

POLS 8195: Public Opinion

Fall 2025

Tuesdays, 3:55-6:40pm

Baldwin 302

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Office Hours: Tuesday & Thursday, 11:00am – noon, or by appointment.

Course Description

This seminar is introduction to U.S. public opinion research. We will cover a variety of topics in this area, ranging from the sources and structures of political attitudes to the representation of these preferences by political elites. Throughout the course our focus will be on public opinion of the mass public rather than the opinions of political elites and elected officials. In addition to examining substantive themes, we will address issues of methodology, like how researchers measure the concepts they are studying, different empirical approaches to studying public opinion, and the effectiveness of different statistical techniques scholars employ to answer their questions. Finally, we will examine the normative implications of the research in this area to assess the health of American democracy.

Structure

This is a seminar and participation by everybody is essential to us having a successful semester. The course will revolve around thoughtful discussion of the course material and I expect everybody to come to class prepared to discuss the following questions about each reading:

1. What are the research questions?
2. How the author(s) define and measure the concepts they are studying? Are these valid and/or reliable measures?
3. What's the theory? What are the hypotheses?
4. What methodological strategy or strategies do they employ to test these hypotheses?
5. Key findings? How dependent of measurement and/or research design are the findings?
6. How do the findings from a given paper fit into the broader theme of a given week? In other words, how does the reader "speak" to other readings this week?
7. What are the implications for how we understand public opinion and American democracy?
8. What questions remain unanswered?

Assignments & Expectations

Attendance & Participation – You are expected to attend every class, read all materials carefully, and contribute to all seminar discussions. In short, you are expected to actively participate in every single class. If you are not participating, you are hurting yourself & your chance to be successful in this class.

Readings – In addition to the required books, each week we will read academic articles. I expect that you will locate most of the readings for class. At times I will provide the reading for you by distributing it through our class slack channel. Those readings are noted in the syllabus.

Reaction Paper – Each student will be required to write a one-page (single-spaced) reaction paper every other week. The paper should cover a broad topic discussed in multiple articles, a book, or all of the readings for a week. The papers should be distributed to the class by 5pm on the Monday before class.

Short Paper & Discussion Leader – Once during the semester, each student is required to write a 6-8-page (double-spaced) paper on the readings for the session that week. The student will also help to lead seminar discussion for that day. The paper and the discussion should address the questions raised in the “structure” section above. The paper should be distributed to the class by 5pm on the Monday before class.

Final Presentation – Our final class session will be devoted to students presenting the results from their final papers. Details will be provided during the semester.

Term Paper - You are required to complete a term paper on a topic of your choice. The paper should be roughly 20 pages of text with the remainder being some combination of tables, figures, appendices, and references. Email me a digital copy by the deadline. Late papers will be accepted only under extraordinary conditions. There are three options for the paper:

1. **Literature Review:** Identify a body of literature on a topic(s) that you would like to examine in depth. The paper must (1) identify the research questions that animate this body of work and explain why the questions are important; (2) elaborate the key concepts and theoretical frameworks in the literature; (3) summarize the types of data scholars have examined and explain how they key concepts have been measured; (4) summarize the key findings and assess the persuasiveness of the evidence; and (5) offer two new research questions the extant literature has failed to address and/or answer.
2. **Research Design:** Specify a question (or set of questions) that you would like to examine and then develop a plan that will let you to answer it. The paper must (1) describe the research question(s) and explain why it's important; (2) review the

relevant literature and explain how your study contributes to it; (3) define the concepts, develop a theoretical framework, and derive testable hypotheses from this framework; (4) describe the data you plan to collect and how the key concepts will be measured; and (5) explain how you plan to analyze the data.

3. Research Paper: Specify a question (or set of questions) that you would like to examine and then conduct original research to answer it. The paper must (1) describe the research question(s) and explain why it's important; (2) review the relevant literature and explain how your study contributes to it; (3) define the concepts, develop a theoretical framework, and derive testable hypotheses from this framework; (4) collect data and describe how the key concepts are measured; and (5) analyze these relationships using appropriate methods.

Required Books

- None required

Grading

The following are the areas in which you will receive points in this class and the weight that each area has on your final grade.

Participation	20%
Weekly Reaction papers	20%
Short Paper & Discussion Leader	10%
Research Paper	40%
Final Presentation	10%

I use the following scale when assigning letter grades:

Grade	Percent
A	94-100
A-	90-93
B+	87-89
B	84-86
B-	80-83
C+	77-79
C	74-76
C-	70-73
D	60-69
F	<60

Course Policies

Valid Absence Excuses

If you have a significant conflict that causes you to miss class (e.g., a personal, family, or medical emergency), you should email me within a week of the missed due date to make sure you can complete the assignment or exam in a timely manner. Documentation is required for any makeup exam.

Academic Honesty

Academic integrity is required for a positive learning environment. All students enrolled in university courses are expected to complete coursework responsibilities with fairness and honesty. Failure to do so by seeking unfair advantage over others or misrepresenting someone else's work as your own, can result in disciplinary action. Students caught cheating or plagiarizing will receive an F in the course. Additionally, I will forward your name to the University. The UGA Student Honor Code states: "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 <https://honesty.uga.edu/>

Accessibility Services

If you anticipate needing classroom or exam accommodations due to the impact of a disability or medical condition, you must register for services with Accessibility and Testing. Additional information can be found here: <https://accessibility.uga.edu>

Withdrawal Policy

Undergraduate students can only withdraw from four courses and receive a withdrawal-passing (WP) grade while enrolled at the University. Students can drop any class without penalty during the drop/add period at the beginning of every semester. Dropped courses during the drop/add period do not qualify as withdrawals. Instructors can withdraw a student from the class due to excessive absences. Please carefully review the policy in its entirety here: <http://www.reg.uga.edu/policies/withdrawals>

Course Recordings

In the absence of written authorization from me or UGA Accessibility and Testing, 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.”

Diversity and Civility

Diversity and civility are integral components of my classroom and the real world. My classroom is open to anybody, no matter their race, class, gender, sexual orientation, or any other quality. I strive to treat all my students with respect, and I ask that you treat your fellow students the same way. Disruptive behavior will not be tolerated. This includes (but is not limited to) inappropriate use of classroom technology, ringing cell phones, text messaging, watching videos, checking email, surfing the internet on your computer, disruptive behavior, bullying, and disorderly conduct.

Use of Generative AI Technology for Coursework

The use of Generative AI (GAI) tools is not permitted in this course unless I provide explicit written and/or verbal permission. If you are uncertain about using a particular tool to support your work, please consult with me before using it. I conduct random AI checks of every assignment to determine whether it was created using generative AI. If I believe a violation of UGA’s “A Culture of Honesty” may have occurred, I have a responsibility to report to the Office of Academic Honesty. If I do, you will be informed of the report and you will receive an email from the Office of Academic Honesty to schedule a facilitated discussion between us. The goal will be an agreement reached about what occurred, and if it involved dishonesty, an appropriate sanction. To protect your rights, we cannot discuss your case outside of that facilitated meeting.

UGA Well-being Resources

UGA Well-being Resources promote student success by cultivating a culture that supports a more active, healthy, and engaged student community.

Anyone needing assistance is encouraged to contact Student Care & Outreach (SCO) in the Division of Student Affairs at 706-542-8479 or visit sco.uga.edu. Student Care & Outreach helps students navigate difficult circumstances by connecting them with the most appropriate resources or services. They also administer the Embark@UGA program

which supports students experiencing, or who have experienced, homelessness, foster care, or housing insecurity.

UGA provides both clinical and non-clinical options to support student well-being and mental health, any time, any place. Whether on campus, or studying from home or abroad, UGA Well-being Resources are here to help.

- Well-being Resources: well-being.uga.edu
- Student Care and Outreach: sco.uga.edu
- University Health Center: healthcenter.uga.edu
- Counseling and Psychiatric Services: caps.uga.edu or CAPS 24/7 crisis support at 706-542-2273
- Health Promotion/ Fontaine Center: healthpromotion.uga.edu
- Disability Resource Center and Testing Services: drc.uga.edu

Additional information, including free digital well-being resources, can be accessed through the UGA app or by visiting <https://well-being.uga.edu>.

Course Schedule

Below you will find the schedule for our semester. This schedule is tentative and I reserve the right to make changes as we proceed through the semester. Scans that I have uploaded to eLC are marked "Dist." In the syllabus.

Week 1 (8/19)– Foundations, Methods, and Course Overview

Foundations

1. Key, V.O. 1961. *Public Opinion and American Democracy* (C. 1, pp. 3-18). **Dist.**
2. Zaller (Ch. 2). **Dist.**

Methods & Attitudes

1. Zaller, John and Stanley Feldman. 1992. "A Simple Theory of the Survey Response: Answering Questions versus Revealing Preferences." *American Journal of Political Science* 36: 579-616.
2. Sen, Maya and Omar Wasow. 2016. "Race as a Bundle of Sticks: Designs that Estimate Effects of Seemingly Immutable Characteristics." *Annual Review of Political Science* 19: 499-522.

Week 2 (8/26) – Ideology (Group A)

1. Converse, Philip E. 1964. "The Nature of Belief Systems in Mass Publics." In *Ideology and Discontent*, David Apter, ed. New York: Free Press. **Dist.**
2. Conover, Pamela and Stanley Feldman. 1981. "The Origins and Meaning of Liberal/Conservative Self-Identifications." *American Journal of Political Science* 25(4): 307-37.
3. Claassen et al. 2015. "Ideological Labels in America." *Political Behavior* 37: 253-278
4. Goggin, Stephen et al. 2019. "What Goes with Red and Blue? Mapping Partisan and Ideological Associations in the Minds of Voters." *Political Behavior* 42: 985-1013.
5. Uscinski, Joseph E., Adam Enders, Michelle Seelig et al. 2021. "American Politics in Two Dimensions: Partisan and Ideological Identities versus Anti-Establishment Orientations." *American Journal of Political Science*. 65(4): 877-895.
6. Guay, Brian and Christopher D. Johnston. 2022. "Ideological Asymmetries and the Determinants of Politically Motivated Reasoning." *American Journal of Political Science*. 66(2): 285-301.
7. Jefferson, Hakeem. 2024. "The Curious Case of Black 'Conservatives': Assessing the Validity of the Liberal-Conservative Scale Among Black Americans." *Public Opinion Quarterly*. 88(3): 909-932.

Week 3 (9/2) – Party Identification 1 (The Michigan Model & Group Identity) (Group B)

1. Campbell, Angus, Philip E. Converse, Warren E. Miller, and Donald E. Stokes. 1960. *The American Voter*. New York: John Wiley. Assorted chapters. **Dist.**
2. Green, Donald, Bradley Palmquist, and Eric Schickler. 2002. *Partisan Hearts & Minds*. New Haven: Yale University Press. Chapter 2 **Dist.**
3. Klar, Samara. 2014. "Partisanship in a Social Setting." *American Journal of Political Science*, 58(3): 687-704.
4. Huddy, Leonie et al. 2015. "Expressive Partisanship: Campaign Involvement, Political Emotion, and Partisan Identity." *American Political Science Review* 109(1).
5. Bisgaard, Martin. 2019. "How Getting the Facts Right Can Fuel Partisan-Motivated Reasoning." *American Journal of Political Science* 63(4).
6. Dias, Nicholas and Yptach Lelkes. 2022. "The Nature of Affective Polarization: Disentangling Policy Disagreement from Partisan Identity." *American Journal of Political Science*.
7. Graham, Matthew and Shikhar Singh. 2024. "An Outbreak of Selective Attribution: Partisanship and Blame in the COVID-19 Pandemic." *American Political Science Review*, 118(1): 423-441.

Week 4 (9/9) – Party Identification 2 (Revisionists & Additional Perspectives) (Group A)

1. Fiorina, Morris P. 1981. *Retrospective Voting in American National Elections*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press. Chapter 5. **Dist.**
2. Gerber, Alan S. and Gregory Huber. 2010. "Partisanship, political control, and economic assessments." *American Journal of Political Science* 54(1): 153-173.
3. Fowler, Anthony. 2020. "Partisan intoxication or policy voting?" *Quarterly Journal of Political Science* 15(2): 141-179. Skim the following replies:
 - a. Rogers, Steven. 2019. "Sobering up after "Partisan intoxication or policy voting?" *Quarterly Journal of Political Science* 15(2)
 - b. Fowler, Anthony. 2020. "Defending sober voters against sensationalist scholars: A reply to Rogers." *Quarterly Journal of Political Science* 15(2): 213-219.
4. Orr, Lilla V., Anthony Fowler, and Gregory Huber. 2023. "Is Affective Polarization Driven by Identity, Loyalty, or Substance?" *American Journal of Political Science*.

Week 5 (9/16) – Issues and Opinion Change (Group B)

1. Adams, Greg. 1997. "Abortion: Evidence of an issue evolution." *American Journal of Political Science*. 41(3): 718-737.
2. Carsey, Thomas and Geoffrey Layman. 2006. "Changing Sides or Changing Minds? Party Identification and Policy Preferences in the American Electorate." *American Journal of Political Science*. 50(2): 464-77.
3. Dancey, Logan and Paul Goren. 2010. "Party Identification, Issue Attitudes, and the Dynamics of Political Debate." *American Journal of Political Science* 54(3): 686-99.
4. Lenz, Gabriel S. 2012. *Follow the Leader? How Voters Respond to Politicians' Policies and Performance*. Chapters 1-3; 8

5. Tesler, Michael. 2014. "Priming Predispositions and Changing Policy Positions: An Account of When Mass Opinion Is Primed or Changed." *American Journal of Political Science*. 59(4): 806-24.
6. Barber, Michael and Jeremy C. Pope. 2019. "Does Party Trump Ideology? Disentangling Party and Ideology in America." *American Political Science Review*. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003055418000795>

Week 6 (9/23)– Political Knowledge/Sophistication (Group A)

1. Delli Carpini, Michael X. and Scott Keeter. 1996. *What Americans Know About Politics and Why It Matters*. Yale University Press. Ch. 4. **Dist.**
2. James Kuklinski et al. 2000. "Misinformation and the Currency of Democratic Citizenship." *Journal of Politics*, 62: 790-816.
3. Prior, Markus and Arthur Lupia. 2008. "Money, Time, and Political Knowledge: Distinguishing Quick Recall and Political Learning Skills." *American Journal of Political Science*, 52(1): 169-83.
4. Dancey, Logan and Geoffrey Sheagley. 2013. "Heuristics Behaving Badly: Party Cues and Voter Knowledge." *American Journal of Political Science*. 57(2): 312-25.
5. Barabas, Jason, Jennifer Jerit, William Pollock, and Carlisle Rainey. 2014. "The Question(s) of Political Knowledge." *American Political Science Review*, 108:840-855.
6. Miller, Joanne M., Kyle L. Saunders, and Christina E. Farhart. 2015. "Conspiracy Endorsement as Motivated Reasoning: The Moderating Roles of Political Knowledge and Trust." *American Journal of Political Science*, 60(4): 824-44.
7. Kraft, Patrick. 2023. "Women Also Know Stuff: Challenging the Gender Gap in Political Sophistication." *American Political Science Review*.

Week 7 (9/30) – Polarization and Political Violence (Group B)

1. Kalmoe, Nathan P. and Lilliana Mason. 2022. "Radical American Partisanship." University of Chicago Press. **Chs. 3-4,6-7**
2. Measurement exchange
 - a. Westwood, Sean, Justin Grimmer, Matthew Tyler, and Clayton Nall. 2022. "Current Research Overstate American Support for Political Violence." PNAS. <https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.2116870119>
 - b. Kalmoe, Nathan P. and Liliana Mason. 2022. "A Holistic View of Conditional American Support for Political Violence." PNAS. <https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.2207237119>
3. Voelkel, Jan G. et al. 2024. "Megastudy testing 25 treatments to reduce antidemocratic attitudes and partisan animosity." *Science*.

Week 8 (10/7) – Groups 1: Race (Group A)

1. Kinder, Donald R. and David O. Sears. 1981. "Prejudice and Politics: Symbolic Racism Versus Racial Threats to the Good Life." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 40(3): 414-34.
2. Feldman, Stanley and Huddy, Leonie, 2005. "Racial resentment and white opposition to race-conscious programs: Principles or prejudice?" *American Journal of Political Science*, 49(1), pp.168-183.
3. Valentino, Nicholas A., Fabian G. Neuner, and L. Matthew Vandenbroek. 2018. "The Changing Norms of Racial Political Rhetoric and the End of Racial Priming." *Journal of Politics*, 80(3): 757-771.
4. Frymer, Paul and Jacob M. Grumbach. 2020. "Labor Unions and White Racial Politics." *American Journal of Political Science*. DOI: 10.1111/ajps.12537.
5. White, Ismail, Cheryl Laird, and Troy Allen. 2014. "Selling Out? The Politics of Navigating Conflicts between Racial Group Interest and Self-Interest." *American Political Science Review* 108(4).
6. Pérez, Efrén, Crystal Robertson, and Bianca Vicuña. 2023. "Prejudiced When Climbing Up or When Falling Down? Why Some People of Color Express Anti-Black Racism." *American Political Science Review*.
7. Fraga, Bernard, Yamil Valez, and Emily West. 2025. "Reversion to the mean, or their version of the dream? Latino voting in an age of populism." *American Political Science Review*.

Week 9 (10/14) – Groups 2: Gender (Group B)

1. Simien, Evelyn. 2005. "Race, Gender, and Linked Fate." *Journal of Black Studies*. 35(5).
2. Cassese, Erin C. and Mirya Holman. "Playing the Woman Card: Ambivalent Sexism in the 2016 U.S. Presidential Race." *Political Psychology* 40(1).
3. Bankert, Alexa. 2020. "Let's Talk About Sexism: The Differential Effects of Gender Discrimination on Liberal and Conservative Women's Political Engagement." *American Politics Research* (48)6: 779-791.
4. Klar, Samara. 2018. "When Common Identities Decrease Trust: An Experimental Study of Partisan Women." *American Journal of Political Science* 62(3).
5. Saha, Sparsha and Ana Catalano Weeks. 2020. "Ambitious Women: Gender and Voter Perceptions of Candidate Ambition." *Political Behavior*.
6. Bauer, Nichole. 2020. "Shifting Standards: How Voters Evaluate the Qualifications of Female and Male Candidates." *Journal of Politics*.

Week 10 (10/21) – Media (Group A)

1. Bartels, Larry M. 1993. "Messages Received: The Political Impact of Media Exposure." *American Political Science Review* 87(2): 267-285.
2. Barabas, Jason and Jennifer Jerit. 2009. "Estimating the Causal Effects of Media Coverage on Policy-Specific Knowledge." *American Journal of Political Science*.
3. Chong, Dennis and James N. Druckman. 2007. "Framing Public Opinion in Competitive Democracies." *American Political Science Review*. 101: 637-56.
4. Lelkes, Yphtach, Gaurav Sood, and Shanto Iyengar. 2015. "The Hostile Audience: The Effect of Access to Broadband Internet on Partisan Affect." *American Journal of Political Science* 61(1): 5:20.
5. Broockman, David E. and Joshua L. Kalla. 2024. "Selective Exposure and Partisan Echo Chambers in Television News Consumption: Evidence from Linked Viewership, Administrative, and Survey Data." *American Journal of Political Science*.
6. Hopkins, Daniel, Yphtach Lelkes, and Samuel Wolken. 2024. "The rise of and demand for identity-oriented media coverage." *American Journal of Political Science*.

Week 11 (10/28) - Trust & Efficacy (Group B)

1. Miller, Arthur H. 1974. "Political Issues and Trust in Government: 1964-1970." *American Political Science Review* 68: 951-972.
2. Citrin, Jack. 1974. "Comment: The Political Relevance of Trust in Government." *American Political Science Review* 68: 973-988.
3. Hibbing, John R., and Elizabeth Theiss-Morse. 2001. "Process Preferences and American Politics: What the People Want Government to Be." *American Political Science Review* 95: 145-153.
4. Intawan, Chanita and Stephen Nicholas. 2018. "My Trust in Government is Implicit: Automatic Trust in Government and System Support." *The Journal of Politics*.
5. Stauffer, Katelyn E. 2021. "Public Perceptions of Women's Inclusion and Feelings of Political Efficacy." *American Political Science Review* 115(4): 1226-1241
6. Bøggild, Troels and Carsten Jensen. 2025. "When politicians behave badly: Political, democratic, and social consequences of political incivility." *American Journal of Political Science*.

Week 12 (11/4) – Representation & Public Opinion

1. Ansolabehere, Stephen, and Philip Edward Jones. 2010. "Constituents' Responses to Congressional Roll-Call Voting." *American Journal of Political Science* 54:583-597.
2. Achen, Christopher and Larry Bartels. 2018. *Democracy for Realists*. Princeton University Press. Ch. 5. **Dist.**
3. Broockman, David E. and Christopher Skovron. 2018. "Bias in Perceptions of Public Opinion among Political Elites." *American Political Science Review* 112(3).
4. Costa, Mia. 2021. "Ideology, Not Affect: What Americans Want from Political Representation." *American Journal of Political Science* 65(2): 342-358.

5. “Hopkins, Daniel and Hans Noel. 2022. “Trump and the Shifting Meaning of ‘Conservative’: Using Activists’ Pairwise Comparisons to Measure Politicians’ Perceived Ideologies.” *American Journal of Political Science*.
6. Dancey, Logan, John Henderson, and Geoffrey Sheagley 2023. “The Personal Vote in a Polarized Era.” *American Journal of Political Science*

Week 13 (11/11) – Choose Your Own Adventure

Pair up with one other person in class to choose a reading for us all to work through. More details provided during class.

Week 14 (11/18) – Paper Presentations

Week 15 (11/25) – No class – Thanksgiving Break

Week 16 (12/5) – Final Paper Due by 5pm.