

PLSC 486U: Public Opinion in International Relations

Fall 2017

Downtown Center 122

Wednesdays 1:40-4:40pm

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Office hours: T 1-2:30pm, F 10-11:30am
and by appointment

Course Description

This course is an advanced undergraduate seminar designed for students who are interested in the dynamics of public opinion in international relations. The democratic ideal assumes and even requires an informed and opinionated public, whose members are expected to express their ideas and preferences on a wide range of policy issues, including foreign policy. Issues of perpetual concern include war and armed intervention, global trade and foreign investment, immigration and foreign aid. Policy-makers, in turn, are assumed and expected to know and abide by the will of the people. How can we know that democratic governance lives up to this ideal? What the public thinks and wants—and why—and to what extent policy is shaped by public opinion are key questions this course will investigate through classic readings, contemporary research in political science, and direct experience with empirical data.

By the end of the semester, students will have acquired (1) an understanding of the role(s) of public opinion in democratic politics and international relations, (2) an overview of the drivers of public opinion on a range of foreign policy issues, (3) basic competence in reading and interpreting the results of public opinion polls, and (4) experience designing original research. In addition, the course is designed to engage and develop analytical, argumentation, and writing skills. The course assignments are also designed to train students to become clear-eyed consumers of polls and what is often (mis-)represented as the ‘majority opinion.’ A final goal of this course is to establish habits of keeping informed about current events and of engaging sources and materials critically.

Course Materials

Required reading for this class will consist of articles and book chapters, available either through the Binghamton University library or on the Blackboard/MyCourses site (marked [BL] in the schedule below). Students are strongly encouraged to follow current events and pay particular attention to the discussion of public opinion and foreign policy. Examples of useful sources include major daily newspapers (New York Times, Financial Times, Wall Street Journal) and weekly journals (e.g., The Economist), as well as other popular news outlets (Fox News, CNN, MSNBC etc.). Keeping up with current events will enrich class discussions. Most importantly, it will allow students to participate in public life as informed citizens.

Course Requirements

Successful participation in this course requires regular and active participation in class, short written assignments, weekly discussion questions (to be submitted before class in writing), and a 12-15 page research paper. For purposes of assigning a final grade, the following weighting factors will be applied:

Participation	30%
Discussion questions	15%
Written assignments (in-class and homework)	15%
Research paper	40%

Grading Scale. Your semester grade for the course will be computed on a 100-point scale as follows:

95-100 A	84-87 B	74-77 C	64-69 F
91-94 A-	81-83 B-	71-73 C-	
88-90 B+	78-80 C+	65-70 D	

Participation (30%). Participating in class discussions by asking questions, answering questions, and offering opinions is one of your responsibilities as a student in this course. It is a major component of the course grade. Your participation grade will be based both on your attendance and the quality of your contribution to discussion. Active and productive discussion in class requires that students complete the readings listed for each day on the syllabus before class begins. Be advised that class discussions are designed to clarify the material and its implications, not to introduce it. Attendance is no substitute for completing the readings. If you are unsure how you are doing in the course, I encourage you to come see me in office hours at any point during the semester.

Discussion questions (15%). For each week, each student will submit 2-3 discussion questions about the readings. These questions are meant to stimulate conversation and should address problems and puzzles raised in the readings for that week. Accordingly, they should not be simple factual questions (“What is this article about?” or “When did X happen?”). Questions for each week must be submitted by **10am on Wednesday (the day of the class meeting)**.

Written assignments (15%). For Weeks 5-12, each week 2-3 students will prepare 1-page papers proposing an explanation for public opinion/public knowledge on a policy issue discussed in that week’s readings. During the class meeting, we will then together try to test those explanations using actual public opinion data. The written assignments for each week will be due at **5pm on the Tuesday** before class (to give the instructor time to gather the relevant poll data).

Research paper (40%). Each student will produce a 12-15 page paper (exclusive of endnotes and bibliography) containing original research question of his/her choice related to public opinion in international relations. The paper should propose a research project that will fall into one of three broad categories: 1) What determines public opinion on Issue X?, 2) How does media reporting/coverage influence public opinion on Issue X?, or 3) How does public opinion influence policymaking on Issue X?

Some ground rules:

- Paper topics must be cleared in advance with the instructor.
- A 2-4 page paper outline (topic and possible data) is due on **Wednesday, September 27**.
- The final paper is due **at 5pm on Friday, December 8** AND must be submitted through Turnitin on Blackboard/MyCourses by that time.

Detailed instructions for the research paper assignment will be provided during the third class meeting (September 6).

Course Policies

Classroom electronics. The use of laptops, tablets, smartphones, and any other electronic devices is not permitted in this course. Exceptions will be made for students with documented special needs.

Attendance. Students are expected to attend every class meeting. Although I will not take roll to enforce this policy, repeated absences will have a negative impact on your final grade. Student participation and in-class writing assignments are important aspect of this course. Obviously, you cannot participate if you are not present. You are also responsible for all readings and materials covered, as well as all any announcements made in class.

Grade appeals. All grade appeals must be made in writing. If you believe that I grade I have as-signed you is incorrect, you should write a brief letter detailing your concerns and submit it to me along with the original graded assignment. I will review the materials and respond to you in writing.

Academic dishonesty and plagiarism. Academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. All work submit-ted in this course must be original work. Sources must be properly cited. You may use any citation style of your choice, as long as it is used consistently throughout the paper. You may not give or receive any unauthorized assistance during exams, quizzes, or assignments. Any and all instances of academic dishonesty will result in a failing grade for the course and will be reported to the Harpur College Academic Honesty Committee for possible further disciplinary measures. You can find out more about the Honesty Code in the bulletin: <http://bulletin.binghamton.edu> (Click on Academic Policies and Procedures - All Students).

Classroom civility. In order to create a productive learning environment in our classroom, you will be asked to observe a few simple rules of behavior:

- Be on time.
- Be prepared for class.
- Turn off your cell phone/smartphone/etc.

Students are strongly encouraged to contribute opinions and observations in ways that invite discussion. Please keep in mind that students in our classroom will have divergent perspectives, unique life experiences, and different strategies for defending their views. Please state your opinions constructively and respectfully. Just as importantly, listen carefully when your colleagues are speaking. If at any time you are offended by something that is said in class, please come speak to me.

Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD). Students requiring particular accommodations for participation in this course must contact the Binghamton University office of Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD), located in the University Union, Room 119. (Phone: 607-777-2686, email: ssd@binghamton.edu). Students are strongly encouraged to register with SSD and obtain the necessary documentation by the Drop/Add date, September 5.

A Note on Stress and other challenges. Binghamton University has available a wide range of resources for students who may be experiencing undue stress and other challenges in connection with this class or the college experience (or anything else, really). Please come talk to your instructor and/or see the Announcements section of the Blackboard/My Course page for an overview of how we may try to help, as well as relevant contact information.

SCHEDULE OF TOPICS & READINGS

I reserve the right to add/change readings. Any changes will be announced at least one week in advance through Blackboard/MyCourses.

Week 1 (August 23): Introduction

*Course syllabus

*No reading

Week 2 (August 30): Written Assignment [No class meeting]

*Assignment details are posted under “Announcements” on the Blackboard/MyCourse site for this class.

September 5 – Add/Drop deadline (11:59pm)

Week 3 (September 6): Democracy, Policy, and Public Opinion

- Schumpeter, Joseph A. 1950. *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy*. New York, NY: Harpur. Chapters 21-22. **[BL]**
- Berelson, Bernard. 1952. Democratic Theory and Public Opinion. *Public Opinion Quarterly* 16(3): 313-30.
- Lippmann, Walter. 1955. *Essays in the Public Philosophy*. New York, NY: Little, Brown & Co. Pages 1-27. **[BL]**

- Asher, Herb. 2017. *Polling the Public*. Thousand Oaks, CA: CQ Press. Chapter 1. [BL]

Week 4 (September 13): Is there (a) public opinion?

- Converse, Philip. 1964. The Nature of Belief Systems in Mass Publics. In: David Apter, Ed. *Ideology and Discontent*. New York, NY: Free Press. Pages 507-30. Reprinted (2006) in *Critical Review* 18: 1-74. [BL]
- Almond, Gabriel A. 1950. *The American Voter and Foreign Policy*. New York, NY: Harcourt, Brace, and Co. Pages 1-135. [BL]
- Page, Benjamin I., and Robert Shapiro. 1988. Foreign Policy and the Rational Public. *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 32(2): 211-47.

Week 5 (September 20): Knowing versus Caring about Foreign Policy

- Druckman, James N., and Arthur Lupia. 2000. Preference Formation. *Annual Review of Political Science* 3: 1-24.
- Aldrich, John H., John L. Sullivan, and Eugene Borgida. 1989. Foreign Affairs and Issue Voting: Do Presidential Candidates “Waltz Before a Blind Audience?” *American Political Science Review* 83(1): 123-41.
- Gilens, Martin. 2001. Political Ignorance and Collective Policy Preferences. *American Political Science Review* 95(2): 379-96.
- Asher, Herb. 2017. *Polling the Public*. Thousand Oaks, CA: CQ Press. Chapter 4. [BL]

Week 6 (September 27): Mass Media, Framing, and the Shaping of Public Opinion

***NOTE: Paper topics/outlines are due today!**

- Entman, Robert M. 2003. *Projections of Power: Framing News, Public Opinion, and U.S. Foreign Policy*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Chapters 1-2. [BL]
- Baum, Matthew A. 2002. Sex, Lies and War: How Soft News Brings Foreign Policy to the Inattentive Public. *American Political Science Review* 96 (March): 1-19.
- Zaller, John. 1994. Elite Leadership of Mass Opinion: New Evidence from the Gulf War. In: W. Lance Bennett and David L. Paletz, Eds. *Taken by Storm: The Media, Public Opinion, and U.S. Foreign Policy in the Gulf War*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press. Chapter 9, pp. 186-209. [BL]

Week 7 (October 4): The Use of Force I

- Bartels, Larry M. 1994. The American Public’s Defense Spending Preferences in the Post-Cold War Era. *Public Opinion Quarterly* 58(4): 479–508.
- Brewer, Paul R., and Marco R. Steenbergen. 2002. All Against All: How Beliefs about Human Nature Shape Foreign Policy Opinions. *Political Psychology* 23(1): 39–58.
- Schoen, Harald. 2007. Personality and Foreign Policy Attitudes in German Public Opinion. *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 51(3): 408-30.

- Conover, Pamela Johnston, and Virginia Sapiro. 1993. Gender, Feminist Consciousness, and War. *American Journal of Political Science* 37(4): 1079-99.

Week 8 (October 11): The Use of Force II

- Stouffer, Samuel A. 1955 [1992]. *Communism, Conformity, and Civil Liberties*. New York, NY: Transaction Publishers. [BL]
- Davis, Darren W., and Brian D. Silver. 2004. Civil Liberties vs. Security: Public Opinion in the Context of the Terrorist Attacks on America. *American Journal of Political Science* 48(1): 28–46.
- Huddy, Leonie, Stanley Feldman, Charles Taber, and Gallya Lahav. 2005. Threat, Anxiety, and Support of Antiterrorism Policies. *American Journal of Political Science* 49(3): 593-608.

Week 9 (October 18): International Trade & Investment I

- Scheve, Kenneth F., and Matthew J. Slaughter. 2001. What determines individual trade-policy preferences? *Journal of International Economics* 54(2): 267-92.
- Mansfield, Edward D., and Diana C. Mutz. 2009. Support for Free Trade: Self-Interest, Sociotropic Politics, and Out-Group Anxiety. *International Organization* 63(3): 425-57.
- Guisinger, Alexandra. 2009. Determining Trade Policy: Do Voters Hold Politicians Accountable? *International Organization* 63(3): 533-57.

Week 10 (October 25): International Trade & Investment II

- Jensen, Nathan, and Rene Lindstädt. 2013. Globalization with Whom: Context-Dependent Foreign Direct Investment Preferences. *Unpublished manuscript*. [BL]
- Hellwig, Timothy. 2014. Balancing Demands: The World Economy and the Composition of Policy Preferences. *The Journal of Politics* 76(1): 1-14.
- Rho, Sungmin, and Michael Tomz. 2017. Why Don't Trade Preferences Reflect Economic Self-Interest? *International Organization* 71(S1): S85-S108.

Week 11 (November 1): Migration

- Scheve, Kenneth F., and Matthew J. Slaughter. 2001. Labor Market Competition and Individual Preferences over Immigration Policy. *Review of Economics and Statistics* 83(1): 133-45.
- Hainmueller, Jens, and Michael J. Hiscox. 2007. Educated Preferences: Explaining Attitudes Toward Immigration in Europe. *International Organization* 61(2): 399-442.
- Blinder, Scott. 2015. Imagined Immigration: The Impact of Different Meanings of 'Immigrants' in Public Opinion and Policy Debates in Britain. *Political Studies* 63(1): 80-100.

November 3 – Course withdraw (with “W”)/Change grade option deadline

Week 12 (November 8): International Cooperation

- Cottrell, Leonard S., Jr., and Sylvia Eberhart. 1948. *American Opinion on World Affairs in the Atomic Age*. New York, NY: Greenwood Press. [BL]

- Nisbet, Matthew C., and Teresa Myers. 2007. The Polls—Trends: Twenty Years of Public Opinion about Global Warming. *Public Opinion Quarterly* (71)3: 444-70.
- Bechtel, Michael M., Jens Hainmueller, Yotam Margalit. 2014. Preferences for International Redistribution: The Divide over the Eurozone Bailouts. *American Journal of Political Science* 58(4): 835-56.
- Hurst, Reuben, Darren Hawkins, and Taylor Tidwell. 2017. “Americans love to hate foreign aid, but the right argument makes them like it a lot more,” *Washington Post, The Monkey Cage*, May 4.

Week 13 (November 15): Policy Implications I

- Druckman, James N., and Lawrence R. Jacobs. 2006. Lumpers and Splitters: The Public Opinion Information that Politicians Collect and Use. *Public Opinion Quarterly* 70(4): 453–76.
- Knecht, Thomas, and M. Stephen Weatherford. 2006. Public Opinion and Foreign Policy: The Stages of Presidential Decision Making. *International Studies Quarterly* 50(3): 705-27.
- Zaller, John. 1994. Strategic Politicians, Public Opinion, and the Gulf Crisis. In: W. Lance Bennett and David L. Paletz, Eds. *Taken by Storm: The Media, Public Opinion, and U.S. Foreign Policy in the Gulf War*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press. Chapter 12, pp. 250-76. **[BL]**

Week 14 (November 29): Policy Implications II

- Ostrom, Charles W. Jr., and Brian L. Job. The President and the Political Use of Force. *American Political Science Review* 80(2): 541-66.
- Levy, J. S. 1989. The Diversionary Theory of War: A Critique. *Handbook of War Studies*. Midlarsky, M.I., editor. New York: Unwin-Hyman, Pages 259-88. **[BL]**
- Jacobs, Lawrence R., and Benjamin I. Page. 2005. Who Influences U.S. Foreign Policy? *American Political Science Review* 99(1): 107-23.
- Goldsmith, Benjamin E., and Yusaku Horiuchi. 2012. In Search of Soft Power: Does Foreign Public Opinion Matter for US Foreign Policy? *World Politics* 64(3): 555-85.

Research design papers are due at 5pm on Friday, December 8 (Must be submitted through Turnitin to count as completed.)