

**POLI 308 Public Opinion**  
University of Wisconsin – Stevens Point, Fall 2017

Instructor:	<b>Dr. Saemyi Park</b>
Class Location & Time:	<b>CCC 234 &amp; Tu/Th 2:00PM - 3:15PM</b>
Instructor’s Office:	CCC 468
Office Hours:	W 10:00 AM – 2:00 PM & by appointment
E-mail:	spark@uwsp.edu
Phone:	715-346-4107

**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

This course is designed to introduce to the origins, nature, and measurement of public opinion as it relates to contemporary political process. My goal is to help you think about the role of public opinion in democracy, the nature and quality of the procedures we use to gauge public opinion, and your own role as a member of the public. We will investigate public opinion from a variety of angles. We will study how opinion polls are conducted and use them to understand opinion process. We will also consider the roots of public opinion, learn about multiple methods of measuring the public’s political judgment and understanding. In addition. We will discuss how our opinion is formed, how people arrived at a vote choice on Election Day, whether public opinion affects policymaking process, and how mass media influence public opinion.

**STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES & ASSESSMENT**

<b>Student Learning Outcomes at the end of this course</b>	<b>Course Topics</b>	<b>Evaluations of Outcome</b>
<b>Student should be able to:</b>	<b>The following topic(s) will address this outcome:</b>	<b>This outcome will be evaluated primarily by:</b>
Understand how people form opinions and translate opinions into survey answers	“What is Public Opinion?” “Can We Trust Public Opinion?” “Where Do Opinions Come From?”	Midterm examination Short Assignment Final Project
Comprehend how surveys are conducted	“How Do We Study Public Opinion?” “How Can We Measure Public Opinion?”	Film Analysis Paper II Final Examination Final Project
Reflect on debates about media effects on public opinion	“How Do Mass Media Influence Public Opinion?”	Final Examination Film Analysis Paper III
Analyze and interpret survey results	“Why Are Polls Variable?” “How Can We Interpret Public Opinion?”	Final Examination Final Project Film Analysis Paper I
Understand how much public opinion does affect public policy		Midterm Examination Final Project

## REQUIRED READINGS

There is no textbook for you to purchase. Instead, individual articles and book chapters are assigned for each week's topic. All readings will be uploaded to the course website at D2L. You must complete assigned readings BEFORE the designated topic is addressed in class.

## COURSE REQUIREMENTS

	Weight	Due Date
Midterm Online Exam	20%	March 8 (TH)
Final Online Exam	20%	May 17 (TH)
Film Analysis Paper	10%	Within two weeks after showing
Final Paper - Survey Design	30%	May 19 (Sat)
3 Reaction Papers	10%	For the assigned dates
Attendance & Participation	10%	Every class
Total:	100%	

## GRADING SCALE

Grades will be determined according to the university's standard scale. I have incredibly high standards for my grades. If you meet the basic requirements for an assignment, you will get a C. If you want a A or B, you need to go above and beyond the exact requirements for an assignment. For individual assignments, I will define the A-F grade base in the following way:

Criteria						
<b>Outstanding</b>	A	93-100	A-	90-92		
<b>Above average</b>	B+	87-89	B	83-86	B-	80-82
<b>Average</b>	C+	77-79	C	73-76	C-	70-72
<b>Below average</b>	D+	67-69	D	63-66	D-	60-62
<b>Unsatisfactory</b>	F	Below 60				

**Note:** students must complete ALL the required work in order to be eligible to receive a passing grade in the course. **You do NOT have the option to "take a zero" on an assignment.** Not completing all the required work will result either in a final grade of incomplete until the work is submitted or an F for the course. You are NOT allowed to submit and complete the required course assignments late unless you receive my permission to do so. Students with serious illness or family emergencies may be considered to be given for late submission, but I will need to see an official evidence to verify the seriousness of the situation.

## ASSIGNMENT DESCRIPTIONS

### A. Exams

There are two ONLINE exams in this course (20% per each exam). The mid-term exam will be given in March 8 (TH), and it will contain material covered in the first part of the course. The final exam will occur in May 17 (TH). It will NOT be cumulative, and questions will cover the second half of the course. The

exam will be open at 9AM and close at 11:59PM on each scheduled date. You will be given two hours to take the test. Once you start taking the test, you are NOT allowed to take a break for return. **Because it is an online exam and is open for a day, students would not have a make-up exam opportunity for whatever reasons.** The format of exams is a combination of multiple choice and short identification questions. We will have a review session before midterm and final exam. I will also distribute a study guide a week prior to the exam day.

**Note:** If you are required to attend the university-sponsored activities (athletic games etc.) or if you are seriously ill and incapable of taking the exam, I may consider you to take the test early or late. However, you must provide an official document to prove your excuse and I reserve the right to determine if you will be given the make-up exam opportunity or not. Make-up exam is all short identification essays, which is a lot harder for students to do well on it. And, you will take it on the final day of class in my office (in case for the university-sponsored activities) or on the date I chose to give you.

### ***B. Short Assignment***

You will be given one short assignment (10%). It will ask you to complete the exercise or activity online (the course website at D2L). It is not a paper assignment. The tentative deadline for short assignment is February 28 (W). A separate announcement will be made in class for more details.

### ***C. Final Paper – Survey Design***

Your final project is to design the public opinion survey for your own interest. This project consists of (1) a consultation meeting with Dr. Park and (2) a survey design paper. It is worth 30% of the course grade (10% for the meeting & 20% for the final outcome). First, you must have one-on-one meeting with Dr. Park on either April 17 or April 19. I will check your ideas or topics. You should be prepared to bring a short prospectus for the meeting so that I can provide the best feedback customized for your project. You are encouraged to have more than one meeting with me. I am happy to help you to do well on this project. Second, you can turn your ideas into the actual survey design. You will design the sample procedure, write survey questions, determine answering options, and propose the way your survey to be interpreted. A good design should make reference to class materials. It is expected that you will write approximately 1,300-1,500 words (single-space) for the project. I will distribute separate worksheets containing detailed information about the final paper.

### ***D. Film Analysis Paper***

You will analyze ONE of three films shown in class in light of the lecture materials and assigned readings for this course. You are free to write on any topic related to public opinion addressed in the documentaries, as long as they are able to incorporate and demonstrate your thorough understanding of the different assigned course readings. You can submit it to D2L within two weeks from the day the film was presented in class. A separate worksheet will be distributed in class for more details.

### ***E. Attendance and Participation***

Regular and prompt attendance, active participation, and mature attentiveness during lecture meetings are MANDATORY. I will NOT distribute lecture notes via e-mail for students who miss a lecture. The student is responsible for finding out what he/she missed and obtaining class notes or assignments from

someone else in the class. **A student who has Eight or MORE absences will automatically receive an “F” for the course for inadequate class attendance.** It is also expected that you will be on time for class. Three tardies are the equivalent of one absence. In the unlikely event that you are late for class, it is YOUR responsibility to let me know that you came in immediately after class. Otherwise, your tardy will be recorded as an absence. It is also your responsibility to keep track of how many absences and tardies you have accumulated. I reserve the right to determine whether an absence should be recoded depending upon the amount of time a student is present during a class meeting. This policy will be revised as needed.

*Excusable Exceptions (evidence/document is required to submit at the beginning of the semester)*

- Documented participated in school-sponsored activities
- Religious holiday

## **COURSE POLICIES**

### ***A. Readings***

Students are required to complete each week’s required readings BEFORE that lecture. Our class is not about simply going over the readings. This means that you are responsible to be prepared to discuss the assigned materials and be examined on it (either in class or exams) even if readings are not covered in class.

### ***B. D2L***

I maintain a page for this course at the D2L site. The site contains copies of some of the material distributed in class (this syllabus, for example), outlines of class material, the separate worksheet for the group oral presentation, and many more. You must check this site before every class.

### ***C. Lectures***

Before we begin a topic in class, I will post an outline of the lecture material on the course website. The outline for a topic will remain on the website for a day or two after we finish a topic and will then be removed. The outlines give you the framework of the lecture but do not give you the entire script. If you wish, you can print these outlines and bring them with you to class to use as a base for note taking. You will learn and remember better when you write things down yourself. Regarding note taking, make sure you take notes that will be meaningful to you later when you are reviewing your notes, rather than focusing only on transcribing the slides verbatim.

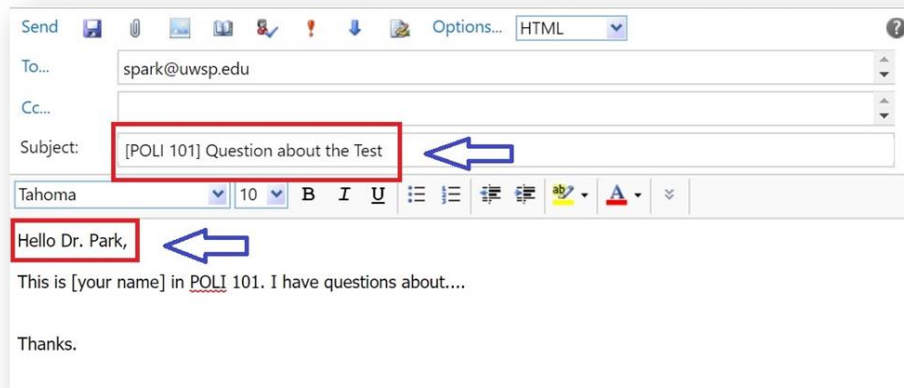
### ***D. Office Hours***

Feel free to drop by during my office hours or make an appointment to see me. I WELCOME students.

### ***E. Email Communication***

Email is a convenient way to continue contact between professor and student outside of class. Email is best for 1-2 sentence responses, and conceptual questions do not lend themselves well to email. If you have any questions regarding your papers, please visit my office hours for in-depth consultation. I will

NOT consult on your written assignment via email. While students should take advantage of this email communication opportunity with me, you should also do so in a professional manner. I will NOT reply to emails that do not include a salutation (“Dear Prof. ...” or “Hello Dr. ...”).



I will also NOT respond to emails that ask for answers to questions that can easily be found on the syllabus or the lecture notes. If you have a question regarding lectures or assigned material that you just cannot seem to master, then ask a question in class, or come to me during office hours. I will only respond to questions about coursework or academic requirements, and I will not respond to questions of a personal nature. I will be able to respond your email during weekdays (not weekend), but please email me again if you do not receive my response within 48 hours.

#### ***F. Honesty:***

Any instance of academic misconduct will be taken seriously and may result in failure of the course. Misconduct will result in notification to the Dean of Students. If you are having a problem, it is much better to talk to me about it. Do not struggle by yourself. I want you to learn and do well in this course, not punish you with a lower grade. Talk to me if you are having a problem so I can try to help you work out a solution.

#### ***G. Late Work & Extra Credit***

There are NO opportunities to make up a missed assignment nor will there be any extra credit assignments. Students with serious illness or family emergencies may be considered to be given, but I will need to see an official evidence to verify the seriousness of the situation.

#### ***H. Ground Rules***

This course is open to a variety of ways of interpreting history, theories, and policies. Students are encouraged to share their questions and ideas in lecture. Since there will be differences and disagreements, students are expected to show respect to the comments and positions of fellow students and me. Also, using a cell phone, iPad, or laptop is NOT allowed in class.

## The Course Calendar

(Topics, readings, and schedule subject to announced change by instructor.)

Topic	Dates	Readings @ D2L
<b>Introduction</b>		
Course Information	1/23	
Class Activity – Bring Your Laptop	1/25	
What Is Public Opinion?	1/30	Chapter 1 (Gylnn et al.)
<b>Can We Trust Public Opinion?</b>		
Knowledge, Interest & Attention to Politics	2/1	Chapter 8 (Clawson & Oxley)
Attitude Stability & Change	2/6	Chapter 4 (Clawson & Oxley)
<b>Where Do Opinions Come From?</b>		
Political Socialization	2/8	Chapter 2 (Clawson & Oxley)
Ideology & Partisanship	2/13	Chapter 5 (Clawson & Oxley)
Core Values & Self-Interest	2/15	Chapter 6 (Clawson & Oxley)
Group Identities	2/20	“Gender” (Sapiro & Shames) “Race” (Atkeson et al.)
<b>How Do We Study Public Opinion?</b>		
Methods for Studying Public Opinion	2/22	Chapter 3 (Gylnn et al.)
The Problem of Public Opinion Surveys	2/27	Chapter 2 (Asher)
<b>Film Presentation I</b>	3/1	
<b>Review Session &amp; Midterm Exam</b>	<b>3/6 &amp; 3/8</b>	
<b>How Can We Measure Public Opinion?</b>		
Sampling	3/13	Chapter 4 (Asher)
Wording & Context of Questions	3/15	Chapter 3 (Asher)
Format & Response Options	3/20	TBA
<b>Film Presentation II</b>	3/22	
<b>Spring Break (no class)</b>	3/27 & 3/29	
<b>How Mass Media Influence Public Opinion?</b>		
Media Effects	4/3 & 4/5	“Three Models” (Scheufele & Tewksbury)
Media Bias	4/10 & 4/12	“Hostile Media Effects” (Vallone et al.)
<b>Research Paper Prep Week</b>	4/17 & 4/19	one-on-one meeting with Dr. Park
<b>Film Presentation III</b>	4/24	
<b>Why Are Polls Variable?</b>		
Polls and Elections	4/26	Chapter 7 (Asher)
Trust in Government & Support for Institutions	5/1	TBA
<b>How Can We Interpret Public Opinion?</b>		
Public Opinion & Policy Making		Chapter 10 (Gylnn et al.)
<b>Review Session &amp; Final Exam</b>	<b>5/10 &amp; 5/17</b>	

