

INTRODUCTION TO POLITICAL BEHAVIOR
Political Science 201N
Winter 2007
M W: 5:30-7:18 p.m.

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Office Hours:
Wednesdays 3:00 – 5:00 p.m.
and by appointment

Goals/Rationale:

Courses in social science help students understand human behavior and cognition, and the structures of human societies, cultures and institutions.

Learning Objectives:

1. Students understand the theories and methods of scientific inquiry as they are applied to the studies of individuals, groups, organizations, and societies.
2. Students comprehend human differences and similarities in various psychological, social, cultural, economic, geographic, and political contexts.
3. Students develop abilities to comprehend and assess individual and social values, and recognize their importance in social problem solving and policy making.

Course Description

The purpose of this course is to introduce students to the study of public opinion and political participation in the American context. We will consider both theory and practice in our examination of the ways that citizens form preferences, express those preferences and transform preferences into behavior. We will begin with an examination of public opinion including: its origins, the influence of the media on public opinion, and the connection between public opinion and policy outcomes. We will then move on to investigate several forms of political participation including voting and other forms of election-based activities. Our consideration of participation also will incorporate a broader definition of political activity to include demand protest activity.

It is my hope that this course will provide students with a structured opportunity to struggle with many of the issues challenging both scholars of American politics and concerned citizens. How do we form our opinions about politics? How much influence does public opinion have on our leaders and policy outcomes? Who participates and why? Why do so many Americans opt not to participate politically? The attempt to address these and other similar questions will provide the foundation for course readings, lectures, and discussions.

Students who want to do well in this course should follow a simple but proven formula: come to class regularly and on time; pay attention and ask questions when you do not understand; contribute regularly to class discussions; complete assignments carefully and in a timely manner; and finally, use office hours as a resource and feel free to contact the instructor if you are still experiencing difficulties after completion of the previously outlined steps.

Course Readings

The following books are required reading and are available for purchase at the Ohio State Bookstore.

Erikson, Robert S. and Kent L. Tedin. 2007. *American Public Opinion*, updated 7th edition. New York: Pearson Longman.

Putnam, Robert D. 2000. *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*. New York: Simon & Schuster.

Crenson, Matthew A. and Benjamin Ginsberg. 2002. *Downsizing Democracy: How America Sidelined Its Citizens and Privatized Its Public*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Course Requirements and Grading

Participation. Students are expected to read assigned materials prior to the class period in which they are to be discussed and should come to each class prepared to participate. Class participation will involve two components: careful and respectful attention to the contribution of classmates and regular and thoughtful contributions to class discussions that demonstrate an understanding of the readings. I will distribute discussion questions for each set of readings prior to the class period in which they are to be discussed; you should use these questions to assist you as you prepare for both the class discussions and the exams. In addition, there will be several short activities and assignments; if you are absent for those activities, your participation grade will be penalized. There are no make-ups for these activities.

Papers. Students will be required to submit two essays during the quarter. Each paper will require students to demonstrate mastery of the course material, the ability to conduct independent research, and critical thinking. The first paper is due in class on **January 31**, and the second essay is due in class on **February 28**. More details about the paper assignments will be distributed in class.

Exams. There will be a midterm exam scheduled for **February 7**. A final exam will take place on **March 12** as scheduled by the University Registrar.

Course Grade. Course grades will be assigned using the following formula:

Participation/Activities	10%
Paper #1	20%
Paper #2	20%
Midterm #1	25%
Final Exam	25%

Late Assignments and Missed Exams. Late papers will be penalized one grade for each day they are late. Failure to take exams at the scheduled time also will result in a grade of zero. Exceptions to this policy must be cleared in advance and can only be granted when students present documentation of exceptional circumstances.

Attendance. Class participation is a vital component of this class; therefore, attendance is both critical and required. Attendance will be taken each class period, and students who miss more than two classes will find their final grades reduced by 1/3 of a letter grade for each additional absence over the two-class limit. In contrast, students with perfect attendance records whose final grades fall in a gray zone on the border between grades will be rewarded for regular attendance. It is your responsibility to make arrangements with a responsible classmate to obtain notes for missed classes.

Academic Honesty. All of the work you do in this course is expected to be your own. Absolutely no cheating or plagiarism (using someone else’s words or ideas without proper citation) will be tolerated. Any cases of cheating or plagiarism will be reported to the University committee on academic misconduct and handled according to University policy.

Disability. Students with disabilities are responsible for making their needs known to the instructor and seeking available assistance in a timely manner. Course materials are available in alternative formats upon request. For such materials, please contact Mr. Wayne DeYoung, 2140 Derby Hall, 154 North Oval Mall, 292-2880.

Office Hours. If you find yourself experiencing any difficulties with the course materials or assignments, you should speak with me as soon as possible. Taking corrective steps early is a strategy that promotes mastery of the material and a desirable outcome in terms of your grade. In addition, please feel free to stop by to discuss any other course-related concerns or feedback you might have. I will be available in my office on Wednesdays between 3:00 p.m. and 5:00 p.m. If my regular office hours are inconvenient for you, we can arrange an appointment that fits into your schedule.

Course Outline and Reading Schedule

January 3	Course Introduction and Overview
<i>Public Opinion</i>	
January 8	Defining Public Opinion Read: Erikson and Tedin, Chapter 1
January 10	Measuring Public Opinion Read: Erikson and Tedin, Chapter 2, Appendix A-1 and Appendix A-2
January 17	Political Socialization and Democratic Stability Read: Erikson and Tedin, Chapters 5 and 6
January 22	Micro and Macrolevel Opinion Read: Erikson and Tedin, Chapters 3 and 4
January 24	Group Differences in Public Opinion Read: Chapter 7
January 29	Media Effects on Public Opinion Read: Chapter 8
January 31	Paper #1 Due at Beginning of Class
January 31	Media Effects on Public Opinion Read: Newspaper Coverage, TBA
February 5	Linking the Public to its Elected Leaders and Policy Read: Erikson and Tedin, Chapters 10 and 11
February 7	Midterm Exam
<i>Political Participation and Citizen Influence on Public Policy</i>	
February 12	Elections Read: Erickson and Tedin, Chapter 9
February 14	Trends in Political Engagement and Social Capital Read: Putnam, Introduction and Chapters 1, 2, 3, 8, and 9
February 19	Explaining the Decline in Social Capital Read: Putnam, Chapters 10-15

February 21	Declining Social Capital: Consequences and Solutions Read: Putnam, Chapters 16, 21, 22, 32, and 24
February 26	The Changing Nature of Political Participation Read: Crenson and Ginsberg, Preface and Chapters 1, 2, and 3
February 28	Paper #2, Due at Beginning of Class
February 28	The Changing Nature of Political Participation Read: Crenson and Ginsberg, Chapters 4, 5, and 6
March 5	The Changing Nature of Political Participation Read: Crenson and Ginsberg, Chapters 7, 8, 9, and 10
March 7	Non-traditional Forms of Participation Read: TBA
March 12 5:30 – 7:18 p.m.	Final Exam As Scheduled By the Registrar

Instructor reserves the right to adjust reading schedule as the quarter progresses.