This class is an introduction to the study of public opinion. We will examine such topics as the meaning of public opinion, forces affecting the formation of public opinion, the distribution of opinion on major issues, and the consequences of public opinion in modern politics.

The grading for this class will be based on two short papers (5-10 pages, 33% each), and a final (33%). The short papers should synthesize an argument from a single week’s readings. The short papers should not be literature reviews, but criticisms of central themes in the readings. Appropriate short paper topics might examine the implications of the research approaches for the conclusions drawn by the different readings, point out central problems that the readings fail to address, extend the implications of one reading into the conclusions of another, and so forth. Brehm will provide a suggested list of these topics.

The following books are available at the Co-op:


Many of the readings for this class are articles. The articles all should be available on E-Reserve (and please let me know otherwise so that I can remedy the situation).
3 Jan What this course is about

9 Jan Definitions (Week 2a)

- Zaller, Ch. 1, 2

11 Jan Survey Response (Week 2b)

- Zaller, Ch. 3
- SBT, Ch. 2, 6
- ELT, Ch. 2

16 - 18 Jan Ideology (Week 3)

- SBT, Ch. 8-10
- Zaller, Ch. 7
- E, L & T, Ch 4.

23 - 25 Jan Influences on Public Opinion: Rationality and Self-Interest (Week 4)


30 Jan - 1 Feb Influences on Public Opinion: Information and Cognition (Week 5)

- Zaller, Ch. 8, 9

6 - 8 Feb Influences on Public Opinion: Media (Week 6)
• E.L&T, Ch. 8
• Iyengar, Shanto. ``Television news and citizens' explanations of national affairs," APSR, 81:815-831 (reserve)
• MacKuen, Michael. 1984. ``Exposure to Information, Belief Integration, and Individual Responsiveness to Agenda Change" APSR 78(2):372-391 (reserve)

SHORT PAPER #1 DUE 8 FEB

13 - 15 Feb   Expressions of Public Opinion: Race (Week 7)

• SBT, Ch. 12-13
• Kinder, Donald and Lynn Sanders, 1996. ``Framing the Issue: Elite Discourse and Popular Understanding," Divided by Color, Ch 7, Chicago: University of Chicago Press. (E-reserve)
• Alvarez, Michael and John Brehm, ``Uncertainty and Racial Attitudes?" Hard Choices, Easy Answers, Princeton University Press, 2003, Ch. 6. (E-reserve)

20 - 22 Feb   Expressions of Public Opinion: Democratic Values (Week 8)

• SBT, Ch. 7
• Putnam, Robert. 2000. Bowling Alone, Ch. 8 and 9, New York: Simon and Schuster (E-reserve)

27 Feb - 1 Mar   Consequences of Public Opinion: Political Participation (Week 9)

• Zaller, Ch. 10
• E, L & T, Ch 9, "Elections as Instruments of Popular Control," pp 242-279

6 Mar   Consequences of Public Opinion: Representation and Responsiveness (Week 13)
• ELT, Ch. 10, 11

SHORT PAPER #2 DUE, 8 MAR