This course will examine public opinion and assess its place in the American political system, and 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 new media. We will also consider normative questions, including the role opinion should play in American democracy.

Important note: This course was previously numbered as PLAP2270. You cannot receive credit for this course if you already took it under the old number.

Course Requirements
Requirements for this course include:

- attendance and participation in section,
- a midterm administered on Collab,
- a comprehensive final, administered on Collab
- a series of in-section and at-home research projects as part of section
- a final reflective paper on the section research project
- (optional) participation in on-line discussion through the Forum section on Collab
Grades will be based on the following breakdown:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Section participation</td>
<td>11 percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In-section research mini-projects</td>
<td>39 percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final reflective essay</td>
<td>10 percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Midterm</td>
<td>20 percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final</td>
<td>20 percent</td>
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Note however, that you cannot pass the course without receiving a passing grade on each of these items individually. Thus, for example, if you do not complete part of the in-section research project, you will not pass the course no matter how well you do on the remaining items.

Assignments turned in late without prior arrangement with your TA will not be considered for a grade.

Readings
There are two required books for this course:


The books should be available from the UVa bookstore and the usual online sources. All other readings for the course are available through Collab and/or links on the syllabus. Each TA will assign a number of additional required readings over the course of the term.

Sections
The bulk of section will be devoted to completing a series of three research mini-projects that use different methods to collect and analyze data about public opinion in the area of income inequality in the U.S. Over the semester you will design, execute, and analyze studies that use in-depth personal interviews, a focus group, and a content analysis of public discourse to explore opinion in this issue area.

*Attendance at your weekly section meeting is required.* This requirement is reflected, in part, in the 10% of your grade that comes from attendance and active participation in section, and the additional 39% from the in-section research mini-projects. If you are deathly ill, we and your fellow students prefer that you *not* attend; otherwise you are expected to be there. If you do miss a section, you are responsible for all the material covered and the research project work that you missed.

Sections will meet the first week.

Collab Forum
The course Collab site includes a Forum section. Here you can ask questions (and answer others’ questions!) and discuss material from lecture and the readings. The professor and TAs will visit the forum regularly, and we encourage you to do the same. While taking part is voluntary, exemplary participation will positively influence your section participation grade.
Tests
The midterm and final will both be administered via Collab. They will be timed, closed-book, and (of course) subject to the Honor Code. The midterm will be 60 minutes long; the final will be 2.5 hours. Each test will be available through Collab for a several-day window—you must take the exam during one single sitting at a time of your choosing during that window. You should plan your time so that you can finish the exam before the window closes, and you should read and carefully attend to Collab’s tips on taking online tests, which are available here: http://goo.gl/P7uube.

The midterm and final will be multiple-choice format, and will focus on the material from reading and lecture. The final will be comprehensive. Last year’s midterm and final will be posted to Collab so you have some sense of what to expect.

Other Policies
We respect and uphold University policies and regulations pertaining to the observation of religious holidays; assistance available to students with physical, visual, hearing, and other disabilities or impairments; 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. However, they must be properly documented by the LNEC and we must have enough notice to make appropriate arrangements.

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/what-is-academic-fraud-2/). Note that we employ plagiarism detection software to help ensure the integrity of the course.

If you or someone you know is struggling with gender, sexual, or domestic violence, there are many community and University of Virginia resources available. The Office of the Dean of Students: 434-924-7133 (or after hours and weekends 434-924-7166 for the University Police Department; ask them to refer the issue to the Dean on Call), Sexual Assault Resources Agency (SARA) hotline: 434-977-7273 (24/7), Shelter for Help in Emergency (SHE) hotline: 434-293-8509 (24/7), and UVA Women’s Center: 435-982-2361. If you prefer to speak anonymously and confidentially over the phone to UVa student volunteers, call Madison House’s HELP Line (24/7): 434-295-8255.

As your teachers and as people, know that we care about your well-being and stand ready to provide support and resources as we can. As a faculty member and graduate teaching assistants, we are “Responsible Employees,” which means that we are required by University policy and federal law to report anything you tell us about sexual violence to the University’s Title IX Coordinator. The Title IX Coordinator’s job is to ensure that the reporting student receives the resources and support that they need, while also reviewing the information presented to determine whether further action is necessary to ensure the safety of you and the University community. If you would rather keep information confidential, there are “Confidential Employees” you can talk to on Grounds (http://www.virginia.edu/justreportit/confidential_resources.pdf). The worst possible situation would be for you or your friend to remain silent when there are so many here willing and able to help.
§ indicates a reading that focuses primarily on the research method for the current section mini-project. In addition, the syllabus includes substantive material that employs the method you are using in your projects.

### Lecture Schedule and Outline

#### I. INTRODUCTION TO THE COURSE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>January 12: Welcome and introduction to the course</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Berinsky, Adam. “Introduction.” Reader</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

#### II. MEANING AND MEASUREMENT OF OPINION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>January 14: What is “public opinion”? Why is that a hard question?</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Herbst, Susan. “The History and Meaning of Public Opinion.” Reader, chapter 1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| January 19: No Class – MLK Day |
| January 21, 26, and 28: Measurement and analysis |


Asher, *Polling and the Public*, chapters 3 and 8 (“Wording and Context of Questions” and “Analyzing and Interpreting Polls”).


§ Chong, Dennis. 1993. “How People Think, Reason, and Feel about Rights and Liberties” *American Journal of Political Science* 37(3):867-899. (Skim this now, focusing on the method; we will see it again in the tolerance unit.)

### Section Outline

(Additional readings TBA)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Jan 14-16:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Section welcome &amp; introduction</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Jan 21-23:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In-depth Interviewing I (introduction)</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Jan 28-30:</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In-depth Interviewing II (protocol work)</td>
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III. DEMOCRATIC COMPETENCE

February 2: The public’s political information and sophistication
http://www.newsweek.com/id/39529

February 4: Acceptance of democratic norms: the case of political tolerance

February 9: Ideology and the organization of opinion
Lane, Robert E. 1962. Political Ideology: Why the Common Man Believes What He Does. New York: Free Press, chapters 4 & 22. (You can skim chapter 4 to get a feel for the view that Lane’s interviews give us about political reasoning; then focus on chapter 22 where he interprets his findings.)

IV. ROOTS OF INDIVIDUAL OPINIONS

February 11: Implicit and Explicit Attitudes

February 16: Self interest
February 18: Groups I—political parties
    Hetherington, Marc. “Partisanship and Polarization.” Reader, chapter 5.
    § Gamson, Talking Politics, chapters 1-2 & Appendix A.

February 23: Groups II—race and gender
    Gamson, Talking Politics, chapter 5.

February 25: Core values

March 2: Emotion
    Gamson, Talking Politics, chapter 3.

March 4: Where have we been, where are we going?
    Movie in lecture: “Magic Town”

    Midterm exam on Collab

March 9 & 11: No class – spring break

V. OPINION IN POLITICAL CONTEXT

March 16 & 18: John Zaller’s theory of opinion formation and expression
March 23: The media
Baum, Matthew. “Media, Public Opinion, and Presidential Leadership.”
Reader, chapter 12.

http://www.newyorker.com/reporting/2007/02/19/070219fa_fact_mayer


March 25: Content Analysis and the Climate of Opinion

§ Gamson, Talking Politics, Appendix C.

March 30: Framing

Gamson, Talking Politics, chapter 7.

April 1 & 6: Campaigns & Elections

April 8: Topics in Media, Campaigns, and Elections
Guest lecture

VI. CONCLUSIONS: PUBLIC OPINION IN POLITICS

April 13: Collective opinion

April 15 & 20: Representation—how does (does?) opinion affect policy?


April 22: Campaigns & Elections II
   Movie in lecture: “Journeys with George”

April 27: Conclusions: Public opinion and American democracy


   Gamson, Talking Politics, chapter 10.

   Sears, David O. “Conclusion: Assessing Continuity and Change.” Reader.