

POL 344: AMERICAN POLITICAL IDEOLOGY AND PUBLIC OPINION

Spring 2020

Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays
9:00AM-9:53AM

FREY HALL 205

Instructor: Robert Vidigal

Office Hours: SBS N723 Wednesdays 2PM-3:30PM and by appointment

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Course Description: An examination of the nature of contemporary political ideology and public opinion in the United States. The goal is to understand political conflict and debate in the U.S. and the ways in which the public influences that debate. Major topics in public opinion include political tolerance and trust, attitudes towards women and African Americans, the role of mass media, and the impact of political values and ideology on political campaigns and elections.

Course Learning Outcomes: When this course is over, you should have a better understanding of three things:

1. a) The differences between the major ideologies in American politics;
2. b) The psychology behind ideologies and mass public opinion;
3. c) How ideology does (or doesn't) make its way into aggregate public opinion.

The syllabus, as well as the course, is structured around these three goals.

Course Policies:

Civility: In this course we will be discussing and debating a variety of political issues, and as such it is understandable we may cover issues of personal importance. As an institution of higher learning, the classroom should be a place where diverse ideas can be explored with respect in order to promote learning and growth. Regardless of whether or not we share similar opinions and beliefs, I expect all of us to remain respectful of each other. Student conduct that disrupts the learning process will not be tolerated and may lead to disciplinary action and/or removal from class. In line with the expectations set in the Code of Student Responsibility

(<https://www.stonybrook.edu/commcms/studentaffairs/ucs/conduct.php>), the following will not be permitted in this course:

1. Ad hominin attacks or attacks on an individual's or group of individuals' character on the basis of gender, race, class, ethnicity, national origin, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, or other personal characteristics.
2. Epithets or other language intended to intimidate, demean, or incite violence.
3. Editorial content that is harmful, threatening, abusive, demeaning, or libelous.

Laptops are allowed during class but discouraged, research does generally suggest that the advantage in note taking usually does not outweigh the distraction potential so I do not recommend you rely them. Why? Poorer quality notes; less selective; less processing of information; less retention.

Course Requirements

Attendance & Participation: 10 points. Your score will depend on your attendance and participation in class discussions as well as your general engagement during the course and lectures. This includes making comments, asking questions and offering observations during class. Also, participation includes asking questions during class, coming to office hours for help, or emailing me questions.

Attendance is expected - and there is a strong correlation between attendance in class and success in a course - however, if you're sick or there is a family emergency you should be okay to go. Since material will be available online on Blackboard, it is your responsibility to cover any missed material, such as by asking classmates for any notes.

Homework: 15 points. There will be a total of three homework assignments (5 points each). The homework assignments involve answering public opinion and survey questions online to learn more about your own ideology.

After completing the survey, you need to write a 1-page response paper (**12pt font, Arial, double spaced**). You should give your impression of the survey and questions. Think about the survey / questions and what it is supposed to measure.

The following are examples of things you might write about but you do not need to talk about all of these nor are you limited to these ideas. Did your results surprise you? Did you learn anything new about yourself? Do you agree with the results? Do the survey questions appear to measure what it is supposed to measure? Do you still have questions about how the survey measures the construct it claims to measure? If you have any problems or criticisms of the survey then consider how they might influence the results of research?

Homework should be uploaded to Blackboard. Homework is due at the beginning of the class period (9AM). Homework turned in after the beginning of the class period is due but before the beginning of the next class period will receive half credit. Homework turned in after the beginning of the next class period will receive no credit. Homework will be due on the following dates:

Homework 1: Monday, February 24th

Take the political ideology survey and write a response paper. Turn in the response paper through Blackboard by beginning of class on Monday, 9AM, February 24th. Please look at the sections of your results labeled "Your Ideology" and "Your political themes". <https://www.isidewith.com/political-quiz>

Homework 2: Monday, March 23rd

Take the Big 5 personality survey and write a response paper. Turn in through Blackboard by the beginning of class on Monday, March 23rd. What do you think these results indicate about your ideology? Do they match what we have discussed in class? <http://www.outofservice.com/bigfive/>

Homework 3: Monday, April 20th

Read the short article and take the partisan IAT. Write a response paper either the article or the IAT or both. Turn in your response through Blackboard by the beginning of class Monday, April 20th. After the article click "Start the test" then press "T" for instructions. Finally, press "T" to begin the test. Do you feel like you prefer the party that the results indicate? <http://www.vox.com/2015/12/7/9828120/partisan-test>

Exam Review Day: The class period prior to an exam is a review day. No lecture will be prepared for review days instead it is an opportunity for students to ask questions about the lectures and readings. The content of the review is based **entirely** on the questions asked by the students so come prepared to ask questions. Attendance is optional on review days but frequently students ask about and receive clarification on material that is on the exam.

You should do fine on the exams by studying your lecture notes, the lecture slides and the readings. We all learn differently, if attending the in-class review helps then do that.

Exams: There will be **3 (three)** exams total in this course: two exams will be during class and the third exam will be during finals period. All exams will be multiple choice with some definitions/short answer questions. If you miss an exam, the make-up exam will be different than the exam the rest of the class takes. The exams will be on the following dates:

Exam 1: *Friday March 13th* (25 points)

Exam 2: *Monday April 13th* (25 points)

Final Exam: *Wednesday May 13th* (25 points)

All exams will be based on both lectures and assigned readings.

Total Course Points: 100

In addition to the exams, there will also be opportunities for extra credit that will be announced in class at certain points during the semester.

To calculate your grade, add up all the points you have earned (and any extra credit) and divide it by the total points possible. Multiply this by 100. The value you receive is the percentage of points earned. This will correspond to grades as described below.

Grading (by percentage of points earned):

100 > A >=93	87> B >=83	77> C >=73	67> D >=63
93 > A- >= 90	83>B- >=80	73> C- >=70	63> D- >=60
90 > B+ >=87	80>C+ >=77	70> D+ >=67	Less than 60: F

Make-up Policy: Students should notify the instructor in advance if they will be missing an exam and arrange to take the test early. If you are unable to take a test due to an emergency you will need to provide evidence of the emergency (Doctor note for illness, police accident report for car accident, etc). Unexcused make-up exams are allowed within one week of the original exam date but will be penalized one letter grade. Make-up exams may not be in the same format as the regular test.

Course Website: Blackboard will allow students to access course materials. The Blackboard system is available from any computer with access to the Internet at the following website, <http://blackboard.stonybrook.edu>. Logging into Blackboard requires a NET ID and a Password. Use this page to obtain additional readings, electronic copies of assignments, and other course handouts and resources.

Reading: All readings will be posted on Blackboard. They will be labeled by week which corresponds to the syllabus. Information from the readings will appear on the exams.

Lecture Notes: *Slides* of lectures given with PowerPoint will be posted to BlackBoard. Note that these slides will not contain all the information discussed in class but merely provide a sketch of topics covered. It is strongly recommended that you take notes in class. Material from the lectures will be on the exams even if it is not on the slides.

Email Policy: You are responsible for all the information that is sent to the class via email. If for some reason you cannot receive email through your Stony Brook email address it is your responsibility to let the instructor know as soon as possible.

Disability Support Services (DSS) Statement: If you have a physical, psychological, medical, or learning disability that may impact your course work, please contact Disability Support Services (631) 632-6748 or <http://studentaffairs.stonybrook.edu/dss/>. They will determine with you what accommodations are necessary and appropriate. All information and documentation is confidential. Students who require assistance during emergency evacuation are encouraged to discuss their needs with their professors and Disability Support Services. For procedures and information go to the following website: <http://www.stonybrook.edu/ehs/fire/disabilities/asp>.

Academic Integrity Statement: Each student must pursue his or her academic goals honestly and be personally accountable for all submitted work. Representing another person's work as your own is always wrong. Faculty are required to report any suspected instance of academic dishonesty to the Academic Judiciary. For more comprehensive information on academic integrity, including categories of academic

dishonesty, please refer to the academic judiciary website at <http://www.stonybrook.edu/uaa/academicjudiciary/>

Critical Incident Statement: Stony Brook University expects students to respect the rights, privileges, and property of other people. Faculty are required to report to the Office of Judicial Affairs any disruptive behavior that interrupts their ability to teach, compromises the safety of the learning environment, and/or inhibits students' ability to learn.

Course Schedule:

The course and readings are organized by topic.
The readings should be completed **prior** to the beginning of the section on that topic.

Week 1

Monday January 27th - Introduction and Course Outline
Wednesday January 29th – Public Opinion in Democratic Societies I
Friday January 31st – Public Opinion in Democratic Societies II

Readings:

Asher, H., 2016. *Polling and the public: What every citizen should know*. Cq Press. Chapter 4.

Week 2

Monday February 3rd – Polling: The Scientific Assessment of Public Opinion I
Wednesday February 5th – Polling: The Scientific Assessment of Public Opinion II
Friday February 7th – Structure of Ideology I

Readings:

Feldman, S. (2013) Political ideology. In: Oxford Handbook of Political Psychology, ed. L. Huddy, D. O. Sears & J. S. Levy, pp. 591–626. Oxford University Press.

Week 3

Monday February 10th – Structure of Ideology II
Wednesday February 12th – Structure of Ideology III
Friday February 14th – Liberal-Conservative Ideologies I

Readings:

Carmines, E.G. and D'Amico, N.J., 2015. The new look in political ideology research. *Annual Review of Political Science*, 18, pp.205-216.

Week 4

Monday February 17th – Liberal-Conservative Ideologies II
Wednesday February 19th – Liberal-Conservative Ideologies III
Friday February 21st – The Psychology of Opinion-Holding I

Readings:

Ellis, C. and Stimson, J.A., 2012. *Ideology in America*. Cambridge University Press. Chapters 1 and 2.

Week 5

Monday February 24th – **The Psychology of Opinion-Holding II** **HOMEWORK1 DUE**

Wednesday February 26th – **Ideology and Values I**

Friday February 28th – **Ideology and Values II**

Readings:

Feldman, S. (2003). Values, ideology, and the structure of political attitudes. In D. O. Sears, L. Huddy, & R. Jervis (Eds.), *Oxford handbook of political psychology* (pp. 477–508). Oxford, United Kingdom: Oxford University Press.

Week 6

Monday March 2nd – **Ideology and Personality I**

Wednesday March 4th – **Ideology and Personality II**

Friday March 6th – **Political Knowledge I**

Readings:

Gerber, A.S., Huber, G.A., Doherty, D., Dowling, C.M. and Ha, S.E., 2010. Personality and political attitudes: Relationships across issue domains and political contexts. *American Political Science Review*, 104(1), pp.111-133.

Week 7

Monday March 9th – **Political Knowledge II**

Wednesday March 11th – **REVIEW DAY**

Friday March 13th – **EXAM 1**

Readings:

Barabas, J., Jerit, J., Pollock, W. and Rainey, C., 2014. The question (s) of political knowledge. *American Political Science Review*, 108(4), pp.840-855.

Week 8

Monday March 16th - **Spring Recess: No classes**

Wednesday March 18th - **Spring Recess: No classes**

Friday March 20th - **Spring Recess: No classes**

Week 9

Monday March 23rd – **Media and Public Opinion I** **HOMEWORK2 DUE**

Wednesday March 25th – **Media and Public Opinion II**

Friday March 27th – **Groups and Ideology**

Readings:

Valentino, N. A., & Nardis, Y. (2013). Political communication: Form and consequence of the information environment. In L. Huddy, D. O. Sears, & J. S. Levy (Eds.), *The*

oxford handbook of political psychology. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Week 10

Monday March 30th – Group Differences in Political Opinions

Wednesday April 1st – Regions and Time Differences in Public Opinion

Friday April 3rd – The Roots of Ideology? Moral Foundations

Readings:

Hatemi, P.K., Crabtree, C. and Smith, K.B., 2019. Ideology justifies morality: Political beliefs predict moral foundations. *American Journal of Political Science*, 63(4), pp.788-806.

Week 11

Monday April 6th – Race and Ideology I

Wednesday April 8th – Race and Ideology II

Friday April 10th – REVIEW DAY

Readings:

White, I.K., 2007. When race matters and when it doesn't: Racial group differences in response to racial cues. *American Political Science Review*, 101(2), pp.339-354.

Week 12

Monday April 13th – EXAM 2

Wednesday April 15th – Cognitive Processes I

Friday April 17th – Cognitive Processes II

Readings:

Zaller, J.R., 1992. The nature and origins of mass opinion. Cambridge university press. Chapter 3.

Week 13

*Monday April 20th – Motivational Bases of Ideology I **HOMEWORK3 DUE***

Wednesday April 22nd – Motivational Bases of Ideology II

Friday April 24th – Ideology and Parties

Readings:

Jost, J.T. and Krochik, M., 2014. Ideological differences in epistemic motivation: Implications for attitude structure, depth of information processing, susceptibility to persuasion, and stereotyping. In *Advances in motivation science*. Chapter 5. (Vol. 1, pp. 181-231).

Week 14

Monday April 27th – Partisan Identities I

Wednesday April 29th – Partisan Identities II

Friday May 1st – Polarization I

Readings:

Huddy, L., 2001. From social to political identity: A critical examination of social identity theory. *Political psychology*, 22(1), pp.127-156.

Week 15

Monday May 4th – Polarization II

Wednesday May 6th – Polarization III

Friday May 8th – REVIEW DAY

Readings:

Mason, L., 2015. "I disrespectfully agree": The differential effects of partisan sorting on social and issue polarization. *American Journal of Political Science*, 59(1), pp.128-145.

Week 16

Monday May 11th – 'READING DAY'

Wednesday May 13th – FINAL EXAM