**Political Science 311-01: Public Opinion & Political Behavior**

**University of Dayton**

**Fall 2019**

*Professor:* Christopher Devine, Ph.D. *Class:* MWF 10:10 – 11:00 AM, Zehler Hall 104

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**Course Description**

In this course, we will study what citizens think about politics (public opinion), and what actions they take to express their views (political behavior). In particular, this course will focus upon empirical methods of measuring and analyzing political opinion and behavior. Students will learn the relevant concepts first through study and in-class discussion; second, by designing and implementing original data collection efforts; third, by analyzing and interpreting empirical results.

**Learning Outcomes**

Upon successful completion of this course, students will have the demonstrated the ability to:

* Develop and administer an original survey instrument;
* Analyze, interpret, and compare empirical evidence collected via quantitative and qualitative research methods.
* Present and explain empirical evidence in an accurate, informative, and professional manner.

**Course Expectations**

Class Participation & Attendance: Students are expected to attend class regularly, attentively, and on time. The maximum number of absences – excused or unexcused – allowed without penalty is ten (10). After that, I will deduct ten (10) percentage points from your final grade for each additional absence. For example, if your submitted work earns you a grade of 85% (C) for the course but you have eleven absences, your final grade will be recorded as 75% (C); for twelve absences, 65% (D); for thirteen absences, 55% (F). And so on.

Let me stress that this policy applies equally to excused and unexcused absences. There are no exceptions. Also, note that excessive tardiness may be counted toward this total, at the instructor’s discretion. Finally, students who behave in a distracting way – including sleeping or using a phone or computer when the instructor has not explicitly authorized doing so – may be asked to leave, and if so will be counted as absent.

Late Assignments: Course projects and assignments must be submitted on time. For any assignment submitted past the submission deadline, I will subtract ten percentage points from your grade. For every subsequent 24-hour period prior to submission, I will subtract ten additional percentage points. Exceptions will be made only for excused absences, as documented by relevant university administrators and subject to the professor’s approval.

**Required Textbooks**

Asher, Herb. 2017. *Polling and the Public: What Every Citizen Should Know*, 9th edition. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Cramer, Katherine J. 2016. *The Politics of Resentment Rural Consciousness in Wisconsin and the Rise of Scott Walker.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Settle, Jamie E. 2018. *Frenemies: How Social Media Polarizes America*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

\*Additional readings are available on our Isidore page, or via hyperlinks found in the course schedule below.

**Honor Pledge, University Resources, and Policies**

University of Dayton Honor Pledge

I understand that as a student at the University of the Dayton, I am a member of our academic and social community. I recognize the importance of my education and the value of experiencing life in such an integrated community. I believe that the value of my education and degree is critically dependent upon the academic integrity of the university community, and so in order to maintain our academic integrity, I pledge to:

* Complete all assignments and examinations by the guidelines given to me by my instructors;
* Avoid plagiarism and any other form of misrepresenting someone else’s work as my own;
* Adhere to the Standards of Conduct as outlined in the Academic Honor Code.

In doing this, I hold myself and my community to a higher standard of excellence, and set an example for my peers to follow.

Students are expected to abide by the University of Dayton Honor Pledge.

Cheating and Plagiarism

Cheating and plagiarism will not be tolerated. Any student suspected of either cheating or plagiarism will be referred to appropriate administrative proceedings at the University of Dayton. Additionally, the student will receive a zero (0%) for the assignment in question.

Learning Support and Writing Resources

A wide range of support and resources are available to UD students, and I strongly encourage students to avail themselves of these opportunities. The LTC’s Office of Learning Resources (OLR) is a learning resource for all students and it offers a wide variety of services to assist you in achieving academic success at the university, including study skills classes and workshops, tutoring and consultations, disability screenings, and a website with many resources (<http://learningsupport.udayton.edu>). Please contact OLR at 937-229-2066 or visit their office on the ground floor of Roesch Library (LTC 023) if you would like to talk about how you could be a more effective learner.

The Write Place is a free service available to all UD students that offers peer-to-peer writing support on any writing assignment and at any stage of the writing process. Students can drop-in to the Write Place without making an appointment. It is located in Roesch Library Room 502. Contact Christina Klimo, Write Place Coordinator, if you have any questions at [klimochm@notes.udayton.edu](mailto:klimochm@notes.udayton.edu) or 229-2066.

Students with Disabilities

If you believe that you need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability, please contact me privately to discuss your specific needs. Formal disability-related accommodations are determined through the Learning Teaching Center’s Office of Learning Resources (OLR). It is very important that you be registered with OLR and notify me of your eligibility for reasonable accommodations with a signed SLS Self-Identification Form. We can then plan how best to coordinate your accommodations. For more information, please contact OLR at 937-229-2066, by email at [disability.services@udayton.edu](mailto:disability.services@udayton.edu), or stop by the OLR office in LTC 023.

**Grade Calculation**

Reading Responses 20%

Research Question 10%

Polling Project

Survey Question 10%

Report 25%

Interview Project

Protocol 5%

Interview/Transcript 10%

Final Report 20%

TOTAL 100%

*Grading Scale:*

A: 93%-100% A-: 90%-93% B+: 87%-90% B: 83%-87% B-: 80%-83%

C+: 77%-80% C: 73%-77% C-: 70%-73% D: 60%-70% Fail: <60%

Note: If your final course grade falls within 0.25% of the next highest letter grade, I will round it up (e.g. 86.75% = B+, 89.75 = A-, etc.).

**Graded Assignments**

Reading Responses

You must submit **18 reading responses** over the course of the semester, on days that a *new reading assignment* is due (there are 26 such days; you will submit responses on 18 of those days, and skip responding on 8 days). When multiple readings are assigned, you may respond to one or both of the readings. However, you cannot earn credit for multiple reading responses based upon the same day’s readings.

Reading responses must be typed or neatly hand-written, and at least one paragraph in length. You will submit them to the professor at the beginning of class, in hard copy format.

To receive full credit (on a 0-1 point scale), your response must:

1. **raise an insightful and well-informed question or thought** demonstrating comprehensive, substantive engagement with the day’s reading assignment, and one that is conducive to generating constructive in-class discussion (0.5 points);\*

2. **include a relevant in-text citation** (e.g. quote, fact, or argument – with page number) from the day’s reading, to support or amplify the substance of your response (0.25 points);\*\*

3. **be well-written and properly edited** (0.25 points).

\* If, in my judgment, your response addresses a tangential point from the reading, or does not convey a clear and thorough understanding of its substantive content, as a whole, then I will give partial credit on that basis.

\*\*If you directly cite a reading assignment but do not specify a page number (when one is available), I will subtract 0.10 from your grade.

Research Question

In this 3-page paper, you will introduce and explain an original research question that you will spend the rest of the semester trying to answer, via survey research (Polling Project) and in-depth interviews (Interview Project). You will explain why you are asking this question and what you think the answer to it may be, by citing information from *Frenemies* and your social media environment. For complete instructions, see Isidore.

Polling Project

For this project, you will participate in designing, administering, and analyzing an original survey, focusing on the themes from *Frenemies* identified above. First, you will identify and critique an existing survey item that directly relates to your research question. Second, you will work with the rest of the class to develop a survey, and then administer it to UD students. Third, you will code and analyze the survey data, in our in-class workshops. Finally, you will write a press release reporting on the results of this survey. For complete instructions, see Isidore.

Interview Project

For this project, you will use an entirely different research method to help answer your research question. Specifically, using Cramer’s *The Politics of Resentment* as our model, you will design and then conduct a “bottom-up study of public opinion” based upon in-depth, open-ended interviews with a small number of UD students. After completing your interviews and submitting a written transcript of them, in the final paper you will report on the results of these interviews and then comparatively evaluate quantitative versus qualitative methods of analysis. For complete instructions, see Isidore.

**Perspective on Grading**

I welcome students to discuss grades with me at any point in the semester. Often, this helps a student to understand the basis for his/her grade, or clarify something that I misunderstood when first evaluating the work. However, let me be clear about my expectations for such conversations: It is not appropriate to come to me with a general objection, such as “I thought I did better on this paper” or “I need an A.” I grade your performance on assignments. I do not grade your *expected* performance, or you as a *person*.  Your grade on each assignment will be broken into parts. After grading each part, I simply calculate the sum total to derive your overall grade on the assignment. The same applies to your course grade: I grade each assignment, and then sum them (in accordance with the weighting formula detailed on our syllabus) to determine your final grade. Overall grades, then, derive from a *mathematical* process – not a subjective, summary judgment of you or your work, as a whole.

Therefore, if you want to talk with me about the possibility of changing a grade, you need to be able to tell me which specific part of that grade might be in error, and why.  If you cannot tell me which part you think I got wrong/misunderstood and why, you are not ready to discuss your grade.

Finally, I do not “fix” grades.  I do not offer extra assignments at the end of the semester to help you reach the grade that you wanted; if I did so, I would have to extend the same opportunity to the entire class. As a social scientist, I view grades as instruments of *measurement* – that is, they measure how much, and how well, you have learned what the course is designed to teach. If I add in other elements to your grade that do not measure actual *learning*, such as your desired GPA or your graduate school ambitions, I have corrupted the measurement (and acted unethically).  Please know that I will not do so, and you shouldn’t ask for that.

**COURSE SCHEDULE**

Please complete each assigned reading prior to class on the first date under which it is listed below. To access a reading assignment, click on the link provided below or visit our Isidore course page (isidore.udayton.edu).

**Introduction**

August 21 (Wed.) Syllabus

August 23 (Fri.) Bishop, “The Psychology of the Tribe” (Isidore)

Azari, “Politics Is More Partisan Now, But It’s Not More Divisive” ([web](https://fivethirtyeight.com/features/politics-is-more-partisan-now-but-its-not-more-divisive/))

**Polarization, Social Identity, & Social Media**

August 26 (Mon.) Settle, Chapter 1 (pp. 1-19)

August 28 (Wed.) Settle, Chapter 2 (pp. 20-49)

August 30 (Fri.) TBA

*September 2 (Mon.) No class – Labor Day*

September 4 (Wed.) Settle, Chapter 3 (pp. 50-78)

September 6 (Fri.) Settle, Chapter 4 (pp. 79-101)

September 9 (Mon.) Settle, Chapter 5 (pp. 102-135)

September 11 (Wed.) Settle, Chapter 6 (pp. 136-160)

September 13 (Fri.) Settle, Chapter 7 (pp. 161-196)

September 16 (Mon.) Settle, Chapter 8 (pp. 197-234)

September 18 (Wed.) Settle, Chapter 9 (pp. 235-255)

\* Research Question Paper due Sunday, September 22 @ 11:55 PM\*

September 20 (Fri.) Discussion: Research Questions

**Public Opinion & Polling**

September 23 (Mon.) Asher, Chapter 1 (pp. 1-40)

September 25 (Wed.) Asher, Chapter 2 (pp. 43-72)

September 27 (Fri.) Asher, Chapter 3 (pp. 75-106)

\*Survey Question Paper due Monday, September 30 @ 11:55 PM\*

September 30 (Mon.) Survey Workshop #1

October 2 (Wed.) Survey Workshop #2

October 4 (Fri.) Survey Workshop #3

October 7 (Mon.) Asher, Chapter 4 (pp. 107-136)

October 9 (Wed.) Asher, Chapter 5 (pp. 139-160)

*October 11 (Fri.) No class – Fall Break*

October 14 (Mon.) Survey Workshop #4

October 16 (Wed.) Asher, Chapter 7 (pp. 219-230)

Cohn, “A 2016 Review: Why Key State Polls Were Wrong About Trump” ([web](https://www.nytimes.com/2017/05/31/upshot/a-2016-review-why-key-state-polls-were-wrong-about-trump.html?_r=0))

\*Finish conducting surveys before class on Friday, October 18\*

**Polling Project**

October 18 (Fri.) Discussion: Polling Project

October 21 (Mon.) Asher, Chapter 6 (pp. 161-188)

October 23 (Wed.) Workshop: Coding

October 25 (Fri.) Asher, Chapter 8 (pp. 237-277)

October 28 (Mon.) Workshop: Final Report

October 30 (Wed.) Workshop: Final Report

\*Polling Report due Wednesday, October 30 @ end of class\*

**“A Bottom-Up Study of Public Opinion”**

November 1 (Fri.) Cramer, Ch. 1 (pp. 1-18)

November 4 (Mon.) Cramer, Ch. 1 (pp. 18-26)

November 6 (Wed.) Cramer, Ch. 2 (pp. 26-44)

November 8 (Fri.) Cramer, Ch. 3 (pp. 45-89)

November 11 (Mon.) Cramer, Ch. 4 (pp. 90-110)

November 13 (Wed.) Cramer, Ch. 6 (pp. 145-168)

November 15 (Fri.) Cramer, Ch. 7 (pp. 169-207)

**Interview Project**

November 18 (Mon.) Interview Workshop #1

November 20 (Wed.) Interview Workshop #2

\*Interview Protocol due Wednesday, November 20 @ end of class period\*

November 22 (Fri.) Cramer, Ch. 8 (pp. 208-225)

November 25 (Mon.) Interview Workshop #3

*November 22 (Wed.) No class – Thanksgiving Break*

*November 24 (Fri.) No class – Thanksgiving Break*

December 2 (Mon.) Interview Workshop #4

December 4 (Wed.) Interview Workshop #5

\*Interview Project: Final Report due Thursday, December 5 @ 9:00 AM\*

\*Disclaimer: This course schedule is subject to change at the instructor’s discretion, including the addition, subtraction, or replacement of reading assignments listed above. I will notify you of any changes in class and/or via e-mail, and post an updated version of the syllabus to Isidore if any such changes are made.