

AEC 5060

PUBLIC OPINION IN AGRICULTURE AND NATURAL RESOURCES

Summer 2018

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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Office Hours

Tuesdays 3:00pm-4:00pm or by appointment. I am happy to schedule zoom meetings or phone calls as needed.

Required Text:

Bardes, B. A., & Oldendick, R. W. (2017). *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. Each week you will need to do the following:

1. Watch my introduction video for the week
2. Complete the assigned readings
3. Take the reading quiz
4. 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 five posts each week. Two of these posts need to be

directly in response to the discussion questions and the other three 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)	Points	Percentage of Grade
Discussion Engagement	240	20
Reading Quizzes	130	15
Personal Statement on Public Opinion	30	5
Public Opinion Poll Critique	100	10
Public Opinion Poll Development	150	15
Public Opinion Poll News Article Critique	100	10
Public Opinion Synthesis and Application	250	25
Total	1000	100

Note: All assignments are due by midnight on Sunday 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>

Please note: Under no circumstances will final grades be rounded. Please do not come to me at the end of the semester to negotiate your grade. If you want an A in this course, begin working toward that today.

Assignment Descriptions:

Personal Statement and Video on Public Opinion – As we begin, think through your ideas and thoughts regarding public opinion. In a video, please introduce yourself, your major or area of concentration, and why you chose to take this course. In a complimentary, two-page (double spaced) paper, consider the following questions as well as others that may come to mind. 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?

Public Opinion Poll Critique – You will select a topic relating to agriculture or natural resources and find two polls on the topic to critique. In a four-page (double spaced) paper introduce your topic and the polls that you chose, then compare the two polls on basis of sampling, the type of poll and questions used, steps taken to reduce error, response format, poll results, and use of the poll results. Use supporting information from course readings.

Public Opinion Poll Development – You will develop a public opinion poll instrument on an agriculture or natural resources topic of your choice. The poll should include a minimum

5 questions (A scale-type question with several items counts as 1 question and demographic questions do not count toward the 5). Your poll may be created in a word document or in Qualtrics. If you create the poll in Qualtrics ensure that you turn in the link to the survey and that the link is operational. In a complimentary three-page paper (double spaced), introduce your topic and why public opinion on the topic is important, steps you took (or would take) to increase validity or reduce error of your poll, challenges in creating a poll, what you learned from looking at your peer's polls and what you learned from your peer's feedback. 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. This article and poll should relate to an agricultural or natural resource topic. Looking at the strengths and weaknesses of both the poll and how it was reported, write a three-page (double spaced) 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? Use supporting information from course readings.

Application of Public Opinion Data – Pretend you have been hired by an agricultural or natural resource company. The company you work for needs to communicate about an agricultural or natural resource issue/topic to the public. Because you have taken a course in public opinion, you understand the importance of using public opinion to inform the company's communication on the issue/topic. You have prepared a report of public opinion on the issue for your boss as well as recommendations for strategic communication about the topic. Your 5-10-page (double spaced) report should detail the following:

- Background on the issue/topic (must be related to agriculture and/or natural resources)
- Assessment of public opinion on the topic – locate existing public opinion data on the topic. Present the data in an easily digestible and accurate way, recognize any limitations that should be accounted for in the data (sampling, population, format, etc.).
- Create a communication plan for the company you work for to address the public opinion issue/topic. Your plan should include objectives of the communication plan, identification and description of a target audience, key messages and frames, communication strategies and tactics (frequency, communication channels, sources, plan for engagement, timeline).

Draw on what you have learned through this course, use citations and provide justifications where necessary.

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.

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 feedback on the quality of instruction in this course based on 10 criteria. These evaluations are conducted online at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu>. Evaluations are typically open during the last two or three weeks of the semester, but students will be given specific times when they are open. Summary results of these assessments are available to students at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu>.

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 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.

Course Schedule:

Date	Topic	Assignment Due
Week of May 14 th	Defining Public Opinion and History of Public Opinions and Polls	Personal Statement on Public Opinion
Week of May 21 st	Formation of Opinions	
Week of May 28 th	Public Opinion & Controversial Issues	Public Opinion Poll Critique
Week of June 4 th	Measuring Public Opinion: Part 1	
Week of June 11 th	Measuring Public Opinion: Part 2	
Week of June 18 th	Public Opinion Research & Ethics	Public Opinion Poll Development
Week of June 25 th	Summer Break	
Week of July 2 nd	Using Public Opinion Data	
Week of July 9 th	Influencing Public Opinion	Public Opinion Poll News Article Critique
Week of July 16 th	Influencing Public Opinion through Strategic Communication	
Week of July 23 rd	Public Opinion & Politics	
Week of July 30 th	Public Opinion & Social Media	Public Opinion Synthesis and Application
Week of August 6 th	Parting Thoughts	Course Evaluations and Final Discussion Board