

PSCI 3407A

Public Opinion and Public Policy

Time: Thursday, 11:35 a.m. – 2:25 p.m.
Location: A720 LA(Loeb)

I General information

Instructor: Steve White
Office: D696 LA(Loeb)
Office Hours: Thursdays, 2:30–3:30 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

All required course material is 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/Participation	10%	Cumulative
Take home midterm test	20%	October 21
Research proposal	30%	December 5
Final examination	40%	Exam period

VII Evaluation in detail

Attendance/Participation (10%): You are expected to attend every lecture, and be prepared to participate in discussions of the assigned topics. Student who are unable to attend a class must have a valid and documentable reason for absence (e.g. bereavement) in order to have that class omitted in the calculation of their attendance/participation grade.

Take home midterm test (20%): Students will answer any three out of five questions related to lectures up to and including the October 13 lecture. Each of the three answers should be between 350 and 500 words. Questions will be provided on Brightspace on October 13. Completed midterm tests will be submitted on Brightspace before 11:59pm on October 21. Late submissions without a valid and documentable reason (e.g. bereavement) will be penalized three percent for each late day (including partial days).

Research proposal (30%): Students will develop a 2000 to 2500-word proposal regarding public opinion about a public policy issue. The proposal will review any existing public opinion research, and then propose new hypotheses and survey questions about the public policy issue. Detailed instructions about this proposal will be provided on Brightspace at the beginning of October. Completed proposals will be submitted on Brightspace before 11:59pm on December 5. Late submissions without a valid and documentable reason (e.g. bereavement) will be penalized three percent for each late day (including partial days).

Final examination (40%): Students will answer any four out of six questions related to lectures in the course. Questions will be provided to students on December 8. The examination will be held in the official examination period at a time and date scheduled by the University.

VIII Course schedule

September 8: Introduction

No assigned readings

September 15: Measuring Public Opinion: Survey Samples, Modes, and Questions

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

September 22: Non-opinions, or Something Else?

Converse, P.E. 2006. "The Nature of Belief Systems in Mass Publics (1964)," *Critical Review* 18: 1–74

Zaller, J. & S. Feldman. 1992. "Answering Questions versus Revealing Preferences: A Simple Model of the Survey Response," *American Journal of Political Science* 36: 579–616.

Alvarez, R.M., & C. Franklin. 1994. "Uncertainty and Political Perceptions," *Journal of Politics* 56: 671–688.

September 29: Cognitive Shortcuts

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

Lau, Richard R., and David P. Redlawsk. "Advantages and disadvantages of cognitive heuristics in political decision making." *American journal of political science*(2001): 951–971.

Merolla, Jennifer L., Laura B. Stephenson, and Elizabeth J. Zechmeister. "Can Canadians take a hint? The (in) effectiveness of party labels as information shortcuts in Canada." *Canadian Journal of Political Science/Revue canadienne de science politique* 41, no. 3 (2008): 673–696.

October 6: Framing

Druckman, James N. "The implications of framing effects for citizen competence." *Political behavior* 23, no. 3 (2001): 225–256.

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.

Winter, Nicholas JG. "Beyond welfare: Framing and the racialization of white opinion on social security." *American Journal of Political Science* 50, no. 2 (2006): 400–420.

October 13: Motivated Reasoning

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.

Bolsen, Toby, James N. Druckman, and Fay Lomax Cook. "The influence of partisan motivated reasoning on public opinion." *Political Behavior* 36, no. 2 (2014): 235–262.

Matthews, J. Scott. "When partisans are attacked motivated reasoning and the news." *Parties, elections, and the future of canadian politics* 231 (2013).

October 20: Social Groups and Identities

Jardina, Ashley. "In-group love and out-group hate: White racial attitudes in contemporary US elections." *Political Behavior* 43, no. 4 (2021): 1535-1559.

Bobo, L.D. (1983). Whites' opposition to busing: Symbolic racism or realistic group conflict? *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 45 (6): 1196-1210.

Harell, Allison, Stuart Soroka, and Kiera Ladner. "Public opinion, prejudice and the racialization of welfare in Canada." *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 37, no. 14 (2014): 2580-2597.

October 27: FALL BREAK (NO CLASS)

November 3: Emotions

Marcus, G.E. 2000. "Emotions in Politics," *Annual Review of Political Science* 3: 221-50.

Druckman, J.N., McDermott, R. Emotion and the Framing of Risky Choice. *Polit Behav* 30, 297-321 (2008).

Fletcher, J., H. Bastedo, & J. Hove. 2009. "Losing Heart: Declining Support and the Political Marketing of the Afghanistan Mission," *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 42: 911-937.

November 10: Values and Interests

Feldman, S. 1988. "Structure and Consistency in Public Opinion: the Role of Core Beliefs and Values," *American Journal of Political Science* 32: 416-440.

Rokeach, M. 1968. "The Role of Values in Public Opinion Research," *Public Opinion Quarterly* 32: 547-559.

Chong, Dennis, Jack Citrin, and Patricia Conley. "When self-interest matters." *Political Psychology* 22, no. 3 (2001): 541-570.

November 17: Media

Kinder, D. 1998. "Communication and Opinion," *Annual Review of Political Science* 1: 167-197.

Wallace, Rebecca, and Elizabeth Goodyear-Grant. "News Coverage of Child Care during COVID-19: Where Are Women and Gender?." *Politics & Gender* 16, no. 4 (2020): 1123-1130.

Lazer, David MJ, Matthew A. Baum, Yochai Benkler, Adam J. Berinsky, Kelly M. Greenhill, Filippo Menczer, Miriam J. Metzger et al. "The science of fake news." *Science* 359, no. 6380 (2018): 1094–1096.

Levy, Ro'ee. "Social media, news consumption, and polarization: Evidence from a field experiment." *American economic review* 111, no. 3 (2021): 831–70.

November 24: Policy Effects on 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 1: Public Opinion Effects on Policy

Burstein, Paul. "The impact of public opinion on public policy: A review and an agenda." *Political research quarterly* 56, no. 1 (2003): 29–40.

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

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

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

December 8: Make-up class (if necessary)

In the event any class earlier in the semester is cancelled, a make-up class will be held on this date.

Appendix

Covid-19 Pandemic Measures

It is important to remember that COVID is still present in Ottawa. The situation can change at any time and the risks of new variants and outbreaks are very real. There are [a number of actions you can take](#) to lower your risk and the risk you pose to those around you including being vaccinated, wearing a mask, staying home when you're sick, washing your hands and maintaining proper respiratory and cough etiquette.

Feeling sick? Remaining vigilant and not attending work or school when sick or with symptoms is critically important. If you feel ill or exhibit COVID-19 symptoms do not come to class or campus. If you feel ill or exhibit symptoms while on campus or in class, please leave campus immediately. In all situations, you should follow Carleton's [symptom reporting protocols](#).

Masks: Masks are no longer mandatory in university buildings and facilities. However, we continue to recommend masking when indoors, particularly if physical distancing cannot be maintained. We are aware that personal preferences regarding optional mask use will vary greatly, and we ask that we all show consideration and care for each other during this transition.

Vaccines: While proof of vaccination is no longer required to access campus or participate in in-person Carleton activities, it may become necessary for the University to bring back proof of vaccination requirements on short notice if the situation and public health advice changes. Students are strongly encouraged to get a full course of vaccination, including booster doses as soon as they are eligible and submit their booster dose information in [cuScreen](#) as soon as possible. Please note that Carleton cannot guarantee that it will be able to offer virtual or hybrid learning options for those who are unable to attend the campus.

All members of the Carleton community are required to follow requirements and guidelines regarding health and safety which may change from time to time. For the most recent information about Carleton's COVID-19 response and health and safety requirements please see the [University's COVID-19 website](#) and review the [Frequently Asked Questions \(FAQs\)](#). Should you have additional questions after reviewing, please contact covidinfo@carleton.ca.

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/health/emergencies-and-crisis/emergency-numbers/>

- **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/>
- Empower Me: 1-844-741-6389, <https://students.carleton.ca/services/empower-me-counselling-services/>
- Good2Talk: 1-866-925-5454, <https://good2talk.ca/>
- The Walk-In Counselling Clinic: <https://walkincounselling.com>

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:

Pregnancy accommodation: Please 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, you must complete the Pregnancy Accommodation Form ([click here](#)).

Religious accommodation: Please 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](#).

Accommodations for students with disabilities: If you have a documented disability requiring academic accommodations in this course, please contact the Paul Menton Centre for Students with Disabilities (PMC) at 613-520-6608 or pmc@carleton.ca for a formal evaluation or contact your PMC coordinator to send your instructor your Letter of Accommodation at the beginning of the term. You must also contact the PMC no later than two weeks before the first in-class scheduled test or exam requiring accommodation (if applicable). After requesting accommodation from PMC, reach out to your instructor as soon as possible to ensure accommodation arrangements are made. For more details, [click here](#).

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 must be provided to students who engage in student activities at the national or international level. Please 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. <https://carleton.ca/senate/wp-content/uploads/Accommodation-for-Student-Activities-1.pdf>.

For more information on academic accommodation, please contact the departmental administrator or visit: students.carleton.ca/course-outline.

Sexual Violence Policy

As a community, Carleton University is committed to maintaining a positive learning, working and living environment where sexual violence will not be tolerated. 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: carleton.ca/sexual-violence-support.

Plagiarism

Carleton's [Academic Integrity Policy](#) defines plagiarism as “presenting, whether intentional or not, the ideas, expression of ideas or work of others as one’s own.” This includes reproducing or paraphrasing portions of someone else’s published or unpublished material, regardless of the source, and presenting these as one’s own without proper citation or reference to the original source. Examples of sources from which the ideas, expressions of ideas or works of others may be drawn from include, but are not limited to: books, articles, papers, websites, literary compositions and phrases, performance compositions, chemical compounds, art works, laboratory reports, research results, calculations and the results of calculations, diagrams, constructions, computer reports, computer code/software, material on the internet and/or conversations.

Examples of plagiarism include, but are not limited to:

- any submission prepared in whole or in part, by someone else;
- using ideas or direct, verbatim quotations, paraphrased material, algorithms, formulae, scientific or mathematical concepts, or ideas without appropriate acknowledgment in any academic assignment;
- using another’s data or research findings without appropriate acknowledgement;
- submitting a computer program developed in whole or in part by someone else, with or without modifications, as one’s own; and
- failing to acknowledge sources through the use of proper citations when using another’s work and/or failing to use quotations marks.

Plagiarism is a serious offence which cannot be resolved directly with the course's instructor. The Associate Deans of the Faculty conduct 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 may include a mark of zero for the plagiarized work or a final grade of "F" for the course.

More information on the University's Academic Integrity Policy can be found at: <https://carleton.ca/registrar/academic-integrity/>.

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).

Submission and Return of Term Work

Papers must be submitted directly to the instructor according to the instructions in the course outline. The departmental office will not accept assignments submitted in hard copy.

Grading

Standing in a course is determined by the course instructor, subject to the approval of the faculty Dean. Final standing in courses will be shown by alphabetical grades. The system of grades used, with corresponding grade points is:

Percentage	Letter grade	12-point scale	Percentage	Letter grade	12-point scale
90-100	A+	12	67-69	C+	6
85-89	A	11	63-66	C	5
80-84	A-	10	60-62	C-	4
77-79	B+	9	57-59	D+	3
73-76	B	8	53-56	D	2
70-72	B-	7	50-52	D-	1

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

Carleton E-mail Accounts

All email communication to students from the Department of Political Science will be via official Carleton University e-mail accounts and/or Brightspace. As important course and university information is distributed this way, it is the student's responsibility to monitor their Carleton University email accounts and Brightspace.

Carleton Political Science Society

The Carleton Political Science Society (CPSS) has made its mission to provide a social environment for politically inclined students and faculty. By hosting social events, including Model Parliament, debates, professional development sessions and more, CPSS aims to involve all political science students at Carleton University. Our mandate is to arrange social and academic activities in order to instill a sense of belonging within the Department and the larger University community. Members can benefit through our networking opportunities, academic engagement initiatives and numerous events which aim to complement both academic and social life at Carleton University. To find out more, visit us on Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/CarletonPoliticalScienceSociety/>.

Official Course Outline

The course outline posted to the Political Science website is the official course outline.