

**San José State University  
Department of Political Science  
POLS107, Politics & Public Opinion  
Spring 2012**



<b>Instructor:</b>	Dr. Melinda Jackson
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<b>Office Hours:</b>	MW 3-4pm, and By Appointment
<b>Class Days/Time:</b>	MW 1:30-2:45pm
<b>Classroom:</b>	HGH116
<b>Faculty Web Page:</b>	<a href="http://www.sjsu.edu/people/melinda.jackson/courses/">http://www.sjsu.edu/people/melinda.jackson/courses/</a>
<b>Course D2L Web Page:</b>	<a href="https://sjsu.desire2learn.com/">https://sjsu.desire2learn.com/</a>

**Course description:**

In this course we will explore American public opinion from both theoretical and practical perspectives. Students will learn about how public opinion surveys are designed and conducted, and the ways in which political scientists, politicians, and the media use this information. We will consider how socialization, psychological processes, and ideology shape individual attitudes, as well as examining group-based differences in opinion, and trends in Americans' political opinions over time. We will also critically examine the role of the media in collecting, reporting, and possibly shaping public opinion. Finally, we will consider the role public opinion plays in a democratic system, including the ways that politicians use information about public opinion, and whether or not citizens' opinions have a significant effect on public policy at the end of the day.

### Student Learning Objectives:

- To gain familiarity with the history and current practice of public opinion polling. Students will learn about the techniques of scientific opinion polling through course readings and a hands-on survey project.
- To develop a clear understanding of liberal and conservative political ideologies, and the extent to which ideology helps to explain citizens' attitudes on specific political issues.
- To gain an understanding of the distribution of American public opinion on a range of policy issues including social welfare, civil rights, foreign policy, and social issues, and to analyze trends and changes in these opinions over time.
- To develop a critical understanding of the various influences on public opinion, including political socialization and learning, media effects, and strategic political appeals.
- To critically reflect on the "proper" role that public opinion should play in a democratic society, and to evaluate several different theoretical models of the linkages between citizens and their elected representatives and leaders.

### Required Texts:

*Public Opinion: Measuring the American Mind, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition. (2007)*  
By Barbara Bardes & Robert Oldendick

*Culture War? The Myth of a Polarized America, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition (2011)*  
By Morris P. Fiorina with Samuel J. Abrams & Jeremy C. Pope

Available for purchase in the Spartan Bookstore.

Additional readings will be available on reserve on the course website.

### Course D2L Website

The course Desire2Learn (D2L) site is an online resource supplement for this course. Copies of all course materials include the syllabus, assignments, and reserve readings will be posted on the D2L course site and updated throughout the semester. You will also turn in your papers online using the "dropbox" feature on the D2L course site, which will automatically check for plagiarism using the turnitin.com database. It is your responsibility to become familiar with the D2L site for this class and make sure that you check it regularly.

To access the site go to <http://sjsu.desire2learn.com>

Username = *firstname.lastname*, but may have an appended number (e.g., *joshua.doe2*)

Password = Your initial D2L password is your 9 digit SJSU ID number.

See the online tutorial for additional login and usage information:

Desire2Learn Student Tutorial: [http://www.sjsu.edu/ecampus/students/D2L\\_students/](http://www.sjsu.edu/ecampus/students/D2L_students/)

***Email me immediately if you are still unable to access the site.***

## **COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

### **1. Quizzes**

There will be 10 short in-class quizzes designed to test your knowledge of the textbooks and other readings. Quiz questions will be fact-based, multiple-choice, fill-in-the-blank, or short answer. **THERE ARE NO MAKE-UPS ON QUIZZES.** *The quizzes are worth 30% of your grade.*

### **2. Exams**

There will be two exams in this class – a midterm and a final. The midterm exam will cover the material learned in the first half of the course, and the final exam will cover the material from the second half of the course (i.e., the final will *\*not\** be comprehensive over the entire course). *Each exam is worth 15% of your grade (together, both exams are worth 30%).*

### **3. Research Paper and Oral Presentation**

You will also write a 10-12 page research paper for this class on a topic of your choosing. You will choose a political issue that interests you and research public opinion on that issue over time. Your paper will use scholarly and polling sources to describe and analyze American public opinion on your topic. You will also give a 5 minute oral presentation of your paper during the final exam period. More details on this research paper assignment will be given in class. *The research paper and oral presentation is worth 15% of your grade.*

### **4. Survey Project**

Students in POLS107 will participate in a hands-on survey project, spending one evening (4:30-8:30pm) in the Survey & Policy Research Institute (SPRI) Lab on campus, conducting a telephone survey. You will have a choice of dates on which to complete this project, and we will cancel one regular class session to compensate for this out-of-class required time. You will also write a short paper reflecting on your survey project experience. **THIS IS A REQUIRED CLASS ACTIVITY – IT IS YOUR RESPONSIBILITY TO SPEAK TO PROF. JACKSON AS SOON AS POSSIBLE ABOUT ANY SCHEDULING DIFFICULTIES.** *The survey project and reflection paper is worth 15% of your grade.*

### **5. Participation**

Participation – meaning coming to class and engaging in class discussion and activities – *will also count for 10% of your total grade.* So that you have plenty of opportunities to participate, expect to be “mobilized” (i.e., called on by name) in class.

**EVALUATIVE CRITERIA**

Your grade will be calculated as follows. You may use the “my points” column to keep track of your grade in the class. You can also track your grades throughout the semester on the course D2L site.

	Points	My Points	Percentage of total
Quizzes (10 @ 10 points each)	100		30%
Midterm Exam	50		15%
Final Exam	50		15%
Research Paper	50		15%
Survey Project <i>Survey Participation = 25 points</i> <i>Reflection Paper = 25 points</i>	50		15%
Participation	35		10%
Total	335		100%

Final letter grades for the course will be assigned based on the following scale:

A = 92 – 100%	B = 82 – 87%	C = 72 – 77%	D = 62 – 67%
A- = 90 – 91%	B- = 80 – 81%	C- = 70 – 71%	D- = 60 – 61%
B+ = 88 – 89%	C+ = 78 – 79%	D+ = 68 – 69%	F = 59% or less

**Accommodations:**

If you need course adaptations or accommodations because of a disability, or if you need special arrangements in case the building must be evacuated, please make an appointment with me as soon as possible, or see me during office hours. Presidential Directive 97-03 requires that students with disabilities register with DRC to establish a record of their disability.

**Academic Integrity:**

Your own commitment to learning, as evidenced by your enrollment at San José State University, and the University's Academic Integrity Policy requires you to be honest in all your academic course work. Faculty members are required to report all infractions to the Office of Student Conduct and Ethical Development.

The policy on academic integrity can be found at: <http://www2.sjsu.edu/senate/S04-12.pdf>.

The website for the Office of [Student Conduct and Ethical Development](http://www.sa.sjsu.edu/judicial_affairs/index.html) is: [http://www.sa.sjsu.edu/judicial\\_affairs/index.html](http://www.sa.sjsu.edu/judicial_affairs/index.html)

Instances of academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. Cheating on exams or plagiarism (presenting the work of another as your own, or the use of another person's ideas without giving proper credit) will result in a failing grade and sanctions by the University. For this class, all assignments are to be completed by the individual student unless otherwise specified. If you would like to include in your assignment any material you have submitted, or plan to submit for another class, please note that SJSU's Academic Policy F06-1 requires approval of instructors.

**Other Course Policies:**

Late papers or assignments will be penalized with lower grades.

No late papers will be accepted after the final exam.

Missed exams may not be made up unless students are excused in advance. Medical and family emergencies must be documented.

LATE ARRIVALS, EARLY DEPARTURES AND DISRUPTIONS OF CLASS IN ANY FORM ARE UNACCEPTABLE. CELL PHONES AND OTHER ELECTRONIC EQUIPMENT SHOULD BE TURNED OFF AT ALL TIMES IN THE CLASSROOM.

**Other Useful Information:**

The **library liaison for Political Science** is available to answer questions and provide one-on-one help learning using the library for research. She is also very friendly and happy to meet with students, so don't be afraid to take advantage of her expertise!

Her name and contact info is:           Crystal Goldman  
  Librarian (Political Science Liaison)  
  (408) 808-2015  
  [Crystal.Goldman@sjsu.edu](mailto:Crystal.Goldman@sjsu.edu)

**Learning Assistance Resource Center**

The Learning Assistance Resource Center (LARC) is located in Room 600 in the Student Services Center. It is designed to assist students in the development of their full academic potential and to motivate them to become self-directed learners. The center provides support services, such as skills assessment, individual or group tutorials, subject advising, learning assistance, summer academic preparation and basic skills development. LARC is an excellent resource if you find yourself needing some extra help with writing or other course skills. [The LARC website is located at http://www.sjsu.edu/larc/](http://www.sjsu.edu/larc/).

**Peer Mentor Center**

The Peer Mentor Center is located on the 1<sup>st</sup> floor of Clark Hall in the Academic Success Center. The Peer Mentor Center is staffed with Peer Mentors who excel in helping students manage university life, tackling problems that range from academic challenges to interpersonal struggles. On the road to graduation, Peer Mentors are navigators, offering "roadside assistance" to peers who feel a bit lost or simply need help mapping out the locations of campus resources. Peer Mentor services are free and available on a drop –in basis, no reservation required. The Peer Mentor Center website is located at <http://www.sjsu.edu/muse/peermentor/>

### **Political Science Department Statement on Writing:**

Students of political science should develop the ability to write in clear, grammatical English. Spelling and grammar count!

Students must take care that appropriate citations are used. Direct quotations must be so indicated with quotation marks and a specific reference to the page in the source from which it was taken. Ideas from others must also be referenced although quotations marks are inappropriate. Failure to cite your sources constitutes academic misconduct which carries with it serious sanctions. A tutorial on citations is available at the library website at [http://www.sjlibrary.org/services/literacy/info\\_comp/citing.htm](http://www.sjlibrary.org/services/literacy/info_comp/citing.htm).

Arguably the best way to improve your own writing is to read quality material on a regular basis. To that end, students are encouraged to read articles from scholarly sources but also newspapers such as *The Wall Street Journal*, *The Financial Times*, *The New York Times*, and *The Economist*. These publications also contain articles of direct relevance to their political science classes.

### **SJSU Writing Center**

The SJSU Writing Center is located in Room 126 in Clark Hall. It is staffed by professional instructors and upper-division or graduate-level writing specialists from each of the seven SJSU colleges. Their writing specialists have met a rigorous GPA requirement, and they are well trained to assist all students at all levels within all disciplines to become better writers. It is your responsibility to arrange a time to meet with the instructors. Consult with your professor in advance to determine whether you need assistance with your writing.

The Writing Center website is located at: <http://www.sjsu.edu/writingcenter/about/staff/>

<b>POLS107 COURSE SCHEDULE – SPRING 2012</b>			
<i>Subject to change with fair notice– by class announcement or email</i>			
WEEK/DAY	DATE	TOPIC	ASSIGNMENT
WEEK 1 WED	1/25	Introduction to course, professor, fellow students	Read syllabus
WEEK 2 MON	1/30	Public opinion and American Democracy	Read Bardes & Oldendick (B&O) Ch.1
WED	2/1	Measuring American Opinion: The Origins of Polling	Read B&O Ch.2 Complete online plagiarism tutorial through SJSU library website: <a href="http://tutorials.sjlibrary.org/tutorial/">http://tutorials.sjlibrary.org/tutorial/</a> . <i>Email score to Professor Jackson</i> QUIZ 1 IN CLASS
WEEK 3 MON	2/6	How Public Opinion Data Are Used	Read B&O Ch.3 RESEARCH PAPER STEP 1 DUE ONLINE @ D2L DROPBOX: Paper Topic Proposal
WED	2/8	Polling Details and Research ethics	Read B&O Ch.4 (pp.54-66)
WEEK 4 MON	2/13	Polling Details and Research ethics - continued	Read B&O Ch.4 (pp.67-82) Read AAPOR (American Association of Public Opinion Researchers) statement of "Standards and Best Practices" Online at: <a href="http://www.aapor.org">www.aapor.org</a> (under Resources tab)
WED	2/15	Writing Survey Questions	QUIZ 2 IN CLASS
WEEK 5 MON	2/20	Survey Questions Workshop	QUIZ 3 – WRITING SURVEY QUESTIONS ASSIGNMENT DUE IN CLASS FOR WORKSHOP/DISCUSSION
WED	2/22	What Do Americans Believe? The Sources of Opinions – Political Socialization	Read B&O Ch.5

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WEEK/DAY	DATE	TOPIC	ASSIGNMENT
WEEK 6 MON	2/27	The Sources of Opinions – Race, Ethnicity, Religion, Gender, and Age	Read ARTICLE ON RESERVE – POSTED ON COURSE WEBSITE: Garcia (2010), “Latino Public Opinion.” From Understanding Public Opinion, 3 <sup>rd</sup> Ed., Barbara Norrander & Clyde Wilcox (Eds.)
WED	2/29	Do our Genes Determine our Opinions?	Read ARTICLE ON RESERVE – POSTED ON COURSE WEBSITE: Alford & Hibbing (2010), “The Ultimate Source of Political Opinions: Genes and the Environment.” From Understanding Public Opinion, 3 <sup>rd</sup> Ed., Barbara Norrander & Clyde Wilcox (Eds.) QUIZ 4 IN CLASS
WEEK 7 MON	3/5	Media Effects on Public Opinion	Read ARTICLE ON RESERVE: Nelson, Clawson & Oxley (1997) “Media Framing of a Civil Liberties Conflict and Its Effect on Tolerance.” American Political Science Review, 91, 567-583.
WED	3/7	EXAM 1	BRING BLUE BOOK AND PEN
WEEK 8 MON	3/12	Political Orientations and Ideology	Read B&O Ch.6
WED	3/14		QUIZ 5 DUE ONLINE @ D2L DROPBOX: 2-3 page paper on “The World’s Smallest Political Quiz” (available at <a href="http://www.theadvocates.org/quiz.html">http://www.theadvocates.org/quiz.html</a> )
WEEK 9 MON	3/19	Public Opinion on Social-Welfare Issues	Read B&O Ch.7 Read ARTICLE ON RESERVE: Martin Gilens (1996) “Race Coding” and White Opposition to Welfare.” <i>American Political Science Review</i> , 90, 593-604.
WED	3/21		QUIZ 6 IN CLASS
WEEK 10		SPRING BREAK MARCH 26-30	ENJOY!

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WEEK/DAY	DATE	TOPIC	ASSIGNMENT
WEEK 11 MON	4/2	SURVEY PROJECT TRAINING	MEET IN SPRI LAB: CENTRAL CLASSROOM BLDG, ROOM 100
WED	4/4	NO CLASS – SURVEY PROJECT FREE DAY	
WEEK 12 MON	4/9	Public Opinion on Racial Issues	RESEARCH PAPER STEP 2 – OUTLINE & ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY DUE Read B&O Ch.8
WED	4/11		QUIZ 7 IN CLASS
WEEK 13 MON	4/16	Public Opinion on Controversial Issues	Read B&O Ch.9 Read ARTICLE ON RESERVE: PPIC Statewide Survey: Californians and Their Government (December 2008) QUIZ 8 IN CLASS
WED	4/18	Survey Project Reflection	SURVEY PROJECT REFLECTION PAPER DUE ONLINE @ D2L DROPBOX
WEEK 14 MON	4/23	Culture War: Red States vs. Blue States?	Read Fiorina Chs. 1-4
WED	4/25		Read Fiorina Chs. 5-10 QUIZ 9 IN CLASS
WEEK 15 MON	4/30	Public Opinion on Foreign and Defense Policies	Read B&O Ch.10
WED	5/2	Public Opinion Research Challenges, and Measuring The American Mind: The Sum of Its Parts	Read B&O Ch.11-12

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WEEK/DAY	DATE	TOPIC	ASSIGNMENT
WEEK 16 MON	5/7	Impact of Public Opinion on Policy	Read ON RESERVE – POSTED ON WEBSITE: Erikson & Tedin Ch. 11 QUIZ 10 IN CLASS
WED	5/9	NO CLASS – STUDY DAY	
MON	5/14	EXAM 2	BRING BLUE BOOK AND PEN
MON	5/21	FINAL EXAM TIME – 12:15-2:30pm ORAL PRESENTATIONS	<b>RESEARCH PAPER DUE IN CLASS AND ONLINE AT D2L DROPBOX ORAL PRESENTATIONS IN CLASS</b>