Basic Information
Class meets: Tuesdays, 2:10-5:00pm
Instructor: Dr. Heather L. Ondercin
Office: 208C Stubbs Hall
E-mail: ondercin@lsu.edu
Office Phone: 578-2550
Office hours: Thursday 2:00-3:00 p.m. and by appointment.

E-mail is an effective way to reach me, I check my messages several times a day. If you can’t attend my office hours, talk to me and we can make an appointment. Never hesitate to talk to me if you have a problem, comment, or concern.

Course Description
This class is a seminar in American political behavior, designed to focus on public opinion and political attitudes. It is designed to survey the topics and debates in the field of public opinion research; however, by no means is this an exhaustive survey of public opinion. I have listed additional readings for several weeks as references for your future study. Additionally, at the end of the course outline there are several topics and readings for several topics we will not cover.

Public opinion is relevant for many different disciplines and fields of study; including but not limited to: political science, sociology, social psychology, and mass communication. We will approach the study of public opinion from the perspective of a political scientists and the materials we will read and discuss are primarily written by political scientists.

Course Requirements and Grading
There are three requirements for this class. The first requirement is class participation accounting for 35 percent of your final grade. This component consists of: completion of all the readings listed below, active participation in class discussions, and leading one class discussion during the semester. You need to think of connections, similarities, and contradictions in readings within each week and also larger themes that connect the readings throughout the entire semester. You are only responsible for the required readings. Additional readings are offered only as references and you are not required to read them. However, you may find them helpful in terms of for studying for comprehensive exams, your final papers, and when you lead class discussion. Participation in class discussion will be assessed on both quality
and quantity. You will select one day to lead the discussion of the class. It is your responsibility that day to come with discussion questions and guide the class through the readings. I encourage you to meet with me before you lead discussion to go over any questions you may have.

The second requirement of the course is five reaction papers to the readings. The reaction papers should be critical responses to the readings and should not be summaries of the readings. You should engage the material and critically analyze it from the perspective of theory, logic, design, method, evidence, conclusions, other research, and/or its overall contribution to the field of public opinion. The first paragraph of the paper should identify the central theme and the rest of the paper should be used to develop this theme. Papers are due by 9:00 am on Tuesday. Papers should be typed, double spaced, and should not exceed 4 pages in length. Please e-mail the papers to me and your classmates as either a word or pdf document. Each response paper is worth 6 percent of the final grade for the class, for a total of 30 percent.

The third requirement for the class is a final paper. I recommend you think on the level of a pilot study or small scale project that can be completed in a semester’s time. However, the project should be more than a simple replication of existing research and must represent a substantive contribution to the field of public opinion. I encourage you to stay in contact with me throughout the semester on the progress of the project. Please note the deadlines for topic, annotated bibliography, and presentation in the tentative course outline below. The final paper is worth 35 percent of your grade for the class. The paper should be around 25 to 30 pages, including tables, figures, and references. **Papers are due at 10a.m. on December 10th**

I assume that students possess an intermediate understanding of statistics and research design; including interpretation and estimation of standard OLS regression and estimation techniques for limited dependent variables. If you do not possess these skills your understanding of some of the material will be hindered. Please talk with me about ways we can make sure you get the most of the class. Several of the readings will utilize more advanced methods, in those cases we will discuss these methods in class.

Please note the disability and academic honesty statements at the end of the syllabus.

**Required Readings**


Additional readings are listed in the course outline below. Most of these will be available through J-STOR or other on-line archives, it is your responsibility to obtain copies of these readings. Readings not available on-line are available as PDF on the course’s Moodle page and hard copies are located in a folder in the main office (240 Stubbs Hall).

**Tentative Course Outline**

**Week 1, August 26th:** Overview of Class and Defining the Field of Public Opinion.


**Week 2, September 2th:** Measurement of Public Opinion


Additional readings on measurement and methods.


¹Any changes to this schedule will be announced verbally in class. It is the student’s responsibility to note changes and adhere to the new schedule.


Week 4, September 16th: Unsophisticated Electorate?


Additional readings on political sophistication and its effects.


Week 5, September 23th: Ideology

Additional readings on ideology.


**Week 6, September 30th: Ideology, Values, and Principle**

**Paper Proposals Due Today**


Additional reading on core values.


Week 7, October 7th: Heuristics


Week 8, October 14th: On-line Models


**Additional reading relating to on-line models**


**Week 9, October 21nd: The Magic of Aggregation**


**Additional readings on linking the micro and macro.**


**Week 10, October 28th: Macro Political Behavior**

**Annotated Bibliography Due Today**

Week 11, November 4th: Macro Political Behavior Continued


Week 12, November 11th: Media Effects


**Additional readings on media effects.**


Week 13, November 18th: Race and Gender


**Additional readings on race.**


**Additional readings on gender.**


**Week 14, November 25th: Intolerance**


• Gibson, James L. 2006. “Enigmas of intolerance: Fifty years after Stouffers Communism, Conformity, and Civil Liberties.” *Perspectives on Politics* 4:


**Additional readings on intolerance.**


**Week 15, December 2th: Presentations**

**Other topics in public opinion that we won’t cover:**

**Policy Responsiveness: How Opinion effects policy**


Conflict, Ambivalence, Uncertainty, Nonseparable Preferences, and Silent Voices

• Tetlock, Philip E. 1986. “A value pluralism model of ideological reasoning.” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 50: 819-827. (The listing says only 1988 and later, but this particular article should be available on-line).


Material or Symbolic Interests


**Academic Honesty:** All students are expected to work independently on all assignments. Group and collaborative work is not permitted unless specific instructions are given. Proper citations must be used to acknowledge any ideas, concepts, theories, organizational formats, and writing that is not your own. If you are not clear on how to properly give credit to others, please see me before turning in any assignment. All students are required to read and be familiar with the Code of Student Conduct found at [www.lsu.edu/judicialaffairs](http://www.lsu.edu/judicialaffairs) as well as all other university policies and procedures. If you have questions about what constitutes plagiarism see: [http://www.lib.lsu.edu/instruction/plagiarism/html](http://www.lib.lsu.edu/instruction/plagiarism/html) I take this issue very seriously and will check all things turned into me for signs of plagiarism.

**Students with disabilities:** Reasonable accommodations will be made for any student with documented disabilities to ensure that the student is able to participate in class to the best of their abilities. Unfortunately Stubbs Hall, the building where my office is located, is not ADA compliant, however I am more than willing to meet with students at alternative locations. If you anticipate needing any type of accommodation in this course or have questions about physical access, please tell the instructor as soon as possible. Reasonable accommodations will be made for all students with disabilities, but it is the student’s responsibility to inform the instructor early in the term. It is also the student’s responsibility to register with the disability service office on campus. Do not wait until just before an exam to decide you want to inform the instructor of a learning disability; any accommodations for disabilities must be arranged well in advance.