Public Opinion & Mass Communication
Political Science 3140
Fall 2015

Steven Rogers
Office: McGannon Hall 125
Email: smrogers@slu.edu

Class time: MWF 10:00am – 10:50am
Classroom: McGannon Hall 121
Office Hours: By appointment

Course Description

Public opinion is critical for the success of a representative democracy, but it is not clear citizens possess the political sophistication to effectively meet normative ideals. To assess whether this is the case, this course introduces students to many facets of public opinion in the United States. Some of the topics we will examine are: citizens' political knowledge and attitudes, the role of elites and groups in opinion formation, and the extent to which elites respond to public opinion.

As a result of completing the course, you should be able to (better) answer the following questions:

- What is public opinion and how do we measure it?
- How sophisticated are Americans' views of politics?
- What are the forces affecting public opinion?
- Can public opinion play the role we expect of it in a democracy?

Course Requirements

Class Participation:

Your class participation consists of three parts.

First, you are expected to complete the readings and contribute to class discussion. If you must miss a class for a legitimate reason, such as illness, family emergency, or University-sponsored activity, you should contact the professor as soon as possible. An absence is excused only if explicitly stated by Professor Rogers by email (therefore if you speak to Professor Rogers – be sure to send a follow up email to confirm excuse). If you have more than three unexcused absences, your final course grade will be lowered by 0.5% for each additional day.

Second, on the Blackboard discussion forum, you will be required to comment on readings for 6 Course Topics (excluding Topic 1). The below course outline has 12 separate topics. Comments should address readings' main arguments, shortcomings, and questions you would like to discuss in class. Comments should not address textbook readings (e.g. Erikson). Blackboard posts should be at least 350 words, and deadlines for comments are 9pm the night before reading due dates, which are typically Wednesday.

Third, you will present and lead discussion for two readings. You will do this once by yourself and once with a partner. These presentations should respectively be approximately 10 and 15 minutes Solo readings to choose from are designated in the Course Reading list by an asterisk (*). Partner readings are designated by two asterisks (**). Presentations should:

- Describe the main *themes* of the reading
- Explain what its *contributions* are to our understanding of public opinion
- Provide specific *criticisms* of the study (e.g., its theoretical argument, hypotheses, evidence, analysis, etc.)
- Raise *questions* about specific theoretical or empirical issues that you did not understand
- Include a one page handout for fellow students

You will choose which readings you would like to present on August 26th.

Papers:

There will be two main written assignments in this course. They will require you to review and critique debates in the public opinion and elections literature. The first paper focuses on the role of income and social issues in public opinion **(Due November 2nd)**, and the second paper will focus on presidential elections **(Due December 4th)**. Each paper will be 7 - 9 pages. You will receive more specific details about the assignments at least three weeks before the papers are due.

Exams:

There will be a midterm and final exam in this course. Each exam will be in-class, open book, and open note. Format will be short answer and/or essay.

Grades

Your grade for this course will consist of the following components and relative weights:

Item	Overall Course Grade Weight
Blackboard Posts	3%
Reading Presentations	10%
In-Class Participation	15%
Paper 1	12.5%
Paper 2	17.5%
Midterm	17%
Final	25%

There will be no make-up tests or deadline extensions given in this course. Exemptions will only be made with written (e.g. email) prior consent for planned events such as sponsored SLU activities or religious observances or under unusual circumstances such as a documented medical emergency. It is the student's responsibility to request and obtain this consent. Late papers will be marked down 10% for each day. There will be no assignments designated purely as "extra credit."

When determining the final grade, the following grading scale will be used. I will round final grades. Depending on the distribution of grades, I reserve the right to impose curves to assignments and final grades.

Letter Grade	Percentage	Letter Grade	Percentage	Letter Grade	Percentage
A	93% - 100%	B	83% - 86%	C	73% - 76%
A-	90% - 92%	B-	80% - 82%	C-	70% - 72%
B+	87% - 89%	C+	77% - 79%	D	60% - 69%
				F	below 60%

When translating letter grades into numeric grades, the midpoint of the range will be used (e.g. A = 96.5%, A- = 91%, etc.)

Key Dates

Due to the university calendar or Professor Rogers' professional obligations, we will not hold class on the following days:

September 2: No Class ~ Rogers at Academic Conference
September 4: No Class ~ Rogers at Academic Conference
September 7: No Class ~ Labor Day
October 19: No Class ~ Fall Break
November 25 & 27: No Class ~ Thanksgiving

Course Evaluations

Students are requested to fill out a course evaluation at the end of the course.

Academic Honesty

The University is a community of learning, whose effectiveness requires an environment of mutual trust and integrity. Academic integrity is violated by any dishonesty such as soliciting, receiving, or providing any unauthorized assistance in the completion of work submitted toward academic credit. While not all forms of academic dishonesty can be listed here, examples include copying from another student, copying from a book or class notes during a closed book exam, submitting materials authored by or revised by another person as the student's own work, copying a passage or text directly from a published source without appropriately citing or recognizing that source, taking a test or doing an assignment or other academic work for another student, securing or supplying in advance a copy of an examination or quiz without the knowledge or consent of the instructor, sharing or receiving the questions from an on-line quiz with another student, taking an on-line quiz with the help of another student, and colluding with another student or students to engage in academic dishonesty.

All clear violations of academic integrity will be met with appropriate sanctions. In this course, academic dishonesty on an assignment will result in an automatic grade of 0 for that assignment and a report of academic dishonesty sent to the Academic Honesty Committee of the College of Arts and Sciences. In the case of Class B violations, the Academic Honesty Committee may impose a larger sanction including, but not limited to, assigning a failing grade in the course, disciplinary probation, suspension, and dismissal from the University.

Students should refer to the following SLU website for more information about Class A and B violations and the procedures following a report of academic dishonesty: http://www.slu.edu/x12657.xml

Students with Special Needs-Disability Services

In recognition that people learn in a variety of ways and that learning is influenced by multiple factors (e.g., prior experience, study skills, learning disability), resources to support student success are available on campus. Students who think they might benefit from these resources can find out more about:

- Course-level support (e.g., faculty member, departmental resources, etc.) by asking your course instructor.
- University-level support (e.g., tutoring/writing services, Disability Services) by visiting the Student Success Center (BSC 331) or by going to www.slu.edu/success.

Students who believe that, due to a disability, they could benefit from academic accommodations are encouraged to contact Disability Services at 314-977-8885 or visit the Student Success Center. Confidentiality will be observed in all inquiries. Course instructors support student accommodation requests when an approved letter from Disability Services has been received and when students discuss these accommodations with the instructor after receipt of the approved letter.

Required Texts

The following texts should be available from the University Bookstore or online retailers, such as Amazon.com. Other readings will be made available via Blackboard.

Erikson, Robert S. and Kent L. Tedin. 2011. "American Public Opinion." New York, NY: Pearson. Eighth Edition [Erikson on course outline]
ISBN: 9780205745432

Sides, John & Lynn Vavreck. 2013. "The Gamble: Choice and Chance in the 2012 Presidential Election." Princeton, NJ. Princeton University Press.
ISBN: 9780691156880

Course Outline

The following listing of topics outlines the subjects we will cover in class and the reading assignments for each of the topics. My intent for the course is to be more lecture focused on Mondays and discussion focused Wednesdays and Fridays. I reserve the right the make change to the syllabus as the semester progresses. You are responsible for any of the changes to the assigned readings. All of the articles and readings on the syllabus will be available on Blackboard. If you have any trouble accessing any of the on-line pieces, **please let Professor Rogers know as soon as possible.**

- August 24 – Course Introduction

Topic 1: Introduction to Public Opinion

- August 26
  - Erikson: Chapter 1
  - Herbst, Susan. "The History and Meaning of Public Opinion." In *New Directions in Public Opinion.*
- August 28
  - Key, V.O. 1961. *Public Opinion and American Democracy*. New York: Knopf. pp. 3-18 ("Introduction")
  - Lippmann, Walter. 1925. "The Phantom Public" Excerpt.

Topic 2: Measuring Public Opinion and Knowledge

- August 31
  - Erikson: Chapter 2

- September 2 ~ No Class – Rogers at Academic Conference
- September 4 ~ No Class – Rogers at Academic Conference
- September 7 ~ No Class – Labor Day

- September 9 & 11
  - "What the Public Knows – In Pictures, Words, Maps, and Graphs." – Pew 2015
  - Herbst, Susan. 1993. Chapter 3: "Techniques of Opinion Expression and Measurement." in Numbered Voices: How Opinion Polling Has Shaped American Politics.
  - Berinsky, Adam. 1999. "Two Faces of Public Opinion." *American Journal of Political Science*: 43(4), 1209 – 1230.*
  - Silver, Nate. 2014. "Here's Proof Some Pollsters Are Putting a Thumb on the Scale." *FiveThirtyEight.com*.

Topic 3: Attitudes and Opinions

- September 14
  - Erikson: Chapter 3

- September 16 & 18
  - Clawson and Oxley, Chapter 5. "Ideological Incongruence and Critiques."
    - Focus on parts of reading related to Converse, Philip. 1964. "The Nature of Belief Systems in Mass Publics." Skim the Converse piece (also on Blackboard) after reading Clawson and Oxley
  - Zaller, John and Stanley Feldman. 1992. "A Simple Theory of the Survey Response." *American Journal of Political Science*. 36(3).
  - Bartels, Larry. "Democracy with Attitudes." In Michael B. MacKuen and George Rabinowitz, eds. *Electoral Democracy*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2003.

Topic 4: Rational Choice

- September 21
  - Bartels, Larry. 2008. "The Study of Electoral Behavior."
  - Erikson: Chapter 4

- September 23 & 25
  - Lupia, Arthur. 1994. "Shortcuts Versus Encyclopedias: Information and Voting Behavior in California Insurance Reform Elections." *American Political Science Review* 88: 63-76.*
  - Popkin, S. *The Reasoning Voter*, 2nd ed. (1994), Prologue (p. 1-6) and Ch. 4 (p. 72-81, 91-95)
  - Krosnick, Jon. 1990. "Government Policy and Citizen Passion." *Political Behavior* (12)1 p. 59 – 92.
  - Page, Benjamin. And Robert Y. Shapiro. 1992. "The Rational Public." Chapters 1, 2, 8, & 9**

Topic 5: Elite Opinion and Socialization

- September 28
  - Erikson: Chapter 5

- September 30 & October 2
  - Zaller, John. 1992. *The Nature and Origins of Mass Opinion*. pp. 6-52.
  - Fiorina, Morris. *Culture War*. Chapters 1, 2, and 9
  - Mutz, Diana. 2006. *Hearing the Other Side.* Chapters 1 – 3. **

Topic 6: Socialization (continued)

- October 5 & 7
  - Newcomb, Theodore M. 1958. "Attitude Development as a Function of Reference Groups: The Bennington Study." In *Readings in Social Psychology*, ed. Eleanor E. Maccoby, Theodore M. Newcomb, and Eugene L. Hartley. NY: Holt, pp. 265-75.
  - Stoker, Laura, and M. Kent Jennings. 1995. "Life-Cycle Transitions and Political Participation: the Case of Marriage." *American Political Science Review* 89(2): 421-433.*
  - Alford, John R. and John R. Hibbing. 2010. "The Ultimate Source of Political Opinions: Genes and the Environment." In *Understanding Public Opinion.*

- October 9
  - Catch up & Review

- October 12
  - Midterm

- October 14 & 16
  - Erikson: Chapter 7: p. 190 – 199
  - "What's the Matter with Kansas?" ~ (Watch Documentary in Class)

- October 19: Fall Break

Topic 7: Groups & Self-Interest

- October 21 & October 23
  - Nelson, Thomas E. and Donald Kinder. 1996. "Issue Frames and Group-Centrism in American Public Opinion." *The Journal of Politics* 58(4): 1055-78.
  - David O. Sears and Carolyn L. Funk (1990). "Self-Interest in Americans' Political Opinions." in *Beyond Self Interest*, edited by Jane J. Mansbridge. (R)
  - Green, Donald Philip and Jonathan A. Cowden. 1992. "Who Protests: Self-Interest and White Opposition to Busing." *The Journal of Politics* 54: 471-496.
  - Bartels, Larry. 2008. "Homer Gets a Tax Cut" Chapter 6 in *Unequal Democracy.**

Topic 8: Groups (continued)

- October 26
  - Erikson 199- 225

- October 28 & 30
  - Sears, David O., Colette Van Laar, Mary Carrillo, and Rick Kosterman. 1997. "Is It Really Racism? The Origins of White Americans' Opposition to Race-Targeted Policies." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 61: 16-53.
  - Kuklinski, James, Micheal D. Cobb, and Martin Gilens. 1997. "Racial Attitudes and the New South." *Journal of Politics.* *
  - Shapiro, Virginia and Shauna L. Shames. 2001. "The Gender Basis of Public Opinion." In *Understanding Public Opinion.*

Topic 9: The Media

- November 2
  - Erikson Chapter 8

- November 4 & 6
  - Iyengar, Shanto and Donald Kinder. "News that Matters." Chapters 2 – 3. 1987.
  - Prior, Markus. 2005. "News vs. Entertainment: How Increasing Media Choice Widens Gaps in Political Knowledge and Turnout. *American Journal of Political Science*, 49(3):577-592.*
  - Delli-Carpini, Michael X. 2014. "The Political Effects of Entertainment Media." in *Oxford Handbook of Political Communication*.
  - Baumgartner, Jody and Jonathan S. Morris. "The Daily Show Effect." *American Political Research.* 2006.

Topic 10: Race & the Media

- November 9, 11, 13
  - Mendelberg, Tali. 2001. *The Race Card.* Chapters 1, 2 (skim), 4 & 5**
  - Gilens, Martin. 1999. *Why Americans Hate Welfare.* Chapters 5 and 6.
  - Kinder, Donald R., and Nicholas Winter. 2001. "Exploring the Racial Divide: Blacks, Whites, and Opinion on National Policy." American Journal of Political Science 45(2): 439-56.
  - Brader, Ted, Nicholas A. Valentino, and Elizabeth Suhay. 2008. "What Triggers Public Opposition to Immigration? Anxiety, Group Cues, and Immigration Threat." American Journal of Political Science 52(4): 959-978.

Topic 11: Elections and Campaigns

- November 16
  - Erikson: Chapter 9

- November 18, 20, 23
  - Gelman, Andrew and Gary King. 1993. "Why are American Presidential Election Campaign Polls so Variable When Votes are so Predictable."
  - Bartels, Larry. 1987. "Candidate Choice and the Dynamics of the Presidential Nominating Process" *American Journal of Political Science* *
  - Kinder, Don. And Roderick Kiewiet. 1981. "Sociotropic Politics: The American Case." *British Journal of Political Science.* 11(2).
  - Sanders, Laura. 2010. "Home Team Wins May Influence Elections." *Wired: Science News.*
  - Alan Gerber et al., 2011. "How Large and Long-Lasting are the Effects of Televised Campaign Ads? Results from A Randomized Field Experiment." *American Political Science Review*. Pp.135-150.

- November 25 & 28
  - Thanksgiving Break

Topic 12: Representation and Public Opinion

- November 30
  - Erikson: Chapters 10 & 11

- December 2 & 4
  - Jeffrey R. Lax and Justin H. Phillips. 2009. "Gay Rights in the States: Public Opinion and Policy Responsiveness." *American Political Science Review.* Pp. 367-386.
  - Gilens, Martin. 2012. "Affluence and Influence." Ch. 2 – 5 (skim Ch 2)**
  - Bartels, Larry. "Unequal Democracy: Economic Inequality and Political Representation." Chapter 9. 2008.*

- December 7: Review and Catch-Up