

# AEC 5060

## PUBLIC OPINION IN AGRICULTURE AND NATURAL RESOURCES

Fall 2021

Course delivered online

### Course Objectives

To develop an understanding of the purpose and value of public opinion polling

To understand how public opinion data is gathered and used

To become aware of the presence and use of public opinion polls in our everyday lives

To develop an ability to critically judge the value of public opinion polls and how they are reported

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AGRICULTURAL  
EDUCATION AND  
COMMUNICATION

### Office Hours

By appointment, in person and via Zoom.

### Required Text:

Bardes, B. A., & Oldendick, R. W. (2016). *Public opinion: Measuring the American mind* (5th ed.). Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc.

### Professionalism Statement

Professional characteristics on which you will be judged in this course include Internet etiquette, collegial attitude (including use of inclusive language) and participation. This course relies extensively on written assignments, discussion and other class interactions; therefore, weekly engagement is crucial to your success.

### Participation Expectations:

You are expected to be an active and engaged member of this learning community. We will communicate with each other via Canvas and email. The first thing you will need to do to begin each week is to complete the assigned readings, watch any videos, and then take the reading quiz. After your reading and quiz are completed you should contribute to the discussion by first reading the posts from your colleagues and then contributing your thoughts and points. For each weekly

discussion you are expected to post a minimum of four posts each week. Two of these posts need to be directly in response to the discussion questions and the other two posts need to be addressing comments from your classmates.

Given that several discussion topics will be posted each week, this should not be difficult to accomplish. The more we all participate the deeper, thicker and more interesting the discussion will become.

### Quality of Postings

Your online posts for this class should be comparable to the kinds of comments you would make in a face-to-face class. A three-page essay response or post will not lend to the quality of the discussion (because most people will not have the patience to read all of it), and likewise neither will posting "I agree!" The quality of the discussions is contingent upon the quality (not length) of the individual posts in the discussion.

## EVALUATION OF GRADES

| Assignment (due dates posted in Canvas)   | Percentage of Grade |
|---|---------------------|
| Discussion Engagement                     | 20                  |
| Reading Quizzes                           | 20                  |
| Personal Statement on Public Opinion      | 5                   |
| Public Opinion Poll Critique (2)          | 15                  |
| Public Opinion Poll News Article Critique | 10                  |
| Public Opinion News Story                 | 15                  |
| Public Opinion Poll Proposal              | 15                  |
| Total                                     | 100                 |

**Note:** All assignments are due by 11:59pm on **Monday** of the week due (specific dates provided in Canvas).

### Grading Scale:

|                  |                  |                  |
|------------------|------------------|------------------|
| A = 93 – 100%    | B- = 80 – 82.99% | D+ = 66 – 69.99% |
| A- = 90 – 92.99% | C+ = 76 – 79.99% | D = 63 – 65.99%  |
| B+ = 86 – 89.99% | C = 73 – 75.99%  | D- = 60 – 62.99% |
| B = 83 – 85.99%  | C- = 70 – 72.99% | E = below 60%    |

*Note:* For information on current UF policies for assigning grade points, see <https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/grades.aspx>

### UF students are bound by The Honor Pledge:

*"We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honor and integrity by abiding by the Honor Code. On all work submitted for credit by students at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied: "On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment."*

The Honor Code (<http://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/process/student-conduct-honor-code/>) specifies a number of behaviors that are in violation of this code and the possible sanctions. Furthermore, you are obliged to report any condition that facilitates academic misconduct to appropriate personnel. If you have any questions or concerns, please consult with the instructor of this class.

In particular, THERE IS ZERO TOLERANCE IN THIS CLASS FOR:

- Giving, accepting or taking unauthorized aid;
- Plagiarizing websites or articles, others' or your own or
- Doubling up on assignments.

ASSIGNMENTS ARE REGULARLY SCANNED FOR PLAGIARISM. ANY VIOLATIONS WILL BE REPORTED TO THE DEAN OF STUDENTS.

## **POLICIES & GUIDELINES FOR SUCCESS IN THIS CLASS**

### **Grade Discrepancies**

If you have a question about a grade you receive on any of the course components, you must discuss the grade with me within one week of getting the assignment back. After that, grades will not be discussed or modified. This discussion must occur in person. I do not discuss grades via email.

### **Accommodations**

If you know of any type of disability or barrier to your success in this class, please let me know as soon as possible. I want you to be successful and I am happy to work with you, if I can. Please note, students requesting classroom accommodation must first register with the Dean of Students Office. The Dean of Students Office will provide documentation to the student who must then provide this documentation to the instructor when requesting accommodation.

### **Deadlines**

Deadlines will be given for all work; these deadlines will not be extended. Meeting deadlines is essential to be successful in this course and in our field. Your work must be completed and handed in by the specified date and time. Incomplete work turned in by the deadline will receive partial credit. If you miss a deadline without having a valid excuse, you will receive zero points on the late work.

### **Online Course Evaluation Process**

Students are expected to provide professional and respectful feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing course evaluations online via GatorEvals. Guidance on how to give feedback in a professional and respectful manner is available at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/students/>. Students will be notified when the evaluation period opens, and can complete evaluations through the email they receive from GatorEvals, in their Canvas course menu under GatorEvals, or via <https://ufl.bluera.com/ufl/>. Summaries of course evaluation results are available to students at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/public-results/>.

### **Student Assistance and Emergencies**

University support services are available to students who are experiencing significant distress and/or personal emergencies. As appropriate please contact:

UF Counseling & Wellness Center: [www.counseling.ufl.edu](http://www.counseling.ufl.edu) or 352-392-1575

University Police Department: 352-392-1111 or 9-1-1 for emergencies

### **\*\*Final Thought\*\***

I want you to be successful in this class, and I will do my best to help you succeed. I am happy to help you address any challenges you face this semester; please contact me to discuss any concerns or challenges.

## **Assignment Descriptions**

**Personal Statement on Public Opinion** – As we begin, think through your ideas and thoughts regarding public opinion. Consider why you are taking this course? What specifically about public opinion interests you? Have you ever read a public opinion poll that troubled you or made you question your own beliefs? Have you ever changed your opinion on a major issue because of the opinions of others? What role does public opinion play in a democracy? Consider these questions as well as any others that come to your mind and write a two-page statement on your personal views of public opinion.

**Public Opinion Poll Critique** – On two occasions you will select a topic relating to agriculture or natural resources and find two similar polls to critique. Consider issues related to sampling, the type of poll and questions used, was a filter question used, response format and use of the poll. Now compare the two polls in a three-page paper discussing how consistent public opinion is on the issue. Use supporting information from course readings.

**Public Opinion Poll News Article Critique** – Locate a public opinion poll in a NEWS source such as a magazine, newspaper or online news site that includes an article along with the poll. Looking at the strengths and weaknesses of both the poll and how it was reported, write a three-page critique. Consider issues similar to those in the Public Opinion Poll Critique, but then go beyond those to include the reporting factor. Did the reporter skew any of the data through his or her reporting? Is any language used that biases the reporting of the data?

**Public Opinion News Story** – Taking what you learned from the News Article Critique, you now get to be the reporter. Put yourself in the role of a journalist for a national U.S. newspaper, and then select a public opinion poll from the past three years that relates to agriculture and natural resources. Write a news story on the poll using clear, unbiased and concise language. As with all news stories you will need supporting quotes from people central to this issue which you may find from previously published sources. Note that these sources do not need to be news sources as you might find better quotation information in reports published on the issue you select.

**Public Opinion Poll Proposal** – In a five-page paper, propose a public opinion poll you would like to conduct that relates to agriculture and natural resources. Your proposal will need to be highly detailed with issues discussed throughout the course including a well-stated purpose, sampling issues, poll format and question types among other factors. You will also create the poll in Qualtrics. While you will not be expected to conduct this poll, the proposal should be detailed enough that you could easily do so if given the time and opportunity.

| <b>Week of</b> | <b>Topic</b>  | <b>Due</b>                                       |
|----------------|---|--|
| August 23      | Defining Public Opinion                                     | <i>Personal Statement on Public Opinion</i>      |
| August 30      | History of Public Opinion and Polls                         |  |
| September 6    | Formation of Opinions                                       |  |
| September 13   | Measuring Public Opinion                                    |  |
| September 20   | Public Opinion Research - Qualitative vs. Quantitative      | <i>Public Opinion Poll Critique 1</i>            |
| September 27   | Using Public Opinion Data                                   |  |
| October 4      | Public Opinion and Controversial Issues                     | <i>Public Opinion Poll News Article Critique</i> |
| October 11     | Perspectives on Public Opinion Research                     |  |
| October 18     | Influencing Public Opinion                                  | <i>Public Opinion Poll Critique 2</i>            |
| October 25     | Influencing Public Opinion through Strategic Communications |  |
| November 1     | Grassroots Public Opinion Formation                         | <i>Public Opinion News Story</i>                 |
| November 8     | Public Opinion and Politics                                 |  |
| November 15    | Public Opinion and Social Media                             |  |
| November 29    | Public Opinion Research and Ethics                          | <i>Public Opinion Poll Proposal (Due Dec. 3)</i> |