

JOUR 542 – Fall 2008
PUBLIC OPINION AND PROPOGANDA – SYLLABUS V.1

Instructor: Dr. John C. Besley (jbesley@sc.edu)
Class Time: M/W 12:30-1:45 (75 minutes)
Classroom: Coliseum 1015
Office Hours: T/W/TH 10:30-11:30 or by appointment
Office: Coliseum 4009C

Introduction and Objectives

Journalism 542 aims to introduce students to the ideas, theory, and evolving practice of public opinion research with a specific focus on the impact of communication on opinion. As a course on PUBLIC opinion, the course focuses primarily on opinion about issues of civic importance (i.e., politics). When practical and relevant, we will also discuss the role of public opinion as it applies to issues in advertising, marketing, and public relations.

You should complete this course with the following:

- A clear understanding of what constitutes public opinion, and key theoretical models associated with the dynamics of public opinion research,
- An introduction to the relationship between values, attitudes, opinion, and behavior;
- An introduction to the psychological and social origins of public opinion; and
- Knowledge of how communication can influence public opinion.

You should look at the present syllabus as a first draft. In order to ensure the class meets all of our needs, it should be expected that we will need to make changes to as we go along. We will discuss any change in class and you should also check Blackboard regularly for announcements.

Required Text

Glynn, C. J., Herbst, S., O'Keefe, G. J., Shapiro, R. Y., & Lindeman, M. (2004). *Public opinion* (2nd ed.). Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

You should also sign up for email reports from the Pew Foundation's Research Center for the People & the Press at: <http://people-press.org/>. This will give us a common basis for discussion of how each week's readings can be put in context of real-world public opinion.

Grading

(1) Quizzes on text and lectures: There will be four short quizzes (1 page of multiple choice questions and 2-3 pages of short answer questions) spaced throughout the semester (15% each). These closed-book tests will occur during regular class time.

(2) Assignments and presentations: You will be asked to complete one group assignments (15% of grade) and one individual assignment (15%). Both will require you to take a specific issue (energy policy, abortion, gun control, gay marriage, the war in Iraq, the election, etc.), describe the current status of public opinion in that area using available resources, as well as apply describe how a concept or theory you learned about in class (e.g. Theory of Planned Behavior, heuristic/systematic processing, deliberation, etc.) may be affecting/could be used to affect public opinion in the area you chose.

(3) Participation and professionalism (10%): You are expected to attend class. You should therefore ensure you sign in every day. You are also expected to take active part in class discussion and group work by contributing your experiences, knowledge, and questions. I feel perfectly comfortable in calling on any

student at any time. During the group project, you are expected to behave in a professional manner and contribute to your group's workload as appropriate and needed. Each group member will submit confidential reports on the adequacy of each group-member's contribution following each assignment.

Also, by the Wednesday of every other week, starting during the second week of class, you will be expected to post an entry to the class Blackboard discussion list of about 150 words (the length of this paragraph) wherein you will note some current trend or piece of public opinion data and speculate (wildly, if you wish) about how some concept from that week's reading may underlie the trend/fact you note. You may also choose to respond to a previous entry. I will post some examples of the kinds of comments I'm thinking of to get us started. If your student number ends with an even number (0, 2, 4, etc.) you will start posting on the second week of class. If your student number starts with an even number (1, 3, 5, etc.) you will start posting on the third week of class. We will discuss postings in class.

Grade Scale

A = 91 or above

B+ = 90.9 – 85.0

C+ = 79.9 – 75.0

D+ = 69.9 – 65.0

F = below 60.0

B = 84.9 – 80.0

C = 74.9 – 70.0 (minimum passing grade)

D = 64.9 – 60.0

I will post grades on Blackboard but these are not your official grades. Your official grades are what you see written on your returned assignments. However, if the grade you see on Blackboard is not the same as the grade you have written in your assignment, you must let me know.

Attendance Policy and Make-up Work

University Bulletin regulations consider missing more than 10% (excused or unexcused) of scheduled classes as "excessive." Furthermore, any student missing 5% of classes will automatically lose a full letter grade (i.e. B+ to C+).

NO makeup exams will be given unless the student can verify that s/he was: (1) under a doctor's care or hospitalized at the time of the exam, (2) on a university-sanctioned trip, (3) away from school due to a major medical event/emergency involving a member of their immediate family, or, (4) experiencing some sort of major personal trauma (e.g. divorce). I understand that emergencies come up. If you can, let me know in advance and be prepared to provide me with appropriate documentation.

Attendance Policy and Make-up Work

The university lays out serious consequences for cheating. If you get caught, it will not be pleasant for anyone involved. For my part, I will fail you immediately and report you to the appropriate review body. Cite EACH AND EVERY source you use and do not try to pass off the work of anyone else as your own. For additional information, see: (<http://www.sc.edu/policies/rsch100.html>).

Tentative Class Schedule (Subject to Change)

WEEK		PO Chapter
August 21 st	Course Introduction	
August 26 th - September 2 nd	The History and Meaning of Public Opinion Research Bybee, C. (1999). Can democracy survive in the post-factual age?: A return to the Lippman-Dewey debate about the politics of the news. <i>Communication Monographs</i> , 1(1), 27-66. (This is a long chapter, focus on understanding the differences between how Dewey and Lippman viewed the public and the consequences of those views) Peters, J. D. (1995). Historical tensions in the concept of public opinion. In T. L. Glasser & C. T. Salmon (Eds.), <i>Public Opinion and the Communication of Consent</i> (pp. 3-32). New York, NY: The Guilford Press.	Chapter 1- 2
September 4 th – 16 th	Propaganda Models We'll watch parts of <i>Manufacturing Consent</i> , plus: Sproule, J. M. (1987). Propaganda studies in American social-science: the rise and fall of the critical paradigm. <i>Quarterly Journal of Speech</i> , 73(1), 60-78. Christians, C. G. (2004). Propaganda the technological system. In T. L. Glasser & C. T. Salmon (Eds.), <i>Public Opinion and the Communication of Consent</i> (pp. 156-174). New York, NY: Guilford Press. Klaehn, J. (2002). A critical review and assessment of Herman and Chomsky's 'propaganda model'. <i>European Journal of Communication</i> , 17(2), 147-182 Possible additional reading, TBD	
Quiz #1: Thursday, September 18th		
September 23 rd and 25 th	Methods of Data Collection Squire, P. (1988). Why the 1936 Literary-Digest Poll Failed. <i>Public Opinion Quarterly</i> , 52(1), 125-133. Erikson, R. S., & Tedin, K. L. (2007). <i>American Public Opinion: Its Origins, Content, and Impact (Chapter 2: Polling ...)</i> (7th ed.). New York, N.Y.: Pearson/Longman. Optional: Survey Research (NC State, PA 765 Website): http://www2.chass.ncsu.edu/garson/pa765/survey.htm	Chapter 3

September 30th to October 7th **Psychological Perspectives** **Chapter 4**
 Oskamp, S., & Schultz, P. W. (2005). *Attitudes and opinions* (3rd ed.). Chapter 1. Mahwah, N.J.: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
 Inglehart, R., & Baker, W. E. (2000). Modernization, cultural change, and the persistence of traditional values. *American Sociological Review*, 65(1), 19-51.

Also: <http://people.umass.edu/aizen/pdf/tpb.intervention.pdf> and <http://people.umass.edu/aizen/pdf/tpb.questionnaire.pdf> (note the root directory has other Theory of Planned Behavior resources).

Quiz #2: Tuesday, October 7th

October 14th and 16th **Social Norms/Sociological Perspectives** **Chapter 5**
 Rodgers, S., & Thorson, E. (2003). A socialization perspective on male and female reporting. *Journal of Communication*, 53(4), 658-675.
 Additional Reading TBD

October 2st and 23rd **Limits to Perception** **Chapter 6-7**
 Davison, W. P. (1983). The third-person effect in communication. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 47, 1-15.
 Gunther, A. C., & Liebhart, J. L. (2006). Broad reach or biased source? Decomposing the hostile media effect. *Journal of Communication*, 56(3), 449-466.

Quiz #3: October 28th

October 30th – November 6th **ELECTION SPECIAL: Public Opinion and Civic Life** **Chapter 10**
 Norris, P. (1996). Does television erode social capital? A reply to Putnam. *PS-Political Science & Politics*, 29(3), 474-480
 Additional Reading TBD

November 11th and 18th **Citizen Knowledge and Deliberation** **Chapter 8**
 Yankelovich, D. (1996). A new direction for survey research. *International Journal of Public Opinion Research*, 8(1), 1-9.
 Price, V., & Neijens, P. (1997). Opinion quality in public opinion research. *International Journal of Public Opinion Research* 9(4), 336-360.

November 20th - 27th Group Presentations

November 27th – December 4th **Agenda-Setting, Agenda Building, and Agenda Management** **Chapter 9**
 Additional Reading TBD

Quiz #4, Tuesday, December 2nd

Final Project Due, Friday December 12

