This course will examine public opinion and assess its place in the American political system. The course will emphasize both how citizens’ thinking about politics is shaped and the role of public opinion in political campaigns, elections, and government. While the course will focus on research on the current state of public opinion, throughout the course we will also discuss historical developments in opinion and its place in politics, including changes that arose with the development of polling and with the advent of television and other electronic media. We will also consider normative questions, including the role opinion should play in American democracy.

**Course Requirements**

Requirements for this course include attendance and participation in section, submission of weekly identification items, an in-class midterm examination, two papers, and a comprehensive final examination, during the allotted final exam time slot for this class. Your TA may assign additional short writing assignments, quizzes, and the like as part of your section participation grade.

The assignments for the papers will be posted to Collab and announced in lecture.

Grades will be based on the following breakdown:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Points</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Section participation</td>
<td>15 percent</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weekly IDs</td>
<td>5 percent</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Paper</td>
<td>15 percent</td>
<td>Wednesday, March 2 at the beginning of lecture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Midterm exam</td>
<td>15 percent</td>
<td>Wednesday, March 16, in class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second Paper</td>
<td>25 percent</td>
<td>Monday, May 2 at the beginning of lecture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final exam</td>
<td>25 percent</td>
<td><strong>Saturday</strong>, May 7, 9am-noon</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Readings
There is one required book for this course, which is available at the UVa Bookstore and from the usual online sources:

(Note: The sixth edition (2004) is also acceptable and may be less expensive.)

All other readings for the course are available through the Collab page for the course.

Sections
The section meetings will provide an opportunity for you to clarify material from the course, discuss the lectures, readings, and current events. Your TA may also assign periodic brief written work in or out of section.

Each week you will be required to submit an identification item (a term or concept) from the week’s reading or lectures, along with a short paragraph defining the item. The midterm and final exams will include a section of identification items, drawn from among those you have submitted during the term. Your TA will explain the mechanics of turning in your IDs, as well as further details on expectations, and weekly due dates. You will be allowed to miss one week with no penalty.

Attendance at your weekly section meeting is required. This requirement is reflected, in part, in the 15% of your grade that comes from attendance and active participation in section. In addition, note that consistent section attendance is a requirement of this course, without which you will not receive a passing grade.

Sections will not meet the first week; they will meet for the first time on January 26 and 27.

Other Policies
We respect and uphold University policies and regulations pertaining to the observation of religious holidays; assistance available to the physically handicapped, visually and/or hearing impaired students; plagiarism; racial, ethnic, gender, sexual orientation, or religious discrimination; and all forms of harassment.

If you have (or suspect you have) a learning or other disability that requires academic accommodations, you must contact the Learning Needs and Evaluation Center (http://www.virginia.edu/studenthealth/l nec.html) as soon as possible, at least two to three weeks before any assignments are due. We take learning disabilities very seriously and we will make whatever accommodations you need to be successful in this class but they must be properly documented by the LNEC.

Plagiarism, or academic theft, is passing off someone else’s words or ideas as your own without giving proper credit to the source. You are responsible for not plagiarizing and are expected to abide by the University of Virginia Honor Code (see http://www.virginia.edu/honor/proc/fraud.html).

Papers turned in late without prior arrangement with your TA will not be considered for a grade.
# Course Schedule and Outline

## I. INTRODUCTION TO THE COURSE

**January 19: Welcome and introduction to the course**

## II. MEANING AND MEASUREMENT

**January 24:** What is “public”? What is “opinion”? Is “public opinion” the intersection of the two?


**January 26 and 31:** Measurement and analysis


## III. DEMOCRATIC COMPETENCE

**February 2:** The public’s political information and sophistication


**February 7:** Political Tolerance


**February 9:** Ideology and the organization of opinion

Asher, *Polling and the Public*, chapter 2 (“The Problem of Nonattitudes”)


## IV. INDIVIDUAL OPINION

**February 14:** Implicit and Explicit Attitudes


February 16 – no class

February 21: Self interest [originally scheduled for 2/16]


February 23: Groups I—political parties [originally scheduled for 2/21]


February 28: Groups II—race and gender [originally scheduled for 2/23]


Prior to your section meeting on March 2 or 3 you are responsible for

Viewing the film Boogie Man (available online through Collab)


March 2: Guest Speaker

CPT Damon Armeni

(Reading TBA)

*The first paper is due at the beginning of lecture.*

March 7 & 9: No class (spring break)

March 14: Core values


March 16: Midterm examination in class

March 21: Emotion

V. OPINION IN POLITICAL CONTEXT

March 23 & 28: A theory of opinion formation

March 30: Guest Speaker
Cara Carter, Research Director, Opinion Research Business
(Reading TBA)

April 4 & 6: In-Class Movie
*Journeys with George*

April 11: Political campaigns

April 13: The media


April 18: Framing


VII. CONCLUSIONS: PUBLIC OPINION IN POLITICS

April 20: Collective (and rational?) opinion


April 25: In-Class Movie: Campaigns in practice
*By the People: The Election of Barack Obama*
(You will be responsible for finishing the movie; it will be available online)

April 27: Representation—how does (does?) opinion affect policy?

May 2: Public opinion and American democracy
Asher, Polling and the Public, chapter 9 (“Polling and Democracy”).

The second paper is due at the beginning of lecture.

Saturday, May 7: Final Examination (9:00am–noon)