FOCUS

This course explores American public opinion and political behavior in a broad fashion, giving an exposure to the substance of that opinion, and the context in which it occurs. The course will focus on several major areas pertinent to any serious analysis of the state of American public opinion: 1) key factors that influence individuals’ opinions, 2) the content of public opinion on racial, social, and foreign policy issues, 3) how opinion is organized through core values and partisanship, 4) the role of public opinion in elections and political participation, and, 5) questions of public trust and attempts by political elites to mold public opinion. There will also be an analysis of the role of public opinion in the 2008, 2010, 2012, 2014, and 2016 elections. We will also conduct our own data analysis using SETUPS (Supplementary Empirical Teaching Units in Political Science) by the Voting Behavior Project at ANES (American National Election Studies).

TEXTS

Required:


Recommended:


There will be additional readings handed out during the course of the semester.

REQUIREMENTS

Midterm Examination 30%
SETUPS Project 20%
Final Examination 30%
Class Citizenship 20%

The midterm examination and the final examination are both in essay format.

CLASS POLICIES

1) Students are responsible for all materials covered in the lectures and assigned readings. You must read the relevant chapters before the lecture pertaining to those readings.

2) Failure to attend class, tardiness and failure to participate in class discussion will negatively affect your grade in this class (class citizenship portion of the course grade).

3) Cheating, plagiarism, and other forms of academic dishonesty will not be tolerated, and will be punished to the fullest extent allowable by the Academic Committee at the University of St. Thomas. (See Below)

4) Other than in exceptional cases of personal or family emergencies, no make-up exams will be given for students missing any of the regularly scheduled assignments during the semester. Every calendar late that an assignment is will result in a reduction of a full letter grade.
5) A grade of “I” (Incomplete) will not be given in this course except in the most extraordinary of circumstances.

PLAGIARISM

The following are some dictionary\(^1\) definitions of plagiarism:

- “The action of copying someone else’s idea or work or pretending that you thought of it or created it” (Collins).
- “To take words, ideas, etc., from someone else’s work and use them in one’s own work without admitting one has done so” (Longman).
- “To steal or pass off as one’s own the ideas or words of another” (Webster).

Plagiarism also includes\(^2\):

- “Double-dipping - This is submitting a paper or other assignment which had previously earned credit from another course.”
- “Text recycling - Reusing in a new assignment large portions of a previously submitted paper(s) or other written assignment (computer code, speech, etc.) without acknowledging their former use.”

Common student misconceptions on plagiarism\(^3\):

- “Many students believe that as long as a citation is included, they can simply appropriate portions of text from another source and use that text as their own writing.”
- “Many are also confused as to what constitutes common knowledge believing that anything on the internet is common knowledge.”

Some General Tips to Students\(^4\):

- Citation Guidelines

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\(^2\) Dr. Miguel Roig (University of St. Thomas Spring 2004 Faculty Study Day Speaker, January 12, 2004.

\(^3\) Dr. Miguel Roig (University of St. Thomas Spring 2004 Faculty Study Day Speaker, January 12, 2004.

\(^4\) Dr. Miguel Roig (University of St. Thomas Spring 2004 Faculty Study Day Speaker, January 12, 2004.
- Common Knowledge: Did you look up the information? If so, then a citation is needed

- An emphasis should be placed on proper paraphrasing (This will be discussed in greater detail when the paper topics are handed out).

Student assignments should always be crafted and turned in with the understanding that the professor will be operating under the assumption that:

- unless otherwise properly noted in the assignment, the assignment submitted is the student’s own.

- the representation of their own or others’ work is accurate (e.g., data fabrication).

- that the assignment turned in/presented is exclusive to that course.

SCHEDULE OF READINGS, LECTURES, AND EXAMS

January 19, Introduction to the course.

Part I – Measuring Public Opinion

Topic One: Polling and the Public (Asher, Chp. 1)

Topic Two: The Problem of Nonattitudes (Asher, Chp. 2)

Topic Three: Wording and Context of Questions (Asher, Chp. 3)

Topic Four: Sampling Techniques (Asher, Chp. 4)

Topic Five: Interviewing and Data Collection Procedures (Asher, Chp. 5)

Part II – The 2012 Presidential Election Contest

Topic Six: The Nomination Struggle (A, A, G, & R, Chp. 1)

Topic Seven: The General Election Campaign (A, A, G, & R, Chp. 2)

Topic Eight: The Election Results (A, A, G, & R, Chp. 3)

Part III – Voting Behavior in the 2012 Elections


Topic Ten: Social Forces and the Vote (A, A, G, & R, Chp. 5)
**Topic Eleven:** Candidates, Issues, and the Vote (A, A, G, & R, Chp. 6)

**Topic Twelve:** Presidential Performance and Candidate Choice (A, A, G, & R, Chp. 7)

**Topic Thirteen:** Party Loyalties, Policy Preferences, and the Vote (A, A, G & R, Chp. 8)


**Topic Fourteen:** Candidates and Outcomes in 2012 (A, A, G, & R, Chp. 9)

**Topic Fifteen:** The Congressional Electorate in 2012 (A, A, G, & R, Chp. 10)

**Part V – Polls, Elections, and Democracy**

**Topic Sixteen:** The Media and the Polls (Asher, Chp. 6)

**Topic Seventeen:** Polls and Elections (Asher, Chp. 7)

**Topic Eighteen:** Analyzing and Interpreting Polls (Asher, Chp. 8)

**Topic Nineteen:** Polling and Democracy (Asher, Chp. 9)

**Topic Twenty:** Manipulating Public Opinion


**Topic Twenty-One:** The 2014 Congressional Elections (A, A, G, & R, Chp. 11)

**Topic Twenty-Two:** The 2012 and 2014 Elections (A, A, G, & R, Chp. 12)

**Topic Twenty-Three:** The Dynamics of American Elections (A, A, G, & R, Chp. 13)

**Important Dates:**

- No Class, Monday, March 13 – Friday, March 17, Spring Break
- Midterm Examination, Thursday, March 23
- 2017 UST Research Symposium, April 6-7
- No Class, April 13 -14, Easter Break
- No Class, Thursday, April 20, ACTC Annual Conference (Tentative)
- Last Day of Class, Friday, May 5
SETUPS Project Due on Friday, May 5

Tuesday, May 16, Final Examination, 8:30-11:00AM