

# POLITICS AND PUBLIC OPINION

POS 3233/Spring 2020/TUR 2328

T | Period 4 (10:40am-11:30am)

R | Period 4-5 (10:40am-12:35pm)

Angela F. McCarthy

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Office Hours: Monday & Wednesday (11:30am – 3:00pm) & by appointment

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## COURSE OBJECTIVES

The purpose of this course is to examine public opinion among Americans. We will discuss political attitude measurement processes, data collection and polling, the effect of political knowledge on attitudes, the role of ideology and partisanship on public opinion, the origins of mass opinions, trends in public opinion as it relates to various salient issues, group differences in political opinions, the influence of the media in impacting political attitudes, and the effect of public opinion on policy and policymakers. During the semester, you will engage with the course materials that will further your understanding of public opinion and political research. Not only will we address political attitudes among the mass public, but we will also consider the role of current political topics and its influence in shaping American beliefs.

## REQUIRED TEXTS

American Public Opinion, (10<sup>th</sup> edition).

Robert S. Erikson and Kent L. Tedin

Polling and the Public: What Every Citizen Should Know (9<sup>th</sup> edition).

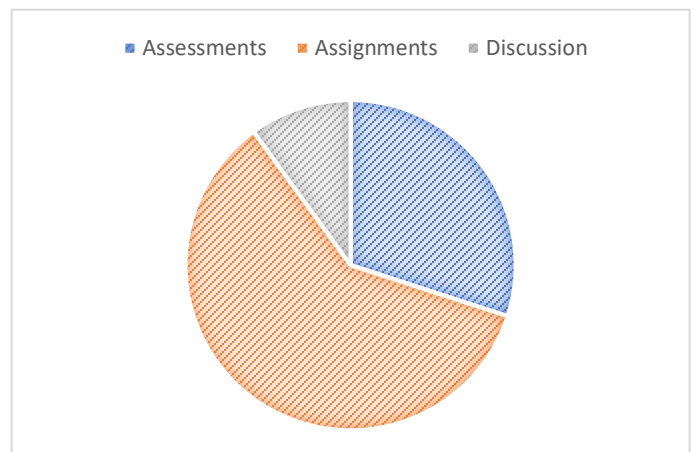
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## COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Assessments: 30%. There are **two** assessments. Each assessment is worth 15% of your final grade. Read the assigned materials for the exams. During class, we will discuss assessment questions and answers.

Assignments: 60%. There are **12** weekly assignments. Each assignment is worth 5% of your final grade. There will be one bonus assignment.

Class discussion: 10%. You are expected to give your (informed) opinion on opinions. This is a political attitudes/public opinion class.



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## ASSIGNMENT DESCRIPTION

**Assessments: 30%.** See “Class Schedule” for assessment dates. Prior to the assessment period, you will receive a list of 10 terms. You will write a two paragraph response for each term. This is an open book assessment. However, there are guidelines to your assessments.

**Assignments: 60%.** Please note that the assignment portion of the class is worth more than exams. Take assignment seriously. On Tuesdays, I will provide students with a prompt that they must answer. Students must complete assignments by **Friday at 5pm**. You are required to submit assignments via Canvas. Assignments are time stamped. Late assignments are not graded. REPEAT: Late assignments are not graded. *I'm serious about this.* If you miss class, do not email me to ask about the assignment. You will need to ask a classmate or someone who is privy to the assignment details. I will NOT provide the details to someone who is not in class. Again, late assignments are not graded.

**Class discussion: 10%.** Discussion grades are based on your contribution to the class. First, because this is a political science class you are expected to stay up to date on current events. The class will spend a few minutes each week discussing “politics.” **Come to class well informed.** This is the time to demonstrate that you are somewhat aware of what is going on in our country and around the world.

Tip: PBS NEWSHOUR and NPR are decent resources. Try to stay away from partisan media outlets. If you decide to use partisan outlets, tread lightly and think critically about what you are consuming. Example available on Canvas: “Why Do Partisan Media Polarize Viewers?” (Levendusky 2013).

Another way to succeed in obtaining a respectable class discussion score is to come to class prepared to enlighten the group about a specific poll question of your choosing (as it relates to the topic of the week). If you are wise, you will use a poll question from the assigned weekly readings.

## COURSE SPECIFICS/DETAILS

**Grading scale:** 93.0 to 100 A, 90.0 to 92.9 A-, 87.0 to 89.9 B+, 83.0 to 86.9 B, 80.0 to 82.9 B-, 77.0 to 79.9 C+, 73.0 to 76.9 C, 70.0 to 72.9 C-, 67.0 to 69.9 D+, 63.0 to 66.9 D, 60.0 to 62.9 D-, below 60.0 E.

**Office Hours:** Students are welcome to attend the scheduled office hours. My office is (almost) always open for student to inquire about their grades, discuss weekly assignments, or chat about public opinion and politics. If the scheduled office hours do not fit your schedule, then let's make an appointment. I am happy to accommodate your scheduling needs.

**Enrichment (Tuesday):** Tuesdays are designated enrichment days. We will use the 1-hour block of time to enrich our understanding of the materials. Tuesday meetings will be heavy discussion days (via online or in class). Students should be prepared to contribute something of value. We will not hold class every Thursday.

**Lecture (Thursday):** Thursday courses are designed to be lectured centered. However, students should expect organically formed group discussion.

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*Late work:* **Late work is not accepted.** If you find yourself unable to complete your assignments on time, email me as soon as possible. I reserve the right to make an exception, provided there is valid documentation. Of course, students can make up exams and assignments due to a university obligation, illness, death of a family member, or civic duties. Students who miss an assignment and have a valid excuse are given three days after the missed assignment to arrange a makeup. Otherwise, you are not allowed to make up the assignment. Without a valid excuse, you are not allowed to make up assignments. No exceptions.

*Attending class:* Class attendance is required and expected. You will need to fulfill your commitment and obligation to be in class and on time every day that class is held. **Exception: Please do not come to class ill.** If you think that you are ill then stay home, get some rest, go to the doctor, and recover. We will make arrangements on how to accommodate your missing class. Note: you are responsible for completing missed assignments. See the “Late work” discussion for more information.

*Recordings:* Please see the Student Honor Code. Students are not allowed to record or video record lectures without my permission.

*Electronics:* Feel free to use laptops and tablets during lectures. However, you may be doing yourself a disservice. See [Attention, Students: Put Your Laptops Away](#). If social media proves to be disruptive to the learning environment, then I will limit the use of electronic devices in the course.

*Evaluations:* Evaluations are part of our course. To ensure the highest quality of education for the entire UF student body, students are expected to provide feedback on their satisfaction with the course.

*Tentative:* Life is often unpredictable. This syllabus is subject to change. This is to protect the needs of both the instructor and the students.

### UNIVERSITY POLICIES

*Students with Disabilities.* The University of Florida is committed to providing accommodations for students with disabilities. If you have a disability which may require accommodation, contact the [Disability Resource Center](#) (352-392-8565).

*Academic Honesty.* It is your responsibility to refrain from cheating, academic misconduct, and/or plagiarism. If you are uncertain about your responsibilities or you are questioning your academic integrity, then contact me immediately. Visit the [Dean of Students Office](#) for an explanation of plagiarism, student conduct, and conflict resolution.

*Counseling and Wellness Center.* If you feel that you need emotional support, then contact information for the [Counseling and Wellness Center](#).

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## UNIVERSITY CALENDAR

January 6	Classes Begin
January 6 – 10	Drop/Add & Late registration
January 20	No Class: Martin Luther King, Jr. Day
February 29 – March 7	No Class: Spring Break
April 10	Drop Deadline & Withdrawal deadline
April 11	Faculty Course Evaluation Period Opens
April 22	Drop/Add or Withdraw from Spring Courses (must petition college)
April 22	Classes End
April 23 & 24	Reading Days
April 24	Faculty Course Evaluation Period Closes
April 25 – May 1	Final Exams
May 1 – May 3	Commencement

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## CLASS SCHEDULE

<b>WEEK 1</b> 1-7 & 1-9	<b>Public Opinion Overview</b> Introduction APO: Public Opinion in Democratic Societies (Chapter 1)
<b>WEEK 2</b> 1-14 & 1-16	<b>Polling and the Public: What Every Citizen Should Know</b> APO: Polling: The Scientific Assessment of Public Opinion (Chapter 2) P&P: Polling and the Public (Chapter 1) “In a Politically Polarized Era, Sharp Divides in Both Partisan Coalitions” Assignment #1
<b>WEEK 3</b> 1-21 & 1-23	<b>Polling and the Public: What Every Citizen Should Know</b> P&P: The Problem of Nonattitudes (Chapter 2) P&P: Wording and Context of Questions (Chapter 3) “Fractured Nation: Widening Partisan Polarization and Key Issues in 2020 Presidential Elections” Assignment #2
<b>WEEK 4</b> 1-28 & 1-30	<b>Polling and the Public: What Every Citizen Should Know</b> P&P: Sampling Techniques (Chapter 4) P&P: Interviewing and Data Collection Procedures (Chapter 5) Pew: Political Typology “Beyond Red vs. Blue: The Political Typology” Assignment #3
<b>WEEK 5</b> 2-4 & 2-6	<b>Polling and the Public: What Every Citizen Should Know/Microlevel Opinion</b> P&P: Analyzing and Interpreting Polls (Chapter 8) APO: Microlevel Opinion: The Psychology of Opinion-Holding (Chapter 3) Assignment #4
<b>WEEK 6</b> 2-11 & 2-13	<b>Macrolevel Opinion</b> APO: Macrolevel Opinion: The Flow of Political Sentiment (Chapter 4) Assignment #5
<b>WEEK 7</b> 2-18 & 2-20	<b>Socialization and Learning</b> APO: Political Socialization and Political Learning (Chapter 5) “Beyond Liberals and Conservatives to Political Genotypes and Phenotypes” “Biology, Politics, and Emerging Science of Human Nature” “Genes and Ideology” Assignment #6
<b>WEEK 8</b> 2-25 & 2-27	<b>Public Opinion and Democratic Stability</b> APO: Public Opinion and Democratic Stability (Chapter 6) <b>ASSESSMENT</b>

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<b>WEEK 9</b>	<b>SPRING BREAK</b> Bonus Assignment
<b>WEEK 10</b> 3-10 & 3-12	<b>Group Differences</b> APO: Group Differences in Political Opinions (Chapter 7) “Key Findings on Americans’ views of race in 2019” “On Gender Differences, No Consensus on Nature vs. Nurture” Assignment #7
<b>WEEK 10</b> 3-17 & 3-19	<b>The Media</b> APO: The News Media and Political Opinions (Chapter 8) P&P: The Media and the Polls (Chapter 6) “Social Media and Fake News in the 2016 Election” “Red Media, Blue Media: Evidence of Ideological Selectivity in Media Use” Assignment #8
<b>WEEK 11</b> 3-24 & 3-26	<b>Elections</b> APO: Elections as Instruments of Popular Control (Chapter 9) P&P: Polls and Elections (Chapter 7) The ANES Guide to Public Opinion and Electoral Behavior Assignment #9
<b>WEEK 13</b> 3-31 & 4-2	<b>The Public and its Elected Leaders</b> APO: The Public and its Elected Leaders (Chapter 10) “Elections in America” Assignment #10
<b>WEEK 14</b> 4-7 & 4-9	<b>Performance of Democracy</b> APO: Public Opinion and the Performance of Democracy (Chapter 11) P&P: Polling and Democracy (Chapter 9) American Values Atlas Assignment #11
<b>WEEK 15</b> 4-14 & 4-16	<b>Special Topic</b> ----- Presidential Approval Ratings Assignment #12
<b>WEEK 16:</b> 4-21:	<b>Assessment</b> -----