

Department of Political Science  
Faculty of Arts and Science  
University of Toronto  
POL382HF:  
Topics in Canadian Politics (Public Opinion and Voting)

Summer 2023

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**Prerequisite Courses:** POL214H1/ POL214Y1/ POL214Y5/ POL215H5/ POL216H5/  
POL224H1/ POL224Y1/ POLB50Y3

**Lecture:** Tuesdays and Thursdays, 4:00PM – 6:00PM, Location UC256

**Office hours:** Appointment by email

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## Course Description and Learning Objectives

This course is intended to introduce you to the attitudes and behaviors of the mass public in Canada and other democracies, highlighting how public opinions shapes elections and policy making. We will examine formal and informal political participation, the mass media, the nature of social, psychological, and economic voting, as well as elite-driven forces on public opinion and voting. There will be a special focus on literature and methods related to measuring public opinion and vote intentions.

This is a course about asking questions: Why do people vote for who they vote for? Why do people vote at all? Why, and *how*, do people form political opinions? What is the role of gender in public opinion? These questions, and more, will be addressed in this course on public opinion and voting.

The course's key learning objectives include:

- An enhanced understanding of political behaviour
- The ability to identify major theories of public opinion and voting
- An overall better appreciation and grasp of public opinion data gathering methods

## Required Texts and Materials

Readings are listed below for each session. Required readings for the course are usually available through the [library](#).

## Assignments

The final course grade reflects your level of demonstrated achievement of the course Learning Objectives listed above. Evaluations provide feedback on your progress towards the final course grade. Ouriginal will be used in this course and can be done via Quercus. You do not need to sign in to Ouriginal separately. Please see the [section below on academic integrity](#) for important information regarding plagiarism.

Evaluations	Weight	Deadline	Submit via:
Public Opinion Critique	15%	May 22	Quercus
Midterm test	20%	June 1	In-person
Survey Proposal Essay	25%	June 12	Quercus
Final Exam	40%	Exam Period	In-person

We strongly advise students to keep draft work and hard copies of their essays and assignments before handing them to the instructors. All essays/assignments should be kept by the student until the marked essays/assignments have been returned to them and the grades are posted on ACORN.

## Evaluation Criteria

The following sections detail the course's assignment criteria. In addition to the brief descriptions below, detailed rubrics and instructions are provided on Quercus.

### Public Opinion Critiques (15%):

Students are expected to submit a 1000-word public opinion critique, due May 22, worth 15% of the overall course grade. The critique provides an opportunity to respond to a publicly-available

public opinion poll or other opinion-related publication using material and theories from the course. Additional information and a rubric for this assignment is available on Quercus. Students are expected to provide each of the following sections as part of their analysis:

- Introduction and Public Opinion Summary
- Critique outlining both the positive aspects of the poll and areas for improvement
- Future research

### **Midterm Test (20%):**

At the course mid-point, students will write an in-class, midterm test worth 20% of the overall course grade. The midterm test is intended to be written in less time than the 2-hours allocated for the course lecture. The midterm requires students to respond to multiple choice questions and short-answer questions. More information about the midterm will be provided in-class and on Quercus.

### **Survey Proposal Essay (25%):**

Students are expected to submit a 2,000-word survey proposal essay, worth 25% of the overall course grade, outlining a proposed survey project. This assignment asks students to not only provide a literature review necessary for their proposal, but also to propose real, meaningful questions for analysis based on existing research. The best proposal will be considered for inclusion as part of a real survey projected to be fielded in late 2023. Additional details about this assignment, as well as a comprehensive assignment overview, is available on Quercus for review.

### **Final Exam (40%):**

During the exam period, students will write a final exam worth 40% of the overall course grade. The final exam is divided in three sections: multiple choice, short answer, and essay response. These sections will have questions which generally reflect the course's content temporally. The course's final lecture will provide an overview on some of the material required for the exam, as well as more information about the format.

## **Grading and Assessment**

Final grades for undergraduates are given as percentage grades, which correspond to a letter grade that is used to calculate GPA according to the University of Toronto marking scheme. For more information, see the Faculty of Arts and Science Academic Handbook, section 10. They reflect your overall performance in achieving the stated Course Learning Objectives. Please contact your instructor if you would like more guidance on your individual course performance.

### **Late Penalty**

Written assignments will be subject to a 3-percentage point penalty per day after the submission deadline. Exemptions will be granted for documented, substantive reasons in accordance with UofT extension guidelines.

### **Grade Appeals**

Students are able to request re-grading via email to both course instructors with a short overview in the email text about why the student is seeking a re-grade. The re-grade will be conducted by both course instructors, working together to review the assignment collaboratively. As a reminder, conducting a re-grade can result in a higher grade, the same grade, or, a lower grade. Students have up to 2 weeks from the date of return of the item of term work to query the marking. Once the re-grading process has begun, students can expect to receive feedback within a week.

## Accessibility Services

Academic accommodations are provided when you experience disability-related barriers that prohibit demonstration of your knowledge and skills. Accommodations are provided to level the playing field upon which you can establish your success. Students with disabilities may receive accommodation from the University and need to register with accessibility services. Instructors are notified with a request for accommodation and can give the request consideration. You are encouraged to inform yourself about options in this regard at the website for [Accessibility Services](#) or email [accessibility.services@utoronto.ca](mailto:accessibility.services@utoronto.ca) or Tel: 416-978-8060.

## Academic Accommodations

Occasionally students will need to apply for an academic accommodation due to disability, illness, religious observance, or personal emergency. All requests for an academic accommodation due to disability are handled by the University of Toronto's Accessibility Services, not the instructor. For disability-related accommodations, Accessibility Services staff will determine suitable accommodations on a case-by-case basis based on recommendation from health providers and with student input.

Students who require consideration for missed academic work for any non-disability related reason (e.g., COVID, cold, flu and other illness or injury, family situation) should report their absence through the online absence declaration available to them directly on [ACORN](#)– until otherwise indicated by the University. A Verification of Illness form is not currently required, but may become required should the public health situation change. Students should also inform their instructors of their absence.

## Academic Integrity

Papers, assignments and all other deliverables must be original work, giving credit to the work of others where appropriate. This applies to individual and group deliverables. All members of a group are accountable for the academic integrity of their submissions. You are encouraged to consult the following websites to ensure that you follow the appropriate rules. Ignorance of these rules is not a defence in cases of violations, which can result in very serious academic sanctions. Please visit the [University of Toronto Academic Integrity](#) or [Writing Centres for Arts and Science](#) websites for further detail and help on the proper use of citations. Plagiarism is a serious academic offence and will be dealt with accordingly. For further clarification and information on plagiarism please see [Writing at the University of Toronto](#).

Normally, students will be required to submit their course essays to the University's plagiarism detection tool for a review of textual similarity and detection of possible plagiarism. In doing so, students will allow their essays to be included as source documents in the tool's reference database, where they will be used solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism. The terms that apply to the University's use of this tool are described on the [Centre for Teaching Support & Innovation website](#).

## Mental Health and Wellness

Feeling distressed? Are you in crisis? There's help. Call Good2Talk: 1-866-925-5454 (Ontario); text GOOD2TALK to 686868. Free, confidential helpline with professional counselling, information and referrals for mental health, addictions and well-being, 24/7/365. You can also contact [My Student Support Program \(MySSP\)](#) 1-844-451-9700 (North America); 001-416-380-6575 (Outside of North America) or the [U of T Employee & Family Assistance Program \(EFAP\)](#) 1-800-663-1142 (toll-free); 1-866-398-9505 (TTY); 604-689-1717 (collect). The following are also available resources: [UofT Health and Wellness](#), [Support if Students are Feeling Distressed](#), [Community](#)

[Safety Office \(416-978-1485\)](#) or [UofT Safety and Support](#). Visit [Support When You Feel Distressed](#) or the [list of programs](#) for more resources.

Are you in immediate danger? For Personal Safety – Call 911, then Campus Community Police: UTSG Police: 416-978-2222 — U of T Mississauga Police: 905-569-4333 — U of T Scarborough Police 416-978-2222 — Centre for International Experience Safety Abroad 416-946-3929.

\*24/7/365; Campus Community Police can direct your call to the right service.

# Class Schedule

## Session 1 (May 9): What is public opinion and political behaviour?

This session is intended to serve as an overview/introduction to the course material. We will review this syllabus, and the course's assignments.

### Required Readings:

- Anderson, Cameron D., and Laura B. Stephenson. "The puzzle of elections and voting in Canada." *Voting behaviour in Canada* (2010): 1-39.
- Stephenson, Laura B., et al. "Measuring preferences and behaviours in the 2019 Canadian election study." *Canadian Journal of Political Science/Revue canadienne de science politique* 54.1 (2021): 118-124.

### Suggested Readings:

- Gidengil, Elisabeth. "Voting Behaviour in Canada: The State of the Discipline." *Canadian Journal of Political Science/Revue canadienne de science politique* (2022): 1-23.
- Bashevkin, Sylvia. "Does public opinion matter? The adoption of federal royal commission and task force recommendations on the national question, 1951–1987." *Canadian public administration* (1988) 31 (3): 390-407.
- Sevi, Semra. 2021. ["A guide to interpreting regression tables."](#)

## Session 2 (May 11): How do you study public opinion and political behaviour?

Which tools are used to study public opinion and political behaviour? What are the best ways to get at peoples *real* opinions? In this class we will look at how researchers use surveys and experiments to understand citizens' preferences.

### Required Readings:

- Lee-Whiting, Blake, and Thomas Bergeron. "Students Returning to Campus Want the 'University Experience' Missed During COVID-19." *The Conversation*, 2022.
- Soroka, Stuart, et al. "The impact of news photos on support for military action." *Political Communication* 33.4 (2016): 563-582.
- Naurin, Elin, Dietlind Stolle, and Elias Markstedt. "The Effect of Pregnancy on Engagement with Politics. Toward a Model of the Political Consequences of the Earliest Stages of Parenthood." *American Political Science Review* (2022): 1-7.
- Frank Michael. C. et al. [Experimentology: An Open Science Approach to Experimental Psychology Methods](#) (2023). **Chapters 1 and 2.**

### Suggested Readings:

- Breton, Charles, et al. "Telephone versus online survey modes for election studies: Comparing Canadian public opinion and vote choice in the 2015 federal election." *Canadian Journal of Political Science/Revue canadienne de science politique* 50.4 (2017): 1005-1036.
- Verba, S. "The citizen as respondent: sample surveys and American democracy presidential address." *American Political Science Association* 90.1 (1996): 1-7.
- *American National Election Study*, [Time Series Cumulative Data File](#).

- *Canadian Election Study*, [Online survey](#).
- [Australian Election Study](#).
- Healy, Kieran. *Data visualization: a practical introduction*. Princeton University Press, 2018. Chapter 1 & 3

### Session 3 (May 16): How do we form political opinions?

#### Required Readings:

How do citizens' form political opinions? Are these opinions stable, or are they random?

- Zaller, John R. *The nature and origins of mass opinion*. Cambridge university press, 1992. **Chapter 2 and 3.**
- Lupia, Arthur. "Shortcuts versus encyclopedias: Information and voting behavior in California insurance reform elections." *American Political Science Review* 88.1 (1994): 63-76.
- Freeder, Sean, Gabriel S. Lenz, and Shad Turney. "The importance of knowing "what goes with what": Reinterpreting the evidence on policy attitude stability." *The Journal of Politics* 81.1 (2019): 274-290.

#### Suggested Readings:

- Converse, Philip E. "The nature of belief systems in mass publics (1964)." *Critical review* 18.1-3 : 1-74.
- Sniderman, Paul M., Richard A. Brody, and Phillip E. Tetlock. *Reasoning and choice: Explorations in political psychology*. Cambridge University Press, 1993.
- Page, Benjamin I., and Robert Y. Shapiro. *The rational public: Fifty years of trends in Americans' policy preferences*. University of Chicago Press, 2010.
- Coppock, Alexander. *Persuasion in parallel*. University of Chicago Press, 2022.

### Session 4 (May 18): Do you want to play a game? (Rational Choice)

Rational choice theory has played an important role in public opinion research. The first half of this session will provide a comprehensive overview about how to think of rational choice theory in relation to public opinion. The second half of the session is a hands-on learning exercise, involving game theory.

#### Required Readings:

- Aldrich, John H. "Rational choice and turnout." *American journal of political science* (1993): 246-278.
- Loewen, Peter John. "Affinity, antipathy and political participation: How our concern for others makes us vote." *Canadian Journal of Political Science/Revue canadienne de science politique* 43.3 (2010): 661-687.
- Jones, Bryan D. "Bounded rationality." *Annual review of political science* 2.1 (1999): 297-321.

### Suggested Readings:

- Jones, Bryan D., and Frank R. Baumgartner. *The politics of attention: How government prioritizes problems*. University of Chicago Press, 2005. **Chapter 2**.
- Tversky, Amos, and Daniel Kahneman. "Rational choice and the framing of decisions." *Multiple criteria decision making and risk analysis using microcomputers*. Springer, Berlin, Heidelberg, 1989. 81-126.

### Session 5 (May 23): Who is the voter?

Do predispositions matter to voters? If so, what elements of our mind might influence our opinions and behaviours?

### Required Readings:

- Sirin, Cigdem., Valentino, Nicholas A. and Villalobos, José D. *Seeing Us In Them. Social Divisions and the Politics of Group Empathy*, Cambridge University Press, New York, 2021. **Chapter 2 and 6**.
- Bakker, Bert N., Gijs Schumacher, and Matthijs Rooduijn. "The populist appeal: Personality and antiestablishment communication." *The Journal of Politics* 83.2 (2021): 589-601.
- Acharya, Avidit., Matthew Blackwell, and Maya Sen. "The Political Legacy of American Slavery." *The Journal of Politics*, 78.3 (2016): 621-641.
- Gidengil, Elisabeth, Neviute, Neil., Blais, André., Everitt, Joanna., and Fournier, Patrick. *Dominance and decline: Making sense of recent Canadian elections*. University of Toronto Press, 2012. **Chapter 3**.

### Suggested Readings:

- Sen, Maya, and Omar Wasow. "Race as a bundle of sticks: Designs that estimate effects of seemingly immutable characteristics." *Annual Review of Political Science* 19.1 (2016): 499-522.
- Mondak, Jeffery J. *Personality and the foundations of political behavior*. Cambridge University Press, 2010. **Chapter 1, 2, and 6**
- Coffé, Hilde, and Catherine Bolzendahl. "Same game, different rules? Gender differences in political participation." *Sex roles* 62.5 (2010): 318-333.
- Smets, Kaat, and Carolien Van Ham. "The embarrassment of riches? A meta-analysis of individual-level research on voter turnout." *Electoral Studies* 32.2 (2013): 344-359.

### Session 6 (May 25): Isn't it all just partisanship?

Partisanship is increasingly a household topic of discussion. What can we learn about the effects of partisanship on public opinion and voting?

### Required Readings:

- Johnston, Richard. *The Canadian party system: An analytic history*. UBC Press, 2017. **Chapter 2**
- Bolsen, Toby, James N. Druckman, and Fay Lomax Cook. "The influence of partisan motivated reasoning on public opinion." *Political Behavior* 36.2 (2014): 235-262.



- Barber, Michael, and Jeremy C. Pope. “Does party trump ideology? Disentangling party and ideology in America.” *American Political Science Review* 113.1 (2019): 38-54.
- Mason, Lilliana. “I disrespectfully agree”: The differential effects of partisan sorting on social and issue polarization.” *American journal of political science* 59.1 (2015): 128-145.

## Session 7 (May 30): Participate? Why? How?

Who participates in politics? Why? How?

### Required Readings:

- Blais, André, and Jean-François Daoust. *The motivation to vote: Explaining electoral participation*. UBC Press, 2020. **Chapter 1 and 2**
- Gerber, Alan S., Donald P. Green, and Christopher W. Larimer. “Social pressure and voter turnout: Evidence from a large-scale field experiment.” *American Political Science review* 102.1 (2008): 33-48.
- Jennings, M. Kent, Laura Stoker, and Jake Bowers. “Politics across generations: Family transmission reexamined.” *The Journal of Politics* 71.3 (2009): 782-799.
- Dassonneville, Ruth, and Ian McAllister. “Gender, political knowledge, and descriptive representation: The impact of long-term socialization.” *American Journal of Political Science* 62.2 (2018): 249-265.

### Suggested Readings:

- Kostelka, Filip. “Does democratic consolidation lead to a decline in voter turnout? Global evidence since 1939.” *American Political Science Review* 111.4 (2017): 653-667.
- Holbein, John B. “Childhood skill development and adult political participation.” *American Political Science Review* 111.3 (2017): 572-583.

## Session 8 (June 1): Midterm Test

This session is dedicated to the in-person, midterm exam.

## Session 9 (June 6): Social Identity Theory & Intersectionality

Social identity theory “explains relations between large social groups using psychological processes concerning social identity—an individual’s sense of belonging to a group and the positive or negative feelings associated with that membership. The theory has become an umbrella term for a set of more specific theories of inter-group behavior” (Harwood 2020 in [The International Encyclopedia of Media Psychology](#)).

Intersectionality is a vital lens by which to examine public opinion literature. This session provides an introductory overview of gender-based public opinion and voting literature, highlighting the Canadian context.

### Required Readings:

- Tajfel, Henri. “Social identity and intergroup behaviour.” *Social Science Information* 13.2 (1974): 65-93.
- Jardina, Ashley. “In-group love and out-group hate: White racial attitudes in contemporary US elections.” *Political Behavior* 43.4 (2021): 1535-1559.

- Platow, Michael J., et al. "The contribution of sport fan social identity to the production of prosocial behavior." *Group Dynamics: Theory, Research, and Practice* 3.2 (1999): 161.
- Bittner, Amanda, and Elizabeth Goodyear-Grant. "Digging deeper into the gender gap: Gender salience as a moderating factor in political attitudes." *Canadian Journal of Political Science/Revue canadienne de science politique* 50.2 (2017): 559-578.
- Holman, Mirya R., Monica C. Schneider, and Kristin Pondel. "Gender targeting in political advertisements." *Political Research Quarterly* 68.4 (2015): 816-829.

#### **Suggested Readings:**

- Besco, Randy. "Rainbow coalitions or inter-minority conflict? Racial affinity and diverse minority voters." *Canadian Journal of Political Science/Revue canadienne de science politique* 48.2 (2015): 305-328.
- Jardina, Ashley. *White Identity Politics*. Cambridge University Press, 2019.
- Wells, Paul. "Kathleen Wynne on her political downfall and the private advice she gave Doug Ford." *Macleans*. 2022.
- White, Graham. "In the Presence of Northern Aboriginal Women?." *Stalled: The Representation of Women in Canadian Governments* (2013): 233.
- Everitt, Joanna, and Quinn M. Albaugh. "The origins of gender-targeted public finance measures: the case of New Brunswick, Canada." *European Journal of Politics and Gender* 5.1 (2022): 127-144.

### **Session 10 (June 8): Aren't we ultimately just voting for a person? (Parties and Leaders)**

What do political leaders and political parties do? What role does a local candidate play? This session explores the impacts that parties and leaders have on political outcomes.

#### **Required Readings:**

- Aldrich, John H. *Why parties?: The origin and transformation of political parties in America*. University of Chicago Press, 1995: **Chapter 2**.
- Bittner, Amanda. *Platform or personality?: the role of party leaders in elections*. OUP Oxford, 2011: **Chapter 6**.
- Loewen, Peter John, and Daniel Rubenson. "For want of a nail: Negative persuasion in a party leadership race." *Party Politics* 17.1 (2011): 45-65.
- Walgrave, Stefaan, et al. "Inaccurate Politicians. Elected Representatives' Estimations of Public Opinion in Four Countries." *Forthcoming at the Journal of Politics* (2022).

#### **Suggested Readings:**

- Lee-Whiting, Blake. "Why Aren't Ontario NDP candidates talking about Andrea Horwath?" *The Hub* (2022).
- Lalancette, Mireille, and Vincent Raynauld. "The power of political image: Justin Trudeau, Instagram, and celebrity politics." *American Behavioral Scientist* 63.7 (2019): 888-924.
- Gilens, Martin, and Benjamin I. Page. "Testing theories of American politics: Elites, interest groups, and average citizens." *Perspectives on politics* 12, no. 3 (2014): 564-581.

## Session 11 (June 13): Are you online? (Social Media and Politics)

Can social media help political mobilization? Or is it only a vector for polarization?

### Required Readings:

- Bond, Robert M., Fariss, Christopher J., Jones, Jason J., et al. “A 61-million-person experiment in social influence and political mobilization.” *Nature* 489.7415 (2012): 295-298.
- Bakshy, Eytan, Solomon Messing, and Lada A. Adamic. “Exposure to ideologically diverse news and opinion on Facebook.” *Science* 348.6239 (2015): 1130-1132.
- Hangartner, Dominik, et al. “Empathy-based counterspeech can reduce racist hate speech in a social media field experiment.” *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 118.50 (2021): e2116310118.
- Bail, Christopher A., et al. “Exposure to opposing views on social media can increase political polarization.” *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 115.37 (2018): 9216-9221.

### Suggested Readings:

- Bail, Chris. *Breaking the Social Media Prism*. Princeton University Press, 2021.
- Porter, Ethan, and Thomas J. Wood. “Political Misinformation and Factual Corrections on the Facebook News Feed: Experimental Evidence.” *The Journal of Politics* 84.3 (2022).
- Eltantawy, Nahed, and Julie B. Wiest. “The Arab spring— Social media in the Egyptian revolution: reconsidering resource mobilization theory.” *International journal of communication* 5 (2011): 18.

## Session 12 (June 15): The Politics of Tomorrow (+ Exam Prep)

The first half of this sessions surveys the future of public opinion research. The second half of this session is intended for exam preparation.

### Required Readings:

- John, P., et al. ”Overcoming Barriers to Vaccination By Empowering Citizens to Make Deliberate Choices.” *The British Academy*, 2022.
- Wu, Nicole. “Restrict foreigners, not robots”: Partisan responses to automation threat.” *Economics & Politics* (2022).
- Zhang, Baobao, and Allan Dafoe. “US public opinion on the governance of artificial intelligence.” *Proceedings of the AAAI/ACM Conference on AI, Ethics, and Society*. 2020.

### Suggested Readings:

- Bridgman Aengus, et al. “The causes and consequences of COVID-19 Misperceptions: Understanding the role of news and social media.” *Harvard Kennedy School Misinformation Review* 1.3 (2020).

## Final Exam (Exam Period, TBD)