This course concerns the joy and magic that is the study of political behavior. 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. We will consider the structure and dynamics of public opinion from the perspectives of both American politics and comparative politics. We will analyze what influences public opinion as well as how it shapes other aspects of politics and public life.

This course is part of a two-semester sequence. Participants in the course this semester are required to have enrolled in the first portion of the course last semester.

READING ASSIGNMENTS

Course readings are drawn from several texts as well as journal articles. Journal articles are accessible through the library’s website, while book chapters have been placed on the library’s e-reserves.

In addition, the following books will be used the course:


REQUIREMENTS

participation (20% of your final grade)

One important prerequisite of participation is class attendance. Class attendance is vital and required. It is essential to read all of the assigned readings and think carefully about what you have read in advance of the class session. Frantically skimming the articles in the minutes before class begins will limit the quality of our class discussion and impede your ability to learn anything useful. Your education and our class discussion of the readings will both benefit from your careful reading of the articles as well as the time you spend in advance of class reflecting on what you have read and learned.

You will also be expected actively participate in class discussions in a thoughtful way.
book discussion leadership (5% of your final grade)

We will read four books this semester, and you will be responsible for leading class discussion about one of these books. Your goal is to ensure that the class engages in thoughtful reflection about what we can learn from that week’s book. How you do this is up to you and your fellow discussion leaders. You could spend time discussing the main points of the book, connecting that week’s book to prior readings from this semester or last, or discussing ways to extend and elaborate on the week’s readings. Your grade will reflect the quality of your preparation, as well as the quantity and quality of class discussion you generate.

presentation of research and leadership of class discussion (5% of your final grade)

You will be responsible for leading class one week this semester, centered on your research project and some of the surrounding literature. You will select a slate of readings that inform your research project, and we will discuss these in the first half of the class session. In the second half of the class, you will give a ten minute presentation of your research, in the manner of a conference presentation. The remainder of the class session will be devoted to discussion of your project.

paper discussant (5% of your final grade)

In another week this semester, you will act as a co-discussion leader and paper discussant for another student’s research project. You will assist in leading the discussion about the companion readings in the first half of the class, and in the second half of class, discuss the paper of one of your classmates in the manner of a conference discussant.

feedback on student papers (each is worth 5% of your final grade)

For three of the student presentations this semester, you will turn in written feedback that responds to the research presented by your classmate and connects it to the assigned readings as well. These papers should be single-spaced and two to three pages in length. Please turn in two copies.

Your feedback memos should include:

- Discussion of the paper’s strengths. Where is the paper strongest? What parts of the paper struck you as most innovative or most compelling? Based on your understanding of the field, what do you think is the most important contribution of the research project?
- Discussion of the paper’s weaknesses. Where does the paper need the most work? How might the author improve the paper? What suggestions do you have in terms of literature, methods, theory, or the framing of the paper? Do you disagree with any of the author’s assertions?
- Connection to the other readings from the week. How does this paper contribute to the research in this area? How might insights from these readings be used to improve the author’s paper?
- Extensions to the project. How might the author build on this research in the future?

research paper (50% of your final grade)

The final project for this class will be to revise and refine the paper you wrote in the previous semester of the course. You should aim to submit a paper at the end of the semester that is polished enough for submission for publication. This paper should follow the conventions of academic writing – including development of a research question, a review of relevant literature, theory, tests of these explanations, and interpretation of what you find.

Throughout the semester, there will be a variety of short assignments related to refining your research paper. More details about these assignments will be outlined on separate handouts.
CULEARN IS YOUR FRIEND
This syllabus, assignments, and other exciting material can be accessed on the class website on culearn.colorado.edu.

SPECIAL ACCOMMODATIONS
If you qualify for accommodations because of a disability, please submit to us 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 us or refer to the University Honor Code at www.colorado.edu/academics/honorcode. Academic dishonesty will result in an F in the course and referral to the Honor Court 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).
1. PLAN FOR THE SEMESTER

Thursday, January 14

2. BOOK WEEK: THE CLASSICS

Thursday, January 21

3. BOOK WEEK: THE CLASSICS

Thursday, January 28

4. BOOK WEEK: POLITICAL BEHAVIOR FIFTY YEARS LATER

Thursday, February 4

5. BOOK WEEK: POLITICAL BEHAVIOR FIFTY YEARS LATER

Thursday, February 11
6. TRUST IN GOVERNMENT ACROSS COUNTRIES

Thursday, February 18

Why do some people have greater confidence in government than others?


7. CORRECT VOTING IN CONGRESSIONAL ELECTIONS

Thursday, February 25

How often, and under what conditions, do citizens succeed in casting a vote that reflects their preferences?


8. ETHNIC DIVERSITY AND INTOLERANCE

Thursday, March 4

Why do people develop ethnic intolerance?

9. REGIONAL IDENTITY AND SUPPORT FOR THE EUROPEAN UNION

Thursday, March 11

Why does support for the EU vary?


10. INTEREST IN LOCAL POLITICS

Thursday, March 18

What factors motivate political interest within a local context?


Thursday, March 25  Spring break: class does not meet

11. EMOTION AND POLITICAL DISCUSSION

Thursday, April 1

Why do individuals engage in cross-cutting political discussion?


12. SUPPORT FOR ETHNIC PARTIES IN BOLIVIA

Thursday, April 8

Why do people support ethnic parties?

13. SUPPORT FOR THE RADICAL RIGHT

Thursday, April 15

Why do people vote for radical right parties?

Thursday, April 22    Class does not meet.

14. PATRIOTISM

Thursday, April 29

Why do levels of patriotism change over time?