

POL 472W, Section 1
Political Attitudes and Behavior
Fall 2009
Monday 6-8:50 – University Center Rm. ____
Professor Robert E. Biles

Three credit hours. Prerequisite: 6 hours of Political Science

TEXTBOOKS

Dalton, Russell J. *The Good Citizen: How a Younger Generation is Reshaping American Politics*, Revised ed. Washington, DC: CQ Press, 2009.

Erikson, Robert S., and Kent L. Tedin. *American Public Opinion: Its Origins, Content, and Impact*. Updated 7th ed. New York: Pearson Longman, 2007.

Larson, Stephanie Greco. *Public Opinion Using MicroCase ExplorIt*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 2003. **NOTE** that to do assignments and the analytical paper you **will need the CD-Rom** from the back of this book and the exercise pages.

NOTE: The bookstores have varying editions of the books. I have done assignments based on the editions noted. However, you can use the first edition of Dalton and the un-updated edition to Erikson and Tedin. Just bear in mind that page numbers may vary slightly, and Dalton has an Epilogue on the 2008 election. Larson is available only in the original edition, and a used version will probably not work because you need the CD and the exercise pages. **Make a copy of the CD** pronto because they break if you look at them funny.

ELECTRONIC RESERVE & BLACKBOARD

The syllabus and other materials will be placed on Blackboard or Electronic Reserve. **Blackboard** can be reached from the Sam home page. Use your student account name and password. I will use the **Course Information** page for most material. I may also email you at your student account. Check it regularly or connect it to the account you do check. For **Electronic Reserve**, go to the SHSU Homepage, click Library, Course Reserves, Electronic Reserves, Electronic Reserves and Reserve Pages, and find my name and course number. The password will be posted in Course Information on Blackboard. It is **opinbeh** (all lower case). You can download material with Adobe, which you probably have. It is available on our system and free on the Internet. The material is there for course use only.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

The course provides an understanding of survey research, the use of survey data for political analysis, political opinions and orientations, public opinion, and political behavior. Students should enhance both their knowledge and their analytical and writing skills. In terms of the

IDEA evaluation system, course objectives include: “21. Gaining factual knowledge,” “28. Developing skill in ... writing”; and “31. Learning to analyze” using quantitative methods.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Classes will be a combination of lecture and class discussion. Students will also complete a series of statistical exercises using real data and write two papers.

GRADES

Satisfactory completion of all exercises* and:		Standard
Exam #1	15	A \$ 90%
Exam #2	15	B \$ 80
Final exam	10	C \$ 70
Descriptive paper	20	D \$ 60
Analytical paper	40	F # 59
Attendance may affect grade (see below)		Round at .5 (e.g., 89.5 = A)

*Failure to turn in all exercises satisfactorily will cause you to fail the course.

Read the assignments and be prepared to discuss them and the exercises in class.

Exercises from the MicroCase book will be assigned weekly and should be **turned in** at the **Monday** class meetings beginning August 31. They will be returned the following week. Incomplete exercises are considered not done. Written answers should be answered in complete sentences and use proper grammar and spelling. The major utility of the exercises will be to familiarize you with working with quantitative data and to give you a more intimate look at the data with which public opinion and behavior studies work. You will do a paper using the data sets. If students are sloppy in doing the exercises, we will assign grades, and you will not be happy with the results.

Exams will be essay in nature. Usually, you will answer two of three essays and five of seven short answer items. Dates will be announced at least two weeks ahead. We will discuss their content. The first two exams just cover their block of the material. The final is comprehensive.

Papers. It will be helpful for your understanding of this material to read a book that makes use of survey or other quantitative data to analyze political participation or opinion. For the **descriptive paper, choose a book from the list on Electronic Reserve/Blackboard.** For very exceptional reasons, I may be willing to approve a book not on the list, but it will have to use data and be a serious scholarly work relevant to the course.

Write a descriptive review of **6-10 pages** of text, not including the cover sheet and bibliography. Include a full bibliographic entry for the book and cite page numbers in the text for quotations and paraphrasing. **A descriptive review involves** explaining the thesis or major arguments of the book. About half the grade will be based on the quality of the writing – such as organization, style, and grammar. Use formal writing but don't be stilted. Write in a style that other students

in the class could read and enjoy. The other half of the grade will be based on the content -- such as explanation of the thesis and understanding of the arguments. The paper is **due Sept. 28**. **Revision of this paper is optional**. Revisions are **due** three weeks after receipt of the graded paper.

The **analytical paper must use** one or more of the **data sets** from the *Public Opinion* disk to analyze some aspect of political opinion or behavior. You may **choose only topics** that can be analyzed using the data sets. Other than for the literature review, you may not use tables you have not created yourself with a statistical program that gives you appropriate statistics (e.g., you may not take them out of an article). There are some sites that have NES and GSS data that will allow you to analyze the data. You should decide on a general topic, do some library research on the topic, write a literature review using **at least five scholarly sources**, formulate a hypothesis and at least two subhypotheses, and test them with the data. There must be **at least three tables** (probably crosstabulations), **at least one** of which must use a **control**. The results of each table must be explained. **Tests of association and significance must be used**. Clear the topic with the prof. I will provide guidance in class as to how the paper should be developed. There will also be information on Electronic Reserve/Blackboard. The paper should be **6-10 pages** of text, not including the cover sheet and works cited pages. The **initial version** of the paper is **due Oct. 19** and the **final version three weeks after receipt of the graded paper**. A **rewrite is required** unless I excuse you because the first version is exceptionally well done. (I have had only three such papers over the years.) You **may not skip the first draft** and just do the final version. Again, half the grade will be based on the writing, half on the content.

PLAGIARISM: Plagiarism is immoral and a violation of university and course policy. Plagiarism in this class will result in a zero for that assignment and cannot be made up. Plagiarism is the use of someone else's words as your own – whether those words are taken from the Internet, another paper, or some other source. Two general rules will help you to avoid plagiarism. 1. If you use more than three consecutive words from another source, put them in quotation marks and cite the source. 2. If you are unsure, cite it. Until you are an experienced writer, it is better to err on the side of caution. And, of course, I do disapprove of all other forms of cheating!

An electronic version of both papers **must be submitted to Turnitin.com**, a plagiarism checker. Turn in a paper copy to me. Instructions will be provided on Blackboard.

ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION

Attendance and participation are an integral part of the class. **Attendance will be taken and will affect your grade**. Each unexcused absence in excess of three will reduce the course grade by two percentage point each. Your having no or one unexcused absence will add two points to your average. Tell me after class if you arrive after roll is taken. Excused absences include official active participation in university functions, illness of yourself or someone for whom you are a primary caregiver, funeral attendance, religious holy days, and occasional work

emergencies. Please provide documentation and make up work missed within two weeks. **Turn off pagers, phones, and other noisemakers before class begins.** If you make a mess, clean it up immediately.

CONTACTING THE PROF

Office: **CHSS 479**. Tel. 936-294-1460; fax 936-294-4172 (address the cover page to me; this number is for all of political science); e-mail **GOV_REB@SHSU.EDU**. **Classes** TuTh 12:30-3:30; MWF12-1; and Monday evening 6-9 at the UCtr. **Office hours:** MWF 11-11:40, 1-2; TuTh 10:30-11:30, 4-5; M 5-6 (at the UCtr; the prof's bullpen is beside the elevators on the third floor; on leaving the elevator, take two lefts and a right). If I know ahead of time, I can arrange to come to the UCtr prior to 5 for a long help session. Please don't come to the office in the 10 minutes just before class; I am usually desperately trying to find notes and to remember where I left off last class. **Do come see me when you first need help;** don't put it off till the situation is critical. After class is fine; I will stay as long as needed. **Hours by appointment or drop-in.** I am in the office most days till 6. **Do not feel limited to official office hours;** come see me when you need help. **Finding my office** (not as easy as it sounds): On the fourth floor, from the elevator, angle ahead left to the unmarked door, enter bravely, make a left and a right, and look for 479 on your left. (Don't worry. We send out trained dogs every evening to find lost students and visitors.) We can handle many issues by phone or email if you can't see me in person.

AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT: SHSU adheres to all applicable laws and guidelines to provide reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities. If you have a disability that may affect adversely your work in this class, I encourage you to register with the SHSU Counseling Center and to talk with me about how I can best help you. All disclosures of disabilities will be kept strictly confidential. **NOTE: No accommodation can be made until you register with the Counseling Center.**

INSTRUCTOR EVALUATIONS: Students will be asked to complete a course/instructor evaluation form near the end of the semester.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION: See www.shsu.edu/syllabus/ and www.shsu.edu/students/guide/dean/codeofconduct.html.

COURSE OUTLINE

Dates assigned as we progress. Turn in Larson assignment each Monday unless directed otherwise.

I. Introduction: Administration and how to

- II. Survey Research: How we do it and what we do and don't get out of it
 Read E&T, Chap. 1 & 2; Review Appendix
 Larson: Preface, Getting Started – Read with the above.
 Larson: Ex. 1 -- **Turn in Monday, Aug. 31, and a lesson each subsequent Monday.**
- III. Public Opinion: An Intro (Orientations for all, ideology for the few)
 E&T, Chap. 3-4
 Larson: Ex. 2
- IV. Political Socialization (“Daddy, I forget, are we Democrats or Republicans?”)
 E&T, Chap. 5
 Larson: Ex. 3

EXAM #1

- V. Public Opinion and Democracy
 E&T, Chap. 6
 Larson, Ex. 4
- VI. Groups and Opinions
 E&T, Chap. 7
 Larson, Ex.5
- VI. The News Media
 E&T, Chap. 8
 Larson, Ex. 6-7 (**both due together**)
- VII. Public Opinion & Popular Control
 - A. The Electoral Connection: E&T, Chap. 9
 - B. Controlling Elected Leaders? E&T, Chap. 10
 - C. The Public and Democracy: E&T, Chap. 11

EXAM #2

- VIII. Political Participation: Are the forms changing?
 Dalton: Chap. 1
- IX. Defining, Measuring, and Forming Citizenship
 Dalton: Chap. 2-3
- X. The Individual and the Group
 Dalton: Chap. 4-5

XI. Views of Government

Dalton: Chap. 6-7

XII. Comparisons and Conclusions

Dalton: Chap. 8-9 and Epilogue

COMPREHENSIVE FINAL – Mon., Dec. 14.