

Syllabus
Indiana University Southeast
POLIS-Y 567: Public Opinion: Approaches and Issues
Winter/Spring 2022: 1/10/22 – 5/3/22
Online Asynchronous

Professor Name

Joe Wert, Ph.D.

Course Description

This course explores the structure and dynamics of American public opinion, providing a broad-based introduction to the forces that shape citizens' social and political attitudes in the contemporary United States. We will focus our analysis in three major areas: definitions of public opinion and theories of opinion formation; how public opinion is measured, how it is influenced, and how it, in turn, influences governmental policy; and public opinion in specific issue areas of contemporary American politics. Ultimately, the goal of this course is to help each member of the class arrive at a deeper, more comprehensive understanding of the forces that shape American beliefs, attitudes, and opinions, the ways that those views are expressed in the public sphere, and the process by which the public will is discerned and translated into legislative outcomes.

Learning Outcomes

At the end of this course, students will be able to:

1. Identify the important role public opinion plays in politics and governing in the U.S.
2. Define the central concepts of public opinion, like sample size, sample error, other types of error, etc.
3. Identify how the public comes to form opinions on public affairs and politics.
4. Compare and contrast what the different points on the ideological spectrum believe and how it has changed over time.
5. Understand how Americans' views on controversial issues are shaped differently than on less controversial issues.
6. Improve written communication skills

Learning Materials

1. Clawson, Rosalee A. and Zoe M. Oxley. Public Opinion: Democratic Ideals, Democratic Practice, 4th edition. CQ Press. ISBN 978-1-5443-9020-8. If you want to purchase a hard copy. Otherwise, you can purchase it as an e-text through IU.

2. Zaller, John. Nature and Origins of Mass Opinion. Cambridge University Press. ISBN: 978-052140-7861.

Assessment

Assignment	Points
Discussions (x14) (10 pts apiece)	140
Homework (x3) (20 pts apiece)	60
Literature review project	200
Midterm Exam	100
Total	500