

**Journalism & Mass Communication 614**  
**Communication and Public Opinion** - Fall 2017 - (4 credits)  
Monday and Wednesday at 2:30 - 3:45 p.m. – 2195 Vilas Hall

Lab Sections:

Tuesdays, 9:55 - 10:45 a.m.	4014 VILAS – Lab 301
Tuesdays, 11:00 - 11:50 a.m.	4014 VILAS – Lab 302
Wednesdays, 12:05 - 12:55 a.m.	2111 Humanities – Lab 303
Wednesdays, 1:20 - 2:10 a.m.	2111 Humanities– Lab 304

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**Dhavan V. Shah**  
**Maier-Bascom Professor**

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

Office Hours: Monday/Wednesday 11:00 – 12:00 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 12:30 – 2:30 p.m. and by appointment

Office: 5137 Vilas Hall

**Course website:**

<https://dshah.journalism.wisc.edu/teaching/#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 message presentation, (d) track changes in media content relevant to the highlighted opinion trend, and (e) 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 randomly assigned to groups of 4-6 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 20 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 programed 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 20-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 response papers each worth 10 points toward the final grade. There will also be two mini assignments 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. Class project work will be guided in lab, so attendance and involvement in those activities is essential, and will count toward your participation score, along with engagement in class discussions and exercises. Notably, significant amounts of time outside lab will be devoted to the project, both in breakout sessions during lecture and group meetings.

## 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	After lab: Week 4 (Wed. 11:59 pm)
Media Predictions Paper	20	After lab: Week 7 (Fri. 11:59 pm)
Question Wording Paper	15	After lab: Week 10 (Wed. 11:59 pm)
Content Analysis Work	30	After lab: Week 13 (Wed. 11:59 pm)
Final Presentation	50	Slides due: Week 14 (Tues. 11:59 pm)
Peer evaluation	<u>20</u>	In class on Week 15
	150	
<i>Exams</i>		
Midterm exam	50	In class on Week 6 (10/11)
Final exam	<u>50</u>	In class on Week 16 (12/20 2:45-4:45 pm)
	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
88-92.9%	AB
83-87.9%	B
78-82.9%	BC
73-77.9%	C
68-72.9%	D
below 68%	F

### COURSE SCHEDULE

<b>WEEK*</b>	<b>Monday</b>	<b>Wednesday</b>
One 9/4		Intro: Media, publicity, and opinion
Two 9/11	Normative concepts I: History of public opinion	Normative concepts II: Public opinion and policy
Three* 9/18	Psychology I: Attitudinal/cognitive models	Psychology II: Nature of survey response
Four* 9/25	Sociology I: Norms and social influence	Sociology II: Social conflict and structure
Five 10/2	Media effects I: News, agenda setting, and framing	Media effects II: Entertainment and cultivation
Six 10/9	Media effects III: Ads, campaigns, and opinion	<b>MIDTERM EXAM</b> (October 11)
Seven* 10/16	Media, perception, and opinion I: Third-person effects	Media, perception, and opinion II: Spiral of silence
Eight 10/23	Studying opinion I: Overview	Studying opinion II: Survey research
Nine* 10/30	Studying opinion III: Experimental research	Studying opinion IV: Content analysis
Ten* 11/6	Research procedures I: Concepts and operationalization	Research procedures II: Reliability & validity
Eleven 11/13	Research procedures III: Sampling and Nonresponse	Presentation Workshop: Parameters and Examples
Twelve 11/20	Data Analysis Workshop: Relationship Testing	<b>PROJECT WORK DAY - Consultation</b>
Thirteen* 11/27	Marketing and opinion I: Materialism & luxury goods	Marketing and opinion II: Political consumerism
Fourteen * 12/4	<b>PROJECT WORK DAY - Consultation</b>	Student presentations
Fifteen 12/11	Student presentations	Student presentations
Sixteen 12/18	<b>FINAL EXAM</b> (12/20 - 2:45-4:45 in 2195 Vilas)	

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

## READINGS SCHEDULE

<b><u>WEEK</u></b>	<b><u>Monday</u></b>	<b><u>Wednesday</u></b>
One		
Two	Glynn et al. (1999) The history of public opinion – Ch. 2. + Cutlip (1997) Brief history of public relations	Monroe (1998) Public opinion and policy making
Three	Glynn et al. (1999) Psychological perspectives – Ch. 4	Zaller (1994) Positive constructs of public opinion
Four	Price & Oshagan (1995) Social perspectives on opinion	Mueller (1994) Policy & opinion during Gulf War – Ch. 1 & 2
Five	McCombs (2005) A Look at Agenda Setting + Chong & Druckman (2007) A Theory of Framing and Opinion	Gerbner et al (2002) Growing up with television
Six	Jamieson et al. (2000) Ch 10 – 13	<b>MIDTERM EXAM</b> (October 11)
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) Survey research Ch. 9 + Tourangeau et al. (2000) Survey Questions, Ch. 2
Nine	Babbie (2001) Experimental methods Ch. 8	Babbie (2001) Content analysis Ch. 11
Ten	Babbie (2001) Conceptualization, operationalization and measurement Ch. 5	Carmines & Zeller (1979). Reliability and Validity Assessment
Eleven	Babbie (2001) Sampling Ch. 7 + Keeter et al. (2006) Growing non-response	No readings
Twelve	No readings	<b>PROJECT WORK DAY - Consultation</b>
Thirteen	Schor (1999) Materialism and Consumption + Twitchell (2002) Lap of luxury	Stolle & Hooghe (2006) Consumers as political...
Fourteen	<b>PROJECT WORK DAY - Consultation</b>	Student presentations
Fifteen	Student presentations	Student presentations
Sixteen	<b>FINAL EXAM</b> (12/20 - 2:45-4:45 in 2195 Vilas)	

## COURSE READINGS

- Babbie, E. (2001). Conceptualization, operationalization and measurement. Ch. 5 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.
- Babbie, E. (2001). Content analysis. Ch. 11 in E. Babbie, *The Practice of Social Research*. 11<sup>th</sup> edition. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.
- Carmines, E. G., & Zeller, R. A. (1979). *Reliability and validity assessment* (Vol. 17). Sage publications.
- Chong, D., & Druckman, J. N. (2007). A theory of framing and opinion formation in competitive elite environments. *Journal of Communication*, 57(1), 99-118.
- 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).
- Jamieson, K. H. (2000). *Everything you think you know about politics...* New York: Basic Books (pp. 93-114).
- 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
- McCombs, M. (2005). A look at agenda-setting: Past, present and future. *Journalism studies*, 6(4), 543-557.
- Monroe, A. D. (1998). Public opinion and public policy, 1980-1993, *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 62, 6-28
- Mueller, J. (1994) *Policy and opinion in the Gulf War*. Chicago, University of Chicago Press (pp. 17-63).
- 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).
- 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 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

Tuesdays, 9:55 - 10:45 a.m.	4014 VILAS – Lab 301
Tuesdays, 11:00 - 11:50 a.m.	4014 VILAS – Lab 302
Wednesdays, 12:05 - 12:55 a.m.	2111 Humanities – Lab 303
Wednesdays, 1:20 - 2:10 a.m.	2111 Humanities– Lab 304

### **Week 1: No Lab**

### **Week 2: Intro to Public Opinion**

Introduction to lab and class

Discuss response paper assignment

Project:

- Group project overview
- Find opinion poll data (Roper i-poll system and others)
- Find literature (scholarly journal article search)
- Introduce potential opinion topics – share example presentation
- **Assigned to groups and choose topics!**

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

Q&A on normative implications and psychological roots of opinion

Project:

- Share previous student projects
- **Discuss opinion trend paper**
- In-class activity: find opinion data; plot opinion trends; describe opinion trends

*Individual Assignment: Response paper 1 due in lab*

### **Week 4: Social Influence**

Q&A on norms and social influence; theories of social conflict

Project:

- Answer questions on opinion trend paper
- **Discuss media prediction paper**

*Project Assignment: Opinion trend paper due Wed. 11:59pm*

### **Week 5: Social Conflict and News Effects**

Q&A on theories of news influence on opinion: agenda setting, priming, and framing

Project:

- In-class activity: how to formulate media predictions

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

Q&A on theories of cultivation and campaign influence on opinion

Midterm review: core concepts and questions

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

Q&A on third-person perceptions and spiral of silence

Project:

- Continue to work on media predictions for the opinion trend
- In-class activity: discuss scholarly articles/chapters related to group project

*Mini Assignment 1 (Individual assignment): Share two relevant scholarly articles or chapters related*



*to the group project.*

*Project Assignment: Media prediction paper due after lab by Friday at 11:59 pm.*

### **Week 8: Opinion Research**

Q&A on opinion research

Project:

- Informal presentation of opinion trend + question wording paper (5 min. per group)
- **Discuss question-wording paper**
- In-class activity: study design & question-wording

### **Week 9: Opinion Research**

Q&A on survey and experimental research approaches;

Project:

- In-class activity: study design & question-wording
- **Discuss content analysis paper**

*Individual Assignment: Response paper 2 due in lab*

### **Week 10: Opinion Research**

Q&A on content analysis;

Project:

- Finalize question wording experiment for programming
- In-class activity: designing content study (sampling procedures/decisions, content measurement, coding categories)
- Establish timeline for completion of project

*Project Assignment: Question wording paper due after lab by Wednesday 11:59pm*

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

Q&A on issues of reliability and validity in opinion research

Project:

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

### **Week 12: Data analysis**

Making presentation slides

Project:

- Data analysis
- Discuss conclusions and implications of research

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

Each group gives practice run of presentation

*Project Assignment: Content analysis work due after lab by Wednesday at 11:59 pm.*

*Mini Assignment 2: Practice run presentation slides due in lab*

### **Week 14: No lab meeting**

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

*Presentation slides due by 11:59 pm Tuesday (12/5)*

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

Exam Review: core concepts and questions