

## **PUBLIC OPINION & POLITICAL COMMUNICATION**

### **DOBLE GRADO ADMINISTRACIÓN DE EMPRESAS Y RELACIONES INTERNACIONALES / DUAL BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS**

Professor: **DANIEL FLYNN**

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Academic year: 18-19

Degree course: SECOND

Semester: 2º

Category: COMPULSORY

Number of credits: 6.0

Language: English

### **PREREQUISITES**

None.

### **SUBJECT DESCRIPTION**

The defining feature of democratic government is its emphasis on public opinion. This course examines how citizens form political opinions and how communications from the media, politicians, and other citizens affect this process.

The course has four parts. We will begin by reviewing surveys, experiments, and other methods analysts use to study public opinion scientifically. In this part of the course, students will learn to design their own studies of public opinion using a popular survey programming tool (Qualtrics). Second, we will examine prominent theories and models of public opinion. Third, we will study how recent changes in the political communication environment --- including the rise of social media, fake news, and fact-checking --- have affected opinion formation. Finally, we will study how citizens form opinions about several contemporary issues, including immigration, populism, corruption, trade, and foreign policy.

### **OBJECTIVES AND SKILLS**

By the end of the course, students should be able to:

- explain how citizens often form opinions about political candidates and issues;
- explain and critique major theoretical approaches to studying public opinion;
- describe how communications from the media, politicians, and peers affect opinion formation;
- design valid surveys and experiments to study public opinion;
- identify strengths and weaknesses in empirical arguments about politics.

### **METHODOLOGY**

I will typically give a short lecture at the start of class, which will cover important concepts and arguments contained in the readings. I will also highlight unresolved issues and points of debate, which we will then discuss as a class after the lecture concludes. The success of our class discussions depends on *active participation* by all students. As such, students are expected to do the following *before* each class meeting: (i) complete all readings; (ii) understand the main takeaway from all readings; (iii) consider how the readings relate to one another; and (iv) identify strengths and weaknesses of each author's argument. Students struggling to complete these tasks before class are encouraged to contact the professor for help.

<b>Teaching methodology</b>	<b>Weighting</b>	<b>Estimated time a student should dedicate to prepare for and participate in</b>
Lectures	30.0 %	45 hours
Discussions	30.0 %	45 hours
Exercises	20.0 %	30 hours
Group work	3.33 %	5 hours
Other individual studying	16.67 %	25 hours
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100.0 %</b>	<b>150 hours</b>

## PROGRAM

### SESSION 1

#### Preliminaries

- Course syllabus
- Gilens, Martin. 2012. *Affluence and Influence*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. [Chapter 1](#). Read until the middle of p. 41 (stop at "Assessing Policy Responsiveness").

### SESSIONS 2 - 3

#### Surveys and experiments

Session 2:

- Druckman, James N., Donald P. Green, James H. Kuklinski, and Arthur Lupia. 2011. "[Experiments: An Introduction to Core Concepts](#)." In *Cambridge Handbook of Experimental Political Science*. New York: Cambridge University Press. All, including the appendix on the Neyman-Rubin Causal Model (stop at "Noncompliance").
- Mutz, Diana C. 2011. *Population-Based Survey Experiments*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. [Chapter 1](#). Skip from the middle of p. 5 ("My personal interest...") to the top of p. 8 ("Drawing on the advantages..."); then read until the top of p. 21 ("...our ability to execute this method well").

Session 3:

- Choose one chapter that interests you from Chapters 10-30 of the [Cambridge Handbook of Experimental Political Science](#) (cited above).

## PART I: METHODS PRIMER

### SESSION 4

#### Designing and programming surveys

- Watch this [introduction](#) to Qualtrics.
- Make sure you can access Qualtrics via the IE website.
- Bring your laptop to class.
- Consider reading ahead for Session 5, which has a heavy reading load.

## PART II: PUBLIC OPINION

### SESSIONS 5 - 6

#### Memory-based vs. online models

Session 5:

- Druckman, James N. and Arthur Lupia. 2000. "[Preference Formation.](#)" *Annual Review of Political Science*. Pages 8-12 (i.e., the subsection on "Internal Processes").
- Zaller, John R. and Stanley Feldman. 1992. "[A Simple Model of the Survey Response: Answering Questions versus Revealing Preferences.](#)" *American Journal of Political Science*. All.
- Lodge, Milton, Kathleen M. McGraw, and Patrick Stroh. 1989. "[An Impression-Driven Model of Candidate Evaluation.](#)" *American Political Science Review*. All.

## SESSION 7

### Non-attitudes

- Bishop, George F. 2005. *The Illusion of Public Opinion: Fact and Artifact in American Public Opinion Polls*. Oxford, UK: Rowman & Littlefield. [Chapters 1-3](#).
- Bartels, Larry M. 2003. "[Democracy with Attitudes.](#)" In *Electoral Democracy*. All.

## SESSION 8

### Partisanship

- Huber, John, Georgia Kernell, and Eduardo Leoni. 2003. "[Institutional Context, Cognitive Resources, and Party Attachments Across Democracies.](#)" *Political Analysis*. Skip the section titled "Estimating Interactive Effects..." (p. 376-379).
- Bisgaard, Martin and Rune Slothuus. 2018. "[Partisan Elites as Culprits? How Party Cues Shape Partisan Perceptual Gaps.](#)" *American Journal of Political Science*. All.

## SESSIONS 9 - 10

### Political knowledge and heuristics

Session 9:

- Lupia, Arthur. 1994. "[Shortcuts Versus Encyclopedias: Information and Voting Behavior in California Insurance Reform Elections.](#)" *American Political Science Review*. All.
- Kuklinski, James H. and Paul J. Quirk. 2000. "[Reconsidering the Rational Public: Cognition, Heuristics, and Mass Opinion.](#)" In *Elements of Reason: Cognition, Choice, and the Bounds of Rationality*. Skip the sections on "Collective Opinion" (p. 11-14) and "Collective Bias: Further Evidence" (p. 39-43).

Session 10:

- Arnold, Jason Ross. 2012. "[The Electoral Consequences of Voter Ignorance.](#)" *Electoral Studies*. All.
- Somin, Ilya. 2013. *Democracy and Political Ignorance: Why Smaller Government Is Smarter*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press. Chapters 1--4, 7, Conclusion.

## SESSION 11

### Collective rationality?

- Page, Benjamin I. and Robert Y. Shapiro. 1992. *The Rational Public: Fifty Years of Trends in Americans' Policy Preferences*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Chapters 1, 8, 10.
- Caplan, Bryan. 2008. *The Myth of the Rational Voter: Why Democracies Choose Bad Policies*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. Introduction, Chapters 1-3, Conclusion.

## SESSION 12

### Misperceptions

- D.J. Flynn, Brendan Nyhan, and Jason Reifler. 2017. "[The Nature and Origins of Misperceptions: Understanding False and Unsupported Beliefs about Politics.](#)" *Advances in Political Psychology*. All.
- Nair, Gautam. 2018. "[Misperceptions of Relative Affluence and Support for International Redistribution.](#)" *Journal of Politics*. All.

## SESSION 13

### Conspiracy theories

- Sunstein, Cass R. and Adrian Vermeule. 2009. "[Conspiracy Theories: Causes and Cures.](#)" *Journal of Political Philosophy*. All.
- Carey, John, Victoria Chi, D.J. Flynn, Brendan Nyhan, and Thomas Zeitzoff. 2018. "The Prevalence and Persistence of Conspiracy Theories about Disease Epidemics: Evidence from Zika and Yellow Fever in Brazil." Unpublished paper. All.
- In class: exam Q&A

## SESSION 14

### Exam 1

## PART III: POLITICAL COMMUNICATION

## SESSION 15

### Agenda-setting

- Iyengar, Shanto and Donald R. Kinder. 1987. *News that Matters: Television and American Opinion*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. [Chapters 2, 3, 6.](#)
- Feezell, Jessica T. 2018. "[Agenda Setting through Social Media: The Importance of Incidental News Exposure and Social Filtering in the Digital Era.](#)" *Political Research Quarterly*. All.

## SESSION 16

### Framing (and priming)

- Iyengar, Shanto and Donald Kinder. 1987. *News that Matters: Television and American Opinion*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Chapters 7, 10.
- Chong, Dennis and James N. Druckman. 2007. "[Framing Public Opinion in Competitive Democracies.](#)" *American Political Science Review*. All.

## SESSION 17

### Media fragmentation

- Prior, Markus. 2005. "[News vs. Entertainment: How Increasing Media Choice Widens Gaps in Political Knowledge and Turnout.](#)" *American Journal of Political Science*. All.
- Arceneaux, Kevin and Martin Johnson. 2015. "[How Does Media Choice Affect Hostile Media Perceptions? Evidence from Participant Preference Experiments.](#)" *Journal of Experimental Political Science*. All.

## SESSION 18

### Selective exposure

- Stroud, Natalie Jomini. 2010. "[Polarization and Partisan Selective Exposure.](#)" *Journal of Communication*. All.
- Kim, Eunjj and Jin Woo Kim. 2018. "[Switching On and Off: Rethinking Partisan Selective Exposure.](#)" Unpublished paper. All.

## SESSION 19

### Social media

- Sunstein, Cass R. 2017. *#Republic: Divided Democracy in the Age of Social Media*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. Chapters Chapters 1, 3, 5, 6, 11.
- Tucker, Josua A., Andrew Guess, Pablo Barberá, Cristian Vaccari, Alexandra Siegel, Sergey Sanovich, Denis Stukal, and Brendan Nyhan. 2018. "[Social Media, Political Polarization, and Political Disinformation: A Review of the Scientific Literature.](#)" Report for the Hewlett Foundation. Pages 9-39.

## SESSIONS 20 - 21

### Fake news and fact-checking

Session 20:

- Anderson, Janna and Lee Rainie. 2017. "[The Future of Truth and Misinformation Online.](#)" Report from the Pew Research Center. Read pages 2-6 carefully; skim pages 7-39 (ignore the quotes, focusing instead on the "themes" and "subthemes").
- Guess, Andrew, Brendan Nyhan, and Jason Reifler. 2018. "[Selective Exposure to Misinformation: Evidence from the Consumption of Fake News during the 2016 U.S. Presidential Campaign.](#)" Unpublished paper. All.
- Funke, Daniel. 2018. "[Who Reads Fact-Checking and Why? Here's What One Outlet Found Out.](#)" Poynter/IFCN. All.

## Session 21:

- Visit the International Fact Checking Network's (IFCN) [homepage](#); read the bulleted list of its core functions.
- Mantzarlis, Alexios. 2016. "[Fact-Checkers Around the World Agree on Shared Code of Principles.](#)" Poynter/IFCN. All.
- IFCN's [Code of Principles](#). All.
- Funke, Daniel. 2018. "[The EU Just Took Its First Major Action Against Fake News. Here's What It Does -- and Doesn't -- Include.](#)" Poynter/IFCN. All.
- Ricci, Alexander Damiano. 2018. "[FakEU: Europe's Anti-Fake News Efforts Get Pushback.](#)" Poynter/IFCN. All.

## SESSIONS 22 - 23

### SESSION 24

#### Immigration

- Sides, John and Jack Citrin. 2007. "[European Opinion about Immigration: The Role of Identities, Interests, and Information.](#)" *British Journal of Political Science*. All.
- Bansak, Kirk, Jens Hainmueller, and Dominik Hangartner. 2016. "[How Economic, Humanitarian, and Religious Concerns Shape European Attitudes toward Asylum Seekers.](#)" *Science*. All.

### SESSION 25

#### Populism

- Muller, Jan-Werner. 2015. "[Parsing Populism: Who Is and Who Is Not a Populist these Days?](#)" *Juncture*. All.
- Iakhnis, Evgeniia, Brian Rathbun, Jason Reifler, Thomas J. Scotto. 2018. "[Populist Referendum: Was 'Brexit' an Expression of Nativist and Anti-Elitist Sentiment?](#)" *Research and Politics*. All.

### SESSION 26

#### Corruption

- Anduiza, Eva, Aina Gallego, and Jordi Muñoz. 2013. "[Turning a Blind Eye: Experimental Evidence of Partisan Bias in Attitudes Toward Corruption.](#)" *Comparative Political Studies*. All.
- Fernández-Vázquez, Pablo, Pablo Barberá, and Gonzalo Rivero. 2016. "[Rooting Out Corruption or Rooting for Corruption? The Heterogeneous Electoral Consequences of Scandals.](#)" *Political Science Research and Methods*. All.

### SESSION 27

#### Trade

- Ehrlich, Sean. 2018. *The Politics of Fair Trade: Moving Beyond Free Trade and Protection*. New York: Oxford University Press. Chapters 1-4, 6.

## **SESSION 28**

### **Foreign policy**

- Rathbun, Brian C., Joshua D. Kertzer, Jason Reifler, Paul Goren, and Thomas J. Scotto. 2016. "[Taking Foreign Policy Personally: Personal Values and Foreign Policy Attitudes.](#)" *International Studies Quarterly*. All.
- Huff, Connor and Joshua D. Kertzer. 2018. "[How the Public Defines Terrorism.](#)" *American Journal of Political Science*. All.

## **SESSION 29**

### **Wrap-up and exam prep**

- Norris, Pippa. 2017. "[Is Western Democracy Backsliding? Diagnosing the Risks.](#)" *Journal of Democracy*. All.
- In class: exam Q&A

## **SESSION 30**

### **Exam 2**

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

This course entails substantial reading. Many of the assigned readings are challenging. Students are not expected to understand every argument or statistical analysis presented in the readings; rather, they should engage in *active preparation* (defined above). I encourage students to read ahead and come to office hours with questions. I will do my best to highlight upcoming readings that are particularly challenging and to offer advice.

The following books are **required**:

- Ehrlich, Sean. 2018. *The Politics of Fair Trade: Moving Beyond Free Trade and Protection*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Somin, Ilya. 2013. *Democracy and Political Ignorance: Why Smaller Government Is Smarter*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Other required readings are accessible by clicking on the hyperlinks above. (Note: you will need to be on the campus network or logged into the [IE Library website](#) to access materials that are behind academic journal paywalls.) Other readings will be posted on Blackboard (noted below). If you are having difficulty accessing a reading, contact the Professor.

The following books are **recommended (i.e., NOT required)**. I encourage students who are especially interested in the topic of this course or who plan to pursue graduate study in political behavior, political communication, or a related field to purchase these books.

- Campbell, Angus, Philip E. Converse, Warren E. Miller, and Donald E. Stokes. 1960. *The American Voter*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Downs, Anthony. 1957. *An Economic Theory of Democracy*. Evanston, IL: Harper & Row.
- Druckman, James N., Donald P. Green, James H. Kuklinski, and Arthur Lupia (eds.). 2011. *Cambridge Handbook of Experimental Political Science*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Green, Donald, Bradley Palmquist, and Eric Schickler. 2002. *Partisan Hearts and Minds: Political Parties and the Social Identities of Voters*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Iyengar, Shanto and Donald Kinder. 1987. *News that Matters: Television and American Opinion*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Lenz, Gabriel S. 2012. *Follow the Leader? How Voters Respond to Politicians' Policies and Performance*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Prior, Markus. 2007. *Post-Broadcast Democracy: How Media Choice Increases Inequality in Political Involvement and Polarizes Elections*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Taber, Charles S. and Milton Lodge. 2013. *The Rationalizing Voter*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Zaller, John. 1992. *The Nature and Origins of Mass Opinion*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

## EVALUATION CRITERIA

Grades will be based on four components: exams (40%), quizzes (20%), homework (20%), and class participation (20%).

### **Exams**

There will be two in-class exams testing your understanding of lecture and reading material (the exams will not cover Qualtrics). The exams will contain multiple choice and essay questions. For the essay portion, I will pose several questions and students will be able to choose a subset of these questions to answer (e.g., choose 2 from 3). The purpose of the exams is to measure your understanding of key concepts and arguments --- *not* your mastery of minor details or jargon.

Here are some sample multiple choice questions (none of these will appear):

- Zaller's (1992) RAS model of opinion formation helps explain
  - (a) why survey respondents often give contradictory answers to the same survey questions over time.
  - (b) why survey respondents often cannot recall or explain the considerations underlying their opinions.
  - (c) why survey respondents with different ideologies often give the same answer to questions about controversial issues.
  - (d) why citizens sometimes vote for politicians from parties they do not support.
  
- Framing effects refer to changes in people's opinions that result from
  - (a) different orders of questions on a survey.
  - (b) emphasizing different considerations about an issue.
  - (c) attributing messages to different sources.
  - (d) changes in the perceived importance of an issue.

Here are some sample essay questions (none of these will appear):

- Are experiments a valuable tool for studying public opinion? Explain why or why not. In your answer, discuss at least two advantages *and* two disadvantages of studying public opinion using experiments.
- Is collective public opinion more "rational" than individual-level preferences? Citing evidence from the readings, explain why or why not.

### **Quizzes**

On five randomly selected class days, I will give a short quiz at the start of class. I will use a random number generator to select the days on which we will have quizzes. As a result, we may go long stretches without having a quiz, or have quizzes on two or more consecutive days, or both. Quizzes will consist of five or fewer multiple choice questions (similar to those above) about the day's readings.

### **Homework**

Some weeks will include homework assignments. Most assignments will ask students to critically analyze reading and lecture material, to express their views about disagreements in the readings, or to apply course material to contemporary events. Other assignments will require students to program surveys and experiments in Qualtrics.

Homework assignments should be submitted on the course website. (In the event of technical difficulties, I will accept homework via email or in person.)

Late homework will not be accepted.

**Class participation**

Students are expected to engage in *active preparation* (defined above) and to participate in class discussions. Comments that refer to specific passages or highlight theoretical or methodological problems in the readings are especially encouraged.

Criteria	Percentage	Comments
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**PROFESSOR BIO**

Professor: **DANIEL FLYNN**

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**Prof. Daniel ("D.J.") Flynn**

D.J. Flynn is Assistant Professor of Political Science. Before coming to IE, he was a Postdoctoral Fellow with the Program in Quantitative Social Science at Dartmouth College (Hanover, NH, USA) and received his Ph.D. in political science from Northwestern University (Evanston, IL, USA). His research and teaching focus on public opinion, political communication, and quantitative methods.

**OTHER INFORMATION****Note on course schedule and readings**

Students are encouraged to complete the readings in the order in which they are listed on the schedule. Please read each entry carefully, as some are entire articles or chapters, while others are excerpts.

This schedule is subject to change (with notice).

**Course website and communication**

The syllabus, slides, and any other materials distributed in class will be posted on the course website. All announcements will be posted on the course website.

While I am happy to answer questions via email, students are encouraged to come to office hours. I can typically provide greater detail and answer follow-ups more quickly in office hours than I can via email.

**Office hours**

My office hours for the fall semester are XXX from XXXX--XXXX in XXX. Feel free to email me to reserve a 15 minute block of time, though this is not required. I will prioritize appointments over walk-ins, but I am happy to meet with any student if time permits. If you cannot attend office hours, please email me to schedule an alternate meeting time.

**Plagiarism and academic honesty**

This course will abide by IE University's plagiarism and academic honesty policy:

Plagiarism is the dishonest act of presenting another person's ideas, text, or words as your own. This includes (in order of seriousness of the offense): (i) providing faulty sources, (ii) copy-pasting material from your own past assignments (self-plagiarism) without the instructor's permission, (iii) copy-pasting material from external sources even while citing them, (iv) using verbatim translations from sources in other languages without citing them, (v) copy-pasting material from external sources without citing them, and (vi) buying or commissioning essays from other parties. IE students must contact the professor if they do not know whether the use of a document constitutes plagiarism. The professor will advise the student on how to present said material. All written assignments must be submitted through TurnItIn, which produces a similarity report and detects cases of plagiarism. Professors are required to check each student's academic work in order to guarantee its originality. If the originality of the academic work is not clear, the professor will contact the student to clarify any doubts. In the event that the meeting with the student fails to clarify the originality of the academic work, the professor will inform the Director of the Bachelor Program about the case, who will then decide whether to bring the case forward to the Academic Ethics Committee. Very high similarity scores will be automatically flagged and forwarded to the Academic Ethics Committee. Plagiarism constitutes a very serious offense and may carry penalties ranging from getting a zero for the assignment to expulsion from the University depending on the severity of the case and the number of times the student has committed plagiarism in the past.

## CODE OF CONDUCT IN CLASS

1. **Be on time:** : Students arriving more than 5 minutes late will be marked as "Absent".

Only students that notify in advance in writing that they will be late for a specific session may be granted an exception (at the discretion of the professor).

2. **If applicable, bring your name card and strictly follow the seating chart.** It helps faculty members and fellow students learn your names.

3. **Do not leave the room during the lecture:** Students are not allowed to leave the room during lectures. If a student leaves the room during lectures, he/she will not be allowed to re-enter and, therefore, will be marked as "Absent".

Only students that notify that they have a special reason to leave the session early will be granted an exception (at the discretion of the professor).

4. **Do not engage in side conversation.** As a sign of respect toward the person presenting the lecture (the teacher as well as fellow students), side conversations are not allowed. If you have a question, raise your hand and ask it. If you do not want to ask it during the lecture, feel free to approach your teacher after class.

If a student is disrupting the flow of the lecture, he/she will be asked to leave the classroom and, consequently, will be marked as "Absent".

5. **Use your laptop for course-related purposes only.** The use of laptops during lectures must be authorized by the professor. The use of Social Media or accessing any type of content not related to the lecture is penalized. The student will be asked to leave the room and, consequently, will be marked as "Absent".

6. **No cellular phones:** IE University implements a "Phone-free Classroom" policy and, therefore, the use of phones, tablets, etc. is forbidden inside the classroom. Failing to abide by this rule entails expulsion from the room and will be counted as one absence.

7. **Escalation policy: 1/3/5.** Items 4, 5, and 6 above entail expulsion from the classroom and the consequent marking of the student as "Absent." IE University implements an "escalation policy": The first time a student is asked to leave the room for disciplinary reasons (as per items 4, 5, and 6 above), the student will incur one absence, the second time it will count as three absences, and from the third time onward, any expulsion from the classroom due to disciplinary issues will entail 5 absences.