

PLS312: Public Opinion and Elections

Fall 2020

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Nazarbayev University

Last Update: August 18, 2020
(**TENTATIVE and SUBJECT TO CHANGE**)

1 General Information

Class Hours

Official Class Hours for this class is **4:30-5:45pm Tuesdays/Thursdays (Nur-Sultan local time)**. However, given that the course is remotely taught, following adjustments are planned to be made (subject to change as the semester proceeds):

- **Tuesdays contents** will be offered in a format of **a video presentation**. In each week, a video describing the theoretical backgrounds is planned be uploaded on Tuesdays (Nur-Sultan Local Time) (in the first week, the video will be uploaded on Thursday).
- **Discussion session** will be offered in a format of **video conference**, during **4:30-5:45pm Thursdays (Nur-Sultan local time)** (except for the first week). Students are expected to attend, but in case one has technical troubles joining a live conference, a video recording will be uploaded after the class.

Office Hours

Office hours will be held over Zoom and it is **by appointment only**. Schedule a meeting by checking the availability from the URL below.

<https://www.meetingbird.com/1/gentok/office-hours>

Each meeting slot is for 15 minutes. If you want longer meeting, reserve two slots separately. The Zoom invitation will be sent to your E-mail address once you successfully completed the reservation. **If the given slots do not work for you, contact me directly with the proposal of your available times.**

2 Prerequisite

It is assumed that students have basic knowledge on social science research design and hypothesis testing (contents covered in PLS210 & 211).

3 Course Objectives

Public Opinion is a crucial part of politics, since it is often seen as the source of the government's legitimacy. Election, along with different types of political participation, plays a critical role in connecting public opinion and policy outcomes. Public opinion is especially crucial under a democratic governance, while it is no less relevant for politicians under non-democratic contexts. As a result, public opinion in any country is constantly monitored by political elites and media.

The questions that we ask in this course are basic, but their answers are more complex than they seem. How do people form views about politics? How can we capture what people think and know? When and why people engage in politics? What accounts for differences in people's views? How can media and group membership influence public opinion? And does public opinion improve policy outcomes, or does it undermining them?

While many of our readings talk about American politics, knowledge acquired from this course is similarly relevant in any country. Non-American based studies are also assigned as needed to show the generality of each topic.

4 Readings

Most of the readings for this course are available online through Moodle. Some of the readings may be provided through NU library access. Those materials have a link. By clicking the URL, you will be prompted to enter your NU user ID and password to access materials.

5 Course Requirements

There are four components to the course requirements:

1. **Discussion Questions (5% * 8 = 40%):** Students are asked to **post one discussion question to Moodle, by 4:30pm Wednesdays**. The question must be original and must be based on the reading of the week. Questions will be graded on check plus to minus scale. At the end of semester, **eight best scored questions will be counted toward the final grade**.
2. **Response Papers (10% * 3 = 30%):** Students are asked to submit **three two-page reaction papers based on the readings of the given week, by 4:30pm Wednesdays**. Papers will be graded in A to F scale.
3. **Research Proposal (25%):** There will be a original research proposal assignment due on **Monday, November 30**. Students are expected to make comprehensive literature review on the topic of their interest and propose a research design that tests an original question. Additional details about the format will be provided as the semester proceeds.

4. **Attending Consultation Meeting for Research Proposal (5%):** Students are expected to consult with me regarding the plan for research proposal through video-meeting. The attendance in this meeting will count as 5% of grade.

6 Course Outline

Schedule and contents are subject to change. Discussion session (video conference) will be held on underlined days.

INTRODUCTION

Week 1: August 18, 20

Note: Introductory video conference is held on August 18 (Tuesday), NOT 20 (Thursday). There is no discussion session this week.

- Timothy O. Lenz and Mirya Holman. 2018. “Chapter 8: Public Opinion.” In *American Government, Second Edition*. University Press of Florida

SOURCES OF PUBLIC OPINION

Week 2: August 25, 27

- Walter Lippmann. 1922. “Chapter 1: The World Outside and the Pictures in Our Heads.” In *Public Opinion*. Mineola, NY: Dover Publications. <http://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/6456/pg6456-images.html>
- Milton Lodge, Kathleen M McGraw, and Patrick Stroh. 1989. “An Impression-Driven Model of Candidate Evaluation.” *The American Political Science Review*: 399–419
- John R. Zaller. 1992. “Chapter 3: How Citizens Acquire Information and Convert It into Public Opinion.” In *The Nature and Origins of Mass Opinion*, 40–52. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

MECHANICS OF VOTING

Week 3: September 1, 3

- Anthony Downs. 1957b. “Chapter 3: The Basic Logic of Voting.” In *An Economic Theory of Democracy*, 36–49. New York: Harper and Brothers
- Angus Campbell et al. (1960) 1980. *The American Voter*. Chapter 6, 7, and 8. University of Chicago Press
- Morris P. Fiorina. 1978. “Economic Retrospective Voting in American National Elections: A Micro-Analysis.” *American Journal of Political Science* 22 (2): 426–443

POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

Week 4: September 8, 10

- Anthony Downs. 1957a. “Chapter 14: The Causes and Effects of Rational Abstention.” In *An Economic Theory of Democracy*, 260–276. New York: Harper and Brothers
- William H. Riker and Peter C. Ordeshook. 1968. “A Theory of the Calculus of Voting.” *The American Political Science Review* 62 (1): 25–42
- Timothy J. Feddersen. 2004. “Rational Choice Theory and the Paradox of Not Voting.” *The Journal of Economic Perspectives* 18 (1): 99–112

Week 5: September 15

- Mark Granovetter. 1978. “Threshold Models of Collective Behavior.” *American Journal of Sociology* 83 (6): 1420–1443
- Gwyneth H. McClendon. 2014. “Social Esteem and Participation in Contentious Politics: A Field Experiment at an LGBT Pride Rally.” *American Journal of Political Science* 58 (2): 279–290
- Davide Cantoni et al. 2019. “Protests as Strategic Games: Experimental Evidence from Hong Kong’s Antiauthoritarian Movement.” *The Quarterly Journal of Economics* 134, no. 2 (January): 1021–1077

CAPTURING PUBLIC OPINION: POLITICAL IDEOLOGY

Week 6: September 22, 24

- Philip E. Converse. 1964. “The Nature of Belief System in Mass Publics.” In *Ideology and Discontent*, edited by D. E. Apter, 206–261. New York, NY: Free Press
- Stephen Ansolabehere, Jonathan Rodden, and James M. Snyder Jr. 2008. “The Strength of Issues: Using Multiple Measures to Gauge Preference Stability, Ideological Constraint, and Issue Voting.” *The American Political Science Review* 102 (2): 215–232
- David E. Broockman. 2016. “Approaches to Studying Policy Representation.” *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 41, no. 1 (February): 181–215

CAPTURING PUBLIC OPINION: POLITICAL KNOWLEDGE

Week 7: September 29, October 1

- Michael X. Delli Carpini and Scott Keeter. 1996. “Chapter 2: What Americans Know About Politics.” In *What Americans Know about Politics and Why It Matters*, 62–104. New Haven: Yale University Press
- Markus Prior and Arthur Lupia. 2008. “Money, Time, and Political Knowledge: Distinguishing Quick Recall and Political Learning Skills.” *American Journal of Political Science* 52 (1): 169–183

- Cheryl Boudreau and Arthur Lupia. 2011. “Political Knowledge.” In *Cambridge Handbook of Experimental Political Science*, edited by James N. Druckman et al., 508–521. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

FALL BREAK

EXPLAINING PUBLIC OPINION: MEDIA

Week 8: October 13, 15

- Amos Tversky and Daniel Kahneman. 1981. “The Framing of Decisions and the Psychology of Choice.” *Science* 211 (4481): 453–458
- Dietram A. Scheufele and David Tewksbury. 2007. “Framing, Agenda Setting, and Priming: The Evolution of Three Media Effects Models.” *Journal of Communication* 57 (1): 9–20
- Thomas E. Nelson, Rosalee A. Clawson, and Zoe M. Oxley. 1997. “Media Framing of a Civil Liberties Conflict and Its Effect on Tolerance.” *The American Political Science Review* 91 (3): 567–583

Week 9: October 20, 22

- Markus Prior. 2005. “News vs. Entertainment: How Increasing Media Choice Widens Gaps in Political Knowledge and Turnout.” *American Journal of Political Science* 49 (3): 577–592
- Stuart Soroka et al. 2013. “Auntie Knows Best? Public Broadcasters and Current Affairs Knowledge.” *British Journal of Political Science* 43, no. 04 (October): 719–739
- Christian Collet and Gento Kato. 2014. “Does NHK Make You Smarter (and Super News Make You Softer)? An Examination of Japanese Political Knowledge and the Potential Influence of TV News.” *Japanese Journal of Political Science* 15, no. 01 (March): 23–50

EXPLAINING PUBLIC OPINION: GROUP IDENTITY

Week 10: October 27, 29

- Henri Tajfel and John Turner. 1979. “An Integrative Theory of Intergroup Conflict.” In *The Social Psychology of Intergroup Relations*, 33–47. Monterey, CA: Brooks/Cole Publishing
- Leonie Huddy. 2002. “From Social to Political Identity: A Critical Examination of Social Identity Theory.” *Political Psychology* 22 (1): 127–156
- Milton Lodge and Charles S. Taber. 2000. “Three Steps toward a Theory of Motivated Reasoning.” In *Elements of Reason: Cognition, Choice, and the Bounds of Rationality*, edited by Arthur Lupia, Mathew D McCubbins, and Samuel L. Popkin. Cambridge University Press

Week 11: November 3, 5

- Anna Bassi, Rebecca B. Morton, and Kenneth C. Williams. 2011. “The Effects of Identities, Incentives, and Information on Voting.” *The Journal of Politics* 73 (2): 558–571

- Shanto Iyengar, Gaurav Sood, and Yphtach Lelkes. 2012. “Affect, Not Ideology: A Social Identity Perspective on Polarization.” *Public Opinion Quarterly* 76 (3): 405–431
- Scott L. Althaus and Kevin Coe. 2011. “Social Identity Processes and the Dynamics of Public Support for War.” *Public Opinion Quarterly* 75 (1): 65–88

VOTER COMPETENCE

Week 12: November 10, 12

- Richard R Lau and David P Redlawsk. 1997. “Voting Correctly.” *American Political Science Review* 91 (3): 585–598
- Arthur Lupia. 2006. “How Elitism Undermines the Study of Voter Competence.” *Critical Review* 18 (1-3): 217–232
- Scott Ashworth and Ethan Bueno de Mesquita. 2014. “Is Voter Competence Good for Voters?: Information, Rationality, and Democratic Performance.” *The American Political Science Review* 108 (3): 565–587

PUBLIC OPINION IN DEVELOPING DEMOCRACIES

Week 13: November 17, 19

- Kevin Croke et al. 2016. “Deliberate Disengagement: How Education Can Decrease Political Participation in Electoral Authoritarian Regimes.” *The American Political Science Review* 110, no. 3 (August): 579–600
- S. Erdem Aytaç, Luis Schiumerini, and Susan Stokes. 2017. “Protests and Repression in New Democracies.” *Perspectives on Politics* 15, no. 1 (March): 62–82
- Christopher Blattman. 2009. “From Violence to Voting: War and Political Participation in Uganda.” *The American Political Science Review* 103 (2): 231–247

Week 14: November 24, 26

- Kanchan Chandra. 2007. “Counting Heads: A Theory of Voter and Elite Behavior in Patronage Democracies.” In *Patrons, Clients, and Policies*, edited by Herbert Kitschelt and Steven I. Wilkinson. Cambridge University Press
- Jordan Gans-Morse, Sebastián Mazzuca, and Simeon Nichter. 2014. “Varieties of Clientelism: Machine Politics during Elections.” *American Journal of Political Science* 58 (2): 415–432

7 Grading Policy

7.1 Grading Scale

Each assignments will be given a **letter grade**, either by A to F or Check plus to minus scale. Each letter grade is translated to grade point by the following tables:

A to F Scale		Check Plus to Minus Scale	
Letter Grade	Grade Point	Letter Grade	Grade Point
A	4.00		
A–	3.67	✓+	4.00
B+	3.33	✓	3.00
B	3.00	✓–	2.00
B–	2.67	Fail	0.00
C+	2.33		
C	2.00		
C–	1.67		
D+	1.33		
D	1.00		
F	0.00		

The final letter grade in A to F scale will be determined by the weighted average of grade points according to the percentages presented in Course Requirements section.

7.2 Late Submission

For any assignment, the following late submission policies will be applied. The assignment submitted incorrectly will be considered as missing.

- Late submission **within 24 hours of the deadline**: Allowed without penalty. However, **a student needs to notify me by E-mail before the deadline**. Without notification, the assignment will be treated in the same way as the *late submission within 1 week of the deadline*.
- Late submission **within 1 week of the deadline**: Allowed with penalty. **The highest grade a student can get will be B or ✓**. No notification is required.
- Late submission **after 1 week of the deadline**: Not allowed at all time.

If you have any special reasons that force you to submit after the deadline, please E-mail me or come talk to me **before the deadline**. If the reason is valid, I may extend the deadline for you. I will **not accept any request after the deadline**.

7.3 Regrading Request

If there is a very clear error in grading your assignment or exam, please let me know as soon as possible. However, if you wish to contest your grade on other grounds, then you must submit a written request to me with following contents:

- Clearly identify the components of the exam or assignment that should be reconsidered.
- For each component, **propose the score** that you think you deserve on that specific component.

- For each component, provide at least a paragraph length explanation for why you think your score should be reconsidered.

I will only have a right to **accept or reject** your proposal. If your proposed score and explanation are compelling, I will change your score on that specific component to the score you proposed. Otherwise, I will reject it and keep the score as it is.

*Under no circumstances will I change any score on any assignment **more than one week** after we have released the grades to the class. If you anticipate that it will take you more than a week to review your graded assignment and draft a response, then you will need to request an extension in advance.*

8 Academic Conduct

I do not expect that any of the students in this course will violate the University's Student Code of Conduct. However, please be aware that **cheating, plagiarism, or other violations of the Code will not be tolerated and will be reported to the Vice Dean and/or the Dean** for appropriate action. Please check NU Student Code of Conduct for more details (<https://nu.edu.kz/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/NU-Student-Code-of-Conduct.pdf>). Also, NU library provides a helpful guideline regarding the academic integrity (https://nu.kz.libguides.com/avoiding_plagiarism/academicintegrity).

9 A Safe and Comfortable Learning Environment

As an instructor, one of my responsibilities is to help create a safe and comfortable learning environment for my students and for the university as a whole. If you have any problems or concerns regarding your student life, including, but not limited to relationships, stress, self-esteem, body image, sexuality, anxiety, and/or depression, Psychological Counselling Center (PCC) provides consultation service for you. Contact nu_counseling@nu.edu.kz or make an appointment with psychologist through NU web portal, under SERVICES → Consultation tab. PCC also has YouTube Channel (<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCZZCN6Kc7UcwWJ04Ai3yOXQ>) and Instagram (https://www.instagram.com/nu_pcc/) with additional resources.