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, 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 first paper will be a short critique of a media poll; the second will be a longer paper applying course material to the political movies in the course.

Grades will be based on the following breakdown:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Points</th>
<th>Date</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Section participation</td>
<td>15 percent</td>
<td>February 19, at the beginning of lecture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Paper</td>
<td>15 percent</td>
<td>March 19, in class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Midterm exam</td>
<td>15 percent</td>
<td>April 30, at the beginning of lecture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second Paper</td>
<td>30 percent</td>
<td>Saturday, May 5, 9am–noon, Ruffner G004A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final exam</td>
<td>25 percent</td>
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Readings
There are five required books for this course, which are available at the UVa Bookstore. They are also all available from the usual online retailers.

[Note: the fifth edition of this book (2001) is also fine and is plentiful on the internet.]


All other readings for the course are available through the Toolkit 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.

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.

Section meeting times:

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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>1200-1250</td>
<td>CAB B029</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>1300-1350</td>
<td>CAB 234</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>1600-1650</td>
<td>CAB 139</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>1800-1850</td>
<td>CAB 119</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>1900-1950</td>
<td>CAB 216</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>1400-1450</td>
<td>CAB 134</td>
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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/lnec.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).

Participation in this class implies permission from students to submit their written work to services that check for plagiarism; you may be required to submit both hard and digital copies of your papers.

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 17: Welcome

January 22: Why study public opinion?

II. MEANING AND MEASUREMENT

January 24: What is “Public”; what is “opinion”?

January 29 & 31: Measurement and analysis
For more on the mechanics of polling, you may want to skim other chapters that interest you.

III. DEMOCRATIC COMPETENCE

February 5: The public’s political information and sophistication

February 7: Political Tolerance

February 12: Ideology and the organization of opinion
IV. INDIVIDUAL OPINION

February 14: Self interest


February 19 & 21: In-Class Movie
Magic Town (abridged)

The first paper is due at the beginning of lecture on February 19.

February 26: Groups I—Theory and gender

February 28: Groups II—Race


March 5 & 7: No class (spring break)

March 12: Core values


March 14: Emotion


March 19: Midterm examination in class

V. PROCESSES OF OPINION FORMATION

March 21 & 26: A theory of opinion formation
March 28 & April 2: Discourse and social context

April 4 & 9: The media and framing

VI. PUBLIC OPINION AND POLITICS

April 11: Political campaigns I: In-Class movie
*Journeys with George*
(You will finish the movie in section.)

April 16: Political campaigns II

April 18 & 23: Collective opinion and representation

April 25: Governing—Opinion and foreign policy

VII. CONCLUSIONS

April 30: Public opinion and American democracy

*The second paper is due at the beginning of lecture on April 30*

May 5: Final Examination (9:00am–noon) in Ruffner G004A