Course Description
The class will explore public attitudes towards democratic institutions, processes, and principles with a primary focus on the United States. The consent of the governed is essential to a properly functioning democracy so understanding public evaluations (e.g., trust, confidence, legitimacy perceptions) of government and political processes provides insight into the health of a democracy. With the U.S. public expressing low trust and confidence in political institutions such an examination is timely. It is my hope the course provides you with an overview of the major topics that make up the field, but each week only includes a small sample so the readings here are meant to be introductory. Some of the topics we will cover include support for democratic principles and civil liberties; trust in government; perceptions of the legitimacy of elections; approval of the president, Congress, and Supreme Court; trust in the police and criminal justice system; and trust in the media.

Each week will focus on a topic that animates current academic debates. The goal is to understand the larger controversy and the role played by each of the readings. We will not only critically evaluate each reading, focusing on theoretical and empirical limitations, but at the same time attempt to understand how a reading has advanced scholarly understanding. As the semester progresses, students should situate readings within a larger context, drawing connections between readings from previous weeks. The distinctions between each week’s readings are not as certain as they appear in the syllabus so thinking about how readings relate to each other across weeks is essential to understanding the field. In addition to understanding the readings and their contributions, I want students to think about how to advance research in the field by proposing new questions and ideas and how to study them.

Readings


In addition, we will read many journal articles, many of which will be available on JSTOR. If not available electronically, I will make readings available on eLC or via email.
Requirements and Expectations

Students will be assessed according to their knowledge of the course materials and their ability to analyze, explain, and apply their knowledge to new and different contexts. Students are expected to attend the seminar and do all the readings. The assigned materials should be read in advance of that week’s topic. Do not come to class unprepared. I expect you to have outlined each reading and have thought of critiques, criticisms, and extensions. Since the class is a seminar (not a lecture-based class), what you get out of the class will depend on what you put into it.

The class requirements include participation, a weekly (or every other week depending on class size) presentation of an assigned reading, written questions about each reading, hypothesis papers, and a research paper.

The hypothesis paper should not exceed a page and requires you to develop an original hypothesis based on the readings for that week. For example, your hypothesis might help resolve a controversy in the literature by proposing a novel test or help advance research by proposing a new (most likely borrowed) independent variable. Regardless, most of the assignment should focus on motivating the hypothesis. In total, you are required to turn in 7 hypothesis papers. You may choose which week’s readings you would like to engage but at least three must be turned in before the middle of October (10/18) to prevent back-loading. If you want to write on a given topic, you must turn in your paper the week we cover it. For instance, if you wish to write a hypothesis paper about presidential approval it must be turned in on the Monday we cover the topic.

The research paper should run anywhere from 15 to 25 pages depending on the type of project you undertake. The research paper may be a research design if it requires original data collection that is not possible to complete before the end of the semester. If your project makes use of readily available data (e.g., the ANES), the paper should include basic statistical analyses.

Student grades will be assigned on following:
Class participation/presentations: 35%
Hypothesis papers (7): 25%
Research paper: 40%

I will assign grades according to the following scale:
A = 94 and above  
A- = 90-93  
B+ = 87-89  
B = 84-86
B- = 80-83  
C+ = 77-79  
C = 74-76  
C- = 70-73
D+ = 67-69  
D = 64-66  
D- = 60-63  
F = Below 60

Academic Honesty

You are expected to adhere to the UGA Student Honor Code: "I will be academically honest in all of my academic work and will not tolerate academic dishonesty of others."
A Culture of Honesty, the University’s policy and procedures for handling cases of suspected dishonesty, can be found at www.uga.edu/ovpi. If you are unclear what constitutes plagiarism, please consult the instructor.

**Prohibition on Recording Classes**
In the absence of written authorization from the UGA Disability Resource Center, students may not make a visual or audio recording of any aspect of this course. Students who have a recording accommodation agree in writing that they:

- Will use the records only for personal academic use during the specific course.
- Understand that faculty members have copyright interest in their class lectures and that they agree not to infringe on this right in any way.
- Understand that the faculty member and students in the class have privacy rights and agree not to violate those rights by using recordings for any reason other than their own personal study.
- Will not release, digitally upload, broadcast, transcribe, or otherwise share all or any part of the recordings. They also agree that they will not profit financially and will not allow others to benefit personally or financially from lecture recordings or other course materials.
- Will erase/delete all recordings at the end of the semester.
- Understand that violation of these terms may subject them to discipline under the Student Code of Conduct or subject them to liability under copyright laws.”

**Preferred Names and Pronouns**
Professional courtesy and sensitivity are especially important with respect to individuals and topics dealing with differences of race, culture, religion, politics, sexual orientation, gender, gender variance, and nationalities. Class rosters are provided to the instructor with the student’s legal name. I am eager to address you by your preferred name and/or gender pronoun. Please advise me of this preference early in the semester so that I may make appropriate changes to my records.

**Face coverings**
Following guidance from the University System of Georgia, face coverings are recommended for all individuals while inside campus facilities.

**Mental Health and Wellness Resources**
- If you or someone you know needs assistance, you are encouraged to contact Student Care and Outreach in the Division of Student Affairs at 706-542-7774 or visit https://sco.uga.edu/. They will help you navigate any difficult circumstances you may be facing by connecting you with the appropriate resources or services.
- UGA has several resources for a student seeking mental health services (https://www.uhs.uga.edu/bewelluga/bewelluga) or crisis support (https://www.uhs.uga.edu/info/emergencies).
- If you need help managing stress anxiety, relationships, etc., please visit BeWellUGA (https://www.uhs.uga.edu/bewelluga/bewelluga) for a list of FREE workshops, classes, mentoring, and health coaching led by licensed clinicians and health educators in the University Health Center.
- Additional resources can be accessed through the UGA App.
Weekly Schedule

8/23. **Introductions and course overview**

8/30. **Support for Democracy**


**Recommended:**


9/6. **Holiday—Labor Day (no class)**

9/13. **Legitimacy of Elections**


**Recommended:**


9/20. **Trust in Government (the output perspective)**


Recommended:


9/27. **Trust in Government (the process perspective)**


10/4. **Consequences of Political (Mis)Trust**


**Recommended:**


10/11. **Presidential Approval**


**Recommended:**


10/18. Supreme Court Approval & Legitimacy


Recommended:


10/25. Congressional Approval


Recommended:


11/1. Trust in State Government


**Recommended:**


**11/8. Trust in the Police and Criminal Justice System**


**Recommended:**


11/15. **Trust in the Mass Media**


**Recommended:**


11/22. **Workshop**

11/29. **Free Speech and Political Tolerance**


Strother, Logan and Daniel Bennett. 2021. “Racial group affect and support for civil liberties in the United States.” *Politics, Groups, and Identities* (early view)
Recommended:


12/6. Class Presentations