

# GOVT 3212

**Public Opinion and Representation:** Spring Semester 2013  
Tuesday and Thursday 1:25 - 2:40pm (Baker Laboratory 135)

## Instructor

Peter Enns  
[pe52@cornell.edu](mailto:pe52@cornell.edu)  
White Hall 205  
Office Hours: Wed. 2:00–4:00pm; *and by appointment*

## Teaching Assistants

Aileen Cardona  
[ac854@cornell.edu](mailto:ac854@cornell.edu)

Steffen Blings  
[sb632@cornell.edu](mailto:sb632@cornell.edu)

## Overview

- *Surveys produce just what democracy is supposed to produce—equal representation of all citizens. The sample survey is rigorously egalitarian; it is designed so that each citizen has an equal chance to participate and an equal voice when participating (Verba 1996, 3).*
- *Many [Americans] do not know much about political issues; their votes are often not closely related to their expressed issue positions, and those positions are often changeable and inconsistent almost to the vanishing point (Glynn et al. 2004, 345–346).*
- *In a representative democracy there is some prospect—no sure thing—that public opinion matters for the formation of public policy. Take that away and the study of opinion becomes as interesting as cataloguing buttons. Representation, that is, is the justification for the study of public opinion, the only one that matters. It is finding the Holy Grail, demonstrating the process of representation, that makes the otherwise tedious collection and analysis of survey results come alive with meaning (Stimson 1995, 180).*

The above quotes help to illustrate the disparate viewpoints political scientists have regarding public opinion in the United States. This course is designed to expose you to the broad range of research about the origins, nature, and influence of public opinion. You will also gain the skills necessary to collect and analyze original public opinion data.

## Objectives:

By the end of this course students will be able to:

- compare and contrast the major theories in political science regarding the origins, composition, and influence of public opinion in the United States.
- use surveys, focus groups, interviews, or content analysis to conduct original public opinion research.
- write an advanced level political science research paper that incorporates the analysis of data.

## Texts

- *Public Opinion*. 2004. Carroll J. Glynn, Susan Herbst, Garrett J. O’Keefe, Robert Y. Shapiro, & Mark Lindeman. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.
- *Tides of Consent: How Public Opinion Shapes American Politics*. 2004. James A. Stimson. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- *The Decline of the Death Penalty*. 2008. Frank R. Baumgartner, Suzanna L. De Boef, & Amber E. Boydstun. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- *Who Gets Represented?*. 2011. Peter K. Enns & Christopher Wlezien. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.

## Office Hours

- Wed. 2:00–4:00pm *and by appointment*
- You may sign up for office hours here: <http://www.wejoinin.com/sheets/qcrna>.

## Evaluation

Your performance in this class will be assessed by your class participation, midterm exams, and a research paper which incorporates original public opinion data. Class participation includes being on time and attending all classes and sections. Each component of your grade will be weighted as follows:

Class & Section Participation	15%
Midterm 1	15%
Midterm 2	20%
Research Proposal	10%
Research Paper	40%

## Readings and Assignments

I have listed the assigned readings below. *Complete the day's reading before coming to class.* Readings followed by (BB) are available on blackboard. I may assign additional readings throughout the course.

- Week 1
  - Tues. 1/20: Class Introduction
  - Th. 1/22: Defining Public Opinion
    - \* Glynn et al. Ch.1 & Ch.2
  
- Week 2
  - Tues. 1/29: Measuring Public Opinion I
    - \* Glynn et al. Ch. 3
    - \* Weisberg, Herbert F., Jon A. Krosnick, and Bruce D. Bowen. 1996. *An Introduction to Survey Research, Polling, and Data Analysis*. Ch.2 & Ch.3 (BB)
  - Th. 1/31: NO CLASS (Presentation at McGill University)
  
- Week 3
  - Tues. 2/5: Measuring Public Opinion II
    - \* Content Analysis: Kahn, Kim Fridkin. 1994. "The Distorted Mirror: Press Coverage of Women Candidates." *Journal of Politics*. (BB)
    - \* Opinion Polls: Bennett, Stephen Earl. 1998. "Young Americans' Indifference to Media Coverage of Public Affairs." *PS: Political Science & Politics*. (BB)
    - \* Focus Groups: Cramer Walsh, Katherine. 2011. *Who Gets Represented?*, Ch.5
    - \* Structured Interviews: Hochschild, Jennifer. 1981. *What's Fair*. p.17–26. (BB)

- Th. 2/7: Psychological Perspectives
  - \* Glynn et al. Ch. 4
  - \* Example Experiment: Hiscox, Michael J. 2003. “The Political Backlash Against Globalization?” (BB)
  
- Week 4
  - Tues. 2/12: Stereotyping, Social Norms, and Public Opinion
    - \* Glynn et al. Ch. 5
    - \* Example Experiment: Mirya R. Holman, Jennifer L. Merolla, & Elizabeth J. Zechmeister. 2010. “Gender Stereotypes in Contexts of Terror Threat.” (BB)
  - Th. 2/14: Human Subjects Research
    - \* The Belmont Report
    - \* James H. Jones. 1981. *Bad Blood*. Chapters 1 & 11 (BB).
  
- Week 5
  - Tues. 2/19: Perception and Opinion Formation
    - \* Glynn et al. Ch. 6
  - Th. 2/21: Midterm 1
  
- Week 6
  - Tues. 2/26: Economic Approaches
    - \* Glynn et al. Ch. 7
  - Th. 2/28: Public Opinion and Democratic Competence
    - \* Glynn et al. Ch. 8
    - \* Bartels, Larry. 2005. “Homer Gets a Tax Cut.” *Perspectives on Politics*. (BB)
    - \* ***Research Proposal Due***
  
- Week 7
  - Tues. 3/5: Political Communication
    - \* Glynn et al. Ch.10 (pgs. 405–448)
  - Thurs. 3/7: Media Influence
    - \* Iyengar & Kinder. 1987 *News that Matters*. Ch.3, 7 & 8 (BB)

- \* Fowler, James H. 2008. "The Colbert Bump in Campaign Donations: More Truthful than Truthy."

- Week 8

- Tues. 3/12: Issue Evolution
  - \* *Tides of Consent* Ch.3
  - \* Levendusky, Matthew. 2009. *The Partisan Sort*, Ch.3 (BB)
- Th. 3/14: Partisan Polarization
- *Who Gets Represented?* Chs. 3 & 4

- SPRING BREAK

- Week 9

- Tues. 3/26: Public Opinion & Representation
  - \* Glynn et al. Ch. 9
- Th. 3/28: What Citizens Want
  - \* *Tides of Consent* 12–22; 30–57
  - \* *Who Gets Represented?* Ch.1

- Week 10

- Tues. 4/1: Whose preferences do policymakers represent? I
  - \* *Who Gets Represented?* pgs.163-165, Chs.6, 7, & 8
- Th. 4/4: Whose preferences do policymakers represent? II
  - \* *Who Gets Represented?* Chs. 9,10,11,12 & Epilogue
    - Nate Silver: Friday, April 5 at 1:30pm

- Week 11

- Tues. 4/9: Midterm 2
- Th. 4/9: NO CLASS (Midwest Political Science Association)

- Week 12

- Tues. 4/16: Public Opinion and the Legal System
  - \* *The Decline of the Death Penalty*, Chs.1–3

- Th. 4/18: Public Opinion and the Legal System
  - \* *The Decline of the Death Penalty*, Chs.4–5
- Week 13
  - Tues. 4/23: Public Opinion and the Legal System
    - \* *The Decline of the Death Penalty*, Chs.6–8
  - Th. 4/25: Public Opinion and the Legal System
    - \* *Incarceration Nation* Ch.1
- Week 14
  - Tues. 4/30: Election Campaigns
    - \* *Tides of Consent*, Chs.4 & 6
    - \* Glynn et al. Pages 448–471
  - Th. 5/2: Vote Choice and the Fundamentals
    - \* Gelman & King. 1993. “Why are American Presidential Election Campaign Polls So Variable When Votes are so Predictable?” Abstract & Pages 433–448 (BB)
    - \* Enns & Richman. 2013. “Presidential Campaigns and the Fundamentals Reconsidered” Pages 1–8 (BB)
- Friday, May 10, 2:00pm - Research Paper Due

## Students with Disabilities

Please give me your Student Disability Services (SDS) accommodation letter early in the semester so that I have adequate time to arrange your approved academic modifications. Meeting with me in my office hours will help ensure confidentiality. If you need an immediate accommodation for equal access, please speak with me after class or send an email message to me and/or SDS at [sds\\_cu@cornell.edu](mailto:sds_cu@cornell.edu). If the need arises for additional accommodations during the semester, please contact SDS.

## Academic Integrity

Each student in this course is expected to abide by the Cornell University Code of Academic Integrity (<http://cuinfo.cornell.edu/Academic/AIC.html>). Any work submitted by a student in this course for academic credit will be the student’s own work.

## **Turnitin Policy**

Students agree that by taking this course all required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to Turnitin.com for the detection of plagiarism. All submitted papers will be included as source documents in the Turnitin.com reference database solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of such papers. Use of Turnitin.com service is subject to the Usage Policy posted on the Turnitin.com site.

## References

- Glynn, Carroll J., Susan Herbst, Garrett J. O'Keefe, Robert Y. Shapiro & Mark Lindeman. 2004. *Public Opinion*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.
- Stimson, James A. 1995. "Opinion and Representation." *American Political Science Review* 89:179–183.
- Verba, Sydney. 1996. "The Citizen as Respondent: Sample Surveys and American Democracy." *American Political Science Review* 90:1–7.