

PSCI 3407A
Public Opinion and Public Policy
Time: Wednesday, 8:35 a.m. – 11:25 a.m.
Course location available on Carleton Central

I General information

Instructor: Steve White
Office: B657 LA(Loeb)
Office Hours: Tuesdays, 10:00a.m.–12:00 p.m., or by appointment (in person, or via Zoom)
Email: steve.white@carleton.ca

All email communication is to be via official Carleton university e-mail accounts and/or Brightspace, not personal emails.

II Course description

Public opinion in its many forms has become increasingly important for government decision-making and accountability processes. This course examines theories about the origins and dynamics of public opinion, the ways in which public opinion influences government policy and decision-making, and how decision-makers can shape public opinion.

III Course format

This course consists of weekly lectures, with time set aside in each class for discussion/activities. Students are expected to actively participate in class activities led by the instructor. Required reading materials will be available through Brightspace. All assigned work will be submitted via Brightspace. Although most of the assigned readings incorporate analyses of mass survey data, a deep familiarity with survey methodology is not a prerequisite for this course. Understanding the theories and conclusions, rather than the detailed empirical evidence supporting those theories and conclusions, is emphasized. Students will be introduced to core concepts in survey design and interpretation during the course.

IV Learning outcomes

By the end of this course, students should be able to:

- Distinguish between major theoretical approaches to understanding how opinions about matters of public policy are formed, and how they change
- Identify the key sources of individual-level differences in opinion

- Evaluate the relationship between public opinion and public policy in different contexts: what is the impact on democratic accountability?
- Develop basic skills in measuring public opinion and interpreting public opinion data.

V Texts

Required Text:

Anderson, Cameron D., and M. Turgeon (Eds.). 2023. *Comparative Public Opinion*. ISBN 978-0-367-64060-6. (This text is available online and free of charge through the Ares library reserve system on Brightspace).

All other required course material is also available online through the Ares library reserve system on Brightspace. Required readings for each week are listed in the course schedule.

VI Evaluation at a glance

Component	Value	Due Date
Attendance	5%	Cumulative
Term test one	20%	In Class October 7
Term test two	35%	In Class November 25
Examination essay outline and references	-	December 9 on Brightspace
Final examination	40%	Exam period

VII Evaluation in detail

Attendance (5%): You are expected to attend lectures and be prepared to participate in discussions of the assigned topics. Full credit (i.e. 5%) will be awarded for attending **at least 8 lectures** (not including the September 8 lecture). Students may therefore miss up to two lectures without penalty. Attendance grades will be assigned as follows:

8 or more lectures = 5%
 7 lectures = 4.5%
 6 lectures = 3.5%
 5 lectures = 2%
 Less than 5 lectures = 0%

Term test one (20%): Term test one covers all readings and lecture material up to and including September 30. The test will be 2 hours and 45 minutes in length and will consist of two parts, each worth 50% of the test grade.

Part I: Prepared Essay. One week before the test, students will be provided with two essay questions. On the test, students will select one of these two questions and respond in an essay.

Part II: Unseen Essay. At the beginning of the test, students will be provided with two additional essay questions that they have not seen in advance. Students will select one of these two questions and respond in an essay.

Responses should present a clear argument and support it through appropriate reference to relevant course material, including lectures and assigned readings. The suggested word range for each essay is 650 to 750 words. These ranges are approximate; students will not be penalized for modestly exceeding or falling short of them. The quality, clarity, and development of the argument are more important than the precise length of the response.

Term test two (35%): Term test two covers all readings and lecture material from October 14 to November 18. The test will be 2 hours and 45 minutes in length and will consist of two parts, each worth 50% of the test grade.

Part I: Prepared Essay. One week before the test, students will be provided with two essay questions. On the test, students will select one of these two questions and respond in an essay.

Part II: Unseen Essay. At the beginning of the test, students will be provided with two additional essay questions that they have not seen in advance. Students will select one of these two questions and respond in an essay.

Responses should present a clear argument and support it through appropriate reference to relevant course material, including lectures and assigned readings. The suggested word range for each essay is 650 to 750 words. These ranges are approximate; students will not be penalized for modestly exceeding or falling short of them. The quality, clarity, and development of the argument are more important than the precise length of the response.

Final examination (40%): The final examination will be 3 hours in length and will consist of two parts.

Part I: Prepared Essay (30%). At the end of the course, students will be provided with two essay questions based on material covered in the final two lectures of the course (December 2 and December 9). On the examination, students will select one of these two questions and write an essay of approximately 500–600 words. Responses should present a clear argument and support it through appropriate reference to relevant course material, including lectures and assigned readings.

Part II: Research Essay (70%). Students will write a short research essay on a topic selected from a list provided in advance. Students will develop their own argument and conduct the research for the essay before the examination. Students must submit for approval on or before December 9 (1) a brief essay outline and (2) a reference list of at least 10 sources. The outline should be no more than one page, and include the proposed thesis statement, the topic sentence for each main section or paragraph, and references to the sources that will be used in support of each part of the argument.

Students will be provided with copies of their approved outline and reference list at the examination. No other research materials or notes may be used. The essay itself must be written during the examination and should be approximately 1,000–1,200 words. Students should use author–date in–text citations when referring to outside sources.

The suggested word ranges for both parts are approximate. Students will not be penalized for modestly exceeding or falling short of them. As a general guide, students should plan to spend approximately one hour on Part I and 2 hours on Part II.

VIII Course schedule

September 9: Introduction: Should the Public Be Trusted?

Anderson, C.D., & M. Turgeon. "Introduction." In *Comparative Public Opinion*, pp. 3–15. Routledge, 2023. ***Note: Students are not required to read this in advance of the introductory class.*

September 16: How Do We Know What the Public Thinks?

Anderson, Christopher D., & Mathieu Turgeon. "Defining and Measuring Public Opinion." In *Comparative Public Opinion*, pp. 16–30. Routledge, 2023.

Glynn, Carroll J. "Chapter 1: The Meanings of Public Opinion." In *Public Opinion*, Third edition. Routledge, 2018.

Krosnick, Jon A. "Questionnaire design." In *The Palgrave handbook of survey research*, pp. 439–455. Palgrave Macmillan, Cham, 2018.

September 23: Shortcuts

Page, Benjamin I., and Robert Y. Shapiro. *The Rational Public: Fifty Years of Trends in Americans' Policy Preferences*. University of Chicago Press, 1992, pp. 1–36 (Chapter 1).

Popkin, Samuel L. "Information shortcuts and the reasoning voter." *Information, participation, and choice: An economic theory of democracy in perspective* (1993): 17–35.

September 30: Social Identities and Socialization

White, Stephen "Age and Public Opinion." In *Comparative Public Opinion*, pp. 41–62. Routledge, 2023.

Romualdi, Tyler, John Kennedy, & Christopher D. Anderson. "Class and Public Opinion." In *Comparative Public Opinion*, pp. 105–128. Routledge, 2023.

Djupe, Paul A. "Religion and Public Opinion." In *Comparative Public Opinion*, pp. 129–151. Routledge, 2023.

October 7: Term Test One

October 14: Social Pressure

Norris, Pippa. "Cancel culture: Myth or reality?." *Political studies* 71, no. 1 (2023): 145–174.

Asch, Solomon E. "Opinions and social pressure." *Scientific American* 193, no. 5 (1955): 31–35.

October 21: Media and Framing

Bastien, Frédérick. "The News Media Organizations and Public Opinion on Political Issues." In *Comparative Public Opinion*, pp. 310–323.

Bakshy, Eytan, Solomon Messing, and Lada A. Adamic. "Exposure to ideologically diverse news and opinion on Facebook." *Science* 348, no. 6239 (2015): 1130–1132.

Nisbet, Matthew C. "Communicating climate change: Why frames matter for public engagement." *Environment: Science and policy for sustainable development* 51, no. 2 (2009): 12–23.

October 28: Fall Break (No Classes)

November 4: Partisanship, Ideology, and Motivated Reasoning

Chassé, Philippe, & Éric Bélanger. "Ideology and Public Opinion." In *Comparative Public Opinion*, pp. 173–193.

Stephenson, Laura B. "Partisanship and Public Opinion." In *Comparative Public Opinion*, pp. 194–213.

Strickland, April A., Charles S. Taber, and Milton Lodge. "Motivated reasoning and public opinion." *Journal of health politics, policy and law* 36, no. 6 (2011): 935–944.

November 11: Material Interests

Weeden, J. and Kurzban, R. (2017), Self-Interest Is Often a Major Determinant of Issue Attitudes. *Political Psychology*, 38: 67–90. <https://doi.org/10.1111/pops.12392>

Chong, Dennis. *Rational Lives: Norms and Values in Politics and Society*. University of Chicago Press, 2000, pp. 1–10 (Introduction).

Kevins, Anthony. "The Impact of Labour Market Vulnerability: Explaining Attitudes Towards Immigration in Europe." In *Comparative Public Opinion*, pp. 259–283.

November 18: How Public Opinion Affects Policy

Petry, François. "How policy makers view public opinion." *Policy analysis in Canada: The state of the art* (2007): 375–398.

Petry, F., & M. Mendelsohn. 2004. Public Policy and Policy Making in Canada, 1994–2001. *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 37: 505–529.

Gilens, Martin. "Inequality and democratic responsiveness." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 69, no. 5 (2005): 778–796.

November 25: Term Test Two

December 2: How Politicians and Policies Affect Public Opinion

Wlezien, C. 1995. "The Public as Thermostat: Dynamics of Preferences for Spending," *American Journal of Political Science* 39: 981–1000.

Jacobs, L.R., and R.Y. Shapiro. Politics and Policymaking in the Real World: Crafted Talk and the Loss of Democratic Responsiveness. *Navigating Public Opinion: Polls, Policy, and the Future of American Democracy* (2002), 54–75.

Soss, Joe, and Sanford F. Schram. "A public transformed? Welfare reform as policy feedback." *American political science review* 101, no. 1 (2007): 111–127.

December 9: Should the Public Be Trusted? Revisiting the Democratic Dilemma

Bartels, Larry M. "Public Opinion and Democratic Politics." In *Democracy Erodes from the Top*, pp. 217–238. Princeton, 2023.

Peffley, Mark, & Robert Rohrschneider. "Elite Beliefs and the Theory of Democratic Elitism." In *The Oxford Handbook of Political Behavior*, pp. 65–79. Oxford University Press, 2007.

Hibbing, John R., and Elizabeth Theiss-Morse. *Stealth Democracy: Americans' Beliefs about How Government Should Work*. 1st ed., pp. 129–159 (Chapter 6). Cambridge University Press, 2002.

IX Policies and Procedures

Deferral Requests: If you are unable to write a test due to extenuating circumstances (such as a death in the family, illness, etc.), you must provide appropriate supporting documentation to the course instructor. Upon review, the instructor may offer a deferred test. For each test, all students granted a deferral will write the deferred assessment on the same date, at the same time, and in the same location. Alternative dates and times for deferred tests will not be offered.

Absences: As student attendance is only assessed on 8 lectures (not including September 8), students are permitted up to **two absences** for **any reason** with no impact on their grade. No additional absences will be granted exceptions.

Use of Artificial Intelligence: the use of generative artificial intelligence (AI) tools to produce *assessed content* **is not permitted** in this course. It is considered a violation of academic integrity standards. **For further clarity, students are not permitted to use AI to complete tests or assignments.** Students may, however, use generative artificial intelligence (AI) tools outside of class to explore concepts, locate academic studies or empirical examples related to the course,

and otherwise enhance their learning. Please refer to the policy in the Appendix of this document. As our understanding of the uses of AI and its relationship to student work and academic integrity continue to evolve, students are required to discuss their use of AI in any circumstance not described here with the course instructor to ensure it supports the learning goals for the course.

E-mail: Students must use a Carleton e-mail account in all correspondence. **Indicate the course number (PSCI 3407) in your email.**

Political Science Course Outline Appendix

REQUESTS FOR ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATION

You may need special arrangements to meet your academic obligations during the term. For an accommodation request the processes are as follows:

Student Mental Health

As a university student, you may experience a range of mental health challenges that significantly impact your academic success and overall well-being. If you need help, please speak to someone. There are numerous resources available both on- and off-campus to support you. Here is a list that may be helpful:

Emergency Resources (on and off campus):

<https://carleton.ca/safety/resources/>

Carleton Resources:

Mental Health and Wellbeing: <https://carleton.ca/wellness/>

Health & Counselling Services: <https://carleton.ca/health/>

Paul Menton Centre: <https://carleton.ca/pmc/>

Academic Advising Centre (AAC):
<https://carleton.ca/academicadvising/>

Centre for Student Academic Support (CSAS):
<https://carleton.ca/csas/>

Equity & Inclusivity Communities: <https://carleton.ca/equity/>

Off Campus Resources:

Distress Centre of Ottawa and Region: (613) 238-3311 or TEXT: 343-306-5550, <https://www.dcottawa.on.ca/>

Mental Health Crisis Service: (613) 722-6914, 1-866-996-0991,
<http://www.crisisline.ca/>

Good2Talk: 1-866-925-5454, <https://good2talk.ca/>

The Walk-In Counselling Clinic: <https://walkincounselling.com>

Academic consideration for medical or other extenuating

circumstances: Students must contact the instructor(s) of their absence or inability to complete the academic deliverable within the predetermined timeframe due to medical or other extenuating circumstances. For a range of medical or other extenuating circumstances, students may use the online self-declaration form and where appropriate, the use of medical documentation. This policy regards the accommodation of extenuating circumstances for both short-term and long-term periods and extends to all students enrolled at Carleton University.

Students should also consult the [Course Outline Information on Academic Accommodations](#) for more information. Detailed information about the procedure for requesting academic consideration can be found [here](#).

Pregnancy: Contact your Instructor with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. For accommodation regarding a formally-scheduled final exam, please contact Equity and Inclusive Communities (EIC) at equity@carleton.ca or by calling (613) 520-5622 to speak to an Equity Advisor.

Religious obligation: Contact your Instructor with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as

soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. For more details [click here](#).

Academic Accommodations for Students with Disabilities: The Paul Menton Centre for Students with Disabilities (PMC) provides services to students with Learning Disabilities (LD), psychiatric/mental health disabilities, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD), chronic medical conditions, and impairments in mobility, hearing, and vision. If you have a disability requiring academic accommodations in this course, please contact PMC at 613-520-6608 or pmc@carleton.ca for a formal evaluation. If you are already registered with the PMC, please request your accommodations for this course through the [Ventus Student Portal](#) at the beginning of the term, and no later than two weeks before the first in-class scheduled test or exam requiring accommodation (*if applicable*). Requests made within two weeks will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis. For final exams, the deadlines to request accommodations are published in the [University Academic Calendars](#). After requesting accommodation from PMC, meet with me to ensure accommodation arrangements are made. Please consult the PMC website for the deadline to request accommodations for the formally scheduled exam (if applicable).

Survivors of Sexual Violence: As a community, Carleton University is committed to maintaining a positive learning, working, and living environment where sexual violence will not be tolerated, and its survivors are supported through academic accommodations as per Carleton's Sexual Violence Policy. For more information about the services available at the university and to obtain information about sexual violence and/or support, visit:
<https://carleton.ca/equity/sexual-assault-support-services>.

Accommodation for Student Activities: Carleton University recognizes the substantial benefits, both to the individual student and for the university, that result from a student participating in activities beyond the classroom experience. Reasonable accommodation will be provided to students who compete or perform at the national or international level. Write to me with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist.

PETITIONS TO DEFER

Students unable to write a final examination because of illness or other circumstances beyond their control may apply within **three working days** to the Registrar's Office for permission to write a deferred examination. The request must be fully supported by the appropriate documentation. Only deferral petitions submitted to the Registrar's Office will be considered. [See Undergraduate Calendar, Article 4.3](#)

INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY

Student or professor materials created for this course (including presentations and posted notes, labs, case studies, assignments and exams) remain the intellectual property of the author(s). They are intended for personal use and may not be reproduced or redistributed without prior written consent of the author(s). Permissibility of submitting substantially the same piece of work more than once for academic credit. If group or collaborative work is

expected or allowed, provide a clear and specific description of how and to what extent you consider collaboration to be acceptable or appropriate, especially in the completion of written assignments.

Academic Advising Centre (7850)
Paul Menton Centre (6608)
Career Services (6611)

302 Tory
501 Nideyinàn
401 Tory

WITHDRAWAL WITHOUT ACADEMIC PENALTY

Please reference the [Academic Calendar](#) for each term's official withdrawal dates

OFFICIAL FINAL EXAMINATION PERIOD

Please reference the [Academic Calendar](#) for each terms Official Exam Period (may include evenings & Saturdays or Sundays)

For more information on the important dates and deadlines of the academic year, consult the [Carleton Calendar](#).

GRADING SYSTEM

The grading system is described in the Undergraduate Calendar section [5.4](#).

Standing in a course is determined by the course instructor subject to the approval of the Faculty Dean. This means that grades submitted by the instructor may be subject to revision. No grades are final until they have been approved by the Dean.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Academic integrity is an essential element of a productive and successful career as a student. Students are required to familiarize themselves with the university's [Academic Integrity Policy](#).

PLAGIARISM

The University Senate defines plagiarism as "*presenting, whether intentional or not, the ideas, expression of ideas or work of others as one's own.*" This can include:

- any submission prepared in whole or in part, by someone else, including the unauthorized use of generative AI tools (e.g., ChatGPT);
- reproducing or paraphrasing portions of someone else's published or unpublished material, and presenting these as one's own without proper citation or reference to the original source;
- submitting a take-home examination, essay, laboratory report or other assignment written, in whole or in part, by someone else;
- using ideas or direct, verbatim quotations, or paraphrased material, concepts, or ideas without appropriate acknowledgment in any academic assignment;
- using another's data or research findings;
- failing to acknowledge sources through the use of proper citations when using another's works and/or failing to use quotation marks;
- handing in "*substantially the same piece of work for academic credit more than once without prior written permission of the course instructor in which the submission occurs.*"

Plagiarism is a serious offence that cannot be resolved directly by the course's instructor. The Associate Dean of the Faculty conducts a rigorous investigation, including an interview with the student, when an instructor suspects a piece of work has been plagiarized. Penalties are not trivial. They can include a final grade of "F" for the course.

RESOURCES (613-520-2600, phone ext.)

Department of Political Science (2777)	B640 Loeb
Registrar's Office (3500)	300 Tory
Centre for Student Academic Success (3822)	4 th floor Library