Description

Do most people have real opinions on political issues, or are their opinions transient and determined by the media and political elites? How can we measure people's attitudes, preferences, and opinions? How and why are Democrats, Republicans, and Independents different? How do income, inequality, social class, and social values determine what people believe and how they vote? How do political organizations and parties mobilize and influence people?

We will explore these and other questions from a social science perspective. We will read answers to these questions from journalists, political practitioners, and academic researchers, formulate our own hypotheses, and test these hypotheses using data that are available or that we will uncover. Completion of Government 10 or its equivalent is highly recommended before taking this course.

Each time I teach this course, I include a two or three-week module focusing on a specific issue or set of issues in public opinion. This quarter, I want to focus for a few weeks on economic inequality and the federal budget. The rest of the syllabus covers mostly the 'classic’ questions at the core of public opinion and voting behavior research: Do people have real opinions, do they have sufficient information to make decisions, do they think and act ‘rationally’?

In 2006, 2008, and 2012, Dartmouth participated in a large, experimental public opinion survey conducted via the Internet. I will talk often about these surveys and other methods of survey research. The questions and data from the surveys are available to all of you (see blackboard) and may be valuable for your research papers. We will also design and field our own survey of Dartmouth students.
### Course Requirements and Grading

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Requirement</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>Regularly</td>
<td>20% of grade</td>
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<tr>
<td>(2) 5 page reaction papers</td>
<td>Due by 8am the day of class</td>
<td>25% each</td>
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<tr>
<td>Research Paper (10-20 pages)</td>
<td>Due TBA</td>
<td>30%</td>
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You should complete reading assignments before class, attend class, and participate actively in discussions. This is a seminar.

You will write two five-page (double-spaced) reaction papers for two classes of your choosing. These reaction papers should critique the reading or raise important issues not covered in the reading or adjudicate disputes in the reading. Reaction papers should not summarize the reading. You may briefly summarize points in the reading that are relevant to your argument. Assume your readers have not read the books or articles. Think of reaction papers as part of a long book review you might write for a magazine. Reaction papers should be emailed to everyone in the class by 8am the day of class. You will help lead class on the days you offer reaction papers. *See the last page of the syllabus for more details.*

You will also write a 10-20 page (double-spaced) research paper on a topic of your choice that I have approved. We will discuss this assignment in more detail in class.
Prerequisites: Knowledge of Statistics

Completion of Gov 10 (statistics) or its equivalent in another department is a prerequisite for this course. The book by Berry and Sanders is a nice summary of multivariate models. I will cover the necessary background material for the reading during class, using Berry and Sanders as a reference book. I do not expect you to know statistics at that level yet. The reading will get more complex as the quarter progresses. You will be able to understand most of the arguments in the reading even without the ability to follow all of the math and statistics.

Contacting Me

You should feel free to talk to me about the course or assignments. I will have office hours on Wednesdays from 11am to noon, and I am generally available for a while after class. I welcome appointments for other times. You may also call my direct line at 646-9228 or cell phone at 717-2944. If you contact me by email, put Gov 83 as the subject. I get so many emails that I usually do not reply to them. But, I will check my email almost every day, sort it by subject, and respond to all of those with Gov 83 as the subject. If I do not reply within 2 days, either give me a call or resend the message. I may have missed your email in a sea of spam.

Students with Disabilities

Students with learning, physical, or psychiatric disabilities may need disability-related classroom accommodations and should see me before the end of the second week of the term. All discussions will remain confidential, although the Student Accessibility Services office may be consulted to discuss appropriate implementation of any accommodation requested.

Religious Observances

I realize that some students take part in religious holidays or observances that fall during this academic term. Should you have a religious observance that conflicts with your participation in the course, please speak with me before the end of the second week of the term to discuss appropriate accommodations.
Class Schedule (* indicates available on Blackboard)

9/13 Introduction

9/15 What is Public Opinion?

Start reading: Berry, William, and Mitchell Sanders. Understanding Multivariate Research (not material for reaction papers)

9/20 Describing Opinions: Rational Choice Models
Hinich, Melvin, and Michael Munger. Analytical Politics. Chs. 1 & 2

9/22 Where Do Opinions Come From? Biology & Personality

9/27 Where Do Opinions Come From? Socialization and Context
9/29  Public Opinion and Political Ideology
   Press, pp. 206-261.
Achen, Christopher. 1975. Mass Political Attitudes and the Survey
Hinich and Munger, *Analytical Politics*. Ch. 9

10/4  NO CLASS (x-hour TBA)

Designing Surveys

10/6  Constructed Opinions and Ambivalence
   *PS: Political Science and Politics* 31(2, June):182-189.

10/11 Are Political Opinions Complex?
   The Strength of Issues: Using Multiple Measures to Gauge
Lacy, Dean. 2003. Nonseparable Preferences and Over-Time Instability
   in Survey Responses.

10/13 Motivated Reasoning and Rationalizing
   Model of Persuasion. in NA - Advances in Consumer Research
   Volume 11, eds. Thomas C. Kinnear, Provo, UT : Association for
   Consumer Research, Pages: 673-675.
   http://acrwebsite.org/volumes/6329/volumes/v11/NA-11
   selections
Nyhan, Brendan, and Jason Reifler. 2010. When Corrections Fail: The
   Persistence of Political Misperceptions. *Political Behavior*

10/18 GUEST SPEAKER
10/20 Economic Voting

10/25 Party Identification: What is It?

10/27 Party Identification: Does it Change?
**Political Participation and Voter Turnout**


**The Federal Budget and Elections**


Lacy, Dean. The Federal Fiscal Paradox

Lacy, Dean. 2014. Moochers and Makers in the Voting Booth. *Public Opinion Quarterly*

**TBA**

**Conclusion**
Reaction Papers

**Directions:** Write a five-page paper about a topic that interests you in the reading for the day. Turn in your paper by 8pm on the day before the class during which we are covering your chosen topic. Blitz me and everyone on the class list an Adobe Acrobat (.pdf) version of your paper with your name and Gov 83 somewhere in the filename. You will turn in two of these reaction papers during the quarter.

**Purpose:** The purpose of writing these papers is to develop your ability to analyze a topic in a short, concise, insightful essay. Think of these an excerpt of a book review or a magazine or academic journal. You should state a clear position and defend it using the available evidence. You may pursue outside sources or do a bit of research for your topic, but do not merely summarize someone else’s argument.

**Possible Topics:** Good topics for a paper include, but are not limited to:
- Adjudicating a dispute between authors
- Pointing out a contradiction, inconsistency, or weak evidence in an article or book
- Affirming an author’s argument by analyzing its strongest evidence or providing additional evidence
- Asking and answering a question related to but omitted from the day’s reading
- Offering a new theory or answer to a question in the day’s reading
- Applying something in the reading to a case study not included in the reading

**Format:**
- Papers must be typed, double-spaced, with 1 or 1-1/2 inch margins on all sides. Use only 12 point font.
- Include a list of references, if necessary, after the last page of text.
- Appropriately cite the books or articles from which you take facts (other than common knowledge) or important conclusions. Do not cite my lectures. I prefer internal citations, e.g. (Smith 2001:10), which is (Author Year:Page). Avoid footnotes or endnotes.
- Follow normal conventions of style and grammar. I allow some leeway here. When in doubt, consult me or, better yet, Strunk and White, *Elements of Style*.

**Suggestions:** You do not need to follow my suggestions in order to write a good paper. Write an introduction of no more than one third of a page. Avoid lengthy summaries of events. Avoid long quotations. Focus on the significance of your topic. Once you have established your argument, consider and respond to criticisms.

**Cautions:** The following are prohibited:
1. Copying another student’s paper.
2. Plagiarizing someone else’s work, even if such work is not copyrighted. If you are unsure of the definition of plagiarism, consult with me.
3. Turning in, under pretense that it is your own work, a paper written by someone else.