COURSE SYLLABUS

Course Topics: The course will be organized around the following questions:
1. How do we know what public opinion is?
2. Where does public opinion come from and what does it look like?
3. What does public opinion affect?

Course Learning Objectives: The general goal of the course is to answer the three questions above. You should leave with a basic understanding of how public opinion is measured through surveys, polling, etc., how these different methods work, their importance and their flaws, and how they can be manipulated. You should also have an understanding of how individuals develop political attitudes/opinions, and how or if they change over time. This section will also focus on research that looks at current issues and how public opinion is formed around these issues and their importance. Finally, you should leave with an understanding of how public opinion affects the political process, specifically through Congress and the Presidency.

Required Texts: The following are the required texts for the course:


Along with these readings will be a number of research articles from some of the top political science journals, as well as selected photocopied book chapters that will be made available by myself.

Course Website: I maintain a course website that will keep you up to date on what is happening in your course. You can get to the website by visiting this link:

http://faculty.mwsu.edu/politicalscience/jeremy.duff/teaching.asp

Then click on the link that goes to your course.

Office Hours:

Monday, Wednesday, Friday: 11:00am-12:00pm and 1:00pm-2:00pm
Tuesday, Thursday: 9:30am-11:00am and 12:30pm-1:00pm
Also, by appointment (send me an e-mail to schedule an appointment)
Student Responsibilities

Attendance: Class attendance is strongly encouraged. It has been my experience that those who do not attend class tend to have a difficult time with the course and generally receive lower grades. I will not regularly take attendance, however, throughout the course of the semester I may feel it necessary to take attendance in order to provide extra points on exams for those who are putting forth the effort to come to class. Students are expected to act like responsible adults in class.

Readings: The readings serve as a point of departure for lectures and discussions. Therefore, it is imperative that each student completes the assigned reading before a topic is taken up in class. Remember, the readings are a point of departure from class lectures. You will be held accountable not only for my discussion in lecture, but also for anything in the textbooks that may not be covered in lecture or discussion.

Participation: Students should feel free to raise questions concerning the readings, the instructor's discussion, and the comments of other students. Participation enhances course quality.

Quizzes: There will be periodic “pop” quizzes given in class covering lecture and textbook material. These quizzes will be graded and will count towards your quiz grade for the course. This should encourage class attendance and also help make sure students are keeping up with the reading. If you are not present for a quiz and do not have an University approved excuse, you will be given a grade of ZERO on that quiz.

Extra-Credit: This class will be one of the few in which you will receive built-in extra-credit options to help your grade. The course will be divided up into three assignment periods, separated by each exam. Each week during these periods, I will give an extra-credit assignment to be completed within a week’s time and turned in to me on a designated day. Late assignments will not be accepted, period. For every assignment you turn in, you will receive an extra two points on your exam grade for that period. So, for example, if before the first exam, you have fully completed and turned in 3 extra-credit assignments, you will receive 6 points added to your first exam grade. After each exam the extra-credit points start over and begin to apply to the next exam. In other words, points cannot be carried over or switched from exam to exam in order to bring up an unexpected bad grade, etc.
**Required Examinations:** There will be five required examinations. The scheduled examination dates (tentative-these may change) are as follows:

- Exam 1: September 24, 2012
- Exam 2: October 12, 2012
- Exam 3: November 2, 2012
- Exam 4: November 26, 2012
- Final Exam: December 12, 2012 (10:30am-12:30pm)

Please note that for whatever reason you arrive late for an exam, you will not be able to take the exam once one student has “legitimately” taken the exam and left the exam room. I reserve the right to change any of the above dates as I feel necessary. This means that in some cases exams may be pushed back to later dates or moved forward to earlier dates. Hence the reason they are called “tentative” exam dates.

**Survey Project:** In this project, you will create your own public opinion survey. This will be done after we get through the Asher text on polling. Based on what you’ve learned from the lectures and readings in the Asher text, you will create a public opinion survey for students here at Midwestern State. You will then administer the survey, tabulate the results and then write-up the results as if you were reporting them for a newspaper. Additional directions and guidelines will be provided throughout the semester.

**Basic Policies**

**Make-up Policy -- Examinations.** If a student has a University-approved excuse AND if the instructor is notified IN WRITING, PRIOR to the examination, arrangements for a make-up will be made. If a student fails to notify the instructor, the student will receive a zero for the exam.

**Exam, Quizzes, and Grading.** I WILL ONLY discuss a grade with you in my office. I WILL NOT discuss a grade with you before or after class in the classroom, in the hallway, outside by my car, via e-mail or over the phone. I want you to take time to look over your exam thoroughly, outside of the classroom before you make an argument for a different grade. Any discussion of exam grades should take place within my office hours or by appointment in my office if you are not able to attend the scheduled office hours. If you feel that you and another student provided similar or equal answers to an exam question and you received a lower grade on that question, then both students must come to the assigned office hours with their exams in order for me to evaluate the answers equally and fairly. Keep in mind that in some cases I may lower the grade of the other student and not raise yours after reviewing both answers, if I feel that the situation deems it necessary. Finally, if I cannot read your handwriting or understand an answer because of poor sentence structure, etc. the answer will be counted wrong. College students, without a University documented disability, should be able to write legibly and in complete, coherent sentences.
Taking Exams Early. Only under extraordinary circumstances will a student be allowed to take an exam, including the final, early. Only university approved excuses, death in the family, illness, etc. will be considered for taking an exam early. You must request to take an exam early IN WRITING.

Wikipedia. At no time will a student be allowed to use Wikipedia as a source for any project or paper in my class. If it is determined that Wikipedia was used as a source for a project or paper, the student will be given a grade of ZERO automatically.

Classroom Behavior

Cellphones, pagers, and so on. Cell phones, pagers, etc. should be turned off when entering the classroom, unless prior arrangements have been made with me concerning a family emergency. If your cell phone goes off during an exam or quiz, IT WILL BE CONFISCATED and returned to you when you hand in the exam or quiz.

AT NO TIME WILL YOU BE ALLOWED TO LOOK AT YOUR CELLPHONE/PAGER DURING AN EXAM OR QUIZ. IF YOU ARE OBSERVED LOOKING AT YOUR CELLPHONE/PAGER ONCE AN EXAM OR QUIZ HAS BEEN HANDED TO YOU, YOU WILL AUTOMATICALLY RECEIVE A GRADE OF ZERO FOR THAT EXAM OR QUIZ.

General Behavior. There should be no talking while I am lecturing or while another student is answering a question or sharing their opinion on the subject matter of the class. If this occurs, students will be warned and if the disruptive behavior continues you will be removed from the class.

Lateness. If you miss a quiz because you arrive to class late, you will receive a grade of zero on that quiz.

Grading. The five exams will count 75% (15% a piece) toward your final grade. The quiz grades will be averaged and make up 10% of your grade. The survey project will account for the last 15% of your grade.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cut Off</th>
<th>Grade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>90-100%</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80-89%</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70-79%</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60-69%</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt;60%</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Class Schedule and Reading Assignments
The following is a list of lecture topics and their corresponding reading assignments. As stated before, please have the readings completed before the designated class period. Lectures are meant to supplement what you have already learned from the readings. Extra-credit (EC) assignments are listed below the assigned readings, as well as their due dates.

SECTION I: How do we know what public opinion is?

August

27: Going over the syllabus and introduction to Public Opinion
   *Erikson and Tedin Chapter 1*

29: Polling and the Public
   *Asher Chapter 1*
   *(At some point over the course of this section you should have also read Erikson and Tedin Chapter 2)*
   *EC 1: Exercise 3, Asher Chapter 1*

31-Sep. 5: The Problem of Nonattitudes
   *Asher Chapter 2*

September

3: No Class (Labor Day)

7-10: Wording and Context of Questions
   *Asher Chapter 3*
   *EC 1 Due (Sep. 7)*
   *EC 2: Survey Critique*

12: Survey Day: Taking and Analyzing a Public Opinion Survey

14-17: Sampling Techniques
   *Asher Chapter 4*

19-21: Interviewing and Data Collection Procedures
   *Asher Chapter 5*
   *Davis and Silver, “Stereotype Threat and Race of Interviewer Effects in a Survey of Political Knowledge,” American Journal of Political Science 2003, pp. 33-38*
   *EC 2 Due (Sep. 15)*
   *EC 3: Exercise 1, Asher Chapter 5*

24: Exam I
26: The Media and the Polls
   *Asher Chapter 6*

28-Oct. 1: Polls and Elections
   *Asher Chapter 7*
   EC 3 Due (Sep. 28)
   EC 4: Exercise 1, *Asher Chapter 6*

**October**

3-5: Analyzing and Interpreting Polls
   *Asher Chapter 8*

8-10: Polling and Democracy
   *Asher Chapter 9*
   EC 4 Due (Oct. 8)

**12: Exam II**

**SECTION II: Where does public opinion come from and what does it look like?**

15-17: The New Look in Public Opinion Research

19-22: Microlevel Opinion
   *Erikson and Tedin Chapter 3*
   EC 5: Levels of Conceptualization Classification

24-26: Macrolevel Opinion
   *Erikson and Tedin Chapter 4*

29-31: Political Socialization and Political Learning
   *Erikson and Tedin Chapter 5*
   Jennings and Niemi, “The Transmission of Political Values from Parent to Child,” 1968, pp. TBA
   EC 5 Due (Oct. 29)
   EC 6: Presidential Approval Tracking

**November**

**2: Exam III**
5-7: Public Opinion and Democratic Stability
Erikson and Tedin Chapter 6

9: Group Differences in Political Opinions I
Erikson and Tedin Chapter 7
EC 6 Due
EC 7: Local News and Media Effects

12-14: Group Differences in Political Opinions II (Symbolic/New Racism)

16-19: The News Media and Political Opinions
Erikson and Tedin Chapter 8
EC 7 Due (Nov. 16)

21-21: No Class (Thanksgiving Break)

26: Exam IV

SECTION III: What does public opinion affect?

28-30: Elections as Instruments of Popular Control
Erikson and Tedin Chapter 9
EC 8: Congressional Scorecard

December

3-5: The Public and Its Elected Leaders
Erikson and Tedin Chapter 10

7: Public Opinion and the Performance of Democracy
Erikson and Tedin Chapter 11
EC 8 Due

12: Final Exam (10:30am-12:30pm)