Professor Jamie Druckman PoliSci 395

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211 Scott HallOffice Hours: By appointment

**Studying Public Opinion**

**Course Description**

This course explores the processes by which citizens form their opinions and how scholars and practitioners measure citizens’ opinions. It does so by covering the major methodological components involved in the construction of surveys (e.g., sampling, measurement, reporting), and approaches to drawing inferences about how individuals form opinions (e.g., experiments). Substantively, a range of topics are discussed including opinions about energy policy, political knowledge, mass communication effects, and data privacy. In the end, students will understand the challenges citizens face in forming public opinions and the hurdles to accurately measuring and understanding those opinions.

**Classes, Assignments, and Grades**

The class meets in 319 Scott Hall on Tuesdays from 2:00pm-4:50pm. Students are expected to attend all (planned) classes, to complete all assigned readings and assignments on time, and to actively participate. Classes will typically involve lectures (that will include examples drawn from research on public opinion), discussions, debates, and presentations by the Professor and the students.

Students will be involved in three formal activities, as follows.

1. Each student will participate in one in-class debate. Students will be assigned a partner and a position on a given issue. Each side will research the topic (and assigned position) and prepare a three minute opening statement, a series of questions for the other side, and a three minute concluding statement. The teams also must be prepared to answer the opposing side’s questions. Each team will turn in a bibliography listing relevant sources (which should include sources beyond those listed on the syllabus). Teams are expected to engage in significant research. This will make up a total of 10% of each student’s grade. Each member of the team will receive the same grade. Times are strict. *Do not exceed the time limits as that will detract from the team’s grade – succinct arguments are required.*
2. Each student will produce a research paper. This will involve choosing a topic at the start of the quarter, identifying relevant literature and reviewing it, collecting *or* acquiring data, analyzing the data, and writing a paper describing the results. The papers will likely be 15 pages (excluding bibliography and tables/graphs). This will make up a total of 60% of each student’s grade. It is due, in the Professor’s box, by 12:00pm on Wednesday, June 13th.

In the course of writing the paper, three graduate Ph.D. students(Sam Gubitz, [srgubitz@u.northwestern.edu](mailto:srgubitz@u.northwestern.edu); Kumar Ramanathan, [kumar.ramanathan@u.northwestern.edu](mailto:kumar.ramanathan@u.northwestern.edu); and Matt Nelsen, [MatthewNelsen2021@u.northwestern.edu](mailto:MatthewNelsen2021@u.northwestern.edu)) will be available for questions and help with obtaining data. Each student will be assigned to a TA with whom he/she will work (see TA assignment sheet that will be provided at the first class).

*Possible research topics:* Presidential approval, support for war, opinions about new technologies, campaign effects, prejudice, tolerance, trust in government, trust in others, political participation, party identification, opinion about any issue/event, the impact of new media, opinions about data privacy, etc.

1. *Class Research Project.* We will be conducting a study of “partisan spillover.” We will discuss the details in week 2 of the class – in short, we are interested in how partisanship affects personal and professional (but non-political) decisions. To do this, we will focus on whether partisanship influences how individuals respond to information inquiries about college and graduate school admissions. This will involve the following steps:
   1. We will identify the population of schools, and a sampling frame. We will draw a sample of schools that possibly stratifies on liberal and conservative populations.
   2. Each student will be assigned a set of schools. The student will then find the name, e-mail contact, and any other information about where inquiries can be sent regarding admissions. We will look at undergraduate admission and graduate admissions to social science departments.
   3. We also might seek out information about each school (e.g., size, private/public, demographic profile, political profile, etc.).
   4. Each week, each student will be expected to report on progress.
   5. As a class, we will construct the experiment. This will include devising the stimuli (e.g., text that varies if it cites an interest in politics and/or a partisan affiliation), going through the IRB process, setting up e-mail accounts to send the messages, receiving the responses, and analyzing the data.
   6. Our goal is to see whether including partisan or political information in the inquiries affect response rates.

This will comprise a total of 15% of each student’s grade.

The remaining 15% of each student’s grade will be based on attendance and the quality of participation. Participation involves taking part in class activities, discussing class readings in an informed way, and discussing ongoing relevant events. While the quantity of the contribution to class discussion is far from definitive, some regular participation is expected.

**Readings**

All readings can be found online (via the Northwestern Library) or will be available from the Professor. Readings are listed in the order that seems most logical to read them (and this often does not correspond to the dates when the readings were written).

Some of the readings include statistics that may be unfamiliar. Do not worry about the specific statistical analyses, instead focusing on the overall argument and implications described in the given reading. Also, readings may change – students will be alerted to any changes at least one week prior to the given class.

*Students are expected to read all of the assigned readings before each class.* Surprise quizzes on the readings are possible (and will become part of the students’ participation grade). If a student misses a class without a legitimate excuse, he or she will receive a 0 on any quizzes.It also will be necessary for students to include direct references to the readings in their assignments.

**Course Policies**

* It is the student’s responsibility to obtain an assignment if he or she is absent during the class in which the assignment is distributed or discussed. Assignments are due at the *start* of the class period on the days they are due. Make-up in-class assignments and/or late papers will be permitted *only* if the student presents written documentation of legitimate circumstances that prevented the student from completing the assignment on time. This documentation must be provided in a timely manner (i.e., within a week); failure to provide such documentation will result in the student receiving a 0 on the assignment in question. Legitimate circumstances include religious holidays, illness (verified by a note from a health care provider), serious family emergencies, subpoenas, jury duty, military service, and participation in group activities sponsored by the University. *Note* this means late assignments are *not* acceptable (even for partial credit; a score of 0 will be assigned for late assignments absent a legitimate excuse).
* Assignments are *not* accepted via e-mail (unless the Professor explicitly states that e-mail is allowed). An assignment must be turned in as a hard copy at the *start* of the class in which it is due. Assignments must be *stapled* at this time or they will not be accepted. If a student misses a class on the date that an assignment is due, it is still his or her responsibility to ensure a hard copy of the assignment is turned in (unless there is a legitimate excuse as described above).
* Grading will be done by the Professor or a teaching assistant. If a student wishes to appeal an assigned grade, he or she must submit a *written* statement to the Professor explaining why the grade should be changed. This must be done within one week after the assignment is returned to the student.
* Incompletes will be granted only in the case of documented illness, and if the student and Professor complete the required form.
* As mentioned, some work will be done in teams. Working with others invariably leads to some disagreement. Students should approach their partners/team with an open and flexible mind. If there are *major* problems, students should notify the professor.
* Students are expected to type each written assignment. The assignments should be proofread; spelling, grammar, and writing style will make up part of a student’s grade. Also, students are expected to make reference to the *academic literature* when appropriate including journal articles and books.

**Some Dates of Note**

April 20th: Last Day to obtain P/N option.

May 11th: Last Day to drop.

May 21st: Fall Quarter, 2018 Registration Begins

June 6th: Reading Week Starts

**Course Outline**

**April 10 The Scientific Study of Public Opinion**

*General Concepts*

O’Keefe, Daniel J. 2016. *Persuasion: Theory and Practice*. Los Angeles: Sage. Chapter 1.

*History of Public Opinion Research*

Herbst, Susan. 2012. “The History and Meaning of Public Opinion.” In Adam J. Berinsky, *New Directions in Public Opinion*, New York: Routledge.

American Association for Public Opinion Research. 1937. “Foreword.” *Public Opinion Quarterly* 1: 3-5.

Allport, Floyd H. 1937. “Toward a Science of Public Opinion.” *Public Opinion Quarterly* 1: 7-23.

**April 17 Partisan Spillover**

***Due:*** *A one paragraph description of your research topic. Set up a meeting with your TA before the next class to finalize the topic.*

***Exercise (for discussion in the next class):*** *Each student will attempt to conduct an in-person survey that consists of 10 questions (we will write it in class). Approach 20 people and record all you can about the people who agree to take it and those who decline. Report back on the perceived gender, age, and race of responders and non-responders.*

*Polarization and Partisan Spillover in the United States*

Hetherington, Marc. 2012. “Partisanship and Polarization.” In Adam J. Berinsky, *New Directions in Public Opinion*, New York: Routledge.

Inbar, Yoel, and Joris Lammers. 2012. “Political Diversity in Social and Personality Psychology.” *Perspectives on Psychological Science* 7: 496-503.

Chen, M. Keith, and Ryne Rohla. 2017. “Politics Gets Personal: Effects of Political Partisanship and Advertising on Family Ties.” University of California, Los Angeles, Working Paper.

*Studying Responsiveness*

Skim: Pager, Devah, Bruce Western, Bart Bonikowski. 2009. “Discrimination in a Low-Wage Labor Market: A Field Experiment.” *American Sociological Review* 74: 777-799.

Butler, Daniel M., and David E. Broockman. 2011. “Do Politicians Racially Discriminate Against Constituents? A Field Experiment on State Legislators.” *American Journal of Political Science* 55: 463-477.

Gift, Karen, and Thomas Gift. 2015. “Does Politics Influence Hiring? Evidence from a Randomized Experiment.” *Political Behavior* 37: 653-675.

**April 24 Sampling: Census**

***Due:*** *Project idea needs to be finalized and stated to the class. Hand in a revised paragraph that includes seven sources (on the topic) not listed on the syllabus; consult with graduate student TA for help if needed and use Google Scholar.*

***Debate*:** *Should the census ask a question about citizenship?*

***Readings:***

*General Sampling*

Moore, David S. 2001. “Sampling, Good and Bad,” from *Statistics: Concepts and Controversies*. New York: W.H. Freeman and Company, pages 19-70.

Hillygus, D. Sunshine. 2012. “The Practice of Survey Research: Changes and Challenges.” In Adam J. Berinsky, *New Directions in Public Opinion*, New York: Routledge.

Langer, Gary. 2009. “Study Finds Trouble for Opt-in Internet Surveys.” *ABC News Blog*, September 1. <http://blogs.abcnews.com/thenumbers/2009/09/study-finds-trouble-for-internet-surveys.html>

*The 2016 Election*

American Association for Public Opinion Research **Ad Hoc Committee on 2016 Election Polling**. 2017. “An Evaluation of 2016 Election Polls in the U.S.” <https://www.aapor.org/Education-Resources/Reports/An-Evaluation-of-2016-Election-Polls-in-the-U-S.aspx>

Gelman, Andrew, and Julia Azari. 2017. “19 Things We Learned From the 2016 Election.” *Statistics and Public Policy* 4: 1-10.

*The Census*

Bass, Gary D., and Adrien Schless-Meier. 2015. “An Insidious Way to Underrepresent Minorities.” *The American Prospect*, November 5. <http://prospect.org/article/insidious-way-underrepresent-minorities>

Wines, Michael. 2017. “With 2020 Census Looming, Worries About Fairness and Accuracy.” *The New York Times*, December 9. <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/12/09/us/census-2020-redistricting.html>

Insights Association. 2018. “Huge Win for the Census,” March 22, [https://www.insightsassociation.org/article/huge-win-census-final-fy2018-omnibus-funding-bill](https://urldefense.proofpoint.com/v2/url?u=https-3A__www.insightsassociation.org_article_huge-2Dwin-2Dcensus-2Dfinal-2Dfy2018-2Domnibus-2Dfunding-2Dbill&d=DwMFaQ&c=yHlS04HhBraes5BQ9ueu5zKhE7rtNXt_d012z2PA6ws&r=GGvMnQ-CG5KX-W-_x7kbahtkcwt7BEuoTiic72hjzew&m=As9I4k7a--z-ejCn1sE_8qPslEDRW41-PIcBBDRxaIY&s=c6FtBHZfhS9tAwnNT_C4ymySBBaTeqrO1HrqESPI1iM&e=)

Social Explorer. 2018. “Census Bureau Adds a Citizenship Question.” March 27. <https://www.socialexplorer.com/blog/post/census-bureau-adds-a-citizenship-question-9186>. *AND read related links.*

Peruse: [http://www.census.gov/#](http://www.census.gov/)

**May 1 Measurement: Knowledge**

***Exercise:*** *Teams of two will devise measures of racial prejudice. Collect data from 20 people on these measures and report back how you would report the “percentage” of prejudiced people. We will develop measures in class and collect the data during the next class.*

***Due:*** *Two page literature review and identification of 12 sources (not listed on the syllabus).*

***Readings:***

*Measures on Surveys*

Moore, David S. 2001. “Measuring,” from *Statistics: Concepts and Controversies*. New York: W.H. Freeman and Company, pages 126-145.

Traugott, Michael W., and Paul J. Lavrakas. 2008. “How Are Questionnaires Put Together,” from *The Voter’s Guide to Election Polls*. 4th Edition. New York: Rowman and Littlefield, pages 83-106.

*Measuring Sensitive Topics*

Burden, Barry C., Yoshikuni Ono, and Masahiro Yamada. 2017. “Reassessing Public Support for a Female President.” *The Journal of Politics* 79: 1073-1078.

Skim: Quillian, Lincoln. 2006. “New Approaches to Understanding Racial Prejudice and Discrimination." *Annual Review of Sociology* 32: 299-328.

*Measuring Political Knowledge*

Shaker, Lee. 2012. “Local Political Knowledge and Assessments of Citizen Competence.” *Public Opinion Quarterly* 76: 525–537.

Pew Reports on knowledge:

<http://www.people-press.org/2015/04/28/what-the-public-knows-in-pictures-words-maps-and-graphs/>  
  
[http://www.people-press.org/2017/07/25/from-brexit-to-zika-what-do-americans-know/](https://urldefense.proofpoint.com/v2/url?u=http-3A__www.people-2Dpress.org_2017_07_25_from-2Dbrexit-2Dto-2Dzika-2Dwhat-2Ddo-2Damericans-2Dknow_&d=DwMFaQ&c=yHlS04HhBraes5BQ9ueu5zKhE7rtNXt_d012z2PA6ws&r=GGvMnQ-CG5KX-W-_x7kbahtkcwt7BEuoTiic72hjzew&m=8gOS7CJHV-tk9inC1RgWeqcgCIOO8gYYqdMXI0E2M8E&s=xE6AKnhQR4LjtPRgWXMxH-WxsB_grWeoelqUMUiJxDQ&e=)

Boudreau, Cheryl, and Arthur Lupia. 2011. “Political Knowledge.” In James N. Druckman, Donald P. Green, James H. Kuklinski, and Arthur Lupia, eds., *Cambridge Handbook of Experimental Political Science*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

**May 8 Experiments: Media Influence**

***Due:*** *Work with graduate students to develop a data plan that includes identifying data or developing a survey.*

***Debate*:** Is political media coverage too uncivil? Is incivility bad for democracy?

***Readings:***

*Experimental Design*

Druckman, James N. 2005. “Experiments” in Samuel J. Best and Benjamin Radcliff, eds., *Polling America: An Encyclopedia of Public Opinion*, Volume 2. Westport, CT: Greenwood Publishing Group.

Gilens, Martin. 2002. “An Anatomy of Survey-Based Experiments.” In Jeff Manza, Fay Lomax Cook, and Benjamin I. Page, eds., *Navigating Public Opinion*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

*Media Effects*

Iyengar, Shanto, and Jennifer A. McGrady. 2007. *Media Politics: A Citizen’s Guide*. New York: Norton, pages 127-137 and 197-228.

Gross, Kimberly, Ethan Porter, and Thomas Wood. 2017. “Presidential Debates in the Age of Partisan Media: A Field Experiment.” <https://ssrn.com/abstract=2926553>

Druckman, James N., S.R. Gubitz, Matthew S. Levendusky, and Ashley Lloyd. N.d. “How Incivility On Partisan Media (De-)Polarizes the Electorate.” *The Journal of Politics*, Forthcoming.

Vavreck, Lynn. November 23, 2016. “Why This Election Was Not About the Issues.” *The New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/11/23/upshot/this-election-was-not-about-the-issues-blame-the-candidates.html>

**May 15 No Class / Set-up and meet with graduate student TAs this week for advice on sources and specific data plan. This must be finalized this week and data obtained by next week.**

**May 22** **Data Ethics and Publishing**

***Due:*** *Must have obtained data (via secondary source or collection) and provide a brief class report on the experience.*

***Exercise (i.e., students will read scenarios prior to class and come ready to discuss)*:** *Hypothetical Ethics Scenarios*.

***Debate:*** *Should Facebook be allowed to conduct research along the lines of the emotional contagion article without explicit consent for the given research project?*

***Readings:***

*Ethics in Designing Studies*

Go through the IRB Office’s Social Behavioral Protocol Template, available here: <https://irb.northwestern.edu/templates-forms/templates-forms-sops>

Moore, David S. 2001. “Data Ethics,” from *Statistics: Concepts and Controversies*. New York: W.H. Freeman and Company, pages 108-125.

Milgram, Stanley. 1963. “Behavioral Study of Obedience.” *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology* 67: 371-378.

Zimbardo, Phillip. “A Pirandellian Prison,” *New York Times Magazine* April 8, 1973. <https://www.nytimes.com/1973/04/08/archives/a-pirandellian-prison-the-mind-is-a-formidable-jailer.html>

*Ethics in Social Media Data*

Kramer, Adam D. I., Jamie E. Guillory. Jeffrey T. Hancock. 2014. [“Experimental Evidence of Massive-Scale Emotional Contagion Through Social Networks.”](http://www.pnas.org/content/111/24/8788.full) *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 111: 8788–8790.

Guynn, Jessica . 2014. “[Privacy Watchdog Files Complaint over Facebook Study](https://www.usatoday.com/story/tech/2014/07/03/facebook-emotion-study-complaint-epic/12157471/).” *USA Today.* July 3. <https://www.usatoday.com/story/tech/2014/07/03/facebook-emotion-study-complaint-epic/12157471/>

Verma, Inder M. 2014. “Editorial Expression of Concern: Experimental Evidence of Massive-Scale Emotional Contagion Through Social Networks.” *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*. <https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.1412469111>

Rosenberg, Matthew, Nicholas Confessore, and Carole Cadwalladrmarch. 2018. “How Trump Consultants Exploited the Facebook Data of Millions.” *The New York Times*, March 17. <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/03/17/us/politics/cambridge-analytica-trump-campaign.html>

Roose, Kevin, and Sheera Frenkel. 2018. “Mark Zuckerberg’s Reckoning: ‘This Is a Major Trust Issue.’” *The New York Times.* March 21. <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/03/21/technology/mark-zuckerberg-q-and-a.html>

Streitfeld, David. 2018. “Call for Privacy Hands a Crisis to Tech Giants.” *The New York Times*, March 25. <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/03/24/technology/google-facebook-data-privacy.html>

*Research Replication and Transparency*

Open Science Collaboration. 2015. “Estimating the Reproducibility of Psychological Science.” *Science* 349: aac4716.

Nosek, Brian A., et al. 2015. “Promoting an Open Research Culture.” *Science* *348*: 1422-1425.

Friedman, Lisa. 2018. “The E.P.A. Says It Wants Research Transparency. Scientists See an Attack on Science.” *The New York Times*, March 26. [https://www.nytimes.com/2018/03/26/climate/epa-scientific-transparency-honest-act.html](https://urldefense.proofpoint.com/v2/url?u=https-3A__www.nytimes.com_2018_03_26_climate_epa-2Dscientific-2Dtransparency-2Dhonest-2Dact.html&d=DwMFaQ&c=yHlS04HhBraes5BQ9ueu5zKhE7rtNXt_d012z2PA6ws&r=GGvMnQ-CG5KX-W-_x7kbahtkcwt7BEuoTiic72hjzew&m=3NbI5-2lZVrCfDy3R1pIzN4XfI4LcYq1nCtMFQLHqEY&s=udioYMFx7xqU3r4Rov-CtRoGauHHPXwxw35xb4hATUA&e=)

**May 29 What Explains Behavior: Voting**

***Due:*** *A brief class report on data and any analysis which should be done or close to being done.*

***Possible Exercise:*** *We may design an experiment to test the impact of differing norms on voting turnout (i.e., providing information about the prior election overall, information about one’s neighbors, or information about the competitiveness of the election). We can collect data on Mechanical Turk.*

***Debate*:** *Should citizens be required to vote, just as they are required to do jury duty?*

# *Studying Behaviors*

# Bolsen, Toby. 2013. “A Light Bulb Goes On: Norms, Rhetoric, and Actions for the Public Good.” *Political Behavior* 35: 1-20.

*Voting*

Rosenstone, Steven. J., and John Mark Hansen. 1993. *Mobilization, Participation, and Democracy in America*, New York: MacMillan Publishing Company. Pages 1-37.

Gerber, Alan S., and Donald P. Green. 1999. “Does Canvassing Increase Voter Turnout: A Field Experiment.” *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 96: 10939-10942.

Manza, Jeff, and Christopher Uggen. 2004. “Punishment and Democracy: Disenfranchisement of Nonincarcerated Felons in the United States.” *Perspectives on Politics* 2: 491-505.

Karp, Jeffrey A., and David Brockington. 2005. “Social Desirability and Response Validity: A Comparative Analysis of Overreporting Voter Turnout in Five Countries.” *The Journal of Politics* 67: 825-840.

Singh, Shane P., and Jason Roy. 2018. “Compulsory Voting and Voter Information Seeking.” *Research and Politics* (March): 1-8.

**June 5 Presentations and Class Summary**

***Due:*** *Five minute report on entire project including most analysis (note it is okay if the project is not entirely complete given the due date).*

Discussion of Main Lessons from Class.