

POLI 209: Analyzing Public Opinion

Philip Warncke
UNC Chapel Hill

Spring 2021

Tue and Thu, 3:30 – 4:45 PM

“In this age, in this country, public sentiment is everything. With it, nothing can fail; against it, nothing can succeed. Whoever molds public sentiment goes deeper than he who enacts statutes, or pronounces judicial decisions.”

-Abraham Lincoln

“Rumour is a pipe
Blown by surmises, jealousies, conjectures
And of so easy and so plain a stop
That the blunt monster with uncounted heads,
The still-discordant wavering multitude,
Can play upon it.”

-William Shakespeare

Link to classes and office hours:

Class times: Tuesdays 3:30 – 4: 45 PM, Wednesdays 3:30 – 4: 45 PM

Office hours: Tuesdays 4:45 PM – 6:15 PM, Wednesdays 4:45 PM – 6:15 PM

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Course Overview and Objectives

This course will give you a broad overview of public opinion – a vast and festinating topic in the study of modern political systems. We will cover the field’s diverse theoretical perspectives, cutting edge research, and applied problems. In addition to introducing the theoretical foundations and current directions of public opinion research, this class will also teach you some of the practical essentials of becoming a successful public opinion analyst. This course thus has a hybrid aim: we will spend roughly 2/3 of our time studying the rich body of extant public opinion literature – in the United States and elsewhere – while using the remaining time to build a practical skillset on survey design, data analysis, and visualization.

It seems obvious that public opinion should matter in a democracy. But does it? Should it? How do we know what people want? Do the people themselves even know? What factors influence public opinion? How do elites, such as the media and political leaders, influence mass opinion? How does public opinion influence elites? How, and why, do groups differ in their opinions? These are just some of the questions we will explore together.

This course fulfills the quantitative intensive university requirement. It therefore includes an introduction to basic statistical concepts, research design, and data analysis. No prior statistical background is necessary. There will be frequent in-class lab exercises and five DataCamp mini-courses. Through a mix of lectures, discussions, and these exercises, you will acquire the tools to conduct your own research on a question of interest to you.

As a remotely taught, synchronous course, you will need to have access to a stable internet connection to participate. Please also have your webcam on if possible.

Required textbooks:

- Berinsky, Adam, ed. 2019. *New Directions in Public Opinion*, 3d ed. New York: Routledge Press.
- Rea, Lois and Richard Parker. 2014. *Designing and Conducting Survey Research: A Comprehensive Guide*, 4th Edition

Required software:

- R and RStudio (free of charge). Please download and install the following software: <https://www.r-project.org/> & <https://rstudio.com/products/rstudio/download/>

Students with Disabilities

I will accommodate students with disabilities. If you have a disability, please contact the Office of Learning Disabilities at <http://www.unc.edu/depts/lds/index.html> and also send me a note during the first week of class indicating how you wish to be accommodated.

Assessments and grading

Below you will find an overview of your grade breakdown, followed by a detailed explanation of each component. I will assess your performance throughout the semester, and am glad to discuss any of the topics in office hours or by email.

Grading percentages

General class participation*	10%
Written questions (on Sakai)*	10%
Paper reports & discussion leadership	10%
Data camp short-courses*	10%
<i>Survey data project (proposal)</i>	<i>10%</i>
<i>Survey data project (preliminary analysis)</i>	<i>15%</i>
<i>Survey data project (final draft)</i>	<i>15%</i>
Final Exam	20%

*= Assessment(s) throughout the semester

Percentage to grade conversion

100-94%	A	73-76%	C
90-93%	A-	70-72%	C-
87-89%	B+	67-69%	D+
83-86%	B	63-66%	D
80-82%	B-	60-62%	D-
77-79%	C+	59% or below	F

Because you will be assessed throughout the semester, you won't encounter cookie-cutter multiple choice tests. Instead, the bulk of your grade boils down to how well you prepare for class, how you participate in and lead discussions, how you complete the external assignments, and the work you put into your individual projects. Therefore, please be aware that this requires more disciplined time management throughout the semester than would a more standard, midterm and final exam type course. In particular, there are three types of assessments designed to measure your engagement throughout the class: your **participation** during class discussion, one **written question** each to be submitted to Sakai each Monday noon and Wednesday noon, and the **DataCamp short courses** (more information below). Together, these components account for 30% of your grade.

I will grade your **participation** holistically at the end of the semester, considering both the frequency and the quality of your contributions. You can get provide midterm participation grades upon request. In any case, I am happy to discuss strategies to improve your participation in office hours or by appointment.

Questions almost always count as high-quality contributions. If you are unclear on a concept, you are very likely not the only one. Moreover, asking questions allows everyone to get the most out of recitation. Well-argued answers/comments, that is answers/comments that include a main point and provide evidence in support of that point, count as high-quality contributions.

I will assess **your work on an independent project** with a set of three deliverables (more information specified below) designed such that you accumulate progress over the course of the semester. Together, the project assignments account for 40% of your grade.

To make class more engaging, I also require each of you to **either present** a 10 min summary of a public opinion research paper (from syllabus list below), **or to lead the discussion** on that same paper based on a catalogue of critical discussion questions prepared ahead of class. This means that you will partner up with someone to divide up the role of reporter/discussion leader. Of course, you can also divide up both tasks equally between yourselves.

If you are the **reporter**, please make sure that you won't talk for more than 10 min. Within that time-frame, you should be able to cover the general context of the paper, the underlying theoretical puzzle (often formulated as competing hypothesis), the research approach (how are they using what kind of data?), and the main conclusions. You can also mention in what ways the authors used fancy, novel techniques and creative thinking to analyze public opinion data (authors often make a BIG DEAL about this in their papers).

If you are the **discussion leader** for the paper, I not only expect you to have expert knowledge about its content, but that you are also able to see critical gaps and open questions in the piece. (There are plenty of those in any paper). It is your task to distill these critical thoughts into engaging discussion questions for your peers. You should not expect that everyone in the

seminar has read every single word about the piece; rather, try to formulate your questions and/or discussion prompts in a way that

The paper report & discussion leadership requirement accounts for 10% of the final grade. We will talk more about each requirement during the first week of class.

***DataCamp* short-courses**

To further building your practical survey analysis skills, I am assigning a total of five *DataCamp* short courses for you to complete throughout the semester (1 course is optional). These interactive online courses cover the basic handling of statistical coding in R, survey data visualization, measurement theory, and scale development. Please don't worry about getting a perfect score on the exercises – you will get full credit as long as you gain 50% of the *DataCamp* experience points in each course. To gain full credit, you will have to complete 4 out of these 5 courses. In total, these courses count towards 10% of your course grade. I will provide more details about the *DataCamp* assignments in class.

- Introduction to Data in R: <https://learn.datacamp.com/courses/introduction-to-data-in-r>
- Introduction to Statistics in R: <https://campus.datacamp.com/courses/introduction-to-statistics-in-r/summary-statistics?ex=4>
- Introduction to Data Visualization in R: <https://learn.datacamp.com/courses/introduction-to-data-visualization-with-ggplot2>
- Analyzing Survey Data in R: <https://learn.datacamp.com/courses/analyzing-survey-data-in-r>
- Survey and Measurement Development in R: <https://learn.datacamp.com/courses/survey-and-measurement-development-in-r>

You can find the link to our DataCamp course sequence (with all deadlines) here:

<https://www.datacamp.com/enterprise/poli-209-analyzing-public-opinion-spring-2021-warncke>

Survey data project

You will be working on your very own survey data and analysis project throughout the semester. In this project, you will answer a unique and substantively interesting research question about public opinion (broadly understood) which you will attempt to answer in two ways: First by sifting through the rich body of extant public opinion survey databases (i.e. the ANES, GSS, ESS, WVS, ect.) and then by crafting your very own survey questions. During this part of the exercise, you will sift through codebooks and interview questionnaires, import and clean the data, run preliminary statistical analysis, and visualize your results with tables and graphs. I will provide guidance every step of the way.

However, existing survey data – as resourceful it may be – only ever goes so far. Important questions, in other words, always remain unanswered. During the second part of your project, I want you to distil at least four additional questions that you were not able to answer with the data at hand. From these questions, you will design your own set of 3-4 survey items. A key lesson here is how to implement the recommendations for good survey design we will cover during the

second half of the semester. For your final draft, I will return these items back to you along with some (hypothetical) answer data. It is then up to you to interpret these data and present your conclusions in the final draft of your project proposal. We will talk more in depth about the requirements of each deliverable (proposal, preliminary analysis, and final draft).

For this project, I highly encourage you to conduct group work. Groups of any size up to 5 students are OK. Please be aware, however, that every group member will receive the same grade, regardless of individual effort.

Here are some sample topics/problems you could choose:

- **Polarization and ideological innocence:** During the 1950's and 1960's a general consensus emerged in that the American public is largely non-ideological and non-polarized on political issues. Many influential scholars still think this is still the case. Is there any evidence to think otherwise? Start by graphing how the average correlation between people identifying with ideological labels ("liberal" and "conservatives") and their partisanship has evolved over time. How about issues (gun control, abortion, climate change, ect.)? Do you think the American public has become more polarized? If yes, how so?
- **Black Lives Matter *versus* Back the Blue?** Last year saw the culmination of a popular protest movement against police brutality towards African Americans in the United States. While many Americans backed the protests and demands for police reform, just as many staunchly oppose the view that systematic racism is an issue in the country's police force. Who are the main supporters and opponents of the BLM protests? You can stratify your analysis by age, gender, region, race, partisanship and/or any other category you think is relevant. How much overlap is there? What can you say about subgroups among these populations (i.e. are Latinos opposed to BLM more conservative than those who don't?)
- **COVID vaccines and health & safety restrictions:** The American public has reacted in an immensely polarized fashion to the first, truly global health crisis of the century. One camp largely welcomed harsh policy interventions such as mask-wearing policies and shutdowns to prevent the spread of the virus. Others feared economic collapse and too much government influence over peoples' lives as a consequence of these policies. How can public opinion data tell us who is likely to belong to which camp? Is there any overlap? How are these people likely going to respond when asked if they plan to get vaccinated?

Of course, you can also pursue a project that personally interests you more. Please talk to me during office hours for guidance so that we can come up with a plan that works for you.

Class policies

1. Showing up

Please note that attendance to both lecture and discussion section is required. Accumulating too many absences will reflect negatively on your grade. If you accumulate more than 4 unexcused absences, you will be removed from the course. Please let me know in advance (if possible), should you encounter technical difficulties that prevent you from participating. I'm happy to provide exceptions based on serious illness or for important religious observances (please communicate those in advance).

2. Being prepared

Please make sure that you have read and taken notes on all the assigned class readings before showing up. If time is tight, make sure that you have at least a rough understanding about the subject matter. That means if you have only 1 hour to prepare but two readings to get through, make sure to dedicate a roughly even amount of time on each (i.e. don't just skip readings). Also, please make sure to submit your weekly discussion questions on time. It is also good practice to read your peers' discussion questions (on Sakai) beforehand in preparation for class.

3. Communication and respect

Respect and listen to your classmates. My principle aim is to make this class a safe and open environment. Part of that is respecting all questions, comments, and thoughts that other classmates choose to share. That being said, I generally do not tolerate purposefully offensive language of any kind (i.e. derogatory, racist, sexist, homophobic, etc.) and talking over other students. Breaking this rule will, among other potential consequences, result in your removal from class for the day. Should this become a pattern, you may be removed from the course.

4. Academic honesty

Students should become familiar with UNC's Honor Code found at <http://instrument.unc.edu> and follow its guidelines when completing all assignments. I take plagiarism quite seriously, and I will not accept any assignments that are not a student's original work. Committing plagiarism or other types of academic dishonesty will result in a failing grade for that assignment and associated consequences specified by the Honor Code guidelines.

5. Sakai page

I heavily rely on Sakai in making administrative announcements, distributing materials, posting grades, and reviewing your discussion questions. So please visit our site regularly to stay on top of things. You can access our Sakai here: https://sakai.unc.edu/portal/site/poli_209_sp2021

6. Other policies

When in class, use your laptops for class-related purposes only. Minimizing distractions will help you and your classmates get the most out of the course.

Observe deadlines. If you have a serious reason to request a deadline extension/make-up exam, you should notify me in advance when possible.

Communicate concerns early. If you have any questions or concerns regarding the class, your participation, or the progress you are making towards an assignment, please talk to me. The earlier you make your concerns known, the better I will be able to (help you) address them.

Please inform me as soon as possible should any cultural or religious observances collide with any of the deadlines set for this course. I am glad to accommodate these events where possible, but I cannot excuse last minute absences or extend deadlines for events whose dates are well-known in advance.

Please expect that I will respond to your emails within 48 hours. If I have not responded within 48 hours, please send me a follow-up email. Bear in mind, however, that I will generally not respond to emails from 7pm to 8am or on the weekends.

Weekly syllabus

Week 1: Introductions. What is public opinion and why should we care about it?

- **Tue, Jan 19th:** *Lecture:* Introductions, course overview
 - Key questions: What this course is (and is not) about. Is this course for me? What is the role of public opinion in mass democracy?
 - Materials to prepare: **None**

- **Thu, Jan 21st:** *Lecture:* Etymology, history, and the emergence of public opinion spheres (groups that matter in the eyes of government)
 - Key questions: How did we come to understand what public opinion means today? What alternative conceptions of public opinion exist and what are their respective merits?
 - Material to prepare:
 - *New directions:* Introduction and Overview
 - *Glynn et.al:* Chapter 1

Week 2: Evolving Techniques of opinion expression and measurement

- **Tue, Jan 26th:** *Lecture:* Public Opinion spheres and measurement techniques – how to capture and quantify public opinion?
 - Key questions: How has technology shaped our understanding of public opinion? What are public opinion polls? Do they matter in politics?
 - Materials to prepare:
 - *Herbst: 1993 (On Sakai)*

- **Thu, Jan 28th:** *Discussion:* Social media as a public opinion sphere
Workshop: Getting started in R and DataCamp
 - Key questions: Does social media change the way we think about public opinion? How useful do you think it is to look at twitter/facebook/Instagram data is in trying to capture public opinion trends? Is this capturing what people truly think? Why, and why not?
 - Materials to prepare:
 - ****Bail et.al. (2017):** Assessing the Russian Internet Research Agency’s impact on the political attitudes and behaviors of American Twitter users in late 2017
 - ****Tufekci, Zeynep. (2018)** Social Movements and Governments in the Digital Age: Evaluating a Complex Landscape.
 - Christenson et.al. (Monkey cage)

- **Important deadlines:**
 - DataCamp: *Introduction to data in R* (due Sunday Jan 31st, midnight)
<https://learn.datacamp.com/courses/introduction-to-data-in-r>

Week 3: The practice opinion polling research

- **Tue, Feb 2nd:** *Lecture:* The evolution of opinion polling and the polling industry
 - Key questions: How did the modern opinion polling and the polling industry come to be? What challenges do we (still) face when capturing polling information?
 - Materials to prepare:

- *New directions*: Chapter 1: “The Practice of Survey Research: Changes and Challenges”
- **Thu, Feb. 4th**: *Discussion*: Is the polling industry messing up? How do people decide which polls to trust? How do social pressures and expressive responding affect the truthfulness of election results?
 - Key questions: Do pre-election projections make sense? Are there shy Trump voters/Republicans? What are the ethical consequences of election forecasting?
 - Materials to prepare:
 - ****Lopez and Hillygus (2019)**: Why So Serious? Survey Trolls and Misinformation.
 - ****Madson & Hillygus (2020)**: All the best polls agree with me: Bias in evaluations of political polling*
 - Shapiro (Monkey cage)
 - A little primer on online polls: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HiTqIyx6tBU>

Week 4: What are we actually measuring? Take 1: Opinion content and democratic accountability

- **Tue, Feb. 9th**: *Lecture: Opinion contents, citizen competence and capacity for public opinion*
 - Key questions: How “real” are political attitudes? Do citizens have the capacity for public opinion? Can they faithfully translate their preferences into democratic governance and accountability? Does aggregating over many individuals help us out?
 - Materials to prepare:
 - *New directions*: Chapter 2
 - Optional but highly recommended: Surowiecki (2004): Wisdom of the crowds. Introduction & Chapter 1
- **Thu, Feb. 11th**: *Discussion*: Is lacking citizen competence an issue? Do citizens punish imbuements for unrelated disasters?
 - Materials to prepare:
 - ****Achen and Bartels (2013)**: Blind Retrospection: Why Shark Attacks Are Bad For Democracy
 - ****Fowler and Hall (2018)**: Do Shark Attacks Influence Presidential Elections? Reassessing a Prominent Finding on Voter Competence
- **Important Deadlines**:
 - *DataCamp*: Introduction to Statistics in R. Due Sunday, Feb. 14.

Week 5: What are we actually measuring? Take 2: Political knowledge and learning

- **Tue, Feb. 16th**: UNC Wellness day – take a well-deserved break!
- **Thu, Feb. 18th**: *Lecture: Stability and change in public opinion*
 - **Key questions**: Are citizen attitudes stable over time? How do they remember their attitudes? What kinds of dynamics influence opinion change?
 - Materials to prepare:
 - New perspectives: Chapter 12
 - ****Hill (2017)**: Learning Together Slowly: Bayesian Learning about Political Facts

Week 6: Media, information flow, and (motivated) political learning

- **Tue, Feb 24th:**
 - o Materials to prepare:
 - New perspectives: Chapter 11
- **Thu, Feb 28th:** Motivated opinion dynamics: How to engineer public opinion change
 - o Materials to prepare:
 - ** King, Schneer, and White. (2017). How the News Media Activate Public Expression and Influence National Agendas. *Science* 358: 776–8
 - ** Simonov et.al. (2020) The Persuasive Effect of Fox News: Non-Compliance with Social Distancing During the Covid-19 Pandemic
 - Optional but highly recommended: Althaus and Largio (2004): When Osama became Saddam: Origins and Consequences of the Change in Americas Public Enemy number 1

Week 7: Ideology and worldviews in the American public

- **Tue, March 2nd:** *Lecture:* Ideological innocence and worldview differences
 - o **Key questions:** Do Americans understand ideology? Are they ideologically polarized? How can worldviews provide attitude stability? Do worldviews matter in public opinion?
 - o Materials to prepare:
 - *New perspectives:* Chapters 3 and 8
- **Thu, March 4th:** *Discussion/workshop:* Worldview and early childhood socialization. How do worldview and social groups relate to one another?
 - o Materials to prepare:
 - ** Perry, Whitehead, and Grubbs (2020): Save the Economy, Liberty, and Yourself: Christian Nationalism and Americans' Views on Government COVID-19 Restrictions
 - ** Mutz (2016): Harry Potter and the Deathly Donald
- **Important deadlines**
 - o *DataCamp:* Introduction to Data Visualization with ggplot2. Due Sunday, March 7.

Week 8: Partisanship and affective Polarization: Why do we hate each other (so much)?

- **Tue, March 9nd:** *Lecture:* The roots of affective polarization in the US.
Data workshop: *Data visualization in R*
 - o Materials to prepare:
 - New perspectives – OLD EDITION –: Chapter 5
 - New perspectives: Chapter 4
- **Thu, March 11th:** UNC Wellness day – take a well-deserved break!

Week 9: Partisanship, elite cuing, and motivated reasoning

- **Tue:** March 16th: *Discussion:* Partisan motivated reasoning and its implications for democracy
 - o Materials to prepare:

- ** Prior, Sood, and Khanna (2015): You Cannot be Serious: The Impact of Accuracy Incentives on Partisan Bias in Reports of Economic Perceptions
- ** Dinas et.al. (2017): Dead Man Walking: The Affective Roots of Issue Proximity between Voters and Parties
- Cassino (Monkey cage)
- **Thu:** March 18th: *Discussion*:: Elite influence models of partisan bias
 - Materials to prepare:
 - ** Bullock (2011): Elite Influence on Public Opinion in an Informed Electorate
 - ** Druckman, Peterson, and Slothuus (2013): How Elite Partisan Polarization Affects Public Opinion Formation
 - NPR: Poll: Just A Quarter Of Republicans Accept Election Outcome
 - Connors (Monkey Cage)
- **Important deadlines:**
 - Public Opinion Research Project – Project proposal due Sunday, March 21

Week 10: Groups and public opinion I: Race, Ethnicity, and Racial Attitudes

- **Tue:** March 23rd: *Lecture*: The racial contours of American public opinion: From Slavery to the 21th century
 - Key questions: How does race shape Americans public attitudes? How did race explain the major political re-alignments? What explains the strong attachment of Black Americans to the Democratic Party?
 - Materials to prepare:
 - *New perspectives*: Chapters 5-6
- **Thu:** March 25th: *Discussion*: Racial attitudes, perceptions of policing and the Black Lives Matter Protests; Attitudes of Asian Americans
 - Materials to prepare:
 - ** McGowen and Wylie (2020): Racialized differences in perceptions of and emotional responses to police killings of unarmed African Americans
 - ** Kuo, Malhotra, and Mo (2017): Social Exclusion and Political Identity: The Case of Asian American Partisanship
- **Important deadlines**
 - *DataCamp*: Analyzing Survey Data in R. Due Sunday, March 28.

Week 11: Groups and public opinion II: Gender, Sexuality, Religion, and Social Interest Groups

- **Tue:** March 30th: Lecture
 - Materials to prepare
 - *New perspectives*, Chapter 7
 - *New perspectives – OLD EDITION! (Check Sakai folder): Chapter 8*
- **Thu:** April 1st: Happy April fool’s day! Discussion/workshop
 - Materials to prepare
 - ** Costa, Pereira, and Leal (2015): “The Contact Hypothesis” and Attitudes Toward Same-Sex Parenting

- ** Lacombe, Matthew J. (2019): The Political Weaponization of Gun Owners: The National Rifle Association’s Cultivation, Dissemination, and Use of a Group Social Identity.
- Ayoub et.al. (Monkey cage)
- Burge (Monkey cage)

Week 12: Fundamentals of good public opinion research I:

- **Tue:** April 6th: *Lecture/workshop:* Survey design and question wording
 - Materials to prepare: Survey research basics and question wording
 - Rea and Parker: Chapters 1 and 2
- **Thu:** April 8th: *Lecture/workshop:* Developing effective survey items
 - Materials to prepare:
 - Rea and Parker: Chapters 3 (read Chapter 5 too, if new to statistics)

Week 13: Fundamentals of good public opinion research II:

- **Tue:** April 13th: *Lecture/workshop:* Data analysis and presentation
 - Materials to prepare
 - Rea and Parker: Chapters 10 and 11
- **Thu:** April 15th: *Lecture/workshop:* Data analysis and presentation
 - Rea and Parker: Chapters 12 and 13
- **Important Deadlines:**
 - *DataCamp:* Survey and Measurement Development in R. Due: Sunday, April 18th

Week 14: Economic self-interest and policy representation of public opinion

- **Tue:** April 20th
 - Materials to prepare
 - *New directions, Chapter 15*
- **Thu:** April 22nd
 - Materials to prepare:
 - ** Bartels (2005): Homer Gets a Tax Cut. Inequality and Public Policy in the American Mind
 - ** Gerber et.al. (2017) Self-Interest, Beliefs, and Policy Opinions: Understanding How Economic Beliefs Affect Immigration Policy Preferences

Important deadlines:

- Public Opinion Project –Data Analysis and Questionnaire Design – due Sunday, April 25th

Week 15: New research frontiers: Biological and psychological basis of public opinion

- **Tue:** April 27th: *Lecture:* Genetic inheritance, predispositions, and epigenetics in public opinion

- Materials to prepare:
 - New perspectives: Chapters 9-10
- **Thu:** April 29th: *Discussion*
 - ** Aarøe, Petersen, and Arceneaux. (2017). “The Behavioral Immune System Shapes Political Intuitions: Why and How Individual Differences in Disgust Sensitivity Underlie Opposition to Immigration.” *American Political Science Review* 111 (02): 277–94.
 - ** Jensen, and Petersen. (2016). “The Deservingness Heuristic and the Politics of Health Care.” *American Journal of Political Science*: 1–16.

Week 16: Wrapping up, closing thoughts, and evaluations

- **Tue:** May 4th- Last day of class (office hours held all day on Thursday, May 6th)
 - **Materials to prepare:**
 - *New directions:* Conclusion
- **Important Deadlines:**
 - Public Opinion Project – Final Draft – due **Sunday May 9th**
 - Final exam posted: Tue, May 4 (last day of class)
 - Final exam due: 12 noon, Tue May, 11

Final project deliverable instructions

Now that you have “fielded” your survey, it is up to your group to analyze the data and evaluate your hypothesis. If you made a plan for how to do analyze your data upon receipt, this task should be quite straight-forward. However, please reach out with any questions you might have.

Your final report should be divided in three parts and not exceed 1.500 words (excluding any tables, figures and graphs you would like to show) in total. The first part should introduce the topic, summarize your literature review (from deliverables #1 and #2), justify your research question, and present your hypothesis.

In the second part, you should briefly describe the kind(s) of analysis you are performing to evaluate each hypothesis and why they are appropriate for your data (i.e. correlations, linear regression, multiple linear regression, cross-tabulation, ect.). Then, briefly discuss your findings. Be sure to evaluate your hypothesis both with regards to the substantive strength of the associations you found and the level of statistical significance you obtained. In general, we call an association statistically significant if we find a p-value smaller than 0.05.

Thirdly, write a focused conclusion section with your substantiate results in mind that summarizes your findings about your hypothesis, acknowledges the limitations of your analysis, and makes suggestions for further research. Make sure to state how your work has contributed to the literature you summarized in the introduction. Finally, please present your final report in an adequate font and layout, as you would for a professional publication or a report for a website.

Due: Sunday, May 9, midnight

Final exam prompt:

Over the course of the semester, we have analyzed public opinion from a variety of lenses, exploring issues in opinion measurement, interpretation, and content. We have studied how the field of public opinion research is a child of its own times: We can only conceptualize mass opinions if we have the appropriate tools to do so. As these tools are constantly evolving, they continue to re-shape how we measure and understand public opinion. Each measurement tool, in turn, comes with distinct strengths and weaknesses. Since none of these tools are flawless, researchers often rely on variety of methods to reveal the true nature of mass opinions. (E.g. national probability surveys, survey experiments, content analysis, or in-depth interviews). In addition, we covered some of the difficulties and common pitfalls that arise when you are running your very own survey project. These include how to write good survey questions, establish sampling frames, and how to analyze the data.

Aside from issues of measurement and interpretation, we have covered a whole host of substantive areas public opinion research focuses on. This includes the content of public opinion including leadership accountability, issue positions, political knowledge and learning, as well as group attitudes. We have spent an equally large amount of time discussing the sources of public opinion content, including cue-taking from political elites and the (partisan) news media, social media interactions, ideologies & worldviews, various group identities, economic interest, and biological factors.

Please write an 600 - 800 word essay in which you reflect on one key lesson you learned from the substantive part of the course (weeks 4 – 11 and weeks 14 –15) is related to one or more analytical challenges we have discussed throughout the course (but especially weeks 2-3 & weeks 12-13). In your answer, please reference at least one of the core we articles we covered throughout the course (marked with an asterisk on the syllabus). You are free to reference a paper you have presented on or a paper for which you served as discussion leader.

As always, please feel free to reach out with any questions or concerns you might have.

Deadline: 12 Noon, Tue: May 11, 2021