PLAP 227: Public Opinion and Political Behavior  
Spring 2008

Mon & Wed 10:00–10:50am  
Gilmer 190

Course web page:  
https://toolkit.itc.virginia.edu/cgi-local/tk/UVa_CLAS_2008_Spring_PLAP227-1

Professor Nicholas Winter  
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100 Cabell Hall  
office hours:  
Wednesday 2:45-4:15pm & by appointment

Teaching Assistants  
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Monday 11-12  
at Starbucks on Corner  
& by appt.  
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& by appt.

This course will examine public opinion and assess its place in the American political system. The course will emphasize both how citizens’ thinking about politics is shaped and the role of public opinion in political campaigns, elections, and government. While the course will focus on research on the current state of public opinion, throughout the course we will also discuss historical developments in opinion and its place in politics, including changes that arose with the development of polling and with the advent of television and other electronic media. We will also consider normative questions, including the role opinion should play in American democracy.

Course Requirements
Requirements for this course include attendance and participation in section, an in-class midterm examination, two papers, and a comprehensive final examination, during the allotted final exam time slot for this class. Your TA may assign additional short writing assignments, quizzes, and the like, as part of your section participation grade.

The assignments for the papers will be posted to Toolkit and announced in lecture.

Grades will be based on the following breakdown:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Points</th>
<th>Date</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Section participation</td>
<td>15 percent</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Paper</td>
<td>15 percent</td>
<td>February 20, at the beginning of lecture</td>
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<tr>
<td>Midterm exam</td>
<td>15 percent</td>
<td>March 19, in class</td>
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<tr>
<td>Second Paper</td>
<td>30 percent</td>
<td>April 28, at the beginning of lecture</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final exam</td>
<td>25 percent</td>
<td>Friday, May 2, 9am-noon</td>
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Readings
There are five required books for this course, which are available at the UVa Bookstore. They are also all available from the usual online retailers.


All other readings for the course are available through the Toolkit page for the course.

Sections
The section meetings will provide an opportunity for you to clarify material from the course, discuss the lectures, readings, and current events. Your TA may also assign periodic brief written work in or out of section.

**Attendance at your weekly section meeting is required.** This requirement is reflected, in part, in the 15% of your grade that comes from attendance and active participation in section. *In addition, note that consistent section attendance is a requirement of this course, without which you will not receive a passing grade.*

Section meeting times:

1. W 1200-1250  CAB 215
2. W 1300-1350  CAB 323
3. R 1600-1650  CAB 319
4. R 1800-1850  CAB 222
5. R 1900-1950  CAB B029
6. W 1500-1550  CAB 224

Sections will not meet the first week; they will meet for the first time the week of January 21.
**Other Policies**

We respect and uphold University policies and regulations pertaining to the observation of religious holidays; assistance available to the physically handicapped, visually, and/or hearing impaired students; plagiarism; racial, ethnic, gender, sexual orientation, or religious discrimination; and all forms of harassment.

If you have (or suspect you have) a learning or other disability that requires academic accommodations, you must contact the Learning Needs and Evaluation Center (http://www.virginia.edu/studenthealth/lnec.html) as soon as possible, at least two to three weeks before any assignments are due. We take learning disabilities very seriously and we will make whatever accommodations you need to be successful in this class but they must be properly documented by the LNEC.

Plagiarism, or academic theft, is passing off someone else’s words or ideas as your own without giving proper credit to the source. You are responsible for not plagiarizing and are expected to abide by the University of Virginia Honor Code (see http://www.virginia.edu/honor/proc/fraud.html).

Participation in this class implies permission from students to submit their written work to services that check for plagiarism; you may be required to submit both hard and digital copies of your papers.

**Papers turned in late without prior arrangement with your TA will not be considered for a grade.**
Course Schedule and Outline

I. INTRODUCTION TO THE COURSE

January 16: Introduction: Why study public opinion?

January 21: No Lecture (MLK Day)

II. MEANING AND MEASUREMENT

January 23: What is “public”? What is “opinion”? Is “public opinion” the intersection of the two?

January 28 & 30: Measurement and analysis
For more on the mechanics of polling, you may want to skim other chapters that interest you.

III. DEMOCRATIC COMPETENCE

February 4: The public’s political information and sophistication

February 6: Political Tolerance

February 11: Ideology and the organization of opinion
February 12: Virginia Primary (plus Maryland and DC)

IV. INDIVIDUAL OPINION

February 13: Self interest


February 18: Groups I—Theory and gender


February 20: In-Class Movie
Magic Town (abridged)
(You will finish the movie in section.)

The first paper is due at the beginning of lecture on February 20.

February 25: Groups II—Race


February 27: Core values


March 3 & 5: No class (spring break)

March 10: Emotion

V. OPINION IN POLITICAL CONTEXT

March 12 & 17: A theory of opinion formation

March 19: *Midterm examination in class*

March 24: The media

March 26: Framing


March 31 & April 2: Political campaigns


April 7 & 9: In-Class Movie: Campaigns in practices
“In Journeys with George”

April 14: Collective opinion


April 16: What happened to political discourse?

April 21: Representation: Does opinion affect policy?

April 23: Does policy affect opinion?

VII. CONCLUSIONS

April 28: Public opinion and American democracy

*The second paper is due at the beginning of lecture on April 28*

Friday, May 2: Final Examination (9:00am–noon)

5/3:GUd
5/6:IN|NC
5/13:NB|WVd
5/17:HIr
5/20:KY|OR
5/27:IDr
6/3:NMr|MTd|SD
6/7:PRd