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Personal web page: <http://www.uncw.edu/people/lowery>
Course web page: <http://www.uncw.edu/people/lowery/pls302>
Office Hours: http://people.uncw.edu/lowery/Weekly_schedule_Spring_2006.pdf

COURSE OBJECTIVES

This course examines the origin, content, and policy impact of public opinion in democratic nations, with major emphasis on the contemporary American experience. It deals systematically with opinion formation and change, opinion measurement, and the relationships between public opinion and public policy. In addition to reading-lecture-discussion activities, this course will also introduce you to the scientific analysis of public opinion data using statistical and computer tools.

TEXTBOOKS

- Erikson and Tedin. 2005. *American Public Opinion: Its Origins, Content, and Impact*. 7th ed. **(REQUIRED)**
- Larson, Stephanie Greco. 2003. *Public Opinion Using MicroCase Explorer*. **(REQUIRED)**
- eInstruction, *Student Response Keypad*. **(REQUIRED)**

STUDENT RESPONSE KEYPADS

Bring your activated *Student Response Keypad* to every class – starting with the first class meeting. You can learn how to activate your keypad by reading the *Introduction to the Course* at:

- http://people.uncw.edu/lowery/pls302/PLS302_introduction_to_course_Spring_2006.pdf

MEASUREMENT AND EVALUATION

Your course grade will be based on a total of 400 points divided in equal fourths between quizzes, a midterm examination, a final examination, and a research report.

- A series of 11 quizzes keyed to the assigned readings will contribute a possible 100 points toward your course grade. A 10-point quiz will be given before class discussion of each of the 11 reading assignments. Your total quiz score will be computed by first deleting the lowest quiz score and then averaging the remaining quiz scores and multiplying that quiz average times 10.
- The midterm and final examinations will each contribute a possible 100 points toward your course grade. Each exam will be one-half essay and one-half multiple choice. A list of essay topics is provided on the course website for each exam. Prior to each assigned reading and class discussion, a chapter outline will be provided on the course website that includes material that relates to one of the essay topics.
- The 100-point term project will be a research report of your investigation of correlates of public opinion and behavior in one of the datasets included in your *MicroCase Explorer*® textbook. Your report will contain five sections:
 - 1) a statement of the general problem you have selected,
 - 2) a review of the relevant published research literature and the specific hypotheses you have tested,
 - 3) a description of the data and methods used to test your hypotheses,
 - 4) a report of the findings produced by your analysis, and
 - 5) an examination of the implications of these findings -- methodological implications for further research as well as substantive implications for real world political actors.

A copy of a research report from a 1992 class member that earned an A grade can be found on the course web site.

- Up to 15 bonus points can be added to your course average, if you are the first to report to me (by email) any typographical or substantive errors in any course materials (available on the web, handed out in class, or included in a reading assignment). Each *typographical error* (spelling, punctuation, syntax, etc.) is worth 1 point added to your final course average. Each

substantive error (an error of fact or interpretation) is worth up to 3 points. In order to earn bonus points, you must include in your email the following information:

- your name,
- your course number (PLS 302),
- where the error was found (if in a textbook, give the author's name, page number, and paragraph number),
- what correction you suggest to replace the error.

All components of the final course grade are combined before a course letter grade is determined, using the following scale:

- A = 90–100% of total possible points
- B = 80– 89% of total possible points
- C = 70– 79% of total possible points
- D = 60– 69% of total possible points
- F = 00– 59% of total possible points

Any form of cheating on any graded work will result in an automatic grade of F for the course, no matter what the quality of all other course work.

REQUIRED ATTENDANCE

If you are a full-time, in-state student, the tuition and fees that you pay (\$3694.76 per year) account for *roughly one-fourth* of the annual cost of your education at UNCW (more than \$13,900).¹ The taxpayers of North Carolina pay much of the difference. This public assistance amounts to more than \$10,000 per year (think of it as tuition stamps) for each in-state, full-time student.² Out-of-state students pay \$13,629.76 per year in tuition and fees, so they are paying about 98% of the annual cost of their education at UNCW. **NC taxpayers (over three-fourths of whom are *not* college graduates) have a right to expect that you attend classes -- their money pays for a significant portion of your public-university education.**

PENALIZED ABSENCES

- **In the real (job) world, unforeseen circumstances (alarm clock doesn't go off, car trouble) are accepted as legitimate excuses for short and infrequent absences from work. Similarly, in this course *two un-penalized absences will be allowed (equivalent to a full week's worth of classes in a regular semester). For each additional un-excused absence, your final course grade will be reduced one letter grade.***
- ***In addition, no makeup quizzes or exams will be given for un-excused absences occurring under normal circumstances. An un-excused absence will result in a grade of zero for any quiz, hourly, or final exam.***
- If late to class, it is your responsibility to ensure (*immediately after class*) that you are recorded present on the class attendance roll. Should you fail to ask to be marked present after class, you will have used up one of any remaining un-penalized absences. Your being late to class is not a problem *as long as this happens infrequently. If you are tardy, see me immediately after class to make sure that your name was counted on the roll — otherwise, you will be marked absent.*
- Once in class, it is expected that you will stay until dismissed or unless some foreseen or unforeseen emergency occurs. In the former case, please advise me ahead of class; in the latter case, leave class as quietly as possible and inform me as soon as possible of the circumstances that led to your unexpected departure. ***Otherwise, you will be marked absent for that day.***

EXCUSED ABSENCES

- In the real (job) world, frequent or lengthy absences are excused only in cases of serious illness or injury, death in the immediate family, or other catastrophic events. Similarly, in this course, ***truly extraordinary circumstances that rarely occur may warrant special arrangements that will be made on a case-by-case basis. Excused absences require written documentation.***
- ***The following circumstances do not constitute an excused absence: job conflicts, an alarm clock that doesn't go off, or an illness that was not serious enough to send you to a healthcare provider who can provide written documentation. Save your two "free cuts" for situations like these.***
- Once in class, it is expected that you will stay until dismissed or unless some foreseen or unforeseen emergency occurs. In the former case, please advise me ahead of class; in the latter case, leave class as quietly as possible and inform me as soon as possible of the circumstances that led to your unexpected departure. ***Otherwise, you will be marked absent for that day.***

¹\$160,000,000 UNCW 2005-2006 operating budget (estimated) divided by 11,600 student FTEs (projected). Revenue sources for the University include tuition and fees (20 percent), state funds (41 percent), federal contracts and grants (10 percent), auxiliary enterprises (25 percent) and others (4 percent). See also <http://www.uncw.edu/ba> and http://www.uncw.edu/oir/FactSheet_Folder

²This public assistance is actually greatly understated because it does not reflect the cost of the state's capital investment in UNCW's buildings and grounds – currently valued at approximately \$210,000,000.