises 7-1, 7-2, 7-3, and 7-4.

**Week 6: Theories of Public Opinion**

• Tuesday, February 24th. Receive - Accept - Sample Model
  – Chapter 4: Oxely and Clawson, pages 101-105, and 112-127.

• Thursday, February 26th. Collective Opinion.
  – Chapter 4: Oxely and Clawson, pages 105-109
  – Homework 4: Chapter 4, Conducting Empirical Analysis, Exercises 4-1 and 4-2, and Further Exploration.

**Week 7: Approval and Exam**

• Tuesday, March 3rd. Presidential Approval.
  – Chapter 4: Oxely and Clawson, pages 109-112
  – “Between Campaigns” in *Tides of Consent* by Jim Stimson.

• Thursday, March 5th.
  – Midterm Exam.

**Week 8: Spring Break**

**Week 9: Ideology**

• Tuesday, March 17th. Organization of Opinions.
  – Chapter 5: Ideological Innocence and Critiques, Clawson and Oxley.
• Thursday, March 19th. Ideology in the Aggregate.
  – Chapter 2, “What the Public Wants from Government” by Jim Stimson in *Tides of Consent*.
  – Homework 5: Chapter 5, Conducting Empirical Analysis. Exercises 5-1, 5-2 and 5-3.

**Week 10: Ideology and Polarization**

• Tuesday, March 24th. Symbolic v. Operational Ideology and Issue evolutions.
  – Chapter 3, “Left and Right Movement in Preferences,” by Jim Stimson in *Tides of Consent*.

• Thursday, March 26th. Polarization and Ideology
  – HW 6: Assignment on BlackBoard.

**Week 11: Alternatives to Ideology**

• Tuesday, March 31st. Self interest, Values, and History.

• Thursday, April 2nd. Partisanship.
  – Homework 7: Chapter 6, Conducting Empirical Analysis, Exercises 6-1, 6-2, 6-3 and 6-4.

**Week 12: More on Group Orientations to Politics**

• Tuesday, April 7th. Group Membership.

• Thursday, April 9th. Attitudes towards groups.
Week 13: Media

- Tuesday, April 14th. Content, Priming, and Agenda Setting.
  - Chapter 3: Mass Media, Clawson and Oxley.
- Thursday, April 16th. Framing Effects
  - Homework 8: Chapter 3, Conducting Empirical Analysis, Exercises 3-1 and 3-2.

Week 14: Campaigns and Elections

- Tuesday, April 21st. Political Advertising.
- Thursday, April 23rd. Do Campaigns Matter?
  - Homework 9: Chapter 12 Conducting Empirical Analysis, Exercise 12-1, 12-2, and 12-3.

Week 15: Public Opinion Responsiveness

- Tuesday, April 28th. Public Opinion and Policy.
- Thursday, April 30th. Bias in responsiveness.

Tuesday, May 5th, Noon Final Exam.