

PSCI 342: Media, Public Opinion, Polling (Section: 001)
Fall 2019
TTh 10:30 a.m. – noon LA 315
Department of Social Sciences and Cultural Studies
Montana State University Billings

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Office Hours: MW 10:30 a.m. – noon, TTh 9:30 a.m. – 10:30 a.m., or by appointment

Course Description

This course provides an overview in how public opinion may or may not matter in how policymakers, including elected officials and bureaucrats, make decisions. This course also has an applied learning element as you will help develop the questions to be asked for the annual Montana Poll and work as a surveyor in the universities CATI (computer-assisted telephone interviewing) lab. Also important is how the media affects public opinion and policymakers. In the era of #FakeNews, it is important for citizens to understand what that means and what are the mechanisms that shape the media's influence on public opinion.

Course Objectives

At the conclusion of this course, you will be able to:

1. Describe the role public opinion plays in the policymaking process.
2. Develop and administer public opinion surveys.
3. Identify and describe the role the media plays in the political process in shaping public opinion and the affect the behavior of policymakers.

Required Text

Asher, Herbert. 2017. *Polling and the Public: What Every Citizen Should Know*. 9th Edition. Thousand Oaks, CA: CQ Press (ISBN: 978-1-5063-5242-8)

Clawson, Rosalee A., and Zoe M. Oxley. 2017. *Public Opinion: Democratic Ideals, Democratic Practice*. 3rd Edition. New York: Sage (ISBN: 978-1-5063-2331-2)

The textbooks are available through the MSUB Campus Store and other online bookstores.

You will also need to keep up with national news. I recommend visiting the NY Times, Washington Post, and Wall Street Journal, which all provide comprehensive news coverage. Also listen to NPZR news shows and public affairs shows such as “Face the Nation”, Meet the Press”, and “This Week” where political leaders try to influence the public on various issues.

Student Responsibilities

Please come to class prepared. This means you need to **read** and **take notes** on the assigned readings beforehand. Attending class and participating is important, as there will be material discussed only in lectures that will be tested on exams and quizzes. We will be discussing controversial issues throughout the semester, with some of you holding passionate opinions on these issues. Please treat your fellow classmates with respect. We each come to this course with diverse backgrounds and different ideas regarding various issues and how government should work. Please respect your classmates by not talking or interrupting when I or others are speaking. You are allowed only one “no-excuse” late pass per semester for an assignment that allows you to turn in the assignment up to 72 hours late without penalty. All you have to do to use your late pass is email me before the assignment is due.

Technology Policy

Use of electronics for web surfing and communicating with others is generally inappropriate, and distracting to both myself and other students. If you need to call or text someone in an urgent situation, quietly leave the room. I reserve the right to ask students to leave if you are using your cell phone or clearly not using a laptop/tablet for note-taking.

Grading

Exams: (40% – Two at 20% each)

Mountain States Poll: (20%)

Survey project: (15%)

Literature reviews: (15%)

Participation: (10%)

Final grade scale: A = 94% and above, A- = 90%-93%, B+ = 87%-89%, B = 83%-86%, B- = 80%-82%, C+ = 77%-79%, C = 73%-76%, C- = 70%-72%, D+ = 67%-69%, D = 63%-66%, D- = 60%-62%, and F = 59% and below (Note: I do not round up final grades if you are just below the cutoff, such as having a 93.8%. I have to define the scale at some point, and some people are always going to fall on the other side of the divide).

Exams (Two at 20% each): Two exams will be administered during the semester. These exams will not be cumulative. The format of the exams will be short answer and essay. Exams will be given in class. You are allowed to make-up the mid-term if you miss it for any reason. However, make-up exams must be taken on Thursday, Dec. 5, in the Academic Support Center

Mountain States Poll (20%): A good chunk of your grade will be based on being available and making calls in the CATI lab when the poll is fielded. The poll is tentatively scheduled to be fielded from Oct. 7-13 during the evenings and weekend days. You will need to work at least four shifts, which include at least one weekend day, if necessary, to receive full participation credit. Polling on Sunday, Oct. 13, might be required, as well, if we still need responses. You will also need to be present and help present results of the Mountain States Poll in a public presentation on Wednesday, Oct. 23. If you cannot commit to this, you should drop the

course as make-up work will not be allowed to substitute for working in the CATI lab and presenting poll results. If you do not participate for at least 10 hours, you will not be allowed to pass the class. As part of this assignment, a 3-4 page reaction paper based on your experience with the poll is due Thursday, Oct. 24.

Survey project (15%): I will assign you to small groups of 3-4 people each where you will develop and field your own original survey. The survey can be fielded to students at MSUB, co-workers, family, friends, etc. As part of the survey, your group will need to write a report detailing the results of your survey and present the results during the last day of class on Thursday, Dec. 5. More details will be available on D2L.

Literature reviews (15%): To help you understand the material and practice articulating an academic argument, you will write six short literature reviews, with the highest five scores counting as part of your grade. Literature reviews will be one-page single spaced with 1-inch margins. I will provide a short prompt and you will need to conduct research on the question. More details on D2L. Literature reviews are due before class the day they are due.

Participation (10%): This is an upper-division class, which means class participation is essential to your learning compared to an intro class, and also because you do not want me to drone on for an hour (My wife will attest to that!). Since I assume you have read the material, everyone should be prepared to contribute. I am not looking for the right answer when I look for responses. I am also looking to move along the conversation a bit and help flesh out any questions. I will call on everyone at some point during the semester, so be prepared to answer questions and offer your thoughts. There will be times when we get to debate issues. If you miss more than six classes with unexcused absences, you lose half of your participation points. If you are absent due to university sponsored events, you will need to email me a one-page reaction to the readings with questions before class. At the end of the semester, I will ask for you to assess your own participation grade and I will provide feedback. You can always ask how you are doing with participation at any point during the semester. Earlier is better to address any deficiencies.

Grading notes: Proper spelling, punctuation, grammar, and sentence structure will be assessed as part of your exam and paper grades. Developing the ability to write clearly is an important skill for your future careers. You are expected to carefully read, edit, and proofread their written work. If you would like help with your writing skills, there are on-campus resources that are there to help you. The university offers help in various subjects through the Academic Support Center. Assistance is free and is available in the Student Union Building. Drop-in writing help and tutoring for this course is available from 8 a.m. – 8 p.m. Monday-Thursday and 8 a.m. – 5 p.m. Friday. Appointments are also available for writing help.

Plagiarism and Academic Honesty

Use of the intellectual property of others without attributing it to them is considered a serious academic offense, and I will generally fail students from the course for academic misconduct. It can also lead to a disciplinary hearing where sanctions can suspension or expulsion from the university. The university's policy on academic misconduct can be found in Section B of the

student handbook. I will provide links to how to avoid plagiarism on D2L. I am available to help. However, you are responsible for learning how to properly cite your sources and avoid plagiarism.

Student Accessibility

MSU Billings is committed to providing equal access. If you anticipate barriers related to the format or requirements of this course, please meet with me so that we can discuss ways to ensure your full participation in the course. If you determine that disability-related accommodations are necessary, please contact Disability Support Services at 657-2283. It is also located in Room 135 in the College of Education. We can then plan how best to coordinate your accommodations.

Registration Requirement

University policy requires all students to be officially registered in each class they are attending. Students who are not officially registered for a course by published deadlines should not be attending classes and will not receive credit or a grade for the course. Please confirm enrollment in MyInfo. Registration errors must be corrected prior to university deadlines.

Class Schedule

Readings will come from the Asher and Clawson/Oxley textbooks, readings freely available online, and other readings I may post on D2L. You should be prepared to discuss the assigned reading on the day listed below. I may make changes to the schedule as needed.

Week	Date	Topic	Reading/Assignments
1	9/5	Intro/Syllabus	None
2	9/10	Introduction to Polling	Asher, chapter 1 Oxley and Clawson, chapter 1 Berinsky, Adam J. 1999. "The Two Faces of Public Opinion," <i>American Journal of Political Science</i> 43 (October): 1209-1230. Blumer, Herbert. 1948. "Public Opinion and Public Opinion Polling." <i>American Sociological Review</i> 13 (1948): 542-549. Delli Carpini, Michael X., and Scott Keeter. 1991. "Stability and Change in the U.S. Public's Knowledge of Politics." <i>Public Opinion Quarterly</i> 55 (4): 583-612.
	9/12	Problems of Nonattitudes	Asher, chapter 2 Oxley and Clawson, chapter 8 Schuman, Howard, and Stanley Presser. 1980. "Public Opinion and Public Ignorance: The Fine Line Between Attitudes and Nonattitudes." <i>American</i>

			<p><i>Journal of Sociology</i> 85 (5): 1214-1225.</p> <p>Zaller, John, and Stanley Feldman. 1992. "A Simple Theory of the Survey Response: Answering Questions versus Revealing Preferences." <i>American Journal of Political Science</i> 36 (3):579-616.</p>
3	9/17	Question Wording	<p>Asher, chapter, 3</p> <p>Clawson and Oxley, chapter 4</p> <p>Lewontin, R.C. 1995. "Measuring American Society: Sex, Lies, and Social Science." <i>The Public Perspective</i> (June/July): 4-6.</p> <p>Smith, Tom W. 1987. "That Which We Call Welfare by Any Other Name Would Smell Sweeter: An Analysis of the Impact of Question Wording on Response Patterns." <i>Public Opinion Quarterly</i> 51 (1): 75-83.</p>
	9/19	Sampling	<p>Asher, chapter 4</p> <p>Barreto, Matt A. et al. 2006. "Controversies in Exit Polling: Implementing a Racially Stratified Homogenous Precinct Approach." <i>PS: Political Science & Politics</i>. 39 (July): 477-483.</p> <p>Greenhouse, Linda. 1999. "Jarring Democrats, Court Rules Census Must Be by Actual Count." <i>New York Times</i>, January 26.</p> <p>Holmes, Steven A. 1996. "In a First, 2000 Census Is to Use Sampling." <i>New York Times</i>, February 26.</p> <p>Pew Research Center, "Assessing the Representativeness of Public Opinion Surveys."</p> <p>Literature review #1 due</p>
4	9/24	Interviewing	<p>Asher, chapter 5</p> <p>Ansolabehere, Stephen, Jonathan Rodden, and James M. Snyder Jr. 2008. "The Strength of Issues: Using Multiple Measures to Gauge Preference Stability, Ideological Constraint, and Issue Voting." <i>American Political Science Review</i> 102 (2): 215-232.</p> <p>Pew Research Center, "What Low Response Rates Mean for Telephone Surveys."</p>

	9/26	Polling and Democracy	<p>Asher, chapters 7 & 9</p> <p>Clawson and Oxley, chapters 8-10</p> <p>Carsey, Thomas M. and Geoffrey C. Layman. 2006. "Changing Sides or Changing Minds? Party Identification and Policy Preferences in the American Electorate." <i>American Journal of Political Science</i> 50 (2): 464-477.</p> <p>Prior, Markus, and Arthur Lupia. 2008. "Money, Time, and Political Knowledge: Distinguishing Quick Recall and Political Learning Skills." <i>American Journal of Political Science</i> 52 (1): 169-183.</p>
5	10/1	Analyzing Polls	Asher, chapter 8
	10/3	Reporting Polls	<p>Asher, chapter 6</p> <p>Literature review #2 due</p>
6	10/8 & 10/10	Mountain States Poll	No class, but need to participate in poll
7	10/15 & 10/17	Mountain States Poll analysis	<p>Poll analysis</p> <p>No class</p>
8	10/22	Political Socialization	<p>Clawson and Oxley, chapters 1, 6-7</p> <p>Brady, Henry E., Kay Lehman Schlozman, and Sidney Verba. 2015. "Political Mobility and Political Reproduction from Generation to Generation." <i>The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science</i> 657 (1): 149-173.</p> <p>Niemi, Richard G. and Mary A. Hepburn. 1995. "The Rebirth of Political Socialization." <i>Perspectives on Political Science</i> 24 (1): 7-16.</p> <p>Prior, Markus. 2010. "You've Either Got It or You Don't? The Stability of Political Interest Over the Life Cycle." <i>Journal of Politics</i> 72 (3): 747-766</p>
	10/24	Press and Democracy	<p>Mutz, Diana C. 2001. "Facilitating Communication across Lines of Political Difference: The Role of Mass Media." <i>American Political Science Review</i> 95 (1): 97-114.</p> <p>Watts, Mark D., David Domke, Dhanvan V. Shah, and David P. Fan. 1999. "Elite Cues and Media Bias in Presidential Campaigns: Explaining Public Perceptions of a Liberal Press."</p>

			<p><i>Communication Research</i> 26 (2): 144-175.</p> <p>Wallace, Chris. 2017. "The Media Is Giving Up Its Place In Our Democracy." Washington Post, November 17.</p> <p>Whitehead, John W. 2011. "Why Local Newspapers Are the Basis of Democracy." Huffington Post, May 25.</p> <p>Literature review #3 due</p>
9	10/29	Mass Media	<p>Clawson and Oxley, chapter 2</p> <p>Hetherington, Mark J. 1996. "The Media's Role in Forming Voters' National Economic Evaluations in 1992." <i>American Journal of Political Science</i> 40 (2): 372-395.</p> <p>Scheufele, Dietram and David Tewksbury. 2006. "Framing, Agenda Setting, and Priming: The Evolution of Three Media Effects Models." <i>Journal of Communication</i> 57 (1): 9-20.</p>
	10/31	Filter Bubbles	<p>Flaxman, Seth, Sharad Goel, and Justin M. Rao. 2016. "Filter Bubbles, Echo Chambers, and Online News Consumption." <i>Public Opinion Quarterly</i> 80 (5) 298-320.</p> <p>Fletcher, Richard, and Sora Park. 2017 "The Impact of Trust in the News Media on Online News Consumption and Participation." <i>Digital Journalism</i> 5 (10): 1281-1299.</p> <p>Iyengar, Shanto, and Kyu S. Hahn. 2009. "Red Media, Blue Media: Evidence of Ideological Selectivity in Media Use." <i>Journal of Communication</i> 59 (1): 19-39.</p>
10	11/5	Media and Partisanship	<p>Clawson and Oxley, chapter 5</p> <p>Carr, David. 2009. "Cable Wars are Killing Objectivity." <i>New York Times</i>, April 19.</p> <p>Darr, Joshua P. and Johanna L. Dunaway. 2017. "Resurgent Mass Partisanship Revisited: The Role of Media Choice in Clarifying Elite Ideology." <i>American Politics Research</i> 46 (6): 943-970.</p> <p>Mutz, Diana C., and Byron Reeves. 2005. "The New VideoMmalaise: Effects of Televised Incivility on Political Trust." <i>American Political Science Review</i> 99</p>

			(1): 1-15. Prior, Markus. 2013. "Media and Political Polarization." <i>Annual Review of Political Science</i> 16: 101-127.
	11/7	Decline in Adversarial Journalism	Prior, Markus. 2005. "News vs. Entertainment: How Increasing Media Choice Widens Gaps in Political Knowledge and Turnout." <i>American Journal of Political Science</i> 49 (3); 577-592. van der Wurff, Richard, and Klaus Schoenbach. 2014. "Civic and Citizen Demands of News Media and Journalists: What Does the Audience Expect from Good Journalism?." <i>Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly</i> 91 (3): 433-451. Literature review #4 due
11	11/12	#FakeNews	Oxley and Clawson, chapter 11 Alcott, Hunt, and Matthew Gentzkow. 2017. "Social Media and Fake News in the 2016 Election." <i>Journal of Economic Perspectives</i> 31 (2): 211-236. Pennycock, Gordon, and David G. Rand. 2019. "Who falls for fake news? The roles of bullshit receptivity, overclaiming, familiarity, and analytic thinking." <i>Journal of Personality</i> (early view): 1-16. Saslow, Eli. 2018. "'Nothing on this page is real': How lies become truth in online America." <i>Washington Post</i> , November 17. Uscinski, Joseph E., Casey Klofstad, Matthew D. Atkinson. 2016. "What Drives Conspiratorial Beliefs? The Role of Informational Cues and Predispositions." <i>Political Research Quarterly</i> 69 (1): 57-71.
	11/14	Media and Fact-checking	Nyhan, Brendan, and Jason Reifler. 2014. "The Effects of Fact-Checking on Elites: A Field Experiment on U.S. State Legislators." <i>American Journal of Political Science</i> 59 (3): 628-640. Swire-Thompson, Briony, Ullrich K. H. Ecker, Stephan Lewandowsky, and

			<p>Adam J. Berinsky. 2019. "They Might Be a Liar But They're My Liar: Source Evaluation and the Prevalence of Misinformation." <i>Political Psychology</i> (early view): 1-14.</p> <p>Thorsen, Emily. 2016. "Belief Echoes: The Persistent Effects of Corrected Misinformation." <i>Political Communication</i> 33 (3): 460-480.</p> <p>Literature review #5 due</p>
12	11/19	Media and Campaigns	<p>Gerber, Alan S., Dean Karlan, and Daniel Bergan. 2009. "Does the Media Matter? A Field Experiment Measuring the Effect of Newspapers on Voting Behavior and Political Opinions." <i>American Economic Journal: Applied Economics</i> 1 (2): 35-52.</p> <p>Wells, Chris, Dhavan V. Shah, Jon C. Pevehouse, JungHwan Yang, Ayellet Pelled, Frederick Boehm, Josephine Lukito, Shreenita Ghosh and Jessica L. Schmidt. 2016. "How Trump Drove Coverage to the Nomination: Hybrid Media Campaigning." <i>Political Communication</i> 33 (4), 669-676.</p>
	11/21	Media Effect on Politicians	<p>Oxley and Clawson, chapter 12</p> <p>Barrett, Andrew W. 2004. "Gone Public: The Impact of Going Public on Presidential Legislative Success." <i>American Politics Research</i> 32(3): 338-370.</p> <p>Schulhofer-Wohl, Sam, and Miguel Garrido. 2013. "Do Newspapers Matter? Short-Run and Long-Run Evidence From the Closure of The Cincinnati Post." <i>Journal of Media Economics</i> 26 (2): 60-81.</p> <p>Literature review #6 due</p>
13	11/26	Consequences of the decline of media	<i>Fit to Print</i> documentary
	11/28	Thanksgiving Day	No class
14	12/3	Group Presentation prep	Work on presentations
	12/5	Survey results	Group presentations Group presentation report due
15	12/10	Final exam	2 p.m. – 3:50 p.m. (Note different time)

