

# POSC 3350: Public Opinion



## Winter 2018 Course Syllabus

**Class meeting time:** Tuesday/Thursday 3:30-4:45 pm in SN 2036

**Instructor:** Dr. Amanda Bittner

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**Office:** SN2040

**Office Hours:** Mondays 10-12, Tuesdays 1:45-3:15 (or by appointment)

## Course Description

Public Opinion is one of those things that we hear about every day. Newspaper headlines are full of it, election campaigns focus on it, party leaders and their spin doctors constantly think about it, and all because we think it has an impact on government decisions. But how much do we actually know about public opinion? Where do the numbers come from? What types of questions are being asked? Can we really trust the information we're given?

This course takes a detailed look at public opinion from a number of different angles: from how we measure it, to how citizens answer questions, to what types of things affect opinion, to what kind of effect opinion has on governments. We will look at the issue of how much people actually "know" about the questions they're answering, as well as the media's influence in shaping opinion. Opinion is not set in stone, it's not permanent. So how do we account for shifts? Answers to these questions will become clearer as we read through some of the original academic work by leading scholars from Canada, the United States, and Europe. One of the most interesting questions of all will be woven into all of our discussions: what is the impact of all of this on our understanding of democracy?

## Required Readings & Tools

### Articles and book chapters:

Required readings are listed in the syllabus below, and are available online through the Memorial library system. I have included links in the syllabus to each article. You do not need to pay for them, you just need to be logged into the library system to access. Other readings not available through the library are available in PDF format via our D2L course shell.

### Classroom Response tool: TopHat (tophat.com)

TopHat will be used for three major purposes in this class: a) to understand how you respond to public opinion questions that are often posed in Canada and the United States; b) to track attendance and reward participation; c) to provide immediate feedback to the instructor about which concepts need further discussion and which are well-understood.

***Students are responsible for the material in the assigned readings. These required readings will supplement lectures and discussion in class.***

There is no textbook required for this course. If you would like to have a textbook to supplement the rest of our readings, I recommend this one:

Erikson, Robert S. and Kent L. Tedin. 2015. *American Public Opinion: It's Origins, Content, and Impact*, 9<sup>th</sup> edition. New York, Pearson Education Inc.

## A quick note on correspondence and class conduct:

I am available in office hours and by appointment (you can schedule an appointment via email). If you want to get in touch with me via email, you are free to do so at [abittner@mun.ca](mailto:abittner@mun.ca), and you should receive an answer within 48 hours. Note: I get A LOT of emails, and I have A LOT of students across all of my classes, graduate and undergraduate. Make sure you clearly identify yourself and the class you are in, so that I can better respond to your inquiry.

I will be using your MUN email addresses to correspond with you if I need to get in touch with you outside of class, and I would encourage you to check your MUN email frequently to make sure you don't miss out.

Throughout the course, I want you to do your own thinking. I want you to think about the readings, where there are strengths and weaknesses, and where you think the dialogue is missing something. Everything is contentious, nothing is set in stone. I don't expect anybody to agree with everything, and I'd like to encourage you to discuss your thoughts, in an environment where we are all open-minded, respectful, and considerate of one another.

## Accommodations, Resources, and Supports Available to Students

Memorial University is committed to facilitating and promoting an accessible, inclusive, and mutually respectful learning environment. Students requiring special accommodation are asked to communicate firstly with the Glenn Roy Blundon Centre ([www.mun.ca/blundon](http://www.mun.ca/blundon)) at the earliest opportunity. University policies and procedures pertaining to accommodations for students with disabilities can be found at [www.mun.ca/policy/site/policy.php?id=239](http://www.mun.ca/policy/site/policy.php?id=239)

**(But really, if you need something, please come talk to me. I will do my best to make the course conducive to whatever your learning needs might be.)**

**Precarity:** If you are having difficulty accessing food to eat every day, or if you lack a safe and stable place to live, and it is negatively affecting your ability to carry out coursework, I encourage you to contact the Student Life Office for resources and support. If you are comfortable sharing this information with me, I will help you access university resources and work with you to devise a strategy for the course work.

Here is a list of additional support services existing on campus designed to support students in a variety of ways. They include:

- The Commons (QEII library) provides access to print, electronic and technology resources.
- The Counselling Centre (UC-5000) helps students develop their personal capabilities, ranging from study strategies to assisting distressed students.
- The Glenn Roy Blundon Centre (UC-4007) serves students whose disabilities involve conditions affecting mobility, vision, hearing, learning (disabilities), chronic illness, or mental health; support is also provided to students with documented temporary illnesses and injuries.
- Student Life (ASK, UC-3005) answers questions about such things as courses, housing, books, financial matters and health.
- The Writing Centre (SN-2053) is a free, drop-in facility for students and helps them become better writers and critical thinkers.

## Assignments and Grading:

Assignment	Date	Value
Participation	Throughout	10%
Public Opinion Field Log	September 30 <sup>th</sup> , 11:59 pm NL time	10%
Midterm	October 11 <sup>th</sup>	15%
Research Project	November 25 <sup>th</sup> (video)	
	November 27 <sup>th</sup> (discussion paper)	30%
Final Exam	During Exam Period	35%

## The Game Plan

What is Public Opinion? How Do We Measure it? Is it Real?	
Sept 6	<b>First Class: Introduction &amp; Overview</b>
<b>One: Sept 11, 13, 18, 20, 25</b>	<p><b>What Is Public Opinion? How do we measure it?</b></p> <p>Asher, Herbert. 2014. Chapter 1: Polling and the Public. In <i>Polling and the Public: What Every Citizen Should Know</i>. Washington, CQ Press. (available online in D2L)</p> <p>Clawson, Rosalee A. &amp; Zoe M. Oxley. 2016. Chapter 1: Public Opinion in a Democracy in <i>Public Opinion: Democratic Ideals, Democratic Practice</i>. CQ Press. (available online in D2L)</p> <p>Hillygus, D. Sunshine. 2011. The Evolution of Election Polling in the United States. <i>Public Opinion Quarterly</i>. 75(5): 862-981.  <a href="https://poq.oxfordjournals.org/content/75/5/962.full.pdf+html">https://poq.oxfordjournals.org/content/75/5/962.full.pdf+html</a></p> <p>Bump, Philip. 2015. Everything you ever wanted to know about how Washington Post polling works. <a href="https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/the-fix/wp/2015/07/24/everything-you-ever-wanted-to-know-about-how-washington-post-polling-works/?utm_term=.b05ff27d85b1">https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/the-fix/wp/2015/07/24/everything-you-ever-wanted-to-know-about-how-washington-post-polling-works/?utm_term=.b05ff27d85b1</a></p> <p>Cramer, Katherine J. Chapter 2 “A Method of Listening” in <i>The Politics of Resentment: Rural Consciousness in Wisconsin and the Rise of Scott Walker</i>. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. (available online in D2L).</p>
<b>Two: Sept 25, 27</b>	<p><b>Voter Competence, Knowledge, and Sophistication: Do Voters Really Know What Their Opinions Are?</b></p> <p>Bartels, Larry. 2008. “The Irrational Electorate” <i>The Wilson Quarterly</i> 32(4): 44-50.  <a href="http://www.jstor.org/stable/40262068">http://www.jstor.org/stable/40262068</a></p> <p>Fournier, Patrick. 2002. The Uninformed Canadian Voter. In Joanna Everitt and Brenda O’Neill, eds., <i>Citizen Politics: Research and Theory in Canadian Political Behaviour</i>. New York: Oxford University Press, 2001. (Available online in D2L).</p>
Where Does Opinion Come From?	
<b>Three: Oct 2</b>	<p><b>Family and Socialization</b></p> <p>Jennings, Kent &amp; Richard Niemi. 1968. “The Transmission of Political Values from Parent to Child” <i>American Political Science Review</i> 62(1): 169-184.  <a href="http://www.jstor.org/stable/1953332">http://www.jstor.org/stable/1953332</a></p> <p>Ericson, Robert &amp; Laura Stoker. 2011. “Caught in the Draft: The Effects of Vietnam Draft Lottery Status on Political Attitudes. <i>American Political Science Review</i> 105(2): 221-237.  <a href="https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/american-political-science-review/article/div-classtitlecaught-in-the-draft-the-effects-of-vietnam-draft-lottery-status-on-political">https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/american-political-science-review/article/div-classtitlecaught-in-the-draft-the-effects-of-vietnam-draft-lottery-status-on-political</a></p>

	<a href="http://attitudesdiv/37B0E3788769BF032C516E6F93794F97">attitudesdiv/37B0E3788769BF032C516E6F93794F97</a>
<b>Four: Oct 4</b>	<b>The Impact of Partisanship &amp; Ideology</b> Klar, Samara. 2014. Partisanship in a Social Setting. <i>American Journal of Political Science</i> . 58(3):687-704. <a href="http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/ajps.12087/abstract">http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/ajps.12087/abstract</a> Rahn, Wendy M. 1993. The Role of Partisan Stereotypes in Information Processing about Political Candidates. <i>American Journal of Political Science</i> 37(2): 472-496. <a href="http://www.jstor.org/stable/2111381">http://www.jstor.org/stable/2111381</a>
<b>Oct 11</b>	<b>Midterm</b>
<b>Five: Oct 16,18</b>	<b>Group Identity</b> Gidengil, Elisabeth, Andre Blais, Richard Nadeau, and Neil Nevitte. 2003. Women to the Left? Gender Differences in Political Beliefs and Policy Preferences in Manon Tremblay and Linda Trimble, eds. <i>Women and Electoral Politics in Canada</i> . Toronto, Oxford University Press. (available online in D2L) Brown, Nadia E. Political Participation of Women of Color: An Intersectional Analysis. <i>Journal of Women, Politics, and Policy</i> 35(4): 315-348. <a href="http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/1554477X.2014.955406?needAccess=true">http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/1554477X.2014.955406?needAccess=true</a> Amanda Bittner and Elizabeth Goodyear-Grant. 2017. "Digging Deeper into the Gender Gap: Gender Salience as a Moderating Factor in Political Attitudes" <i>Canadian Journal of Political Science</i> . 50(2): 559-578. <a href="https://doi.org/10.1017/S0008423917000270">https://doi.org/10.1017/S0008423917000270</a>
<b>Six: Oct 23, 25, 30</b>	<b>Media, Social Media, &amp; Public Opinion</b> Valentino, Nicholas A., Vincent Hutchings and Ismail White. 2002. Cues that Matter: How Political Ads Prime Racial Attitudes During Campaigns. <i>American Political Science Review</i> 96(1): 75-90. <a href="https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003055402004240">https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003055402004240</a> Searles, Kathleen, Martha Humphries Ginn and Jonathan Nickens. 2016. For Whom the Poll Airs: Comparing Poll Results to Television Poll Coverage. <i>Public Opinion Quarterly</i> 80(4): 943-963). <a href="http://poq.oxfordjournals.org/content/80/4/943.abstract">http://poq.oxfordjournals.org/content/80/4/943.abstract</a> Munger, Kevin. 2016. Tweetment Effects on the Tweeted: Experimentally reducing racist harassment. <i>Political Behavior</i> . <a href="http://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11109-016-9373-5">http://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11109-016-9373-5</a> Albertson, Bethany and Adria Lawrence. After the Credits Roll: The Long-Term Effects of Educational Television on Public Knowledge and Attitudes. <i>American Politics Research</i> 37(2): 275-300. <a href="http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/1532673X08328600">http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/1532673X08328600</a>  <b>Library session October 25</b>
<b>Seven: Nov 1</b>	<b>Framing and Persuasion</b> Matthews, Scott. 2005. The Political Foundations of Support for Same-Sex Marriage in Canada. <i>Canadian Journal of Political Science</i> 38(4): 841-866. <a href="https://doi.org/10.1017/S0008423905040485">https://doi.org/10.1017/S0008423905040485</a> Nelson, Thomas E. Rosalee A. Clawson, and Zoe M Oxley. 1997. Media Framing of a Civil Liberties Conflict and Its Effect on Tolerance. <i>American Political Science Review</i> 91(3): 567-583. <a href="http://www.jstor.org/stable/2952075?seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents">http://www.jstor.org/stable/2952075?seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents</a>
<b>Effects of Public Opinion</b>	
<b>Eight: Nov 6,8</b>	<b>Whose Opinion?</b> Bittner, Amanda. 2007. The Effects of Information and Social Cleavages: Explaining Issue Attitudes and Vote Choice in Canada. <i>Canadian Journal of Political Science</i> 40(4): 935-968. <a href="https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/canadian-journal-of-political-science-revue-canadienne-de-science-politique/article/div-classtitlethe-effects-of-information-and-social-cleavages-explaining-issue-attitudes-and-vote-choice-in-">https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/canadian-journal-of-political-science-revue-canadienne-de-science-politique/article/div-classtitlethe-effects-of-information-and-social-cleavages-explaining-issue-attitudes-and-vote-choice-in-</a>

	<p><a href="http://canadadiv/7423C65399596999D896437B41594122">canadadiv/7423C65399596999D896437B41594122</a></p> <p>Brady, Henry, Sidney Verba, and Kay Lehman Schlozman. 1995. Beyond SES: A Resource Model of Political Participation. <i>American Political Science Review</i> 89(2): 271-294.  <a href="http://www.jstor.org/stable/2082425">http://www.jstor.org/stable/2082425</a></p> <p>Marschall, Melissa J. &amp; Amanda Rutherford. 2015. Voting Rights for Whom? Examining the Effects of the Voting Rights Act on Latino Political Incorporation. <i>American Journal of Political Science</i> 60(3): 590-606.  <a href="http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/ajps.12182/abstract">http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/ajps.12182/abstract</a></p>
<b>Nine: Nov 13,15</b>	<p><b>Impact of Public Opinion on Policy</b></p> <p>Soroka, Stuart N. and Christopher Wlezien. 2004. Opinion Representation and Policy Feedback: Canada in Comparative Perspective. <i>Canadian Journal of Political Science</i> 37(3): 531-559. <a href="https://doi.org/10.1017/S0008423904030860">https://doi.org/10.1017/S0008423904030860</a></p> <p>Bartels, Larry M. 2005. Homer Gets a Tax Cut. <i>Perspectives on Politics</i> 3: 15-31.  <a href="https://doi.org/10.1017/S1537592705050036">https://doi.org/10.1017/S1537592705050036</a></p>
<b>Ten: Nov 20,22</b>	<p><b>Public Opinion and Democracy</b></p> <p>Berinsky, Adam. 2002. Silent Voices: Social Welfare Policy Opinions and Political Equality in America. <i>American Journal of Political Science</i> 46(2): 276-287.  <a href="http://www.jstor.org/stable/3088376">http://www.jstor.org/stable/3088376</a></p> <p>Bartels, Larry. 2003. "Democracy with Attitudes" in Michael B. MacKuen and George Rabinowitz, eds. <i>Electoral Democracy</i>. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press. (available online in D2L)</p>
<b>Nov 27,29</b>	<b>Videos, Awards, and Review for Exam</b>

Assignment Details
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**Participation (10%) – TopHat**

Using TopHat on your wireless device (laptop, tablet, or mobile phone) you will be able to interact with me and the rest of the class. During each class I will ask questions designed to double-check that you understand the concepts we are covering, get you thinking differently about the readings and course content, and check in with the class about administrative issues. Your participation in class Q&A will be registered when you submit your answers to questions that are posed in class.

If you show up to every class and participate, you will automatically get full marks. You're not being evaluated on the content of your participation here, just on whether or not you do it.

**Honestly, simply coming to class is the BEST WAY TO ENSURE that you do well in this course. Participating with TopHat will help to facilitate this process.**

Questions or Technical Concerns? Top Hat has technical support available by email (support@tophat.com) and by phone (1.888.663.5491).

### **Public Opinion in Everyday Politics Field Log (10%)**

For one week, you will keep a “field log” providing your own observations and reflections on public opinion in the everyday political world. Details about this assignment and what is involved will be provided in class.

Due Sunday September 30<sup>th</sup> at 11:59 pm, online in brightspace dropbox (more details about how to submit will come).

### **Midterm (15%) and Final Exam (35%)**

Both the midterm test and the final exam are cumulative: that is, they cover all the material we have done in class until that date. So the midterm covers all of the materials we cover in class up until February 10. The final exam will cover all of the material from the course (from beginning to end), including all assigned chapters, all class discussions and lectures, and anything else we might do in class – movies, guest speakers, etc.

The midterm will take place on October 11, and is worth 25%. The final exam will take place during the exam period in December, and is worth 35% of your final grade.

### **Research Project (30%)**

Students will be required to work on a research project for this course. I will circulate information about this project, including requirements, parameters, and expectations early in October (probably just prior to the thanksgiving break.

These research projects involve a two-part process, and you will hand in two separate items:

1. A 3 to 5 minute video to “inform people” about something in relation to public opinion. This video is due on Sunday, November 25<sup>th</sup>, and you must post a link to your video online in brightspace by 11:59 pm (more details about how to submit will come). **The video is worth 15% of your final grade.**
2. A 2000-word discussion paper outlining what public opinion the video was addressing, why you did the video the way that you did, and what you hope your viewers will take from the video. This discussion paper is both reflective and research based. That is, you will be asked to reflect on the process, but the paper also needs to have sources to the academic research that you based your video on. Discussion papers are due on Tuesday November 27<sup>th</sup> by 1:59 pm, online in a dropbox in brightspace (more details about how to submit will come). Papers must be 2000 words in length, single-spaced and typed in a 12-point font. Margins must be 2 centimetres on the left side and 4 centimetres on the right side (I will be grading these digitally on my tablet). You are required to cite a minimum of seven (7) sources in this paper, through the use of in-text citations as well as including a bibliography with your paper when you hand it in. **The discussion paper is worth 15% of your final grade.**

A library session will be held on October 25, and you are all required to attend. This will provide you with necessary information on where to find sources for your project (including public opinion data, should you choose to use it). Attendance will be taken, and all those who attend will be given a bonus mark of 2% on the final research project discussion paper.

We will discuss the projects more in class, and I will hand out more information, including my expectations, in early October. This assignment, including both components, is worth 30% of your final grade.

I will be showing all of your videos in class on November 27<sup>th</sup> and November 29<sup>th</sup>. The best video will win a prize.

## Notes on Grading, Missed Tests, Late Penalties, and Academic Misconduct

In the event of a class cancellation, then a scheduled quiz or midterm test will be administered in the class immediately following. Students unable to write the midterm or final exam on the days which they are administered may qualify—by providing valid medical documentation (e.g. doctor's note) for the day in question—for a different test/exam on a different day.

The research discussion paper is due Tuesday, November 27<sup>th</sup> in class. The penalty for late assignments is 10% per 24 hour period after the deadline, including each weekend day. So, if you submit your paper after 2 pm that day and before 1:59 pm on Wednesday the 28<sup>th</sup>, 10% will be deducted. If you submit it on Friday before 1:59 pm, 30% will be deducted. This seems like a lot – it is. So submit the paper on time! If class is cancelled on the day any assignments are due, the assignment is still due. All assignments are being submitted online this year (with the exception of tests and exams), so deadlines are not changing based on weather or other considerations.

Cheating on tests, research assignments, and/or final examinations includes (but is not limited to) allowing another student to copy from your own work, presenting someone else's work as your own, and/or consulting with others while a test is taking place. Information about procedures and penalties for academic dishonesty is outlined in the University Calendar and is available through the Department of Political Science. Plagiarism is the act of presenting the ideas or works of another as one's own. This applies to all material such as essays, laboratory assignments, laboratory reports, work term reports, design projects, seminar presentations, statistical data, computer programs, research results, and theses. The properly acknowledged use of sources is an accepted and important part of scholarship. Use of such material without acknowledgment is contrary to accepted norms of academic behaviour. Information regarding acceptable writing practices is available through the Writing Centre at [www.mun.ca/writingcentre](http://www.mun.ca/writingcentre).

## Department of Political Science

### Policy on Plagiarism

Plagiarism means offering the words or ideas of another person as one's own. The material copied or paraphrased may consist of a few phrases or sentences, or an entire passage or paper. Whatever its form and extent, plagiarism constitutes two kinds of failure: 1) Failure to perform the basic tasks expected in any paper -- original mental effort and expression; 2) Potentially, the moral failure of academic dishonesty. Plagiarism may be deliberate (as in the submission of a paper written in whole or part by another student, purchased from an essay bank, or cut and pasted from web sites) or the result of carelessness through failure to provide proper documentation.

All directly copied or quoted material must be enclosed in quotation marks and the source must be clearly identified in a footnote. The source of any paraphrased material or ideas must also be properly documented. Failure to do so is plagiarism.

The procedure for handling cases of suspected plagiarism at Memorial University is set out in the University Calendar. All cases of suspected plagiarism must be reported to the Department Head in accordance with Section 4.11 of the University Calendar General Regulations. Depending on the circumstances and the degree of plagiarism involved, the Department of Political Science normally handles first offenders in accordance with the Procedures for Informal Resolution (Section 4.11.5). The penalty in such cases is normally a grade of 0 for the work concerned. The Department maintains a list of students who have been found guilty of plagiarism, and in the case of a second offence or in particularly serious cases of plagiarism, the Procedures for Formal Resolution (Section 4.11.6) will be followed. The penalty in these cases may be probation, suspension or expulsion in addition to the grade of 0 for the work concerned.

If in any doubt about what plagiarism consists of, consult with your instructor or refer to any standard work on writing essays and research papers. The Faculty of Arts Writing Centre (SN2053) can also provide relevant information. The notes on proper documentation below may be of assistance.

#### Notes on Proper Documentation

A good political science paper contains a logical argument built on solid evidence. While the evidence may be that of first-hand observation and study, evidence for most student papers will come from books, journals, newspapers, and government documents. Documentation in the form of footnotes, endnotes, or in-text references (with page numbers) must be provided for all facts, ideas, or interpretations which are not considered to be common knowledge. An acceptable rule of thumb for determining whether an item is one of common knowledge would be if the information is readily available in a number of different sources. An example may help.

It is common knowledge that Martin Luther King, Jr. was a black civil rights activist who was jailed in Alabama for leading a march against segregation in the early 1960s. No footnote would be required for such a fact.



A footnote would, however, be required for a statement such as: *Martin Luther King, Jr. expressed disappointment that southern religious leaders urged people to comply with desegregation not because it was morally right but because it was the law.*

In the latter case, the reader might want to check that Rev. King actually did express those views. A good guideline to follow is to ask yourself where your understanding of the thoughts, beliefs, or ideas of an individual or a group came from. If you don't know, are you sure that your understanding is accurate? If it isn't, then don't use it. If you do know, then state the source.

A common misperception is that footnotes only have to be given for direct quotations. This is not correct: footnotes must be provided in all cases where an idea, belief, action, or thought is attributed to an individual or group.

A footnote would be required for the following quotation from page 14 of the province's Strategic Economic Plan. "The private sector must be the engine of growth. While it is the role of government to create an economic and social environment that promotes competitiveness, it is the enterprising spirit of the private sector that will stimulate lasting economic growth."

A footnote would also be required for the following statement. *The Strategic Economic Plan argues that the private sector must be the basis of economic growth in the province.*

Similarly, a footnote must be provided whenever you "borrow" a particular idea, interpretation, or argument from a known source.