POS 3233: Politics and Public Opinion
Class Periods: Tuesdays period 4 (10:40-11:30), Thursdays periods 4-5 (10:40-12:35)
Location: MAT 051
Academic Term: Spring 2025

Instructor:
Stephen C. Craig
sccraig@ufl.edu
Office Hours: Tuesday/Thursday 2:30-4:00 p.m., and by appointment (the latter intended especially, but not exclusively, for those who prefer to meet with me F2F); Zoom id 831-661-6708. Unless you are notified otherwise, regular office hours will be held online via Zoom.
Web Page: https://people.clas.ufl.edu/sccraig/

Text:
G. Elliott Morris, *Strength in Numbers: How Polls Work and Why We Need Them* (W. W. Norton, 2022).

Students also are expected to obtain a license, purchased either through UF or directly from IBM, for use in the analysis of data from the Qualtrics survey described below. Details will be provided in class.

All assigned readings (see the course outline below) except for the Morris book are posted in the Files folder on Canvas (https://elearning.ufl.edu). Some can also be accessed directly online.

Course Overview:
This course is designed to provide students with an introduction to the study of public opinion. Our focus will be less on what people think or how they feel about a particular party, candidate, issue, or group – and more on the ways in which we can go about measuring these things. Four approaches to attitude measurement will be discussed: polling (survey research), focus groups, in-depth interviewing, and elite interviewing. Your readings and lectures will feature a mix of academic research and practical applications (the latter often but not always addressing the question of how to win an election). After spending the first few classes learning about the different approaches, we will move on to more nuts-and-bolts activities such as writing survey questions, conducting both in-depth interviews and a focus group, administering a small internet-based survey, and analyzing the results of that survey. By the time we're finished, you should have a basic understanding of the techniques typically used to study public opinion.

Grades:
Grades will be based on the following:

Written assignment #1	10 percent (due Tuesday, February 11, 1 p.m.)
Written assignment #2	15 percent (due Tuesday, March 11, 1 p.m.)
Written assignment #3	15 percent (due Tuesday, April 8, 1 p.m.)
Written assignment #4	20 percent (due Tuesday, April 22, 1 p.m.)
Participation	25 percent (attendance, pop quizzes, discussion, group projects)
Final assignment	15 percent (due Monday, April 28, 12:00 p.m.)

Minus grades will (if appropriate) be assigned in this course. Information about grades and grading policies at UF can be found at https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/grades.aspx

Written Assignments: The first four of these are described below (with additional details to be provided in class). They involve essays that are based on a national internet survey conducted during the coronavirus summer of 2020, open-ended interviews that students will conduct individually, one or more focus groups that will be more of a group effort, and an analysis of data from an online survey that the class will develop

and then implement. The "final assignment" (constituting 15% of your grade) will assess your ability to execute tasks that are essential to the academic study of public opinion and/or to the gathering and use of public opinion data in campaigns and other real-world settings.

Essays should be submitted to the appropriate assignments folder in Canvas **no later than 1 p.m. (or 12:00 p.m. for the final assignment)** on the day they are due. In most cases, they will be read, graded, and returned to students within a week of their completion. **Anything submitted after the deadline will be penalized one full letter grade, plus one additional letter grade if turned in the following day – after which the essay will not be read or graded at all.**

For all written assignments:
- Be sure to include an alphabetical <u>list of references</u> at the end for all works cited. The author's name should be listed first or, if there is no author, the originating source, e.g., Pew Research Center, nbc.com, American Association for Public Opinion Research, and so on. *Never lead with the title of a book or article.*
- <u>In-text cites</u> should take the following form: (Smith and Jones 2020) – *do <u>not</u> use footnotes or insert full article/ book titles in the text*. If I want to know what (Amith and Jones 2020) is, I should be able to find out by looking at your list of references. Include the <u>page number</u> for direct quotes and other specific points drawn from the article/book.
- **The only thing that should appear at the top of page one is your name. Do not include the course number, my name, the date, a title for your essay, or any other information.**
- Before submitting any written assignment (preferably as a Word document), review it carefully for errors in <u>spelling, grammar, and/or capitalization</u>. Regarding the latter, here is a <u>partial</u> list of terms that should be capitalized: Democrat (or Democratic Party), Republican (or Republican Party), Congress, Senate, House of Representatives, Supreme Court, White House, First Amendment, and the proper name of any individual. Terms that should <u>not</u> be capitalized include: president, vice president, senator, congressman/ woman, governor (unless these are used as a title, e.g., President Trump), and constitution. Also, be sure to use <u>paragraph breaks</u> as appropriate; paragraphs that run on for the better part of a page (or longer) and encompass more than one topic are difficult to read and will put your instructor in a grumpy mood as he decides what grade to assign to your work.

Any written assignment that does not constitute original work by the student is subject to penalties consistent with the UF Code of Student Conduct, up to and including receiving a grade of zero and a failing grade in the class.

<u>Class Participation</u>: This constitutes 25% of your grade, a figure that should make clear to students that anyone whose engagement with the class is half-hearted will not fare well in the end. It will be based on attendance (you can't participate unless you're in class) and the extent to which you stay on top of the readings and contribute to our discussions. Depending on how the course plays out, there may also be a group participation element that evaluates students as "team players," that is, do they carry their share of the load on group projects (as judged by the professor and fellow group members)?

Some concluding points:
- Attendance is required. Students who can reasonably anticipate an absence should inform me by email as soon as is practical and prior to the anticipated absence. Absences may be excused with documentation of a university, military, or legal obligation, illness, or bereavement.
- As noted above, students are bound by the University of Florida's <u>Student Code of Conduct</u>. Anyone who commits an act of academic dishonesty, such as cheating on exams or committing plagiarism on the written essays, will suffer appropriate sanctions and be referred to university authorities for further action.
- There will be times when I need to communicate with the class as a group. In those instances, I will do

so by posting an Announcement in Canvas. Students should <u>check their incoming mail regularly</u> so as not to miss any important information. The best way for students to connect with me directly is through Outlook (sccraig@ufl.edu), though messages can also be sent via Canvas. If a reply is needed, I will try to get back to you quickly.

- If you are unable to connect with me during my official <u>office hours,</u> or if you wish to discuss matters that are confidential, feel free to request a one-on-one meeting and we will determine a time that works for both of us.

- Students are allowed to record video or audio of class lectures (not including student presentations). However, the purposes for which these recordings may be used are strictly controlled. The only allowable purposes are (1) for personal educational use, (2) in connection with a complaint to the university, or (3) as evidence in, or in preparation for, a criminal or civil proceeding. All other purposes are prohibited. Specifically, students may not publish recorded lectures without the written consent of the instructor. To "publish" means to share, transmit, circulate, distribute, or provide access to a recording, regardless of format or medium, to another person (or persons), including but not limited to another student within the same class section. Additionally, a recording, or transcript of a recording, is considered published if it is posted on or uploaded to, in whole or in part, any media platform, including but not limited to social media, book, magazine, newspaper, leaflet, or third-party note/tutoring services. A student who publishes a recording without written consent may be subject to a civil cause of action instituted by a person injured by the publication and/or discipline under UF Regulation 4.040 Student Honor Code and Student Conduct Code.

- Students are expected to provide professional and respectful feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing course evaluations online via GatorEvals. Guidance on how to do this is available at https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/students/. Students will be notified when the evaluation period opens and can complete evaluations through the email they receive from GatorEvals, in their Canvas course menu under GatorEvals, or via https://ufl.bluera.com/ufl/. Summaries of course evaluation results are available to students at https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/public-results/.

<u>COURSE OUTLINE</u>

<u>Weeks 1-2 (Jan 14-16, 21-23): Course Overview/Polling in the 21st Century</u>
Assigned Readings:
Morris, *Strength in Numbers*, Chapters 1-5 (pp. 1-120).
Herb Asher, "Interviewing and Data Collection Procedures," Chapter 5 (pp. 139-160) in *Polling and the Public: What Every Citizen Should Know*, 9th ed. (CQ Press, 2017).
John Geraci, "Sampling and Sample Biases," Chapter 8 (pp. 163-188) in *Poll-arized: Why Americans Don't Trust the Polls and How to Fix Them Before It's Too Late* (Houndstooth Press, 2022).
Courtney Kennedy, "Key Things to Know about Election Polling in the United States," Pew Research Center 8/5/20). https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2020/08/05/key-things-to-know-about-election-polling-in-the-united-states/
Kaleigh Rogers, "Election Forecasts Try to Go Beyond the Polls. Are They Helping?" *New York Times* (11/23/24).

Recommended Readings:
American Association for Public Opinion Research, "Task Force on 2020 Pre-Election Polling: An Evaluation of the 2020 General Election Polls," AAPOR report (2020). [note: This is lengthy and detailed report. Students should review its conclusions but do not need to dwell on the particulars, including the statistical analysis and graphics.]
American Association for Public Opinion Research, "Statements on 'Push' Polls" (2015).
American Association for Public Opinion Research, "Herding" (n.d.)

Gabriel J. Madson and D. Sunshine Hillygus, "All the Best Polls Agree with Me: Bias in Evaluations of Political Polling," *Political Behavior* (December 2020).

Weeks 3-4 (Jan 28-30, Feb 4-6): Conceptualization and Measurement
Assigned Readings:
Philip H. Pollock III and Barry C. Edwards, "The Definition and Measurement of Concepts," Chapter 1 (pp. 1-33) in *The Essentials of Political Analysis*, 6th ed. (CQ Press, 2020).
John Geraci, "Data Collection Errors and Omissions," Chapter 9 (pp. 189-211) in *Poll-arized: Why Americans Don't Trust the Polls and How to Fix Them Before It's Too Late* (Houndstooth Press, 2022).
Dante Chinni and Ari Pinkus, "Talking to Americans Reveals the Diversity Behind the Shared Opinion 'The Country Is on the Wrong Track," *The Conversation* (4/10/24).
Stephen C. Craig et al., "Question Wording and Attitudinal Ambivalence: COVID, the Economy, and Americans' Response to a Real-Life Trolley Problem," *Social Science Quarterly* (January 2022).
Stephen C. Craig et al., fake news/coronavirus questionnaire (summer 2020).

By the beginning of week #3, students should review and be prepared to discuss questions in the 2020 fake news survey, which is posted in the Files folder on Canvas. You may also find it helpful to consult the three survey questionnaires listed as recommended readings in week #5.

Recommended Reading:
Mark Pickup et al., "Novel Coronavirus, Old Partisanship: COVID-19 Attitudes and Behaviours in the United States and Canada," *Canadian Journal of Political Science* (no. 2, 2020).

Written assignment #1 is due on Tuesday, February 11 at 1 p.m. This is an essay roughly 3 pages in length (single-spaced, approximately 500 words per page, submitted to the appropriate assignments folder in Canvas) based on the 2020 fake news survey. Details will be provided in class, but the essay will focus on conceptualization, measurement, and the development of hypotheses.

Weeks 5-6 (Feb 11-13, 18-20): Designing a Survey
Assigned Readings:
Herb Asher, "Wording and Context of Questions," Chapter 3 (pp. 75-106) in *Polling and the Public: What Every Citizen Should Know*, 9th ed. (CQ Press, 2017).
Pew Research Center, "Writing Survey Questions" (also watch accompanying You Tube video). [https://www.pewresearch.org/our-methods/u-s-surveys/writing-survey-questions/]
Stephen C. Craig, "The 2000 Presidential Election: Voter Reaction in Florida and the Nation," report prepared by the Graduate Program in Political Campaigning, University of Florida.
Introduction to Qualtrics: https://training.it.ufl.edu/training/items/qualtrics-uf-getting-started.html

Written assignment #1 due February 11 at 1 p.m.

Recommended Readings:
Stephen C. Craig et al., "Winners, Losers, and Election Context: Voter Responses to the 2000 Presidential Election," *Political Research Quarterly* (December 2006).
Stephen C. Craig et al., "Core Values, Value Conflict, and Citizens' Ambivalence about Gay Rights," *Political Research Quarterly* (March 2005).
Students may wish to review the questionnaires on which these analyses are based:
national opinion survey (May/June 2001).
national opinion survey (July 2015)
Florida gay rights survey (May/June 2002).

During these two weeks, we will begin putting together a survey to be administered on Qualtrics. The survey

itself will be the same for all students, though each student must do his/her own data analysis and write an individual short paper (see **written assignment #4**). During week 5, we will learn about Qualtrics and discuss possible topics to explore in our own survey. To facilitate our discussion, students are expected to (1) identify at least one article (academic or otherwise) on a topic that you find interesting, submitting a pdf of that article to the appropriate assignments folder in Canvas and (2) offer some thoughts about specific questions on that topic that might be asked in our survey. During week 6, we will hopefully put the finishing touches on that survey so that it can be made available online to respondents.

Week 7 (Feb 25-27): In-Depth Interviews
Assigned Readings:
Stephen C. Craig, "Citizens: Is Anybody Listening?" Chapter 4 (pp. 89-131) in *The Malevolent Leaders: Popular Discontent in America* (Westview Press, 1993).
Arthur Sanders, "Ideological Symbols," *American Politics Quarterly* (July 1989).
Daniel K. Pryce et al., "A Neglected Problem: Understanding the Effects of Personal and Vicarious Trauma on African Americans' Attitudes toward the Police," *Criminal Justice and Behavior* (October 2021).

Recommended Readings:
Anthony Nadler et al., "Unmasking Polarization: How Conservatives Make Sense of COVID-19 Coverage, " *Columbia Journalism Review* (12/7/21). [https://www.cjr.org/tow_center_reports/polarization-covid-conservative.php#%E2%80%9CSo%20far%20gone%E2%80%9D] note: while the authors of this article describe their methodology as involving focus groups, it more closely resembles in-depth interviewing]
Jennifer Hochschild, *What's Fair? American Beliefs about Distributive Justice* (Harvard University Press, 1981), pp. 292-308 ("Appendix B: Interview Questions").
Stephen C. Craig, depth questionnaire used for Chapter 4 of *The Malevolent Leaders*.
It might be helpful for students to compare these with the more structured questionnaires used in surveys.

Written assignment #2 is due on Tuesday, March 11 at 1 p.m. This is an essay roughly 3 pages in length (single-spaced, approximately 500 words per page, submitted to the appropriate assignments folder in Canvas) in which students (a) develop several open-ended questions that explore respondents' attitudes in greater depth than allowed in the survey, (b) interview two people (one can be another student, the second should be an adult non-student) posing both selected closed-ended questions from the fake news survey and the new open-ended ones, and (c) discuss the concepts/measures (what you are trying to measure and how; focus on face validity) and the results of your interviews. While a full-blown literature review is not required, each student must find at least one academic article or book that provides a substantive basis for hypotheses that are explored (notice that I did not say "tested") with the interview data.

Weeks-8-9 (Mar 4-6, 11-13): Analyzing Survey Data
Assigned Readings:
Morris, *Strength in Numbers*, Chapters 6-7 (pp. 121-164).
Herb Asher, "Analyzing and Interpreting Polls," Chapter 8 (pp. 237-278) in *Polling and the Public: What Every Citizen Should Know*, 9th ed. (CQ Press, 2017).
Philip H. Pollock III and Barry C. Edwards, "Proposing Explanations, Framing Hypotheses, and Making Comparisons," Chapter 3 (pp. 72-104) in *The Essentials of Political Analysis*, 6th ed. (CQ Press, 2020).
Introduction to statistical analysis using data from the 2020 fake news survey.

Written assignment #2 due March 11 at 1 p.m.

Recommended Readings:
Philip H. Pollock III and Barry C. Edwards, "Making Controlled Comparisons," Chapter 5 (pp. 134-166) in *The Essentials of Political Analysis*, 6th ed. (CQ Press, 2020).
Tom Hogan, "New Poll: One Year After Jan. 6th, Disturbing Support for Authoritarianism," *The Bulwark*

(1/6/22).

These two weeks are devoted to giving students some hands-on experience doing basic data analysis using the 2020 fake news survey. The kinds of operations you learn about here will subsequently be employed in your analysis of data from the Qualtrics survey.

Week 10 (Mar 18-20): Spring Break

Week 11 (Mar 25-27): Focus Groups
Assigned Readings:
David W. Stewart et al., "Group Depth Interviews: Focus Group Research," Chapter 18 (pp. 589-616) in *The Sage Handbook of Applied Social Research Methods*, ed. Leonard Bickman and Debra J. Rog (2009).
John R. Hibbing and Elizabeth Theiss-Morse, "Focus Groups and Perceptions of the Washington System," Chapter 5 (pp. 84-105) in *Congress as Public Enemy* (1995).
Stephen C. Craig et al., "Fighting Back: Attack and Response in Political Campaigns," paper presented at the American Political Science Association meetings (2010).
Roger Simon, "How a Murderer and Rapist Became the Bush Campaign's Most Valuable Player," *Baltimore Sun* (11/11/90).
Dan Diamond, "'We Want to Be Educated, Not Indoctrinated,' Say Trump Voters Wary of Coronavirus Vaccination," *Washington Post* (3/15/21).

Recommended Readings:
Alex Stambaugh, "Getting the Most Out of Focus Groups," *Campaigns and Elections* (3/26/12).
Stephen C. Craig, Santa Fe Health Care (focus group report 1988)
Stephen C. Craig, Seminole Tribe of Florida (focus group report 2000)

Written assignment #3 is due on Tuesday, April 8 at 1 p.m. Possible topics for two separate focus groups will have been discussed earlier in the semester. The groups themselves will be conducted on Thursday, March 27 and moderated by either myself or the T.A., with both participants and timing TBD. Each student will write an essay roughly 3 pages in length (single-spaced, approximately 500 words per page, submitted to the appropriate folder in Canvas) that outlines a research question, develops hypotheses related to that question, and reports the findings. No statistical analysis is expected for this assignment because focus group data are fundamentally qualitative in nature; accordingly, your essay should focus on creating a narrative more than simply crunching numbers. As with written assignment #2, a literature review is not required. Each student must, however, find at least one academic article or book that provides a substantive basis for hypotheses that are explored (notice once again that I did not say "tested") with the focus group data.

Week 12 (Apr 1-3): Elite Interviews
Assigned Readings:
Joel D. Aberbach and Bert A. Rockman, "Conducting and Coding Elite Interviews," *PS: Political Science & Politics* (December 2002).
Jeffrey M. Berry, "Validity and Reliability Issues in Elite Interviewing," *PS: Political Science & Politics* (December 2002).
Kenneth Goldstein, "Getting in the Door: Sampling and Completing Elite Interviews," *PS: Political Science & Politics* (December 2002).
Beth L. Leech, "Asking Questions: Techniques for Semistructured Interviews," *PS: Political Science & Politics* (December 2002).
Laura R. Woliver, "Ethical Dilemmas in Personal Interviewing," *PS: Political Science & Politics* (December 2002).
Stephen C. Craig, "Leaders: Fingers on the Public Pulse?" Chapter 5 (pp. 133-162) in *The Malevolent Leaders: Popular Discontent in America* (Westview Press, 1993).

Recommended Reading:
Stephen C. Craig, leadership questionnaire used for Chapter 5 of *The Malevolent Leaders*.

Week 13 (Apr 8-10): Discussion of Final Paper Topics (and a little more about "fake news")
Assigned Readings:
Morris, *Strength in Numbers*, Conclusion (pp. 165-178).
Pennycook, Gordon, and David G. Rand. 2021. "Research Note: Examining False Beliefs about Voter Fraud in the Wake of the 2020 Presidential Election." *Harvard Kennedy School (HKS) Misinformation Review* (2021). [https://doi.org/10.37016/mr-2020-51]
Andrew M. Guess et al., "'Fake News' May Have Limited Effects Beyond Increasing Beliefs in False Claims," *Harvard Kennedy School (HKS) Misinformation Review* (2020). [https://doi.org/10.37016/mr-2020-004]
Stephen C. Craig et al., "To Vote or Not to Vote? Fake News, Voter Fraud, and Support for Postponing the 2020 Presidential Election," revised version of paper presented at the 2021 annual meetings of the Midwest Political Science Association.
Aaron Blake, "A New Study Suggests Fake News Might Have Won Donald Trump the 2016 Election," *Washington Post* (4//3/18).

Written assignment #3 due April 8 at 1 p.m.

Written assignment #4 is due on Tuesday, April 22 at 1 p.m. This is a short paper, roughly 3-5 pages in length (single-spaced, approximately 500 words per page not including tables or other graphics, submitted on Canvas) based on your analysis of the Qualtrics data. As before, a full-blown literature review is not required but each student is expected to find at least two academic articles or books that provide a substantive basis for hypotheses that are tested using the survey data.

Week 14 (Apr 15-17): The Consulting Profession
Assigned Readings:
Michael D. Cohen, "Focus Groups and Polling," Chapter 7 (pp. 93-113) in *Modern Political Campaigns* (Rowman and Littlefield, 2021).
Candice J. Nelson, "Survey Research and Campaigns – Getting to the Future," Chapter 5 (pp. 61-72) in *Campaigns on the Cutting Edge*, ed. Richard J. Semiatin (Sage/CQ Press, 2017).
Jill Lepore, "The Lie Factory: How Politics Became a Business," *The New Yorker* (9/24/12).

If time and circumstances permit, the class will view a video that looks back at some memorable moments that occurred during the 1968 presidential campaign: *Best of Enemies: Buckley vs. Vidal* (2015).

We will spend part of this week (as needed) discussing and dealing with any problems students may be having with their final paper. Otherwise, we will talk mainly about the profession of political consulting and (maybe) get a preview of the final assignment, details of which will be provided the following week.

Week 15 (Apr 22): Course Wrap-up
Assigned Readings: None
Nature of the final assignment will be described.

Written assignment #4 due April 22 at 1 p.m.

Final assignment due April 28 at 12:00 p.m. [note: early submissions are strongly encouraged; the submission window will be open beginning at 1 p.m. on April 24]