Instructor: Ken Mulligan, Ph.D.
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Telephone: 453-3335
Office: 3171 Faner Hall
**Office Hours:** Mon. & Fri. 2:00 pm – 4:00 pm, Tues. & Thurs. 9:00 am – 11:30 am
Class Meets: Mon., Wed., & Fri. 1:00 pm to 1:50 pm in 107 Parkinson

**Access Course Materials via** [SIU Online](#).

**Course Description**

This course provides an introduction to the study of public opinion in the United States. We will discuss public opinion polling, including its methods, history, strengths, weaknesses, and ways to evaluate critically surveys reported in the news media. We will discuss the origins of political opinions, current debates about the role of elites and the competence of the masses, as well as ideology, partisanship, religion, race, gender, news and entertainment media, trends, and polarization in public opinion. The course will conclude with a critical discussion of the book by David Moore, *The Opinion Makers: An Insider Exposes the Truth Behind the Polls*.

**Required Reading**

The course requires two books and selected readings. The books were placed on order at the university bookstore and the 710 Bookstore. Other required readings will be made available either online through links on the syllabus or by way of [SIU Online](#). More information will be provided in class. The required books are as follows:


Course Requirements and Grading

Students will be graded on two exams (a midterm and a final), two writing assignments, as and participation.

First Writing Assignment. 15% of final grade

The first writing assignment is due during the fifth week of the semester. The assignment is a critical review of a public opinion poll in one area of public opinion of interest to you. Students will be given instructions on the assignment in class. (Please see below for the policy on late and missed assignments)

Midterm Exam. 25% of final grade

The midterm examination will be held in class during the seventh week of the semester. It will cover all the material from lectures, class discussions, and reading up to the day of the exam. (Please see below for the policy on missed exams and arriving late to exams)

Second Writing Assignment. 25% of final grade

The second writing assignment is due during the sixteenth week of the semester. It is a critical review of the assigned book by David Moore, The Opinion Makers: An Insider Exposes the Truth Behind the Polls. Students will be given instructions on the assignment in class. (Please see below for the policy on late and missed assignments)

Final Exam. 25% of overall grade

The final examination will be held at the day and time scheduled by the registrar, which is Thursday, May 9, at 12:50 pm in our usual meeting place. It will cover all the material from lectures, class discussions, and reading up to the day of the exam. (Please see below for the policy on missed exams and arriving late to exams)

Classroom Attendance and Participation. 10% of overall grade

Classroom participation is encouraged. This course will incorporate a mix of lecture and discussion. Please do the reading before class and come prepared to talk. Attendance will be taken regularly. Your participation grade will be awarded based on your attendance and thoughtful participation in class. Please come to class on time. Recurrent unexcused tardiness may diminish one’s attendance and participation grade.

The university and your instructor expect you to attend class regularly. If for some reason you have a legitimate reason for missing class, please send your instructor an email letting him know ahead of time that you cannot attend class, and why. If you cannot do this ahead of time, please do so afterward. In general, students benefit themselves by attending every class, informing the instructor when they cannot, and by participating actively in class.
Overview of Course Requirements

- First Assignment 15% of overall grade
- Midterm Exam 25% of overall grade
- Second Assignment 25% of overall grade
- Final Exam 25% of overall grade
- Classroom Participation 10% of overall grade

Grading

Your writing assignments, exams, and overall grade in the course will be calculated according to the following scales. The writing assignments and participation grades will be awarded as the midpoint of the letter-grade range as indicated in the first column of the table below. Thus an “A” on the first writing assignment, worth 20 percent of the overall grade, would be awarded a numerical grade of “96.5,” an “A-“ would be scored as a “91.5,” etc. The exam grades, as well as the overall final grade, will be awarded according to the scale in the second column. Since SIU does not observe plusses or minuses, pluses and minuses are not possible in the submission of final course grades. If your final grade is an “A-“ you will receive an “A,” if your final grade is a “B+“ or “B-“ you will receive a “B,” etc. Grades in this course are awarded based on merit, according to the requirements outlined above, in conjunction with the judgment of the instructor, and are not otherwise negotiable.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment, Research Requirement, &amp; Participation</th>
<th>Exam and Final Grade Ranges</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A 96.5</td>
<td>93 - 100</td>
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<tr>
<td>A- 91.5</td>
<td>90 - 92.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+ 88.5</td>
<td>87 - 89.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B 85</td>
<td>83 - 86.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B- 81.5</td>
<td>80 - 82.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C+ 78.5</td>
<td>77 - 79.99</td>
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<tr>
<td>C 75</td>
<td>73 - 76.99</td>
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<tr>
<td>C- 71.5</td>
<td>70 - 72.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D 65</td>
<td>60 – 69.99</td>
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<tr>
<td>F 30</td>
<td>0 - 59.99</td>
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Policy on Late Assignments and Research Papers

Please give me a paper copy of your first assignment and your final paper when it is due. I regret that papers and assignments submitted via email will NOT be accepted unless explicit prior permission is granted by the instructor. Late papers and assignments (those not ready to be handed in at the beginning of the class in which they are due) are penalized one full letter grade (e.g., from an “A” to a “B”) for each day that they are late. This means that an “A” assignment turned in five days late automatically receives a failing grade. Students who find themselves turning in their assignment or paper late would benefit from communicating with the instructor before turning in their late assignment.
Policy on Missed Examinations

Missed Exams will receive a grade of zero except in cases of demonstrated, appropriate, and verifiable emergencies or tragedies or where the student has prior approval from the instructor. Unexcused missed exams receive a grade of zero. In cases of missed exams excused by the instructor, a makeup exam will be rescheduled at the convenience of the instructor. Students must arrive to exams on time. Students who arrive at an exam 20+ minutes late will not be allowed to take the exam will receive a zero.

Policy on Academic Honesty

All of the work you do in this course is expected to be your own, done exclusively for this course. Instances of suspected cheating or plagiarism (using someone else’s ideas or words without proper attribution) will be dealt with in accordance with the university’s policy on academic honesty. Please note that penalties for academic dishonesty are severe and ignorance is not an excuse for cheating or plagiarism.

Students with Disabilities

Students with disabilities that have been documented by the SIU office of Disability Support Services will be accommodated according to university policy. For more information please visit the Disabilities Support Services website at www.siu.edu/~dss/ or call the DSS office at (618) 453-5738.
Tentative Class Schedule

Please note that the schedule below is a guideline. Actual material covered in class may deviate from the schedule according to the progress of the class and discussion. Unless otherwise indicated orally during class and/or discussion, we will follow the order of the topics as listed in the schedule. It is the responsibility of students that they be aware of where we are in the progress of the course and where we deviate from this schedule. This will be made clear orally in class and/or discussion.

**Introduction to Public Opinion**

Week 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Reading</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mon., 01/14</td>
<td>Introduction to the Course</td>
<td>Erikson &amp; Tedin ch. 1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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**Introduction to Polling and Survey Research**

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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Reading</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fri., 01/18</td>
<td>Who Polls, Why, and How: An Introduction to Survey Research</td>
<td>Erikson &amp; Tedin ch. 2</td>
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Week 2

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Reading</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mon., 01/21</td>
<td>MLK Day (No Class)</td>
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**How do We Measure Public Opinion from Such a Small Sample?**

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<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Reading</th>
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Week 3

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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Reading</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wed., 01/30</td>
<td>Sampling, Cont.</td>
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</table>
Fri., 02/01   Discuss First Writing Assignment

**Evaluating Polls and Poll Questions**

Week 4

Mon., 02/04   Evaluating Polls and Poll Questions
*Reading:* Sheldon Gawiser and G. Evans Witt. “**Twenty Questions A Journalist Should Ask About Poll Results, 3rd Ed.**”

Wed., 02/06   Evaluating Polls, Cont.
*Reading:* [Principles of Disclosure](#) of the National Council of Public Polls

Fri., 02/08   Evaluating Polls, Cont.

**Sources of Public Opinion**

Week 5

Mon., 02/11   Political Socialization
*Reading:* Erikson & Tedin ch. 5

Wed., 02/13   Are Attitudes Genetically Inherited?
*Reading:* TBA

Fri., 02/15   **FIRST WRITING ASSIGNMENT DUE IN CLASS**

**Trends in Public Opinion**

Week 6

Mon., 02/18   Macro-Level Public Opinion
*Reading:* Erikson & Tedin ch. 4

Wed., 02/20   Macro-Level Opinion, Cont.

Fri., 02/22   No Class
Week 7
Mon., 02/25  
MIDTERM EXAM

Ideology and Party Identification

Wed., 02/27  
Ideology
Reading:  Erikson & Tedin ch. 3, parts 1 & 2

Fri., 03/01  
Party Identification
Reading:  Erikson & Tedin ch. 3, parts 2 & 3

Public Opinion and the Problem of “Nonattitudes”

Week 8
Mon., 03/04  
Do Polls Reveal Opinions or Nonattitudes?
Reading:  Review Erikson & Tedin ch. 3

Wed., 03/06  
Opinions and Nonattitudes, Cont.

Fri., 03/08  
Responses to the Problem of Nonattitudes in Public Opinion

Week 9
SPRING BREAK

Group Differences in Public Opinion

Week 10
Mon., 03/18  
The Gender Gap
Reading:  Erikson & Tedin ch.7, focus on part 6

Wed., 03/20  
Race and Public Opinion
Reading:  Erikson & Tedin ch.7, focus on part 2

Fri., 03/22  
Religion and Public Opinion
Reading:  Erikson & Tedin ch.7, focus on part 4
News Media and Public Opinion

Week 11
Mon., 03/25  News Media and Public Opinion
Reading:  Erikson & Tedin ch. 8
Wed., 03/27  News Media, Cont.
Fri., 03/29  News Media, Cont.

Entertainment Media and Public Opinion

Week 12
Mon., 04/01  “Soft” News Media and Public Opinion
Wed., 04/03  Fictional Entertainment Media and its Effects on Opinions and Beliefs
Reading:  Mulligan and Habel. 2011. “An Experimental Test of the Effects of Fictional Framing on Attitudes.”
Fri., 04/05  Entertainment Media, Cont.

Week 13
Mon., 04/08  Relationship Between Prime Time TV and Public Opinion
Wed., 04/10  Conference (No Class)
Fri., 04/12  Conference (No Class)
Public Opinion & Democracy

Week 14
Mon., 04/15  Political Tolerance and Public Opinion on Civil Liberties  
Reading:  Erikson & Tedin ch. 6

Wed., 04/17  Public Opinion & Democratic Values  
Reading:  Erikson & Tedin ch. 6, focus on parts 1 to 3

Fri., 04/19  Mass Opinion, Elite Opinion, and the Public Interest  
Reading:  TBA

Polarization and Public Opinion

Week 15
Mon., 04/22  Polarization in the U.S.  

Wed., 04/24  Polarization, Cont.  
Reading:  Fiorina, 2008.  “Political Polarization in the American Public”

Fri., 04/26  Polarization, Cont.  
Reading:  Rettig, 2010.  “Why Political Polarization Might be Good for America.”

The Opinion Makers

Week 16
Mon., 05/29  FINAL WRITING ASSIGNMENT DUE IN CLASS  
Reading:  David W. Moore, The Opinion Makers: An Insider Exposes the Truth Behind the Polls

Wed., 05/01  The Opinion Makers, Cont.  

Fri., 05/03  The Opinion Makers, Cont.
Reading: Daniel Terdiman, Nov. 6, 2012. “Obama's win a big vindication for Nate Silver, king of the quants”

Week 17

Thu., 05/09  12:50 to 02:50 p.m
FINAL EXAM