This class concerns the joy and magic that is the study of public opinion. In many ways, public opinion is the currency of a representative democracy. It is the expression of what people expect, desire, and think of their government. And it is what politicians follow, influence, and are held accountable to. Throughout the course, we will consider the structure and dynamics of public opinion, analyzing both what influences it, as well as how it shapes other aspects of politics and public life.

Specifically, the course is structured around four key themes:
- How we measure public opinion, particularly the methodology of public opinion polling.
- How the public forms opinions about politics – what people know about politics, how they organize their beliefs, and why it matters.
- What factors in the political world influence and shape public opinion, including the effects of the media, political rhetoric, and social forces.
- The consequences of public opinion – for citizen participation in politics, for the actions of political leaders, and for representation more generally.

CULEARN IS YOUR FRIEND
I will regularly update class information on the website for the class at culearn.colorado.edu. This syllabus will be posted there, as well as links to assignments and other exciting material.

OBJECTIVES
At its core, this class is about encouraging you to think about public opinion in an analytical way. This will include reading about the public opinion questions that other researchers have considered, and using these to develop theoretical questions that interest you. In particular, a major component of the class will be to acquire some of the skills necessary to analyze public opinion data and explore theories of public opinion. To build these skills, we will study the methodology of public opinion and work hands-on with survey data.

EXPECTATIONS
You are encouraged to be an active participant in class. Please feel free to raise questions at any point during lectures, including matters of clarification, theoretical points, or topics to address in class discussion. You should also keep in touch by e-mail or by visiting office hours if you have any questions about course expectations or the material covered in class.

The reading assignments are a core part of the class – to build a working knowledge of the character of public opinion, and also to encourage you to ask questions, develop theories, and think about explanations for political phenomena. Keeping up with assigned readings is important. You should complete readings listed for a given day before the scheduled class meeting.

You are also expected to maintain proper classroom etiquette. This includes respecting the opinions of others even if you disagree, not talking out of turn, putting away newspapers and crossword puzzles during lecture, turning off cell phones before class, and not disrupting the class if arriving late.
READING MATERIAL
- A set of journal articles and book chapters, which can be linked to from CULearn.
  - Some are accessible on JSTOR, an archive of social science journals: www.jstor.org
  - Some are available in the library’s e-reserves: libraries.colorado.edu/screens/coursereserves.html
  - Some are articles from journals available online through the library’s e-journal archives.
  - Note: In some cases, you may be blocked from accessing online journals from off-campus computers. See information on the website of the University Library for instructions on remote access from off-site: ucblibraries.colorado.edu/research/offcampusaccess.htm

REQUIREMENTS
In addition to the readings, you will also be responsible for the following:

**participation, quizzes, and homework assignments** (worth 25% of your final grade)
This includes quizzes on the readings, in-class assignments, participation in class discussions, and homework projects on the skills associated with analyzing public opinion data.

**research paper** (worth 30% of your final grade)
As demonstration of the vast analytical skills gained in this class, you will prepare a ten to fifteen page research paper concerning some exciting question about public opinion (of your own choosing, given instructor approval). The paper will give you the opportunity to use survey data to explore said question, and explore a particular aspect of public opinion in greater detail.

**three exams** (each worth 15% of your final grade)

SPECIAL ACCOMODATIONS
If you qualify for accommodations because of a disability, please submit to me a letter from Disability Services in a timely manner so that your needs may be addressed. You can contact the Disability Services office for more information at www.colorado.edu/disabilityservices.

SOME IMPORTANT COMMENTS ON ACADEMIC INTEGRITY
- Plagiarism and other academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. If you are not familiar with the rules of citing sources in written work or what constitutes plagiarism, you should contact me or refer to the University Honor Code at www.colorado.edu/academics/honorcode. Additional information about avoiding plagiarism, citation style, and writing in political science is also posted on CULearn. Academic dishonesty will result in an F in the course and referral to the Honor Council for additional non-academic sanctions.
- All papers are expected to be original work, not previously or simultaneously handed in for credit in another course (unless prior approval of all instructors involved is obtained).
PSCI 3051 – public opinion & political behavior

First class
Tuesday, August 28

Class does not meet.
Thursday, August 30

MEASURING PUBLIC OPINION

Why study public opinion, Measuring public opinion, Questionnaire wording and design
Tuesday, September 4 and Thursday, September 6
- Erikson and Tedin: Chapter 1.
- Asher: Chapters 1-3.

Questionnaire construction, Sampling
Tuesday, September 11 and Thursday, September 13
- Asher: Chapter 4-5.

Interviewer effects, Other ways to measure public opinion
Tuesday, September 18 and Thursday, September 20
- Asher: Chapter 6-8.

THE CONSTRUCTION OF PUBLIC OPINION

Information, values, ideology, and partisanship
Tuesday, September 25 and Thursday, September 27
- Erikson and Tedin: Chapter 3

Exam 1
Tuesday, October 2

Opinion formation
Survey analysis: research questions
Thursday, October 4

Sophistication and cognition, Self interest and symbolic politics
Survey analysis: Reading academic articles and writing a literature review
Tuesday, October 9 and Thursday, October 11
INFLUENCES ON PUBLIC OPINION

Socialization and personal experience, Media effects
Survey analysis: Writing hypotheses
	Tuesday, October 16 and Thursday, October 18
  - Erikson and Tedin: Chapter 5.

The mass media, Social influences
Survey analysis: Looking at survey responses
	Tuesday, October 23 and Thursday, October 25
  - Erikson and Tedin: Chapter 8.

Social influences, Campaigns and elections
Survey analysis: Analyzing survey data
	Tuesday, October 30 and Thursday, November 1
  - Erikson and Tedin: Chapter 9.

Exam 2
	Tuesday, November 6

EXPRESSIONS OF PUBLIC OPINION

Opinion dynamics and change over time, Presidential approval
	Thursday, November 8
  - Erikson and Tedin: Chapter 4.

Democratic values and tolerance
Survey analysis: Crosstab analysis
	Tuesday, November 13 and Thursday, November 15
  - Erikson and Tedin: Chapter 6.

Fall break. Class does not meet.
	Tuesday, November 20 and Thursday, November 22

Opinions about government, Trust in government
Survey analysis: Writing a research paper
	Tuesday, November 27 and Thursday, November 29
CONSEQUENCES OF PUBLIC OPINION

Voter turnout, Political participation

Tuesday, December 4 and Thursday, December 6

Research papers due

Tuesday, December 11

Social capital, Representation and responsiveness

Tuesday, December 11 and Thursday, December 13
- Erikson and Tedin: Chapters 10-11.

Final exam

Monday, December 17th, 4:30 p.m. - 7:00 p.m.