# Public Opinion & Political Psychology
## University of Maryland, College Park
Fall 2023

## Instructor Information

- Dr. Candace Turitto
- turitto@umd.edu
- Office Hours
    - Tuesday 12:30pm-1:30pm (in office)
    - Wednesday 12:30pm-1:30pm (on Zoom, see ELMS)
    - (or email me at the address below for another time or Zoom appt)
    - Tydings 1147

## Course Information

- Wed 5p – 7:45p
- WOODS 1131

## Course Overview and Goals

In this course, students investigate how citizens in a democracy think about politics, form attitudes, and how public opinion shapes, and is shaped by, political environments. In doing so, students will explore their own personal experience of developing political attitudes, how to methodologically approach modern public opinion measurement, and explore the psychological underpinnings inherent in citizen thought.

### Upon Completion of this Course, students will:

- Develop an in-depth understanding of forces shaping beliefs and opinions in the public sphere, and explore whether public opinion should play an integral role in American democracy.
- Learn how to use polling and survey data to investigate and analyze core debates in public opinion and discourse.
- Examine the role of public opinion in key moments in American democracy, the influence of political campaigns and elections, and the rise of electronic media in shaping public opinion.
- Understand the interplay of psychology and politics in how citizens gather and convert information into public opinion.

# Course Requirements

## Readings

Some readings (particularly those from books) will be provided as scans on ELMS. Students who wish to purchase or use a hard copy from the library are more than welcome to do so. Those readings not provided on ELMS will be searchable in the library's academic database via journal access. Students should come to class with their copies of the week's readings, including their notes prepped for class discussion of the readings (see Attendance/Participation). While I am here to guide the conversation in parts, _students are the primary drivers of the class discussion each week_.

## Attendance/Participation

Each week, students are expected to thoroughly and astutely prepare for class discussions, in ways that ready them to cover each reading in depth. This will likely include several methods of note-taking and paths of inquiry posed before each class meeting. For example, summarizing the work, specifically noting criticisms or critiques of an author's theory or methodology, reflecting on how another theory or author would react, posing questions about the theory or methods, imagining additional research questions, musing about modern situations, or playing devil's advocate. Although students will also post similar content on a weekly basis for the readings, each should also tangibly engage further than what the Discussion Board requires, in preparation for the class discussions themselves. Each student will receive a participation score for each class meeting, which will contribute to the overall grade.

0 - Not present
1 - Present but did not engage
2 - Engaged in conversation but without unique contributions
3 - Engaged in conversation with some unique contributions
4 - Engaged in conversation with notable unique contributions

## Discussion Board Questions

As mentioned above, there are several possible avenues of critique and reflection to use on each reading. Every week, students will post ONE (1) question or consideration for the class to work through together, per reading. Discussion Boards will _close at the start of class each week_. Late posts cannot be used to contribute to the class's discussion and therefore will not receive credit.

The quality of Discussion Board posts will be incorporated into the weekly participation score. Posts must be thoughtful and generated from critical thinking – comments that simply agree with the author(s) or compliment their methods are unacceptable. Consistent low quality of responses will generate a reduction in the participation score based on instructor's judgment.

Note that, with appropriate preparation, students will have multiple questions or critiques for any given reading. They will post one (1) of these to ELMS, but bring all of them to our class discussion.

**Socialization Essay**
In 4-5 pages, double-spaced, each student will reflect on their own political socialization, specifically incorporating lessons learned from the readings on socialization processes. Students will also (informally) share an overall summary of their essay in class.

**Ad Search**
Students will identify five political advertisements, from no earlier than 2018 – two which employ fear, two which employ enthusiasm, and one which lacks emotional appeals. The ads must be in video form, ranging between 30 seconds and 2 minutes, and regard either a congressional (House or Senate), or statewide campaign. Additionally, the two fear and two enthusiasm ads must be from one R and one D candidate, or otherwise be from different partisan sides. Finally, all 5 ads should come from different races. Upon identifying each ad, students will compose a short 1-2 page essay, double-spaced, _for each ad_ (5-10 pages total), which highlights the presence or lack of emotional appeals, and critically analyzes the objective and subjective success of each ad.

**Research Design**
Each student will describe (and diagram, if needed) two original experimental research designs they create on their own.

The first design will describe an experiment that primes respondents to think of "compromise" as a positive social value. The second design will describe an experiment that explores the framing effects of "compromise" in politics, using at least two separate frames. Both designs must include a research question, hypothesis, and description of how the experiment would successfully measure a specific dependent variable and provide conclusive evidence to reject or fail to reject the null. While the priming design calls for "compromise" to be used as a positive social value, there is no such limitation in the framing design. The designs can be staged in any country or electoral setting.

**Polarization Essay**
Using the readings on polarization as a guide and reference, each student will construct a 7-8 page essay, double-spaced, which addresses the following prompt: _Based on the arguments presented in the week's readings, is polarization a myth? If not, how do you know? If so, how do you know?_

**Final Polling Analysis**
In lieu of a Final Exam, each student will independently analyze a polling dataset provided by the instructor. The final product of this analysis will be a 5-slide presentation in Power Point (or a similar program). Each slide will be populated with relevant figures from the data, and summarized/analyzed/described in a short and direct headline at the top. In most cases, each slide will address a particular point of interest, which, in turn, is addressed by more than one question from the dataset. Therefore, each slide will likely contain more than one data point, and

the headline will need to connect each figure on display in the interpretation. In total, the five slides should tell an overall story that is informative and properly considers the audience. In aid of this, slides should be high in design, graphics, and color, and light on text.

## Grading of Assignments

The grade for this course will be determined according to the following formula:

| Assignments/Activities | % of Final Grade |
|---|---|
| Attendance/Participation | [25%] |
| Socialization Essay | [10%] |
| Ad Search | [15%] |
| Research Design | [15%] |
| Polarization Essay | [15%] |
| Final Polling Analysis | [20%] |

### Letter Grades

Letter grades for the entire course will be assigned as follows:

| Letter Grade | Points | Percent |
|---|---|---|
| A+ | 4.00 | 97-100 |
| A | 4.00 | 94-96 |
| A- | 3.7 | 90-93 |
| B+ | 3.3 | 87-89 |
| B | 3.0 | 84-86 |
| B- | 2.7 | 80-83 |
| C+ | 2.3 | 77-79 |
| C | 2.0 | 74-76 |
| C- | 1.7 | 70-73 |
| D+ | 1.3 | 67-69 |
| D | 1.0 | 64-66 |
| D- | 0.7 | 60-63 |
| F | .00 | Below 60 |

### View Grades

Assignment grades will be made available on the UMD ELMS site. Note that the "final grade" listed on ELMS is <u>NOT</u>, in fact, your final grade, as assignments are weighted differently (see Assignments/Activities section above).

# Course Schedule - Topics & Assignments
[Subject to change with notice from Instructor]
*Readings led by an * are available as scans on ELMS*


## PART I – HISTORY AND VALUE OF PUBLIC OPINION


**8.30.23** – Introduction of syllabus; class discussion; focus groups


Readings for Discussion:
1) *Polling and the Public - Ch 1 (Asher 2012)
2) *Strength in Numbers – Intro, Ch 1-3 (Morris 2022)


Assignments for next week:
1) Discussion Board by start of next class


## PART II – ATTITUDE FORMATION: RATIONALITY, SOCIALIZATION, AND NON-ATTITUDES


**9.6.23** – Class discussion; lecturette; vignette exercise


Readings for Discussion:
1) Feldman, Stanley. "Economic self-interest and political behavior." *American Journal of Political Science* (1982): 446-466.
2) Sears, David O., and Carolyn L. Funk. "The role of self-interest in social and political attitudes." *Advances in experimental social psychology*. Vol. 24. Academic Press, 1991. 1-91.
3) *The American Voter - Ch 6 (Campbell et al., 1960)


Assignments for next week:
1) Socialization Essay by start of next class


**9.13.23** – Class discussion; lecturette; non-attitudes exercise; socialization summaries


Readings for Discussion:
1) *Polling and the Public – Ch 2 (Asher 2012)
2) *Political Socialization: A Study In Psychology of Political Behavior – Ch 5 (Hyman, 1959)
3) *The American Voter - Ch 2 (excerpt), Ch 7, Ch 9 (Campbell et al., 1960)
4) *Voting – Ch 6 (Berelson et al. 1954)
5) *Pluralistic Roots of Political Beliefs (excerpt)
6) Miller, Steven D., and David O. Sears. "Stability and change in social

tolerance: A test of the persistence hypothesis." *American Journal of Political Science* (1986): 214-236.

Assignments for next week:
1) Discussion Board by start of next class

# PART III – BELIEF SYSTEMS AND VALUES

**9.20.23** – Class discussion; lecturette; social desirability exercise

Readings for Discussion:
1) Converse, Philip E. "The nature of belief systems in mass publics (1964)." *Critical review* 18.1-3 (1964): 1-74.
2) *The Nature of Human Values (Rokeach, 1973)
3) *McCann, James A. "Electoral choices and core value change: The 1992 presidential campaign." *American Journal of Political Science* (1997): 564-583.
4) Croco, Sarah E., Jared McDonald, and Candace Turitto. "Making them pay: Using the norm of honesty to generate costs for political lies." *Electoral Studies* 69 (2021): 102250.

Assignments for next week:
1) Discussion Board by start of next class

# PART IV – LEARNING, SHORTCUTS, INFORMATION, AND DECISION-MAKING

**9.27.23** – Class discussion; lecturette; political knowledge tests

Readings for Discussion:
1) *Public Opinion – Ch 27 (Lippman, 1922)
2) Converse, Philip E. "Information flow and the stability of partisan attitudes." *Public opinion quarterly* 26.4 (1962): 578-599.
3) *Knowledge and Attitudes – (Visser et al., 2008)
4) *Lau, Richard R., and David P. Redlawsk. "Advantages and disadvantages of cognitive heuristics in political decision making." *American journal of political science* (2001): 951-971.
5) Lodge, Milton, Kathleen M. McGraw, and Patrick Stroh. "An impression-driven model of candidate evaluation." *American Political Science Review* 83.2 (1989): 399-419.
6) *Reconsidering the Rational Public – Ch 8 (Kulkinski & Quirk, 2012)
7) Mitchell, Dona-Gene. "It's about time: The lifespan of information effects in a multiweek campaign." *American Journal of Political Science* 56.2 (2012): 298-311.

**10.4.23** – Class discussion; lecturette; meme exercise

Readings for Discussion:
1) *The Nature & Origins of Mass Opinion – Ch 3 & 7 (Zaller 1992)
2) *It's a Matter of Interpretation – Ch 3 (Kulkinski & Hurley, 1996)
3) Kuklinski, James H., and Norman L. Hurley. "On hearing and interpreting political messages: A cautionary tale of citizen cue-taking." *The Journal of Politics* 56.3 (1994): 729-751.
4) *Partisan Hearts & Minds – Ch 5-6 (Green et al., 2004)

**10.11.23** – CLASS CANCELLED – DR. T ATTENDING APSA EVENT

# PART V – EMOTIONS

**10.18.23** -- Class discussion; lecturette; political ads

Readings for Discussion:
1) *Affective Intelligence & Political Judgement – Ch 4 & 7 (Marcus et al., 2000)
2) *Symbolic Politics: A socio-psychological theory – Ch 5 (Sears, 1993)
3) *Campaigning for Hearts & Minds – Ch 1 (excerpt), 2-3 (Brader, 1999/2020)
4) Brader, Ted. "Striking a responsive chord: How political ads motivate and persuade voters by appealing to emotions." *American Journal of Political Science* 49.2 (2005): 388-405.

# PART VI – MEDIA EFFECTS: FRAMING, PRIMING, AND FRAGMENTATION

**10.25.23** -- Class discussion; lecturette; ad search share

Readings for Discussion:
1) *Agenda-Setting, Framing, & Priming - Ch 19 (Roessler, 2008)
2) *News That Matters – Ch 7 (Iyengar & Kinder, 2010)
3) Druckman, James N. "Priming the vote: Campaign effects in a US Senate election." *Political Psychology* 25.4 (2004): 577-594.
4) Valentino, Nicholas A., Vincent L. Hutchings, and Ismail K. White. "Cues that matter: How political ads prime racial attitudes during campaigns." *American Political Science Review* 96.1 (2002): 75-90.
5) Nelson, Thomas E., Rosalee A. Clawson, and Zoe M. Oxley. "Media framing of a civil liberties conflict and its effect on tolerance." *American Political Science Review* 91.3 (1997): 567-583.
6) Druckman, James N. "On the limits of framing effects: Who can frame?." *The Journal of Politics* 63.4 (2001): 1041-1066.

Assignments for next week:
1) Research design by start of next class


# PART VII – POLARIZATION

**11.1.23** -- Class discussion; lecturette; experimental designs

Readings for Discussion:
1) *Democracy & The News – Ch 3 (Gans, 2004)
2) Prior, Markus. "News vs. entertainment: How increasing media choice widens gaps in political knowledge and turnout." *American Journal of Political Science* 49.3 (2005): 577-592.
3) Iyengar, Shanto, and Kyu S. Hahn. "Red media, blue media: Evidence of ideological selectivity in media use." *Journal of Communication* 59.1 (2009): 19-39.
4) Valentino, Nicholas A., et al. "Selective exposure in the Internet age: The interaction between anxiety and information utility." *Political Psychology* 30.4 (2009): 591-613.

Assignments for next week:
1) Polarization Essay due by start of next class


# PART VIII – GROUP THEORY AND IDENTITY POLITICS

**11.8.23** -- Class discussion; lecturette; polarization essays

Readings for Discussion:
1) Abramowitz, Alan, and Kyle Saunders. "Why can't we all just get along? The

reality of a polarized America." *The Forum*. Vol. 3. No. 2. De Gruyter, 2005.
2) Abramowitz, Alan I., and Kyle L. Saunders. "Is polarization a myth?." *The Journal of Politics* 70.2 (2008): 542-555.
3) Fiorina, Morris P., and Samuel J. Abrams. "Political polarization in the American public." *Annu. Rev. Polit. Sci.* 11 (2008): 563-588.ART
4) Baldassarri, Delia, and Andrew Gelman. "Partisans without constraint: Political polarization and trends in American public opinion." *American Journal of Sociology* 114.2 (2008): 408-446.
5) Mason, Lilliana. ""I disrespectfully agree": The differential effects of partisan sorting on social and issue polarization." *American Journal of Political Science* 59.1 (2015): 128-145.

<u>Assignments for next week:</u>
1) Discussion Board by start of next class


**11.15.23** – Class discussion; lecturette; identity conflict exercise, implicit bias test

<u>Readings for Discussion:</u>
1) *Human Groups & Social Categories – Ch 12 (Tajfel 1982)
2) *Us Against Them – Ch 1-2 (Kinder & Kam 2009)
3) Mutz, Diana C. "Cross-cutting social networks: Testing democratic theory in practice." *American Political Science Review* 96.1 (2002): 111-126.
5) *Uncivil Agreement – Ch 1-3 (Mason 2018)

<u>Assignments for next week:</u>
1) Discussion Board by start of next class


**11.22.23** – FALL BREAK, NO CLASS


# PART IX – READING A POLL


**11.29.23** -- Class discussion; reading xtabs and trends; finding storylines; various audiences; introduction of final dataset; brainstorm possible slide topics for Final

<u>Readings for Discussion:</u>
1) Campbell, Angus. "Surge and decline: A study of electoral change." *Public opinion quarterly* 24.3 (1960): 397-418.
2) *Tides of Consent – Ch 1-3 (Stimson 2004)
3) *Politicians Don't Pander – Intro, Ch 1 (Jacobs & Shapiro 2000)

<u>Assignments for next week:</u>
1) Discussion Board by start of next class

**12.6.23** -- Class discussion; lecturette; questions about Final

Readings for Discussion:
1) *Polling and the Public – Ch 6 (Asher 2012)
2) *Strength in Numbers – Ch 4-6 (Morris 2022)
3) *NYTimes: Four Pollsters article
4) *From Tea Leaves to Opinion Polls – Ch 1, 4 (Geer 1996)

**12.13.23** – FINAL DUE by midnight on ELMS

# Course Materials

**Required Textbooks & Materials**

There are no required textbooks to purchase for this course. Instructor will provide excerpts for students from *Basic Econometrics* by Gujarati & Porter ("GP") and any other readings via ELMS.

Each student will also be required to download and utilize the statistical software, R (https://cran.r-project.org/) and its user interface partner, Rstudio (https://rstudio.com/products/rstudio/download/). Throughout the course, we will also utilize the "poliscidata" package created by Philip H. Pollock III & Barry C. Edwards.

Instructor will provide R scripts in class with directions on how to use an array of common commands that help us explore datasets, manipulate variables, and execute statistical tests.

**Resources**
- **Access your course materials**: https://elms.umd.edu
- **Databases, journal articles, and more**: https://www.lib.umd.edu/
- **Assistance with strengthening your writing**: https://www.english.umd.edu/academics/writingcenter/schedule
- **See all University course policies:** https://ugst.umd.edu/courserelatedpolicies.html
- **Obtain 24/7 technology assistance:** https://it.umd.edu/

# Course Policies

**ELMS:**

Important communication regarding the class is conducted via ELMS. This includes posting of the syllabus, announcements, and grades. Students are required to be proficient users of ELMS and to ensure that their emails registered with ELMS are up to date and checked regularly.

**Attendance and Tardiness:**

As participation is a large graded component of this course, attendance and punctuality are critical. Any student who needs to miss class due to illness or some excusable reason should inform the instructor ahead of time whenever possible.

In the instance where I get sick, one of two things will occur. If I am just germy, I will create a Zoom link in our ELMS course site for class that day, and we'll proceed as "normal", just online for that class period. Students can feel free to use the classroom space to stream the class if necessary or desired. If I'm down for the count, I will send an announcement on ELMS to cancel class, and we will make any necessary adjustments to the syllabus after that.

**Major Grading Events:**

In this course, there is one major grading event – the Final Polling Analysis. You cannot "miss" this event with a self-signed note; you must have a doctor's note or other valid documentation. In absence of such documentation, late submission of the final will lose 10 points per day; days round up.

**Late Assignments:**

Late submission of assignments will lose a letter grade for each day it is late, including weekends (i.e., and A+ becomes an A, then an A-, then a B+, etc.). If you have reason to request an extension on any assignments, please communicate that need directly to me as soon as possible via email, including supporting documentation. The deadlines for Major Grading Events ("the Final exam") will not be altered and late submissions of those assignments will lose 10 points per day. In all late assignments, days late round up as they accumulate.

If an illness interferes with an assignment deadline, you may submit one (1) self-signed note per semester to have an extra 24 hrs for that assignment before the late penalty is applied. Subsequent instances or cases requiring more than 24 hrs require an extension request. Any extension will need supporting documentation and formal approval from the instructor.

**Absence due to illness:**

Any student missing a Major Scheduled Grading Event is required to provide documentation (e.g., from the Health Center or from an outside health care provider that verifies the dates of treatment and time frame during which the student was unable to meet academic responsibilities). This documentation should be sent to me as soon as possible – keep an open line of communication. Again, while self-signed notes are approved by the University for absences, they do not apply to assignment deadlines.

**Grade Challenges:**

Any challenges to a grade must be submitted *in writing* **no sooner** than one week after the grades have been released online. That 1-week buffer is there so you have time to digest and better understand the grade and any corrections. Any challenge to a grade needs a substantive explanation of why you were improperly graded.

**Extra Credit and Incompletes:**

Graded assignments in the class provide students with ample opportunity to demonstrate mastery of the materials. **No extra credit assignments** will be assigned in the class.

**Important Note about Class Communication:**

Please allow the professor 24 hours to respond to emails (48 to 72 hours on weekends).

**Code of Conduct:**

It is assumed that all students are familiar with and adhere to the code of academic integrity. See http://www.studenthonorcouncil.umd.edu/index.html

**Statement on Diversity and Inclusivity:**

The Government and Politics department deeply values the voices and perspectives of all people. We are committed to having a diverse department that recognizes and appreciates the differences in race, ethnicity, culture, gender, sexual orientation, religion, age, abilities, class, nationality, and other factors. Our department prioritizes diversity and seeks to foster a diverse community reflected in its faculty, staff, and students.

In this class, students are invited to share their thoughts and a diversity of opinions is welcome. Respectful communication is expected, even when expressing differing perspectives. Supporting one's statement with research findings is encouraged. In accordance with free speech statues, speech that contains threats of violence is prohibited.

**Reporting Racism and Other Forms of Hate and Bias:**

If you experience racism or other forms of bias in this class or any GVPT course, we encourage you to do at least one of the following:

· Please report the experience to the instructor or teaching assistant

· Report the experience to Patrick Wohlfarth, the GVPT Director of Undergraduate Studies at patrickw@umd.edu

· Report the experience to the GVPT Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion committee, led by Professor Isabella Alcaniz at ialcaniz@umd.edu.

Please also report all incidents of hate and bias to the Office of Diversity and Inclusion at https://diversity.umd.edu/bias/.

**Religious Observances:**

In accordance with the University's policy on the observance of religious holidays, it is the student's responsibility to inform me of any absences due to these holidays well in advance and **in writing** within the first two weeks of the semester.

**Students with disabilities:**

I will make every effort to accommodate students registered with the Accessibility and Disability Services (ADS) Office. I am not able to accommodate students who are not registered with ADS or who do not provide me with documentation that has been reviewed by ADS.