

Meetings

Wednesdays

Room: Quinn 206

10:30 - 11:50 am

Professor: Dr. Melissa Baker

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Office: Benedict 301

Office Hours: Wednesday 12-1pm and by appointment

Course Description

An introduction to public opinion, media and politics, and the role of technology in these processes.

This course is designed to serve as an introduction to public opinion as it relates to politics. We will discuss how attitudes that make up public opinion are formed and expressed. We will also discuss the role of media and technology in forming, influencing, and spreading public opinion. The ultimate goal of this class is to understand how, why, and when public opinion matters for politics.

As this is a hybrid course, we will meet once a week (most weeks) and the other 50% of "class time" will be asynchronous activities with a mix of prerecorded lectures, listening to and reflecting on podcasts, and other weekly activities. A tentative course calendar is provided below but is subject to changes.

Textbooks: There is not a textbook for this class. Readings will be mostly academic journal articles and will be posted on Blackboard.

Evaluation: The final grade will be based on the following:

1. *Quizzes (40%)*. There will be six quizzes over key terms, scheduled roughly every two weeks. Quizzes will be due at 11:59pm on the Sunday after the class it is listed with. There will also be a 'Quiz 0' during week 1 that is a syllabus quiz.
2. *Reflections (Activities and Podcasts) (30%)*. Every week there will be 1-2 short reflections due that focus on assigned activities and podcasts. Instructions for each will be posted on Blackboard. These reflections are meant to practice writing about class concepts and to think deeper about class topics.
3. *A Concept Assignment (30%)*. This assignment will be due at the end of the semester. Instructions will be posted on Blackboard during the first month of the semester.

Extra Credit: Students may complete up to 2 SONA credits to apply to their overall grade. Each credit will be worth its percentage value (e.g., 1 SONA credit = 1% grade bump, meaning an 89% would be increased to a 90%). Instructions on registering for SONA and completing studies will be posted on Blackboard.

Course Policies: This course adheres to policies and procedures that apply to all UTEP courses with regard to accommodations and academic misconduct (individual statements can be found at the end of this document). There is a zero-tolerance policy for plagiarism and cheating. All work is expected to be your own, no unoriginal work or work generated by AI will be accepted. For any accommodations related to disability or religious observation, with or without documentation, please speak with the instructor. The Center for Accommodations and Support Services can be reached at cass@utep.edu. More information on UTEP's academic integrity policy can be found in the handbook of operating procedures. To demonstrate you understand these policies, please email the professor what your walk-up song would be if you were in the MLB.

In addition:

- class attendance is expected
- students are expected to come to class on time and ready to participate (having done the readings listed for that day)
- make-up exams will only be offered in justified, special circumstances.

Student Resources: The university provides a range of academic, counseling, medical and administrative student resources and support services. To learn more, please review the resources document on Blackboard.

Course Goals and Learning Objectives:

Goals	Objectives	Assessments
1. Students will develop an understanding of the processes, theories, and empirical evidence of public opinion	(a) Students will learn key political terms and theories (b) Students will be able to communicate the importance of public opinion terms and concepts	Reflections Quizzes Concept Assignment
2. Students will build an ability to employ critical thinking and demonstrate social scientific literacy, including basic data literacy	(a) Students will be able to read and interpret data visualization (b) Students will be able to read and extract important information from published social science research papers	Reflections Exams
3. Students will practice applying abstract theory and research methods to understand contemporary political events	(a) Students will be able to evaluate credibility of sources (b) Students will be able to gather information about politics through podcasts, social media, and other modern tools	Reflections Concept Assignment

Tentative Course Schedule: The tentative course schedule is detailed in the table below.

In the event of a class cancelation, students are expected to continue with readings as originally scheduled. Any assignments scheduled are due at the next class unless other instructions are posted on the course website or otherwise communicated.

Disclaimer: The schedule, policies, procedures, and assignments in this course are subject to change in the event of extenuating circumstances, by mutual agreement, and/or to ensure better student learning.

Tentative Course Schedule (Subject to Change as Semester Progresses):

Day	Week	Topic	Readings	Assignments	Quiz
01/17	1	Course Introduction		Podcast: Political Persuasion	#0
01/24	2	Public Opinion & Attitudes 101		Podcast: Fundamental Nature of Opinion Video: The Psychological Traits That Shape Your Beliefs	
01/31	3	Measuring Attitudes	Krosnick et al. (2019)	BeanFest (run Inquisit Web version) Podcast: Your Language Shapes Your Opinions	
02/07	4	Polling	How to read polls: (1) NYT , (2) 538 , (3) Slate	Video: Election Polls: How to Read Them Properly Podcast: Why We Need Polls	
02/14	5	Emotions & Stress	Phoenix Chs. 1 and 5 French et al. (2011)	Podcast: Disgusted Activity: Journal Article Analysis	#1
02/21	6	Personality	Gerber et al. (2010) Ollerenshaw and Johnston (2022)	Activity: Big 5 measure	
02/28	7	Groups & Attitudes	Mason Ch. 1 Sirin, Valentino, and Villalobos (2016) Cassese, Barnes, and Branton (2015)	Podcast: American Islamophobia Activity: Implicit Association Test	
03/06	8	The Strange Death of American Civility		Podcast: Us vs. Them	#2
03/13	9	SPRING BREAK			

Day	Week	Topic	Readings	Assignments	Quiz
03/20	10	Print Media & TV	Arora, Phoenix, and Delshad (2019) Valentino, Brader, and Jardina (2013)	Podcast: Framing Political Issues Podcast: Media, Norms, & Social Change	
03/27	11	Social Media	Guess et al. (2023a) Guess et al. (2023b) Nyhan et al. (2023)	Activity: Someone is Wrong on the Internet Podcast: Social Media Polarization	#3
04/03	12	Concept Assignment Planning		Podcast: Digital Media Trends in American Political Campaigns Podcast: Connecting Social Media Influencers with Political Campaigns	
04/10	13	Mis-, Dis-, and Malinformation	Jerit & Zhao (2020)	Podcast: Fake News Podcast: Fighting Against Misinformation	
04/17	14	Artificial Intelligence & Automation (Class on Zoom)		Activity: Critique statements written by AI	
04/24	15	TBD based on student requests			#4
05/01	16	Concept Assignment Work			