Syllabus – Hybrid



Course Contents

Public Opinion is, according to most authors who deal with the subject, a pan-cultural phenomenon, that is, a phenomenon that appears in any society, at any time, and regardless of the political or social system that identifies a particular culture. Still, it is in the liberal democracy, the prevailing political model in modern western societies, where public opinion attains to its highest relevance. In the democratic model, public opinion is regarded – and unanimously accepted – as the only legitimate source of political and social power. The battle for the public opinion is at long last the battle for power, social influence and moral legitimacy. But public opinion is not only relevant within the limits of politics. Also in the world of business, the value and the future of corporations directly depend on their image in the public opinion.

To understand the true nature of the phenomenon called Public Opinion is necessary to go beyond the concrete contents of public opinion at a particular time, in a particular society, and regarding a particular issue. It is necessary to recognize the social conditions and individual features that make possible the apparition of a public opinion in practically every cell of human coexistence. The Phenomenon must be analyzed from a micro- and a macrosociological point of view, that is, students shall learn the effects of public opinion on the individual, as well as its social function. The public opinion is in a state of constant change. This mutable nature is maybe its most characteristic feature. Therefore, it is necessary to know the social-psychological mechanisms that control or just influence public opinion dynamics. They can explain us how a particular opinion arises, becomes public, and finally disappears and is replaced by another different point of view in the public preference.

The most important opinion research techniques will also be discussed in the course. Students will learn the different ways to find out tendency and direction of the public attitude regarding a particular issue. Opinion polls also give us information about currently accepted and prevailing moral values.

Warning: In our class discussions and presentations, we will address some public opinion issues that may be controversial. Always keep in mind that our conversations do not focus on the issues themselves, but on public opinion about those issues. If you do not feel comfortable with any topic, talk to the instructor.

Literature

We will be working in this course with original literature (as opposed to textbooks). All the necessary reading material (books and book chapters) will be available in Blackboard

Learn.

Grading

Assessment	Value
Midterm Exam	30%
Final Exam	35%
Participation	10%
Public Opinion Research Paper	25%

Graded Assignments:

Examinations

There will a midterm exam and a final exam, which includes the contents of the whole course. Exams will cover material from the class and the case studies published in Blackboard Vista. There will be no make-up exams (except for well documented medical emergencies). All the assessments in this course will take place online, in the Blackboard Vista environment. Please, make sure that you are familiar with the system before the day scheduled for the exams.

Public Opinion Research Paper

In this assignment, you must select a topic the public may fell strong about. The stronger the feelings, the more likely you will find interesting material in your research. Then, you have to find actual data from surveys about that topic. In the “assignments” page within this site, you can find a detailed description of how to structure you paper.

Participation

An active and positive participation in the class dynamic is expected. Students can also improve the participation grade bringing up current public opinion issues.

Extra Grades

You will receive extra grading points if you present to the class one case study based on your own research. These presentations will NOT be graded and will just have a positive effect on your final grade. Only if the student DOES NOT APPEAR the day scheduled for the presentation, it will negatively reflect on the final grade.

Course Policies

The instructor reserves the ultimate right to modify the schedule of activities, assignments and tests for the class as it deems necessary. In addition, the professor reserves his right to assess the overall ability of the students to meet the expectations of the course and will exercise his right to pass or fail the student accordingly.

Late Assignments

Late assignments will be graded so you receive feedback, but will be worth only half credit (100 pt. paper receives 50 points). This is a severe penalty; it is not fair to others who met the deadlines if we accept yours late. The instructor will not accept any assignment more than one week late. In the 21st century, printer troubles or computer problems are no longer reasonable excuses for late papers. The instructor suggests knowing the equipment well enough and allowing ample time in case of problems.

Attendance

Attendance in this course is **ONLY** mandatory when graded assignments (presentations, quizzes, and final exam) or group work are scheduled. However, it is highly recommended to attend classes on a regular basis because the contents of the exams will be based on the contents of classes and class discussions.

Punctuality

If you decide to attend classes, you will need to do it on time. After 10 minutes courtesy, the door will be closed and students will not be allowed to enter the room.

Electronic Devices

To enhance the active participation in the class, the use of mobile electronic devices, such as cell phones, laptops, tablets or netbooks, is not allowed in this course.

Incompletes

The University's policy on the awarding of incompletes is discussed in the catalog and will be followed in this class.

Academic Dishonesty

CCSU has a zero tolerance policy on academic dishonesty. Academic dishonesty includes cheating on homework or exams, and also plagiarism. The unauthorized use of AI can also be regarded as academic misconduct (for instance, the use of AI tools – ChatGPT, or similar – to answer multiple choice, true/false or short essay questions). In written assignments, submission of AI generated text as the own work is considered plagiarism. Demonstrated cases of academic dishonesty can result in severe penalties including receiving an "F" in the class.

To learn more about this subject, please read CCSU's policy of academic misconduct at ccsu/academicintegrity

Accessibility Accommodations

Central Connecticut State University is committed to providing equal access to its programs, services, and activities in accordance with applicable federal and state laws, including the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, and Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972. Students with documented disabilities or significant medical, psychological, or temporary conditions that may warrant accommodations are encouraged to register with the Office of Accessibility Services (OAS) as early as possible. OAS reviews impairment-related documentation, engages in an interactive process with students, and determines reasonable accommodations when appropriate. Although accommodation requests may be submitted at any time, accommodations cannot be applied retroactively. **To request accommodations, students should contact the Office of Accessibility Services**, located in Willard-DiLoreto Hall, Suite 201, by phone: 860-832-1952 or by email: accessibilityservices@ccsu.edu. Additional information about eligibility, registration procedures, documentation requirements, and services is available at https://www.ccsu.edu/accessibility/.

Diversity Statement

It is our intent that students from all diverse backgrounds and perspectives be well-served by this course, that students' learning needs be addressed both in and out of class, and that the diversity that students bring to this class be viewed as a resource, strength and benefit. We will present materials and activities that are respectful of diversity: gender, sexual orientation, disability, age, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, race, culture, perspective, and other background characteristics. Please let us know ways to improve the

effectiveness of the course for you personally or for other students or student groups. In addition, we have attempted to avoid conflicts with major religious holidays. If, however, we have inadvertently scheduled an exam or major deadline that creates a conflict with your religious observances, please let us know as soon as possible so that we can make other arrangements.

Tentative Course Outline

Week	Course Contents
Week 0 8/25 to 8/28	Introduction to the Course
Week 1 8/31 to 9/4	Public Opinion Defined
Week 2 9/7 to 9/11	The Classical Tradition in Public Opinion: The Sophist vs Plato
Week 3 9/14 to 9/18	The Classical Tradition in Public Opinion: Renaissance – Machiavelli
Week 4 9/21 to 9/25	The Classical Tradition in public Opinion: Renaissance – John Locke / Michel de Montaigne

Week	Course Contents
Week 5 9/28 to 10/2	The Classical Tradition in public Opinion: Enlightenment – David Hume
Week 6 10/5 to 10/9	The Classical Tradition in public Opinion: Enlightenment – Jean Jaques Rousseau
Week 7 10/12 to 10/16	Midterm Exam Review (10/16) **Midterm Exam – Friday, October 16**
Week 8 10/19 to 10/23	Alexis de Tocqueville
Week 9 10/26 to 10/30	Social Psychology
Week 10 11/2 to 11/6	Walter Lippmann
Week 11 11/9 to 11/13	José Ortega y Gasset’s The Revolt of the Masses
Week 12 11/16 to 11/20	Jürgen Habermas’ Elite Conception of Public Opinion

Week	Course Contents
11/25 to 11/29	**Thanksgiving Recess** – No Classes
Week 13 11/30 to 12/4	Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann's Spiral of Silence **12/4 – Public Opinion Research Paper Due**
12/7 to 12/13	**Final Exams**

Important Dates

Date	
8/24	Last day for full-time students to withdraw with 100% refund
8/31	90% tuition refund withdrawal deadline (full-time students) 100% tuition refund withdrawal deadline (part-time students)l
9/7	60% tuition refund withdrawal deadline (full-time students) 60% tuition refund withdrawal deadline (part-time students)
9/14	Last day to drop full semester course without "W". Last day to change from full-time to part-time status. Last day to declare pass/fail and audit.
9/15 to 11/16	Withdrawal period (no permission required).

Date	
9/21	40% tuition refund withdrawal deadline (full-time students) 40% tuition refund withdrawal deadline (part-time students)
10/18	INC grades from Spring & Summer lapse to “F” (undergraduates)
10/19 to 10/30	Spring 2026 Advising period
10/21	Winter Intersession 2026-2027 Registration begins.
10/30	Spring 2027 Registration period for matriculated students.
11/17 to 12/13	Late course withdrawal period (permission required).

Contact

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Please, use the “Contact the Instructor” category in the course’s main menu for questions related to this course.