**POLITICAL SCIENCE 420/AMERICAN STUDIES 420**

**Political Attitudes & Behavior**

**Spring 2017**

Instructor: Dr. Rebecca Shafer

Class Meets: Does not meet

Room: Online Only

Office Hours: contact me via email

Email: [rshafer@utk.edu](mailto:rshafer@utk.edu)

**Course Description from Undergraduate Catalog**:

Systematic examination of political attitudes, public opinion, and political behavior.

**Nature of the Course:**

This seminar will cover some of the key topics and controversies in the study of American public opinion, political participation, and political behavior. Some of the questions we will be covering regarding public opinion are: Are citizens pliable? Do citizen’s organize their political thinking? Do citizens endorse and demonstrate democratic basics? What is the relationship between citizens and their government?. This course will also address political behavior questions like: Who votes and why? How does partisanship affect political behavior? How and why does partisanship change? How much influence do the mass media have on the electorate’s attitudes and behavior?

Ideally, the course will sharpen our understanding of why public opinion is critical for understanding democracy in the United States. It will also help us focus our attention on the major concepts and characteristics that shape Americans’ responses to politics; and how these American political behavior has changed over the past sixty years. This process will be done by reading a lot about surveys and survey data. In addition, we will also be developing our empirical analysis skills by completing online exercises that will focus heavily on how to analyze public opinion using survey data.

**University/College/Departmental Curricular Requirements Met:** This course satisfies the upper level requirement for the Political Science Major & Minor.

**Required Text:**

Flanigan, Zingale, Theirss-Morse, and Wager. *Political Behavior of the American Electorate* (CQ Press, 13th edition, 2015). **(Political Behavior)**

Clawson & Oxley. *Public Opinion: Democratic Ideals, Democratic Practice*. (CQ Press, 3nd edition, 2015). (**CO Text**)

Clawson & Oxley. *Conducting Empirical Analysis: Public Opinion in Action*. (CQ Press, 2011). (**CO Workbook**)

\*Additional Readings will be assigned throughout the semester. The readings will be available on Canvas under the Modules tab. These readings will be indicated in your syllabus with **(CANVAS)** listednext to the title.

**Required instructional technology:**

Knowledge of Canvas Instructional System.

**Student Assessment and Evaluation Methods:** Points Given Per Assignment

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Discussion Posts/Videos | 100 (10 x 10 points each) |
| Workbook Exercises | 100 (10 x 10 points each) |
| Mini-Research Projects | 75 (3 x 25 points each) |
| Research Paper | 100 |

**Attendance and Participation: You will not be successful in this class unless you keep up. There are weekly reading assignments in your textbooks and other assigned readings (posted on Canvas) plus weekly Discussion Posts on Canvas.**

**Discussion Board:**

Each week there will be a set of questions for discussion that will be administered through Canvas. All students will be graded for their contribution to the discussion board. You must answer all the questions assigned as well as addressing at least one part of another student’s post. Hint: A posting of “I agree” won’t provide you any points. Comments are to be civil, although you are welcome to disagree. Our class is intended to be a safe, intellectually stimulating, collaborative space for learning, where we respect each other’s thoughts and process, and everyone’s voice and experiences are important.

You have until 11:59 on the Sunday following th. You are not allowed to gain points by going back to earlier weeks. You can earn a maximum of 100 points on these weekly postings. Therefore, you **DO NOT** have to post every week but you must post at least 10 weeks throughout the semester to receive full credit..

**Workbook Exercises:**

Each week you will be assigned a chapter from the Clawson & Oxley Workbook. Each chapter has a series of exercises that you will be responsible for completing and for answering the questions associated with the exercise. You will receive 10 points for every week.

**Mini-Research Projects:**

The Clawson & Oxley Workbook contains Mini-Research Projects. You will be responsible for completing 3 of these projects over the semester. The due dates are listed in the syllabus

**Papers:**

Each student will write a paper on a topic relating in some way to political behavior and attitudes. All paper topics must be selected with the professor’s approval by **February 19th**. You will submit a typed-one page outline by **March 26 ~~19~~~~th~~**. The paper should be approximately 10 pages, double-spaced text in 12-point font along with 1 inch margins all around.

\* More Information on research paper will be posted on Canvas

**Grading Scale**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| A | 93 – 100% |
| A - | 90 – 92% |
| 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% |
| F | Less than 60% |

**COURSE CALENDAR**

*Week of:*

Jan 11 Introduction

* Noel - “Ten Things Political Scientists Know That You Don’t.” **(CANVAS)**
* Take [Political Compass Survey](http://www.politicalcompass.org/)
* Take [Pew Political Typology Quiz](http://www.people-press.org/quiz/political-typology/group/be846140)

Jan 16 Democratic Beliefs and American Democracy

* **CO Text** – Ch. 1 & Appendix
* **CO Workbook** – Ch. 1
* **Political Behavior** – Ch.1 & Appendix

Jan 23 Political Socialization

* **CO Text** – Ch. 2
* **CO Workbook** – Ch. 2
* **Jennings, Stoker, and Bowers** –*Politics across Generations: Family Transmission Reexamined* **(CANVAS)**
* Pew Research Center – [America’s Demographic Transformation](http://www.pewresearch.org/next-america/#Two-Dramas-in-Slow-Motion)

Jan 30 Attitude Stability and Attitude Change

* **CO Text** – Ch. 4
* **CO Workbook** – Ch. 4
* **Political Behavior** – Ch.4

Feb 6 Mass Media

* **CO Text** – Ch. 3
* **CO Workbook** – Ch. 4
* **Political Behavior** – Ch.7

Feb 13 Ideology

* **CO Text** – Ch. 5
* **CO Workbook** – Ch. 5
* **Political Behavior** – Ch.5

Feb 20 Pluralistic Roots of Public Opinion: Part 1

* **CO Text** – Ch. 6
* **CO Workbook** – Ch. 6 (69-74)
* Caprara and Vecchione - *Personality Approaches to Political Behavior* (**CANVAS**)

**Mini-Research Project #1 Due on Sunday, February 26th (Chapters 2-5)**

Feb 27 Pluralistic Roots of Public Opinion: Part 2

* **CO Text** – Ch. 7
* **CO Workbook** – Ch. 6 (74+)
* **Political Behavior** – Ch.6

Mar 6 Knowledge, Interest, and Attention to Politics

* **CO Text** – Ch. 8
* **CO Workbook** – Ch. 7
* Boudreau and Lupia – *Political Knowledge* (**CANVAS**)
* Lizotte & Sidman - *Explaining the Gender Gap in Political Knowledge* ***(CANVAS)***

Mar 13 **SPRING BREAK**

Mar 20 Support for Civil Liberties

* **CO Text** – Ch. 9
* **CO Workbook** – Ch. 8
* Gibson - *Measuring Political Tolerance and General Support for Pro–Civil Liberties Policies* (**CANVAS**)

Mar 27 Support for Civil Rights

* **CO Text** – Ch. 10
* **CO Workbook** – Ch. 9
* Schneider and Bos *- Measuring Stereotypes of Female Politicians (***CANVAS***)*
* Redlawsk et. al - *Symbolic Racism and Emotional Responses to the 2012 Presidential Candidates* (**CANVAS**)

**Mini-Research Project #2 Due on Sunday, April 2nd (Chapters 6-8)**

Apr 3 Trust in Government, Support for Institutions, and Social Capital

* **CO Text** – Ch. 11
* **CO Workbook** – Ch. 10
* **Pew Research Center** – [Public Trust in Government: 1958-2014](http://www.people-press.org/2014/11/13/public-trust-in-government/)

Apr 10 Impact of Public Opinion on Policy

* **CO Text** – Chs. 12 & 13
* **CO Workbook** – Ch. 11
* Gilens - *Preference Gaps and Inequality in Representation* ***(*CANVAS*)***
* Burstein - *The Impact of Public Opinion on Public Policy: A Review and an Agenda* ***(*CANVAS*)***

Apr 17 Elections: A lens for studying Political Behavior

* **Political Behavior** – Chs. 2 & 3
* **CO Workbook** – Ch. 12

**Mini-Research Project #3 Due on Sunday, April 23th (Chapters 9-12)**

*The* ***Final Paper*** *must be posted by April 28th, 11:59 pm*

**Academic Integrity**

All rules concerning academic honesty as set out in the current edition of *Hilltopics* will be enforced. Particular attention should be paid to the section on plagiarism. Students are reminded of their obligation to abide by the UTK Honor Code: “An essential feature of the University of Tennessee, Knoxville is a commitment to maintaining an atmosphere of intellectual integrity and academic honesty. As a student of the university, I pledge that I will neither knowingly give nor receive any inappropriate assistance in academic work, thus affirming my own personal commitment to honor and integrity.”

**Disabilities that Constrain Learning**

Any student who feels he or she may need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact the Office of Disability Services (ODS) at 865-974-6087 in 2227 Dunford Hall to document their eligibility for services. ODS will work with students and faculty to coordinate reasonable accommodations for students with documented disabilities.

**The Student’s Role in Improving Teaching and Learning through Course Assessment**

At UT, it is our collective responsibility to improve the state of teaching and learning. During the semester, you may be requested to assess aspects of this course either during class or at the completion of the class. You are encouraged to respond to these various forms of assessment as a means of continuing to improve the quality of the UT learning experience.

**University Civility Statement**

Civility is genuine respect and regard for others: politeness, consideration, tact, good manners, graciousness, cordiality, affability, amiability and courteousness. Civility enhances academic freedom and integrity, and is a prerequisite to the free exchange of ideas and knowledge in the learning community. Our community consists of students, faculty, staff, alumni, and campus visitors. Community members affect each other’s well-being and have a shared interest in creating and sustaining an environment where all community members and their points of view are valued and respected. Affirming the value of each member of the university community, the campus asks that all its members adhere to the principles of civility and community adopted by the campus: <http://civility.utk.edu/>.

**Communication of Announcements:**

Announcements will be sent via e-mail to students’ official UTK e-mail addresses and/or posted on Canvas. Reminder: Students are responsible for monitoring their UTK e-mail account and the course Canvas site.

**Alteration of this Syllabus:**

The instructor reserves the right to revise, alter and/or amend this syllabus, as necessary. Students will be notified by email and/or Canvas of any such revisions, alterations and/or amendments.