This course provides an introduction to the vast literature devoted to public opinion. In the next 14 weeks, we will survey the major theoretical approaches and empirical research about public opinion and political persuasion, bringing together works from political behavior, political communication, and political psychology (though we will only tangentially discuss political participation and voting). For the most part we will focus on American public opinion, though some of the work we will read is comparative in nature.

Each seminar will center on a critical analysis of the assigned readings for the week. Although much of our class time will be spent in group discussion, we will typically open with a brief overview and commentary on the week's readings. At the end of each seminar we will introduce the next week's readings – describing them briefly and suggesting issues for you to think about.

Students will be required to write a short essay responding to each week's readings, no longer than one single-spaced page. These essays should try to engage a number of the week's readings, by, for example, doing one or more of the following: juxtaposing and commenting on alternative explanations or approaches to a substantive topic; criticizing the methodologies used and proposing other strategies of research; criticizing the conceptualization and/or measurement of a particular construct; analyzing the implications of a set of findings; suggesting new questions or hypotheses for research; developing similarities and contrasts with arguments or research found in the readings from previous weeks. More generally, these papers should contain an argument, not a summary or description of the readings. These papers should be turned in to me no later than noon on the Tuesday before the scheduled Wednesday meeting. These essays will serve as the starting point for our discussion.

Your grade will depend on your performance on these papers (25%), your participation in class discussions (quality of participation weighted by volume of participation, another 25%), and a term paper due at the end of the term (50%). We will provide more details about this paper later in the term.

We have not ordered books for the course. We will provide links to several recommended books on the course website and Adam’s homepage, but these are not required for purchase.
Week 1: Introduction and Overview of the Course (January 31).

Preliminaries

Week 2: The Meaning and Measurement of Public Opinion (February 7).

Recommended

Questions of Competence

Week 3: Political Ignorance: Causes and Effects (February 14)


**Recommended**


**Week 4: The Search for Overarching Principles: Ideology and Political Reasoning (February 21)**


**Recommended**


Week 5: Material Interests (Or Symbolic Politics?) (February 28)

Recommended

Week 6: Principles and Values (March 7)


Recommended


Week 7: Groups in American Politics: Us and Them (March 14)


Mendelberg, Tali. 2001. The Race Card, Chapters 1, 6, 7.

Recommended


Week 8: Elements of Persuasion (A Primer) (March 21)


Week 9: Social Influence (April 4)


Recommended


Week 10: Framing, Priming and Media Effects (April 11)


Recommended


Week 11: Political Campaigns (April 18)


Week 12: The Miracle of Aggregation and Enlightened Preferences (April 25)


Recommended


**Week 13: Public Opinion and Public Policy (May 2)**


Berinsky, Adam J. “Public Opinion and World War II,” Typescript.


**Recommended**


**Reflections**

**Week 14: Final thoughts: The Place of Public Opinion in Democratic Politics (May 9)**


Recommended
