

Political Science 317
Public Opinion and Voting Behavior
 Professors Kelly D. Patterson and J. Quin Monson
 Fall 2008

Contact Information

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Course Overview

This course examines how Americans see the political world, think about it, and participate in it. Special attention will be given to the following topics: survey research methodology, political socialization, distribution and sources of attitudes on issues, attitude change, and explanations of vote choice in both presidential and congressional elections. We will be primarily concerned with “ordinary” citizens and mass behavior; however, in some topics the opinions of political elite will also be studied. When possible, we will consider examples of public opinion and voting behavior in other countries.

Because it is an election year, we use the 2008 election as a case study. When appropriate, we will discuss campaign events and activities, including debates, media coverage, and issues. Under our direction, students in the class will organize and conduct the 2008 Utah Colleges Exit Poll of Utah voters on Election Day. Conducting the exit poll will allow you hands-on experience in an actual research activity on an important political science topic. On election night, our class project will provide core data used to predict and explain the major races and initiative contests in the state of Utah. Conducting an exit poll is an enormous undertaking and the major part of the course. All class members are required to participate. Your active participation, hard work, and enthusiasm will be vital to the success of the project.

Course Objectives

1. The students will acquire a minimum of two theoretical perspectives to explain why voters choose a particular candidate.
2. The students will learn the fundamentals of survey research design and analysis, including an understanding and appreciation for the concept of “Total Survey Error.”
3. The students will use statistics to make inferences about the relationships between variables that affect voting behavior or public opinion.
4. The students will be able to articulate the relationship between public opinion and democracy.

Required Textbooks

The following texts are required and are available for purchase at the BYU Bookstore:

Niemi, Richard G. and Herbert F. Weisberg, eds. 2001. *Controversies in Voting Behavior*, 4th ed. Washington, D.C.:CQ Press. ISBN: 1-56802-334-0.

Campbell, David E., ed. 2007. *A Matter of Faith: Religion in the 2004 Presidential Campaign*. Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press. ISBN: 0-8157-1327-4.

Weisberg, Herbert F. 2005. *The Total Survey Error Approach: A Guide to the New Science of Survey Research*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press. ISBN: 0-226-89128-3

Additional readings are noted in the schedule below and will be posted on Blackboard.

Course Requirements and Grading

Class Project and Accountability. The primary project in this course will be the Utah Colleges Exit Poll. You will work very hard during the months of September and October on exit poll preparations. We will work with the Department of Statistics to complete this project.

One of the most common concerns students and professors share about group projects is accountability. Students are concerned because those who want to perform well and put together a good project are often forced to work extra to make up for other students. Professors also worry about fairness because they want to assign grades based upon performance.

After the committees are formed, students will submit a weekly log of their personal work on the exit poll project (see the attached form). This will include a description of the work they have done on the exit poll during that week-- things like preparing packets, training interviewers at BYU and other schools, researching questions for the survey, and other work. It will not include things like reading for the course or work on personal research papers. It should go without saying that you are expected to be honest and objective on these weekly logs. The logs will be used to help us assess your contribution to the class project and to assign your grade for project participation.

We will also use two student peer evaluations to help assign grades (see the attached form). Students will briefly evaluate the other members of their committee. The first evaluation will take place on October 1st and will be a simple progress report. The first evaluation will not count towards anyone's grade and will simply help us know where students stand with their peers in time to provide feedback. After all of the committee work has been finished, students will prepare a final evaluation that we will use to help assign grades. Please submit all of the evaluations you write together with a sheet on top listing your name and committee.

Peer review systems, like this one, will make some of you uncomfortable. It is not always easy to evaluate peers, and if done inappropriately can lead to problems. Yet, without honest feedback those who contribute significantly to the project can be treated the same as those who leave the group tasks to others. We are simply asking for an honest, objective evaluation to help us treat each other with respect and fairness. We hope we can work together in a friendly, professional atmosphere to produce a quality product, in keeping with the tradition of this course.

Finally, your committee is also required to submit a committee report detailing how you completed the project. This report should include a timeline of activities, suggestions for how to improve, and a copy of all relevant documents (both in paper and electronic format). If your committee does not provide a report, then all members of the committee will receive a failing grade for the class project portion of their grade. The committee reports are due in class on December 1st. Please note that we strongly encourage you to approach this task by editing and improving the content of the committee report from the most recent exit poll. We expect you to draw on these reports as you conduct the exit poll and you should continue to do so when you write your report.

Paper

To further enhance your understanding and use of the data you collect, you will be required to work in groups of two to write a research paper. Individuals will be assigned to groups based on their topic interests and on their ability to use quantitative data. Ideally each group will have at least one individual who has the skills to create and interpret inferential statistics. We hope that this collaboration with other students will help build on the strengths that we know each one of you possesses. However, we also expect that you will share equally in the responsibility of creating a quality research project. You and your partner must work together to produce quality work. You should never shirk your responsibility by leaving tasks to another. It is critical that you work together so that you can learn

from and help each other. Because you will be working together, we have high expectations for your work. We expect that all of the groups will produce a paper ready for submission to a student-paper competition for a professional organization such as the Pacific Association for Public Opinion Research (PAPOR). Students in the course will use the data gathered in the exit poll to write a 20-page research paper. You will also make brief class presentations on your papers in class December 3rd, 5th, and 8th.

The paper should analyze data gathered in the exit poll and may examine one of the following topics:

Voting experience—confidence in election system	Religion and voting behavior
Voting on ballot propositions	Issue Voting
Non-response error	Candidate choice in state legislative, congressional, or presidential elections
Partisan Identification	Political Participation
Primary election voting	Early voting

The paper must contain an introduction to the topic, a theoretical reason for the relationship between the variables, and a summary and analysis of the data. The paper must be well written and contain few errors in spelling, grammar, or syntax. The paper must also contain a title page and a complete and accurate works-cited page. You should use the citation and other guidelines outlined in Political Science 200.

The topics listed above, though broadly stated, serve as an organizing device for much of the literature in public opinion and voting behavior. Each group is required to select a question from one of the topics to explore. The class session on September 5th will be devoted in part to a discussion of potential paper topics. Term paper proposals are due September 12th so that we can see that each group has a topic that is manageable and fits within the parameters of questions asked on the exit poll. This proposal should be two pages and should contain a brief summary of the problem, a thesis statement and a theoretical justification. It should also include a literature review with at least five significant citations that are directly relevant to your topic. Finally, one class session prior to your class presentation, you must submit a summary of findings and a literature review so that we can follow your presentation in class. Final papers are due on Wednesday December 10th to the Political Science secretary in 745 SWKT by 5 pm. Final papers received after that time will be assessed a late penalty. The late penalty is one-third of a grade for each working day that the paper is late. For example, an “A” paper that is due in class on a Friday will receive an A- if turned in the following Monday (1 working day).

Exams. There will be an in-class midterm on Friday October 3rd and an in-class final Monday, December 15th, 2:30—5:30 pm. Examinations will contain both objective and essay questions. The final examination is comprehensive. Do not ask to take the final examination early. It is against university policy to give final examinations outside of the scheduled time. Do not make any plans that interfere with the final exam schedule. **Please do not ask for exceptions. We are not authorized to grant them.**

Grading Percentages. Your final grade will be figured by computing a weighted average using the following components:

Paper	25%
Midterm exam	20%
Final exam	30%
Class Project—participation and evaluation	15%
Class Project—committee report	10%

After weighting the course work as listed above, your final grade will be assigned using the following scale:

A	>	93 %
A-	=	90-92 %
B+	=	87-89 %
B	=	83-86 %
B-	=	80-82 %
C+	=	77-79 %
C	=	73-76 %
C-	=	70-72 %
D+	=	67-69 %
D	=	63-66 %
E	<	63 %

Other Course Policies

Academic Honesty All of the work you do in this course is expected to be your own. While all students sign the Honor Code, there are still specific skills most students need to master over time in order to correctly cite sources, especially internet sources. We will notice instances of cheating on exams or plagiarizing on papers. Cheating, plagiarism (using someone else's words or ideas without proper citation), and other forms of academic misconduct will not be tolerated, and they will be handled according to university policy. A review of the Honor Code can be found here: <http://honorcode.byu.edu/content/view/3585/4643/>. Some examples of various forms of academic misconduct can be found here: <http://honorcode.byu.edu/content/view/3567/4621/>. And here: http://honorcode.byu.edu/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=5302&Itemid=5698. If you have any doubt about your academic conduct, we encourage you to consult these web pages or come speak with us.

Disability We are committed to providing a learning atmosphere that reasonably accommodates qualified persons with disabilities. If you have any disability that may impair your ability to complete this course successfully, you are responsible for making your needs known to us and seeking available assistance from the university in a timely manner. In addition to notifying us, you must contact the University Accessibility Center (UAC) at 422-7065, 1520 WSC. The UAC reviews requests for reasonable academic accommodations for all students who have qualified documented disabilities, and any accommodations for this class must be coordinated with the UAC office. See <http://uac.byu.edu/> for more information.

Discrimination/Harassment Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 prohibits sex discrimination against any participant in an educational program or activity that receives federal funds. The act is intended to eliminate sex discrimination in education. Title IX covers discrimination in programs, admissions, activities, and student-to-student sexual harassment. BYU's policy against discrimination and sexual harassment extends not only to employees of the university but to students as well (see: <http://www.byu.edu/hr/human-resource-services/equal-employment-opportunity>) If you encounter sexual harassment or discrimination, please talk to us; contact the Equal Employment Office in D-282 ASB or by telephone at 422-5895 or 367-5689 (24-hours); or contact the Honor Code Office at 422-2847.

Learning Outcomes The BYU Political Science Department has developed a set of expected student learning outcomes. These will help you understand the objectives of the political science curriculum, including this class. See: https://learningoutcomes.byu.edu/wiki/index.php/Political_Science. Feedback on the expected student learning outcomes can be given to us or sent to FHSS@byu.edu.

Course Outline

Date/Day	Lecture Topic/Lab Activity	Reading Assignments
9/3 W	Introduction to the class, review of past exit poll experiences, questionnaires.	2006 Exit Poll Report—Please skim or read the entire document and familiarize yourself with the assignments and responsibilities. Grimshaw, Scott, Howard B. Christensen, David B. Magleby, and Kelly D. Patterson. 2004. “Twenty Years of the Utah Colleges Exit Poll: Learning by Doing” <i>Chance</i> 17:32-38.
9/4 Th	Lab: Get acquainted. Pizza in 1142 SWKT	--
9/5 F	Introduction to Polling; Discussion of potential paper topics	Mitofsky, Warren J. 1991. “A Short History of Exit Polls” in Lavrakas and Holley eds. <i>Polling and Presidential Election Coverage</i> , pp. 83-99.
9/8 M	Methodology: Total Survey Error	Lavrakas, Paul J. 1996. “To Err is Human: Embrace a ‘Total Survey Error’ Approach Perspective to Make the Most of Precious Resources” <i>Marketing Research</i> 8:30-36. Weisberg, Chapters 1 and 2
9/9 T	Lab: Meet with Committee chairs	--
9/10 W	Methodology: Sampling and Sampling Error	Weisberg, Chapter 10
9/11 Th	Lab: Committees meet	
9/12 F	Methodology: Measurement Error (Interviewers) ***Paper proposals due in class today	Weisberg, Chapter 4
9/15 M	Methodology: Measurement Error (Theories of survey response, question wording)	Weisberg, Chapter 5 Zaller, John and Stanley Feldman. 1992. “A Simple Theory of the Survey Response: Answering Questions versus Revealing Preferences” <i>American Journal of Political Science</i> 36:579-616.
9/16 T	Lab: Committees meet	--
9/17 W	Methodology: Measurement Error (questionnaire design)	Weisberg, Chapter 6
9/18 Th	Lab: Committees meet	--
9/19 F	Methodology: Coverage Error	Weisberg, Chapter 9

Date/Day	Lecture Topic/Lab Activity	Reading Assignments
9/22 M	Methodology: Non-Response Error	Weisberg, Chapter 8 Keeter, Scott, Carolyn Miller, Andrew Kohut, Robert M. Groves, and Stanley Presser. 2000 “Consequences of Reducing Nonresponse in a National Telephone Survey” <i>Public Opinion Quarterly</i> 64:125-48.
9/23 T	Lab: Committees meet	--
9/24 W	Ethics in Survey Research	Weisberg, Chapter 14
9/25 Th	Lab: Committees meet as needed	--
9/26 F	Methodology: A review	Niemi and Weisberg, chapter 1
9/29 M	Political Participation: Suffrage and Turnout ***First Committee Peer-Evaluation Due	Niemi and Weisberg, chapters 2, 4, and 5
9/30 T	Lab: Committees meet as needed	--
10/1 W	Political Participation: Beyond Turnout	Brady, Henry E., Sidney Verba, and Kay Lehman Schlozman. 1995. “Beyond SES: A Resource Model of Political Participation” <i>The American Political Science Review</i> 89:271-294.
10/2 Th	Lab: Committees meet as needed	
10/3 F	***Midterm Exam in Class	--
10/6 M	Partisan Identification: Theory and Measurement	Niemi and Weisberg, chapter 17. Keith, Bruce E., David B. Magleby, Candice J. Nelson, Elizabeth Orr, Mark C. Westlye, and Raymond E. Wolfinger. 1986. “The Partisan Affinities of Independent ‘Leaners’” <i>British Journal of Political Science</i> 16:155-185.
10/7 T	Lab: Committees meet as needed	--
10/8 W	Partisan Identification: Stability and Trends	Niemi and Weisberg, chapters 19 and 20
10/9 Th	Lab: Committees meet as needed	--
10/10 F	Social Characteristics of Partisanship	Niemi and Weisberg, chapter 18
10/13 M	Political Knowledge	Niemi and Weisberg, chapter 6 and 7
10/14 T	Lab: Committees meet as needed	--
10/15 W	Public Opinion Dynamics	Niemi and Weisberg, chapter 9
10/16 Th	Lab: Committees meet as needed	--
10/17 F	Political Trust	Citrin, Jack and Samantha Luks. 2001. “Political Trust Revisited: Déjà vu All Over Again?” in Hibbing and Theiss-Morse eds. <i>What is it About Government that Americans Dislike?</i> , pp. 9-27.
10/20 M	Voting Behavior: The Economy	Niemi and Weisberg, Chapter 10 and 11

Date/Day	Lecture Topic/Lab Activity	Reading Assignments
10/21 T	Lab: Committees meet as needed	
10/22 W	Voting Behavior: Issues, Candidates, and Campaigns	Niemi and Weisberg 12 and 13
10/23 Th	Lab: Committees meet as needed	--
10/24 F	Voting Behavior: Issues, Candidates, and Campaigns	Abbe, Owen G., Jay Goodliffe, Paul S. Herrnson, and Kelly D. Patterson. 2003. "Agenda Setting in Congressional Elections: The Impact of Issues and Campaigns on Voting Behavior" <i>Political Research Quarterly</i> 56:419-30.
10/27 M	Voting Behavior: Presidential Elections	Weisberg, Herbert F. and Dino P. Christenson. 2007. "Changing Horses in Wartime? The 2004 Presidential Election" <i>Political Behavior</i> 29:279-304.
10/28 T	Lab: Committees meet as needed	--
10/29 W	The Voting Experience	Hall, Thad E., J. Quin Monson, and Kelly D. Patterson. n.d. "The Human Dimension of Elections: How Poll Workers Shape Public Confidence in Elections." Forthcoming, <i>Political Research Quarterly</i>
10/30Th	Lab: Committees meet as needed	--
10/31 F	Exit Poll Management	--
11/3 M	Exit Poll Management	--
11/4 T	ELECTION DAY	--
11/5 W	Clean Up Election Day	--
11/6 Th	Lab: Clean Up Continued	--
11/7 F	Discussion of Results from Election Day-- Data Analysis in Class	--
11/10 M	Religion, Public Opinion, and Voting--Introduction	Campbell, chapters 1-3
11/11 T	Lab: Committees meet as needed	--
11/12 W	Religion, Public Opinion, and Voting--Measurement	"Religious Affiliations and Religious Traditions handout.doc" on Blackboard
11/13 Th	Lab: Committees meet as needed	--
11/14 F	2004: The Moral Values Election?	Campbell, chapters 4 and 5
11/17 M	Mobilizing the Faithful	Campbell, chapters 6 and 7
11/18 T	Lab: Committees meet as needed	--
11/19 W	Religious Constituencies: Catholics and	Campbell, chapters 9, 10, and 11.

Date/Day	Lecture Topic/Lab Activity	Reading Assignments
	Evangelicals	
11/20 Th	Lab: Committees meet as needed	--
11/21 F	CSED Election Conference	All Day—schedule to be announced.
11/24 M	Polling in a Democracy	Jacobs, Lawrence R. and Robert Y. Shapiro. 1997. “Debunking the Pandering Politician Myth” <i>The Public Perspective</i> , April/May pp. 3-5.
11/25 T	Friday Instruction Research paper workshop: survey data analysis	Handout in class
11/26 W	THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY	--
11/27 Th	THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY	--
11/28 F	THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY	--
12/1 M	Summary of Survey Research *** Committee Reports Due in Class	Schuman, Howard. 2008. “Conclusion: A Brief Look at Methods and Meanings, Surveys and Polls” in <i>Method and Meaning in Polls and Surveys</i> . London and Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, pp. 156-60.
12/2 T	Lab: Committees meet as needed	--
12/3 W	Student Paper Presentations	--
12/4 Th	Lab: Committees meet as needed	--
12/5 F	Student Paper Presentations	--
12/8 M	Student Paper Presentations	--
12/9 T	Lab: Committees meet as needed	--
12/10 W	Wrap up and Review Last Day of Classes *** Papers due at 5:00 p.m.	--
12/15 M	FINAL EXAMINATION 2:30-5:30 P.M.	--

**Political Science 317
Student Evaluation Form**

Evaluator:

Date:

Student:

Please rate the student listed above on a 1 to 10 scale with 10 meaning the statement perfectly describes the student, and 1 meaning the statement does not describe the student at all. Please add comments underneath as necessary.

This student has been consistently dependable with committee assignments.

This student has attended and contributed to nearly all of the out of class committee meetings.

This student has demonstrated creativity in fulfilling group projects.

Please give the student a general rating based on his or her participation and contribution to the exit poll

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Political Science 317 Utah Colleges Exit Poll Class

Name:

Committee:

Student Participation Log for the week of: _____

	Hours
Work performed for <u>my committee</u> this week:	
Work performed for <u>other committees</u> this week:	
Total Hours this week:	

Political Science 317 Utah Colleges Exit Poll Class

Name:

Committee:

Student Participation Log for the week of: _____

	Hours
Work performed for <u>my committee</u> this week:	
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Total Hours this week:	