

University of Nevada, Las Vegas
PSC 401F
Public Opinion and Political Behavior
Dr. Jelen
Spring, 2008

Contact Information:

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Office Hours:

MW: 10:00-11:00 am
T: 12:00 – 2:00 pm

Required Texts:

Robert S. Erikson and Kent L. Tedin, *American Public Opinion* (7th revised edition).
Barbara Norrander and Clyde Wilcox, *Understanding Public Opinion* (2nd edition).
Herbert Asher, *Polling and the Public: What Every Citizen Should Know* (7th edition).
Morris P. Fiorina, et. al. *Culture War? The Myth of a Polarized America* (2nd edition).

Objective:

This course is intended to provide the advanced student with an overview of the field of public opinion and political behavior in the United States. Course foci will include the sources and content of the political attitudes and actions of ordinary citizens in American politics, as well as more systematic analyses of the role of public attitudes in electoral politics, governance, and democratic theory.

Grading:

There will be a midterm exam, given on March 5, and a final exam, given on May 14. Each exam will be essay, and will count for 1/3 of each student's final grade. In addition, on or before April 30, each student will submit a critical review (7-10 double-spaced typed pages) of Morris Fiorina's *Culture War: The Myth of a Polarized America*. The book review will count for 1/3 of each student's final grade.

Policies:

Any attempt at academic dishonesty results in failure of the entire course. This includes, but is not limited to, receiving outside assistance on exams, or using unattributed material from other sources. Any use of cell phones or other electronic devices during exams is considered academic dishonesty.

Exceptions to the final exam schedule will only be granted in cases of **documented** medical or bereavement considerations. Make-ups for the midterm exam will be administered on May 7.

The Disability Resource Center (DRC) coordinates all academic accommodations for students with documented disabilities. The DRC is the official office to review and house disability documentation for students, and to provide them with an official Academic Accommodation Plan to present to the faculty if an accommodation is warranted. The DRC strongly encourages faculty to provide accommodations only if and when they are in receipt of said plan. Faculty should not provide students accommodations without being in receipt of this plan.

UNLV complies with the provisions set forth in Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, offering reasonable accommodations to qualified students with documented disabilities. If you have a documented disability that may require accommodations, you will need to contact the DRC for the coordination of services. The DRC is located in the Student Services Complex (SSC), Room 137, and the contact numbers are: VOICE (702) 895-0866, TTY (702) 895-0652, FAX (702) 895-0651. For additional information, please visit: <<http://studentlife.unlv.edu/disability/>>.

A Useful Website: For a variety of services to assist students in their academic endeavors, log on to http://tlc.unlv.edu/student_success.htm

Order of Events, with Approximate Dates:

- I. Introduction (January 23-28)
Erikson and Redin, 1; Norrander and Wilcox, Introduction; Asher 1.
- II. Survey Research (January 30-February 6)
Erikson and Tedin, 2; Asher, 3-5, 8.
- III. Sources of Public Opinion (February 11-20)
Erikson and Tedin, 5, 7; Norrander and Wilcox, 1, 3-4.
- IV. The Media and Public Opinion (February 23-March 3)
Erikson and Tedin, 8; Norrander and Wilcox, 2; Asher, 6.

Wednesday, March 5: Midterm Exam

- V. Micro-level Opinion (March 10-26)
Erikson and Tedin, 3; Asher, 2; Norrander and Wilcox, 8-9.
- VI. Issue Attitudes (March 31-April 9)
Norrander and Wilcox, 5-7.
- VII. Political Change (April 14-16)
Erikson and Tedin, 4
- VIII. Public Opinion and Elections (April 21-23)
Erikson and Tedin, 9; Norrander and Wilcox, 11; Asher, 7.
- IX. Public Opinion and Government (April 28-30)
Erikson and Tedin, 10; Norrander and Wilcox, 12-15.

Wednesday, April 30: Book Review Due

- X. Public Opinion and Democracy (May 5)
Erikson and Tedin, 6, 11; Asher, 9

Wednesday, May 7: Make-up Midterms

Wednesday, May 14: Final Exam., 10:10 am