

**Journalism & Mass Communication 614**  
**COMMUNICATION AND PUBLIC OPINION**

(4 semester hours credit) - Spring 2017

Monday and Wednesday at 4:00 - 5:15 p.m. – 2195 Vilas Hall

Lab Sections:

Tuesdays, 9:30 - 10:20 a.m.	4041 VILAS – Lab 301
Tuesdays, 11:00 - 11:50 a.m.	4014 VILAS – Lab 302
Wednesdays, 11:00 - 11:50 a.m.	EDUC SCI 218 – Lab 303
Wednesdays, 12:05 - 12:55 a.m.	4035 VILAS – Lab 304

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**Dhavan V. Shah**

**Maier-Bascom Professor**

Email: [dshah@wisc.edu](mailto:dshah@wisc.edu)

Office Hours: Monday 12:00 – 2:00 p.m. and by appointment

Office: 5162 Vilas Hall

Phone: 608-262-0388

**Yini Zhang**

**Teaching Assistant**

Email: [zhang525@wisc.edu](mailto:zhang525@wisc.edu)

Office Hours: Tuesday 12:00 – 2:00 p.m. and by appointment

Office: 5137 Vilas Hall

**Course website:**

[www.journalism.wisc.edu/~dshah/j614/](http://www.journalism.wisc.edu/~dshah/j614/)

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**Purpose statement:**

This course is an examination of the concept of public opinion and provides an integrated approach to learning about (a) the philosophical and normative assumptions surrounding public opinion, (b) the theoretical approaches to studying public opinion formation and change, (c) the research processes involved in measuring public opinion and understanding its change over time, and (d) the reactions of the public to polling, news information and marketing communications. We will focus on how opinion intersects with the mass media, policymakers, and mass marketers. The goal is to provide students with an understanding of public opinion as it relates to journalism and strategic communication, especially how public opinion surveys are conducted and opinion trends understood. A central tenet of this class is that one of the most effective ways to learn is by being actively involved in the subject matter. In order to get hands-on experience understanding the connection between mass communication and public opinion, students will participate in a group project that requires them to (a) highlight a trend in public opinion of normative importance, (b) generate an explanation of the trend based on media influence, (c) attempt to link it to shifts in media content, and (d) present their predictions and conclusions to the class.

**Readings:**

The **required readings** for this class are available as a single bulk download. Reading assignments are

listed by class session after the lecture outline and again at the end of the syllabus in a bibliography. Assigned readings for Monday lecture are to be completed prior to coming to discussion section.

### **Group Project:**

In lab, students will be put into groups of 4-5 to work on a class project regarding a selected trend in public opinion. Each group will (1) examine public opinion archives and select a trend in public opinion to study, (2) plot that trend, noting the change over time, and explain its societal relevance, (3) develop a theoretical rationale regarding how media might explain this trend, (4) test some part of this theory with a survey-question wording experiment, (5) conduct a content analysis of mass media to relate to this trend, and (6) prepare a presentation that summarizes their findings. In the past few years, two to three groups from each class have gone on to present this research at national public opinion conferences.

Opinion Trend Paper: This 5-page paper is produced by the group and consists of an introduction to the opinion trend of interest, a plot of the changes in measurements of this opinion trend, and a discussion about its import. Explaining this trend will be the focus of your group's efforts over the term. It is worth 15 points toward your grade.

Media Predictions Paper: This 5-page paper is produced by the group and consists of an introduction, purpose statement, literature review, and a model predicting the relationship between media content and changes in opinion. This work will form the basis of your account of how changes in media content are linked to changes in mass opinion and the implications of this. It is worth 15 points toward your grade.

Question Wording Paper: This 3-page paper is produced by the group and features the rationale, design, measurement for an experimental study of survey question wording. It will include the actual question wording of the survey items and response categories. These will be programmed into a national survey we will collect so that you can report the results in your final presentations. This paper is worth 15 points toward your grade.

Content Analysis Work: Each group must work together to conduct a content analysis of media content focusing on the period spanning the trend in mass opinion. Media should be coded for content thought to explain the changes in mass opinion (e.g., popular music lyrics and attitudes towards drug legalization; presence of gay characters in popular programs and support for gay marriage, coverage of female politicians and willingness to vote for a woman for President). This work is worth 30 points toward your final grade.

Final Class Presentation: During the last four class sessions, each group will then make a presentation (a) highlighting the opinion trend, (b) explaining their theory of media influence, (c) summarizing their findings for both the survey experiment and content analysis relating media content with mass opinion. One presentation will be selected from each day as a "finalist." "Finalist" groups will not have to take the final exam. This presentation will be worth 50 points toward your final grade.

Peer Evaluation: During the final exam period, there will be a confidential written evaluation of each student's performance by other group members. Each member of the group will evaluate all other group members on a 100-point scale based on effort, contributions, and congeniality. The average of these evaluations will be converted to a 25-point equivalent and figured into the final grade to reflect your contribution to the final project.

## Exams:

There will be two examinations for this class: a midterm (50 points) and a final exam (50 points). The exams will cover material presented in class, lab and readings. The exams will include both multiple choice and short answer questions that will be based on the readings and/or material presented in class. The final exam is **not** explicitly cumulative, but material covered throughout the class may be covered.

## Lab assignments:

There will be two reaction papers each worth 10 points toward the final grade. There will also be a series of smaller lab exercises totaling an additional 10 points. You will receive further instructions on these assignments in lab. Finally, participation in lab will be worth an additional 20 points. Most of the class project work will take place in lab, so attendance and involvement in those activities will count toward your participation score, along with engagement in class discussions and exercises.

## Notice Regarding Academic Misconduct:

It is your responsibility to complete your own work as best you can in the time provided. Cheating, plagiarism and falsification of data are serious offenses, and it is our responsibility to make sure they do not occur. Anyone found guilty of academic misconduct should expect to fail the entire course and have a record of the matter forwarded to the Dean of Students.

## Grading:

<u>Activities</u>	<u>Points</u>	<u>Due date</u>
<i>Group Project Responsibilities</i>		
Opinion Trend Paper	15	In lab on Week 4
Media Predictions Paper	15	In lab on Week 8
Question Wording Paper	15	In lab on Week 10
Content Analysis Work	30	In lab on Week 12
Final Presentation	50	Slides due <b>April 30 (Sunday)</b>
Peer evaluation	<u>25</u>	In lecture on Week 15
	150	
<i>Exams</i>		
Midterm exam	50	In class on Week 6
Final exam	<u>50</u>	During Scheduled Time
	100	
<i>Lab Assignments</i>		
Response Paper 1	10	In lab on Week 3
Response Paper 2	10	In lab on Week 9
Mini-assignments	10	In lab throughout the semester
Participation	<u>20</u>	In lab throughout the semester
	50	

Students will be graded on the basis of.... 300 points

The following breakdowns provide a guideline for the assignment of final grades. These are standards that are guaranteed. When we establish the breakpoints for determining final grades, we use a form of **“collective grading.”** By this, we mean that we assess the performance of the class as a whole. If we have the impression that students in general have been working hard on assignments, doing the readings,

and participating in class, we will be more generous when setting the final grades. The scale below may be adjusted to make the grades more generous, but they will NOT be adjusted to make the scale tougher.

<u>Percentage</u>	<u>Grade</u>
93-100%	A
88-93%	AB
83-88%	B
78-83%	BC
73-78%	C
68-73%	D
below 68%	F

### COURSE SCHEDULE

<u>WEEK*</u>	<u>Monday</u>	<u>Wednesday</u>
One 1/16		Intro: Media, publicity, and opinion
Two 1/23	Normative concepts I: History of public opinion	Normative concepts II: Public opinion and policy
Three* 1/30	Psychology I: Attitudinal/cognitive models	Psychology II: Nature of survey response
Four* 2/6	Sociology I: Norms and social influence	Sociology II: Social conflict and structure
Five 2/13	Media effects I: News, agenda setting, and framing	Media effects II: Entertainment and cultivation
Six 2/20	Media effects III: Ads, campaigns, and opinion	<b>MIDTERM EXAM (Feb 22)</b>
Seven 2/27	Media, perception, and opinion I: Third-person effects	Media, perception, and opinion II: Spiral of silence
Eight* 3/6	Studying opinion I: Overview	Studying opinion II: Content analysis
Nine* 3/13	Studying opinion III: Survey research	<b>PROJECT WORK DAY - NO LECTURE</b>
3/20	<b>Spring Break</b>	<b>Spring Break</b>
Ten* 3/27	Studying opinion IV: Experimental research	Research procedures I: Concepts and operationalization
Eleven 4/3	Research procedures II: Reliability & validity	Research procedures III: Sampling
Twelve* 4/10	Problems and challenges I: Nonresponse & Cell Phones	Presentation Workshop: Parameters and Examples
Thirteen 4/17	Marketing and opinion I: Materialism & luxury goods	Marketing and opinion II: Political consumerism
Fourteen* 4/24	<b>PROJECT WORK DAY - NO LECTURE</b>	Student presentations
Fifteen 5/1	Student presentations	Student presentations
Sixteen 5/8	<b>FINAL EXAM (5/8/2017, 10:05 a.m. - 12:05 p.m.)</b>	

**\*There is an assignment due in lab on this week; see grading section details.**

## READINGS SCHEDULE

<b><u>WEEK</u></b>	<b><u>Monday</u></b>	<b><u>Wednesday</u></b>
One		Krugman (1965). The impact of television advertising... + Cutlip (1997) Brief history of public relations
Two	Glynn et al. (1999). The history of public opinion – Ch. 2.	Glynn et al. (1999). Public opinion and policymaking - Ch. 9
Three	Glynn et al. (1999). Psychological perspectives – Ch. 4 + Tourangeau et al. (2000) Introduction - Ch. 1	Zaller (1994) Positive constructs of public opinion
Four	Price & Oshagan (1995) Social perspectives on opinion	Olien et al. (1995). Conflict, consensus and public opinion. + Mueller (1994) Policy & opinion during Gulf War – Ch. 1 & 2
Five	Kosicki (1993) Problems and opportunities with agenda-setting + Price & Tewksbury (1995) A theoretical account of framing...	Gerbner et al (2002) Growing up with television
Six	Jamieson (2000) Ch 10 – 13 + Ansolobehere (1993) Ch. 8	<b>MIDTERM EXAM (Feb. 22)</b>
Seven	Perloff (2002) The third person effect	Eveland (2002) Media impact on social reality judgments
Eight	Glynn et al. (1999). Methods for studying opinion - Ch. 3	Babbie (2001) Content analysis Ch. 11
Nine	Babbie (2001) Survey research Ch. 9	<b>PROJECT WORK DAY - NO LECTURE</b>
	Spring Break	Spring Break
Ten	Babbie (2001) Experimental methods Ch. 8	Tourangeau et al. (2000) Understanding Survey Questions, Ch. 2
Eleven	Babbie (2001) Reliability & Validity Ch. 5	Babbie (2001) Sampling Ch. 7
Twelve	Keeter et al. (2006) Growing non-response	Keeter et al. (2007) Growing cell-only population
Thirteen	Schor (1999) Materialism and Consumption + Twitchell (2002) Lap of luxury	Stolle & Hooghe (2006) Consumers as political...
Fourteen	<b>PROJECT WORK DAY - NO LECTURE</b>	Student presentations
Fifteen	Student presentations	Student presentations
Sixteen	<b>FINAL EXAM (TBD)</b>	

## COURSE READINGS

- Ansolabehere, S, Behr, R., & Iyengar, S. (1993). *The media game: American politics in the television age*. New York: McMillan (pp. 157 –188).
- Babbie, E. (2001). Conceptualization and measurement. Ch. 5 in E. Babbie, *The practice of social research*. 9th edition. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.
- Babbie, E. (2001). Content analysis. Ch. 11 in E. Babbie, *The practice of social research*. 9th edition. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.
- Babbie, E. (2007). Sampling. Ch. 7 in E. Babbie, *The Practice of Social Research*. 11<sup>th</sup> edition. Belmont, CA: Thomson Wadsworth.
- Babbie, E. (2007). Experimental Methods. Ch. 8 in E. Babbie, *The Practice of Social Research*. 11<sup>th</sup> edition. Belmont, CA: Thomson Wadsworth.
- Babbie, E. (2007). Survey Research. Ch. 9 in E. Babbie, *The Practice of Social Research*. 11<sup>th</sup> edition. Belmont, CA: Thomson Wadsworth.
- Beniger, J. R. & Gusek, J. A (1995). The cognitive revolution in public opinion and communication research. In Glasser, T.L., & Salmon, C.T. (Eds.) *Public opinion and the communication of consent*. New York: Guilford Press (pp. 217-248).
- Cutlip, S. M. (1997) The unseen power: A brief history of public relations. In Caywood, C. (Ed). *The Handbook of Strategic Public Relations and Integrated Communications*, New York: McGraw-Hill (pp. 15-33.)
- Eveland, W. P. (2002) The impact of news and entertainment media on perceptions of social reality. In Dillard, J. P. and Pfau, M (Eds.) *The persuasion handbook*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage 691-727).
- Gerbner, J. et al. (2002) Growing up with television: Cultivation process. In Bryant, J. & Zillmann, D. (Eds.) *Media effects: Advances in Theory and Research*. Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum (43-67).
- Glynn, C.J., Herbst, S., O’Keefe, G.J., & Shapiro, R.Y. (1999). The history of public opinion – Ch 2. In C.J. Glynn et al. (Eds.). *Public opinion*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press (pp. 31-64).
- Glynn, C.J., Herbst, S., O’Keefe, G.J., & Shapiro, R.Y. (1999). Methods for studying public opinion – Ch 3. In C.J. Glynn et al. (Eds.). *Public opinion*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press (pp. 65-100).
- Glynn, C.J., Herbst, S., O’Keefe, G.J., & Shapiro, R.Y. (1999). Psychological perspectives - Ch 4. In C.J. Glynn et al. (Eds.). *Public opinion*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press (pp. 103-144).
- Glynn, C.J., Herbst, S., O’Keefe, G.J., & Shapiro, R.Y. (1999). Public opinion and policymaking - Ch 9. In C.J. Glynn et al. (Eds.). *Public opinion*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press (pp. 299-340).
- Jamieson, K. H. (2000). *Everything you think you know about politics...* New York: Basic Books (pp. 93-114).
- Keeter, S., Kennedy, C., Clark, A., Tompson, T., and Mokrzycki, M. (2007) “What’s Missing from

National RDD Surveys? The Impact of the Growing Cell-Only Population,” American Association for Public Opinion Research, Anaheim, California, May 17-20

- Keeter, S., Kennedy, C., Dimock, M., Best, J., and Craighill, P. (2006) Gauging the Impact of Growing Nonresponse on Estimates from a National RDD Telephone Survey, *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 70, 759-779
- Kosicki, G. M. (1993). Problems and opportunities in agenda-setting research. *Journal of Communication*, 43, 100-127.
- Krugman, H. E., (1965). The impact of television advertising: learning without involvement, *Public Opinion Quarterly*, Vol. 29, No. 3 349-356
- Mueller, J. (1994) *Policy and opinion in the Gulf War*. Chicago, University of Chicago Press (pp. 17-63).
- Olien, C.N., Donohue, G.A., & Tichenor, C.N. (1995). Conflict, consensus, and public opinion. In Glasser, T.L., & Salmon, C.T. (Eds.) *Public opinion and the communication of consent..* New York: Guilford Press (pp. 301-322).
- Perloff, R. M. (2002) The Third Person Effect. In Bryant, J. & Zillmann, D. (Eds.) *Media effects: Advances in Theory and Research*. Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum (489-506).
- Price, V & Oshagan, H (1995). Social-psychological perspectives on public opinion. In Glasser, T.L., & Salmon, C.T. (Eds.) *Public opinion and the communication of consent..* New York: Guilford Press (pp. 177-216).
- Price, V., and Tewksbury, D. (1996). *News values and public opinion: A theoretical account of media priming and framing*. In G. Barnett and F. Boster (Eds.) *Progress in communication sciences*. Norwood, N.J., Ablex Pub. Corp.
- Schor, J. (1999). Toward a new politics of consumption. In Schor, J. and Holt, D., *The consumer society reader*, New York: The New Press.
- Stolle, D. & Hooghe. (2006). Consumers as Political Participants? In Micheletti, M., Follesdal, & Stolle, D. *Politics, products, and markets*. London: Transaction Publishers.
- Tourangeau, R., Rips, L. J., & Rasinski, K. (2000). *The psychology of survey response*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press. (Chapter 1: Introduction and a Point of View)
- Tourangeau, R., Rips, L. J., & Rasinski, K. (2000). *The psychology of survey response*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press. (Chapter 2: Respondents Understanding of Survey Questions)
- Twitchell, J. B. (2002) *Living It Up: Our Love Affair with Luxury*. New York: Columbia University Press. Ch. 1.
- Zaller, J. (1994) Positive Constructs of Public Opinion. *Critical Studies in Mass Communication*, September 11: 276-286.

## LAB SCHEDULE

### Lab section details:

Tuesdays, 9:30 - 10:20 a.m.	4041 VILAS – Lab 301
Tuesdays, 11:00 - 11:50 a.m.	4014 VILAS – Lab 302
Wednesdays, 11:00 - 11:50 a.m.	EDUC SCI 218 – Lab 303
Wednesdays, 12:05 - 12:55 a.m.	4035 VILAS – Lab 304

### Week 1: No Lab

### Week 2: Intro to Public Opinion

- Introduction to lab and class
- Discuss response paper assignment
- Group project overview
  - Opinion poll data sources (Roper i-poll system)
  - Reviewing literature (scholarly journal search)
- Project: select groups, discuss relevant opinion topics

### Week 3: Importance of Opinion Trends/Psychological Roots

- Discuss normative implications of opinion
- Discuss psychological roots of opinion
- Discuss opinion trend paper
  - Finding opinion data
  - Plotting opinion trends
  - Describing opinion trends
- Individual Assignment: Response paper 1 due in lab*

### Week 4: Survey Response and Social Influence

- Discuss nature of survey response
- Discuss norms and social influence
- In-lab presentation of opinion trends (5-7 minutes for each group)
- Project Assignment: Opinion trend paper due in lab*
- Mini Assignment 1: Presentation slides or handouts due in lab (Group project)*

### Week 5: Social Conflict and News Effects

- Discuss theories of social conflict
- Discuss theories of news influence on opinion: agenda setting, priming, and framing
- Discuss media prediction paper
- Applying theory to opinion trends
- In-class question-wording activity

### Week 6: Entertainment and Campaign Effects [Exam Week]

- Discuss theories of cultivation and campaign influence on opinion
- Applying theories to opinion trends: Hone arguments for media predictions paper
- Midterm review: Core concepts, relevant materials and questions

### Week 7: Media, Perceptions, and Opinion

- Discuss third-person perceptions and effects



Project: continue to work on media explanations for the opinion trend

*Mini Assignment 2: Share two relevant scholarly articles or chapters related to the group project.*

### **Week 8: Spiral of Silence / Opinion Research**

Discuss spiral of silence and perceptual influences

Introduction to opinion research

Begin work on study design

*Project Assignment: Media prediction paper due in lab*

### **Week 9: Content Analysis**

Review of content analysis assignment

- Sampling (sampling procedures/decisions)
- Content measurement (units of analysis, variables, validity and reliability)

Project: Designing content study (sampling procedures, coding categories)

*Individual Assignment: Response paper 2 due in lab*

### **Spring Break!!!**

### **Week 10: Opinion Research and Question Wording**

Discuss survey and experimental research approaches to studying opinion

- Finalize question wording experiment for programming

Discuss conceptual and operational issues of content coding

- Establish timeline for completion of project

*Project Assignment: Question wording paper due by Friday at noon (submit by email)*

### **Week 11: Connecting Content and Trend Data**

Discuss issues of reliability and validity in opinion research

Project:

- Relate content findings to opinion trends
- Establishing inter-coder reliability
- Coder training

### **Week 12: Preparing for Presentation**

Making presentation slides

Project: Discuss conclusions and implications of research

*Project Assignment: Content analysis work due in lab*

*Mini Assignment 3: Presentation slides or handouts of content analysis due in lab (Group project)*

### **Week 13: In-lab Presentation**

Each group gives practice run of presentation

*Mini Assignment 4: Abstract for the presentation due in lab (Group project)*

*Mini Assignment 5: Each group uploads presentation slides to learn@uw by 6 pm Sunday (4/30) of week 14*

### **Week 14: No Lab**

Extended office hours for all students who have questions about anything related to the class

### **Week 15: Exam Review and Preparation**

**Exam Review**