

# Political Science 416 – Senior Seminar in Politics: U.S. Public Opinion and Political Behavior

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Time 2:00-2:50, MWF  
Location 202 Quigley Hall

Course Page: <https://mycourses.siu.edu/webct/entryPageIns.dowebct>

## 1 Course Description

The course will explore the nature and function of American public opinion and political behavior with a focus on research in political psychology. Topics will include citizen knowledge and competence, presidential approval and the media, information processing and attitude formation, and political participation. We will read scholarly work across a variety of topics. Each student will work toward a final research paper.

## 2 Course Requirements and Graded Evaluation

### 2.1 Available Points and Events Schedule

Item	Date	Points
Attendance and Participation	Daily	100
Midterm Exam	February 27	100
Final Exam	Wednesday, May 7, 3:10-5:10 PM	100
Research Assignment 1	February 29	40
Research Assignment 2	March 29	50
Final Research Paper	May 2	100
Research Presentation	April 28 or 30	10

### 2.2 Grading Scale

Total Points	Grade
500 to 450	A
449 to 400	B
399 to 350	C
349 to 300	D
Below 300	F

## **2.3 Attendance and Participation**

Each student is expected to attend every lecture and to participate. Any student who misses 4 or more sessions will lose all 25 attendance and participation points. Any student who misses 6 or more sessions will receive a grade no higher than a C. Missing 8 or more sessions will result in a failing grade in the course. (See Problems and Emergencies, Section 5.8, for excused absences, which do not count against your final grade.) This policy is designed to ensure that students take this course seriously.

## **2.4 Midterm and Final Exam**

There will be a midterm exam, held February 27, worth a total of 100 points. You will have the entire period to complete the exam, which will be comprised of multiple choice, short answer, and essay sections. The final exam, worth a total of 100 points, will be held Wednesday, May 7, from 3:10 to 5:10 PM. The final exam will be of the same format and will cover material presented following your first exam.

## **2.5 Research Assignment 1 and 2**

For Assignment 1, you will be asked to integrate material we have learned about polls and the elections into a study that tracks polling data over time. For Assignment 2, you will use polling data from your first assignment combined with data you collect on news reports related to the candidates. Tips on locating data and incorporating it into your paper will be discussed in detail in class.

## **2.6 Research Paper**

You will conduct original research on a topic of your choice. Your research may either replicate an earlier analysis with new data or address a new question with new data. In either instance, your research must advance the literature on public opinion. That is, you are not to summarize the extant literature, but to add to it.

Your research paper is due on the final day of class, May 2. It is worth 100 points. Students must also submit an electronic version of the paper to [www.turnitin.com](http://www.turnitin.com), an online plagiarism tool.

# **3 Class Policies**

## **3.1 Contacting the Instructor and Teaching Assistant**

Your instructor is readily available to answer your questions during office hours. Email is best for clarification purposes. All written communication, including emails, must be properly addressed and written. Use proper grammar, and include your first and last name.

## **3.2 Absences**

See Attendance and Participation, Section 2.3

### **3.3 Tardiness, Leaving Class Early, and Appropriate Behavior**

My courses reward students who attend class, put forth a high level of effort, and accept responsibility for their education. As a result, attendance is taken daily in this course. Students who arrive in class after attendance has been taken or who leave early will not receive credit for being in class, unless permission from the instructor has been arranged one day in advance.

### **3.4 Makeup Exams**

There will be no make-up exams except in cases of emergency or where university policy applies. If you miss an exam, you will receive a 0. If you are late to an exam, you must take the exam in time remaining. See Problems and Emergencies, Section 5.8, for the only exceptions to this rule.

### **3.5 Grading Policies & Standards**

Graded exams and assignments will be returned as promptly as possible. We will spend some time going over the exam and the assignments on the dates that they are returned to you. If you have questions about your grades, you should come and talk with your instructor during office hours.

### **3.6 Cheating and Academic Misconduct**

Any student engaging in cheating/plaigerism will receive an F in the course and will be reported to the Dean for further disciplinary action, as outlined in the university code of student conduct. If you have any questions about what constitutes cheating/plaigerism, you should examine the university policy and/or ask the instructor prior to turning in any assignment. It is your responsibility to familiarize yourself with university policy.

### **3.7 Disability Policy**

It is the policy of this university and this professor to help disabled individuals succeed in the classroom. The student is responsible for notifying the professor and the university of any special problems or needs as soon as possible. The professor and university are responsible for doing whatever they can within university policy to accommodate that student. For more information, please contact Kathleen Plesko at Disabled Student Services or go to the DSS homepage. <http://www.siu.edu/dss>

### **3.8 Problems and Emergencies**

If a problem or emergency arises that will prevent you from attending an exam, turning in a paper, or missing class, you should contact me as soon as possible. Your first contact should explain the situation in detail. If you are unable to take an exam due to sickness or another circumstances, I will request verification of your absence, which may include a doctor's note or an obituary.

### 3.9 SIU's Emergency Response Plan

Southern Illinois University Carbondale is committed to providing a safe and healthy environment for study and work. Because some health and safety circumstances are beyond our control, we ask that you become familiar with the SIUC Emergency Response Plan and Building Emergency Response Team (BERT) program. Emergency response information is available on posters in buildings on campus, available on the BERT'S website at [www.bert.siu.edu](http://www.bert.siu.edu), Department of Public Safety's website [www.dps.siu.edu](http://www.dps.siu.edu) (disaster drop down) and in the Emergency Response Guidelines pamphlet. Know how to respond to each type of emergency.

Instructors will provide guidance and direction to students in the classroom in the event of an emergency affecting your location. It is important that you follow these instructions and stay with your instructor during an evacuation or sheltering emergency. The Building Emergency Response Team will provide assistance to your instructor in evacuating the building or sheltering within the facility.

## 4 Course Texts

The reading assignments form the foundation of our lectures and discussions. You are expected to keep up with the readings. Please notify the instructor about problems obtaining the readings as soon as possible. The materials below are required and can be found at either the campus bookstore or the course website. We will be using a combination of two core texts and several articles published in the top political science journals. Texts were selected to balance high quality and low cost.

- Erikson, Robert S. and Kent L. Tedin. 2006. *American Public Opinion: Its Origins, Content, and Impact*. Updated 7<sup>th</sup> Edition. Longman. ISBN-10: 0321107535
- Asher, Herbet. Author. 2007. *Polling and the Public: What Every Citizen Should Know*. 7<sup>th</sup> Edition. Congressional Quarterly. ISBN-10: 0872893405
- Additional readings posted online on the course website

## 5 Course Schedule and Reading Assignments

On the following page is the tentative course schedule. I reserve the right to alter our schedule as necessary.

Date	Topic	Reading Covered
January 14	Polling: Front Matter	Asher 1
January 16	Polling: Front Matter	Asher 1; Erikson & Tedin 1
January 18	Nonattitudes	Asher 2; Erikson & Tedin pages 58-72
January 21	Martin Luther King Jr. Holiday	
January 23	Question Wording	Asher 3; Erikson & Tedin pages 38-46
January 25	Question Wording	Asher 3; Erikson & Tedin pages 38-46
January 28	Sampling	Asher 4; Erikson & Tedin pages 24-38
January 30	Sampling	Asher 4; Erikson & Tedin pages 24-38
February 1	Interviewing	Asher 5
February 4	Media and Polls	Asher 6; Erikson & Tedin 8
February 6	Media and Polls	Asher 6; Erikson & Tedin 8
February 8	Media and Polls	Asher 6; Erikson & Tedin 8
February 11	Polls and Elections	Asher 7; Erikson & Tedin pages 46-57
February 13	Polls and Elections	Asher 7; Erikson & Tedin pages 46-57
February 15	Research Assignment 1 Discussion	
February 18	Polls and Elections	Patterson 1993, 1 & 2
February 20	Analyzing and Interpreting Polls	Asher 8
February 22	Polling and Democracy	Asher 9
February 25	Organization of Opinions	Erikson & Tedin pages 72-91
February 27	EXAM	
February 29	Assignment 1 Due; Macro Opinion	Erikson & Tedin pages 92-119
March 3	Macro Opinion	Erikson & Tedin pages 92-119
March 5	Research Assignment 2 Discussion	
March 7	Presidential Approval	Erikson & Tedin pages 119-126
March 10-14	Spring Break	
March 17	Presidential Approval	Gaines 2002; Zaller 1998
March 19	Political Socialization	Erikson & Tedin 5
March 21	Political Socialization	Alford, Funk, and Hibbing 2005
March 24	Opinion and Democratic Stability	Erikson & Tedin 6
March 26	Group Differences	Erikson & Tedin 7
March 28	Assignment 2 Due; Elections Revisited	Erikson & Tedin 9
March 31	Final Paper Discussion	
April 2	The Public and Policy	Erikson & Tedin 10
April 4	Class Canceled for Conference	
April 7	The Public and Policy	Erikson & Tedin 10
April 9	Opinion and Democratic Performance	Erikson & Tedin 11
April 11	Opinion and Democratic Performance	Erikson & Tedin 11
April 14	Election 2008: Primary Elections	Norrander 1991
April 16	Election 2008: Partisans	Holbrook and McClurg 2005
April 18	Election 2008: Campaign Ads	Goldstein and Freedman 2002
April 21	Election 2008: Campaign Spending	Coleman and Manna 2000
April 23	Election 2008: Campaign Visits	Althaus, Nardulli, Shaw 2002
April 25	Election 2008: Interest Groups	Sittig 1995
April 28	Research Presentations	
April 30	Research Presentations	
May 2	Final Paper Due; Course Overview	
May 7	FINAL EXAM, 3:10-5:10 PM	