Welcome to PS900: Public Opinion! “PS900” is a topics course number in the Department of Political Science department, in other words which means that it is “An umbrella course for variable credit topic courses, such as colloquia series, workshops, intensive summer courses, half-semester courses, etc.” This particular course is about public opinion in the United States. In this seminar, we will study and learn together classic and cutting-edge research on public opinion, prominent and promising methodologies for studying it, and contemplate all of this within the context of competing theories on the appropriate and actual role of public opinion in democracies. Although our focus will be on public opinion in the United States, I will ask you to bring in your knowledge of research on public opinion in other parts of the world, and we will spend week 12 in particular considering work on other regions of the world.

My goal is that by the end of this seminar, you will each be able to do the following (In other words, these are our learning outcomes):

- Identify and differentiate various conceptualizations of public opinion.
- Identify and analyze assumptions about public opinion in contemporary social science literature.
- Analyze the role of modes of measurement on research conclusions.
- Summarize major past research findings and debates about the role of public opinion in contemporary United States democracy. In particular, summarize and differentiate findings with respect to what explains why people interpret public affairs as they do and express the opinions that they do in different contexts.
- Identify questions related to public opinion that are in need of research to make significant contributions to our understanding of the nature, origins, and effects of public opinion.

REQUIREMENTS
You will each write a set of one-page reaction papers, a term paper proposal, and a term paper.

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1 This course is a face-to-face graduate seminar. The credit standard for this course is met by an expectation of a total of
The term paper is due Monday, May 7th. This will be either a thorough research design that includes a thorough literature review or a report of original research that takes the form of a journal article. Your choice to pursue either a research paper or a research design should be driven by your familiarity with the literature in the area in which you would pursue research for this class. That is, you will each be responsible for a thorough understanding of the literature on the topic of your choosing and for formulating a question that is important. That is, your paper should ask a question that addresses a gap in existing literature and whose answer would contribute to scholarship and the broader public. If you can formulate such a question and collect data within the first month or so of class, I strongly encourage you to write a research paper. Otherwise, invest your time in writing a research design paper. The papers should be a concise and focused 17 to 20 pages. A short 2-3 page proposal is due in class February 22nd.

If you choose to write a research paper, you are responsible for 4 one-page reaction papers. If you choose to write a research design, you are responsible for 6 reaction papers. You may choose which weeks you write these papers, though I encourage you to spread them throughout the term. On the weeks that you write a paper, it is due via email to the class email list (polisci900-2-s18@lists.wisc.edu) by noon on the Wednesday before class. These papers should be reflections and/or critiques on a selection of the week’s readings. By critique, I mean an analysis of the claims, evidence, or methods, which can include praise as well as criticism. The best papers take the following form: They have a brief introduction that identifies a key argument or claim mentioned or implied in the week’s readings. The body of the paper then gives a careful and thorough analysis of the evidence the week’s readings have on this point. This is followed by your reading of this evidence in light of other research, and a rigorous analysis of current events. In other words, the papers focus on one point, ransack the week’s readings for all the details and evidence they have to offer on this point, and include your own original insight. Citing specific pages is encouraged. These papers will be graded.

Each week, I would like each of you to email to me (kathy.cramer@wisc.edu), by noon on the Wednesday before class, 2 questions that you would like us to pursue as a group. These can be substantive questions such as, “What did Author X mean by statement Y?” or “Compare the claims made in article A to article B.” They can also be methodological questions, such as “I don’t understand what’s going on in Table 1 in Article Z. Let’s interpret it together.” Your questions do NOT have to fit one of these formats—these are just ideas. I will record whether you complete this assignment every week, but the purpose is not to give you another task—it is to give you another opportunity to set the agenda of the topics we cover in seminar.

I will only give an incomplete for this course under rare circumstances. Your grade will depend on your performance on the short papers and completion of weekly questions (25%), attendance and your participation in class discussions (quality of participation weighted by volume of participation, to count as another 25%), and the term paper (50%). I will grade on an A, A-, B+, B, B-, C+ etc. basis, even though final grades are assigned on an A, AB, B, BC, C basis.
The following books are required for the course. Most of the readings not found in one of the required texts are available electronically through the UW Library system. The remaining readings will be available through Box. These are marked with a * in the calendar below.

**BOOKS**

**ACADEMIC INTEGRITY**
By enrolling in this course, each student assumes the responsibilities of an active participant in UW-Madison’s community of scholars in which everyone’s academic work and behavior are held to the highest academic integrity standards. Academic misconduct compromises the integrity of the university. Cheating, fabrication, plagiarism, unauthorized collaboration, and helping others commit these acts are examples of academic misconduct, which can result in disciplinary action. This includes but is not limited to failure on the assignment/course, disciplinary probation, or suspension. Substantial or repeated cases of misconduct will be forwarded to the Office of Student Conduct & Community Standards for additional review. For more information, refer to studentconduct.wiscweb.wisc.edu/academic-integrity/.

**ACCOMMODATIONS FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES**
**McBurney Disability Resource Center syllabus statement:** “The University of Wisconsin-Madison supports the right of all enrolled students to a full and equal educational opportunity. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), Wisconsin State Statute (36.12), and UW-Madison policy (Faculty Document 1071) require that students with disabilities be reasonably accommodated in instruction and campus life. Reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities is a shared faculty and student responsibility. Students are expected to inform faculty [me] of their need for instructional accommodations by the end of the third week of the semester, or as soon as possible after a disability has been incurred or recognized. Faculty [I], will work either directly with the student [you] or in coordination with the McBurney Center to identify and provide reasonable instructional accommodations. Disability information, including instructional accommodations as part of a student's educational record, is confidential and protected under FERPA.”
[http://mcburney.wisc.edu/facstaff/other/faculty/syllabus.php](http://mcburney.wisc.edu/facstaff/other/faculty/syllabus.php)
DIVERSITY & INCLUSION

Our institutional statement on diversity: “Diversity is a source of strength, creativity, and innovation for UW-Madison. We value the contributions of each person and respect the profound ways their identity, culture, background, experience, status, abilities, and opinion enrich the university community. We commit ourselves to the pursuit of excellence in teaching, research, outreach, and diversity as inextricably linked goals.

The University of Wisconsin-Madison fulfills its public mission by creating a welcoming and inclusive community for people from every background – people who as students, faculty, and staff serve Wisconsin and the world.” [https://diversity.wisc.edu/](https://diversity.wisc.edu/)

CALENDAR

(*=Readings not available on line, but available in coursepack. Readings other than “recommended” are required.)

1. JAN 25, INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

2. FEB 1, CONCEPTUALIZING PUBLIC OPINION

3. FEB 8, IDEOLOGICAL REASONING
4. **FEB 15, MODELS OF PREFERENCE FORMATION**

Choose to read one from the following:

5. **FEB 22, MODELS OF PREFERENCE FORMATION, CONTINUED**

*DUE IN CLASS—PAPER HARD COPY, PLEASE:* Short (2-3 pages) term paper proposal.
Include: 1) question you are addressing; 2) whether you are doing a lit review/research design or original research; 3) if original research, then possible data you have located or are in the process of locating that you will use to research this; 4) brief sketch of previous research you are familiar with to date that addresses your question, and 5) a justification of the importance of this project to the research literature and its implications for the broader public.


**Recommended:**

6. **MAR 1, GROUP BASIS OF PUBLIC OPINION**

Choose to read 2 from the following:


**Recommended:**


7. **MAR 8, KNOWLEDGE AND SHORT CUTS**


Choose to read one from the following:


**Recommended:**


**8. MAR 15, RACISM AND RACIAL RESENTMENT**

**Recommended:**


**9. MAR 22: IMMIGRATION AND STRIVING TO GET BEYOND WHITE-CENTERED RESEARCH**

**Recommended:**


**MARCH 29: SPRING BREAK**

**10. April 5, TERM PAPER CHECK-INS**
Instead of class this day, I will have extended office hours in the morning on this day to check in with you about your term papers.

**11. APRIL 12, POLITICAL UNDERSTANDING**

**Recommended:**


12. **April 19, Global Populism**

Choose to read 1 from the following:
Rooduijn, Matthijs, and Brian Burgoon. 2017. “The Paradox of Well-Being: Do Unfavorable Socioeconomic and Sociocultural Contexts Deepen or Dampen Radical Left and Right Voting Among the Less Well-Off?” *Comparative Political Studies*: 1041401772070.

13. **April 26, Partisan Polarization**

14. **May 3, Reconsidering the Place of Public Opinion in Democracy**

**********FINAL PAPERS DUE by 5pm, Monday, May 7th, by email as Word documents (please no .pdf)**********