



**GVPT 635- Public Opinion
Fall, 2022**

Instructor:

Dr. Conny S. Kazungu

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Office: Tydings, Room 1127D

Office Hours: Monday 4.30p-5.30p or by appointment on Zoom

Class Information:

Meeting Times: M 6:00p-9:00p

Class location: TYD 2109

Course Description:

This course investigates public opinion and its position in the American political system. It involves how citizens in a democracy think about politics, form attitudes, and how public opinion shapes and is shaped by the political environment.

Over the semester, students will be exposed to an in-depth understanding of forces shaping beliefs and opinions and how those views are demonstrated in the public sphere. Moreover, students will be exposed to core debates in public opinion and, students will use several surveys that have been central to advancing out knowledge of public opinion.

We will focus on a few key questions throughout the semester including defining public opinion, in other words, what is public opinion? What are the theories of public opinion? What influences public opinion in the United States and in turn, how does that influence policymaking by the government? What is the current state of public opinion in America today?

This course will examine the role of public opinion in key moments in American democracy including political campaign and elections. This course will also analyze polling and the rise of electronic media (including social media) in shaping public opinion. We will explore whether public opinion should play an integral role in American democracy.

Course Materials

Required Books:

- Cramer, K. J. (2016). *The politics of resentment : rural consciousness in Wisconsin and the rise of Scott walker* (Ser. Chicago studies in American politics). University of Chicago Press.

Optional:

- Asher, H. B. (2012). *Polling and the public : what every citizen should know* (8th ed.). CQ Press.
- Clawson, R. A., & Oxley, Z. M. (2008). *Public opinion : democratic ideals, democratic practice*. CQ Press.

Readings:

- Links go online reading materials for the course will be available on ELMS

- Students are expected to come to class well-prepared having read the materials for that week and participate in the class discussions. Failure to do so will result in a lessened grade for the semester.

Mid-term exam- This will be an essay-style format reflecting on course materials including key themes, concepts and debates covered from the *first half* of the semester. You will be asked to critically think about topics covered until this point. The mid-term will be available on ELMS on **October 17th, 2022, from 6:00p-9:00p.**

Final exam- This will be an essay-style format reflecting on course materials including key themes, concepts and debates covered from the *second half* of the semester. You will be asked to critically think about topics covered until this point. The final will be available on ELMS on **Friday, December 16th from 4-6pm.**

Weekly Presentations and Polling Analysis

At the beginning of the semester, students will be divided into smaller groups of two. Groups will lead a class discussion by selecting a reading for that week from the syllabus. Each group will then present to the class a summary of the readings, key themes involved and the different scholarly perspectives. The group will then be expected to have discussion questions for the larger classroom.

In addition to leading discussion each week, you will also be expected to compare, interpret, and analyze two polls on a salient issue within or outside the United States. The polls must be from a reputable source (recommended list is provided in the separate assignment sheet). More details are also available on ELMS.

Public Opinion Project

The purpose of this assignment is to understand how the public can form preferences about complicated issues facing our country today. It will also help to inform how public opinion can be measured, how errors can appear in public opinion polling, the nature of collecting information from respondents in a changing world, and how to design an effective survey. This project will be due on ELMS by December 5th, 2022, by midnight. More information will be provided on ELMS.

Grades

In this class you will be assessed based on the following:

1. Performance on the mid-term exam (20%)
2. Performance on weekly class presentations (20%)
3. Performance on individual project (30%)
4. Performance on the final exam (20%)
5. Attendance and participation (10%)

Total : 100%

Grading Scale

Final grades will be assigned on the following scale:

A+	98-100%
A	92-97%
A-	90-91%
B+	88-89%
B	82-87%
B-	80-81%
C+	78-79%
C	72-77%
C-	70-71%
D+	69-69%
D	62-67%
D-	60-61%
F	59% or lower

<u>Week</u>	<u>Topic</u>	<u>Scheduled Readings Team Names</u>
Week 1	08/29 <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Introduction and overview of the course• Explore course expectations and schedule.• Division into groups for semester readings. Understanding Public Opinion. The Role of Citizens in a Democratic Society. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Clawson & Oxley Chapter 1	<u>No presentations</u>
Week 2	9/5: LABOR DAY NO CLASS	<u>No presentations</u>
Week 3	9/12: Political Socialization. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Clawson & Oxley Chapter 2.• Polling and the Public. Asher Chapter 1• Making Sense of Politics Through Resentment. Cramer Chapter 1	
Week 4	9/19: No Class. Dr. Kazungu at APSA. Work on individual/team research papers/projects	
Week 5	9/26: Shaping & Forming of Public Opinion. Mass Media. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Clawson & Oxley Chapter 3• A Method of Listening. Cramer Chapter 2• The Media and the Polls. Asher Chapter 6	
Week 6	10/3: Attitude Stability & Attitude Change. Clawson & Oxley Chapter 4	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attitudes toward Public Institutions and Public Employees. Cramer Chapter 5. • The Problem of Nonattitudes. Asher Chapter 2 	
Week 7	<p>10/10: Citizens and Political Thought.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ideology, Partisanship, and Polarization. Clawson & Oxley Chapter 5 • Support for Small Government. Cramer Chapter 6 • Wording and Context of Questions. Asher Chapter 3 	
Week 8	<p>10/17: Mid-Term exam on ELMS from 6-9p</p>	
Week 9	<p>10/24: Roots of Public Opinion I</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personality, Self-interest, Values and History. Clawson & Oxley Chapter 6 • Reactions to the Ruckus. Cramer Chapter 7. • Sampling Techniques. Asher Chapter 4 	
Week 10	<p>10/31: The Central Role of Groups</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Race, Ethnicity, and Public Opinion. Clawson & Oxley Chapter 7. • We Teach These Things to Each Other. Cramer Chapter 8. • Interviewing and Data Collection Procedures. Asher Chapter 5 	
Week 11	<p>11/7: Political Knowledge and Public Opinion</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge, Interest, and Attention to Politics. Clawson & Oxley Chapter 8 • Polls and Elections. Asher Chapter 7 	
Week 12	<p>11/14. Supporting Democratic Ideals</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support for Civil Liberties. Clawson & Oxley Chapter 9 • Davis, D. W., & Silver, B. D. (2004). Civil liberties vs. security: public opinion in the context of the terrorist 	

	<p>attacks on america. American Journal of Political Science, 48(1), 28–46.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Analyzing and Interpreting Polls. Asher Chapter 8. 	
Week 13	<p>11/21: Rethinking Civil Rights</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support for Civil Rights. Clawson & Oxley Chapter 10 Trust in Government, Support for Institutions & Social Capital. Clawson & Oxley Chapter 11 Polling and Democracy. Asher Chapter 9. 	
Week 14	<p>11/28: Impact of Public Opinion on Policy.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Should Public Opinion Influence Policy? Clawson & Oxley Chapter 12 Group exchange questionnaires in class. 	
Week 15	<p>12/5: Public Opinion and Perceptions on Gender</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Readings Available on ELMS under “Modules” Allison M N Archer, Scott Clifford, Improving the Measurement of Hostile Sexism, <i>Public Opinion Quarterly</i>, Volume 86, Issue 2, Summer 2022, Pages 223–246, https://doi.org/10.1093/poq/nfac015 Stephanie L DeMora, Christian A Lindke, Jennifer L Merolla, Laura B Stephenson, Ready for a Woman President? Polls, Public Comfort, and Perceptions of Electability in the 2020 Democratic Nomination, <i>Public Opinion Quarterly</i>, Volume 86, Issue 2, Summer 2022, Pages 270–292, https://doi.org/10.1093/poq/nfac012 <p>**Public Opinion Project due on ELMS by Midnight</p>	
Week 16	<p>12/12 : Conclusion.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clawson & Oxley Chapter 13 Patrick J Egan, David M Konisky, Megan Mullin, Ascendant Public Opinion: The Rising Influence of Climate Change on Americans’ Attitudes about the Environment, <i>Public Opinion Quarterly</i>, Volume 86, Issue 1, Spring 2022, Pages 134–148, https://doi.org/10.1093/poq/nfab071 Ayelet Banai, Fabio Votta, Rosa Seitz, The Polls—Trends: Trends in Public Opinion toward Immigration 	

	<p>among EU Member States, <i>Public Opinion Quarterly</i>, Volume 86, Issue 1, Spring 2022, Pages 191–215, https://doi.org/10.1093/poq/nfac001</p> <p>**Last Day of Classes</p>	
Week 16 (Final Exam)	**Final Exam Available on ELMS on Friday, December 16th from 4-6pm.	

Make-up Assignments

Make-up Exams and Assignments will be given because of a documented, unexpected emergency or as the result of a university-authorized commitment.

Attendance and Participation

This course is based on collaboration and group work. I expect students to be engaged during each class session. This means coming to class prepared and on time. Prepared means coming to class with ideas, comments, and questions so you can actively participate in small group work, and larger class discussions.

Participation also means respectfully listening to the ideas and perspectives of your classmates even if you may not agree with them. Diversity of thought is encouraged in this class. Inappropriate comments, yelling, or interrupting other students because you do not agree with their perspectives is not welcome.

****Please note that official documentation is required if you know you will miss class for a reason. Failure to provide documentation if you miss class, will result in a 10-point decrease per absence in your overall grade for the semester.**

Lateness to Class

Students arriving in class **repeatedly** late will be penalized. Repeatedly late means that you are consistently coming to class more than 15 minutes after class has begun. Students repeating this behavior will be counted as absent. If you know you will be late to class for a special reason, you can e-mail Dr. Kazungu at least 24 hours beforehand.

Technology in the Classroom

Cell phones are prohibited in class. Students will be required to turn off their phones or put their phone on silent. Students who are caught texting, looking at their phones during class will be penalized against their participation grade.

Note taking devices including laptops are allowed in class for in-class purposes. Students using laptops/iPads for browsing the web and non-class related purposes will be penalized against their participation grade.

Academic Integrity

Plagiarism, cheating, not citing another person's ideas or work will be subject to the university's policy on academic integrity.

UMD Resources

Additional information about course-related policies at the University of Maryland, can be found on the Course Related Policies page, hosted by the Office of Undergraduate Studies:

For a comprehensive list of UMD resources including COVID-19 click [here](#).