



The University of Western Ontario
Department of Sociology
SOCIOLOGY 2133A - 001

Public Opinion

Fall 2025

In-Person

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This is a DRAFT copy only. Please see the course site for the final version.

Course Description: The formation of public opinion by governments, corporations, third sector organizations, and special interest groups. Particular attention will be paid to the role of the mass media. Other topics include: socialization, polling, public relations, propaganda, advocacy, and electioneering.

In this course, you will learn more about how the “social” impacts public opinion. First, the foundations of public opinion and its history will be discussed. After this introduction to the topic, students will learn how gender, age, immigration, social media and other key factors influence public opinion in society.

Prerequisite(s): None

Anti-requisite(s): None

Course Objectives and Learning Outcomes:

You will learn how to view public opinion sociologically, while encountering differing views on what public opinion means in the current era of polarization and uncertainty. By the end of the course, you will be better able to discern how public opinion is generated and manipulated by governments, mainstream media, political actors, social media algorithms, and other forces.

Course Material:

The course material for this class will consist of lectures and readings for all instructional weeks. The companion textbook for this course is Clawson, R. A., & Oxley, Z. M. (2020). Public Opinion: Democratic Ideals, Democratic Practice (4th ed.). This textbook is recommended but not required. It is available for purchase as an Ebook <https://www.vitalsource.com/en-ca/products/public-opinion-rosalee-a-clawson-zoe-m-v9781544390185?srsId=AfmBOopr2ZLTAjgBN6dg-mUjTMTdP3LVTTNzoe6eGSFQkdyhBBMnBB>.

Currently the Ebook is \$88 for 180 days and \$127 for a lifetime purchase.

Communication:

Students are responsible for checking the course [OWL Brightspace](#) site on a regular basis for news and updates. This is the primary method by which information will be disseminated to all students enrolled in the course.

Please read - Regarding email communication, please refer to the course Brightspace site, the course outline, and the weekly reading list for answers to common questions before sending the instructor an email. Resources will be online under the resources tab on Brightspace. The reading list, weekly schedule, and the outline will have important dates and deadlines and other pertinent information. When emailing, please note that I will endeavor to respond within a reasonable amount of time, and reserve the right to avoid answering questions on the weekend. Please do not assume that I will answer an email in time if one is sent within 48 hours of a test or review exercise deadline.

Course Schedule and Readings:

The reading list and weekly schedule are available on the course Brightspace site.

Method of Evaluation:

**** The evaluation methods described in the course outline are essential requirements for the course. ****

Evaluation for this course will consist of review assignments described below and 3 exams: 2 midterms and 1 final.

Midterm 1 in class, 25% of final grade. Exam consists of a mix of multiple choice and short answers (2hrs 30 min Max) (October 2nd).

Midterm 2 in class, 25% of final grade. Exam consists of a Mix of multiple choice and short answers (2hrs 30 min Max) (October 30th).

Instructors are permitted to designate one assessment per course per term as requiring supporting documentation to receive academic consideration. For this course, Midterm 2 (October 30th) has been designated as requiring supporting documentation to attain a makeup test.

Final Exam in exam period, 35% of final grade. Exam consists of a mix of multiple choice and short answers (3hrs Max) (TBA. Scheduled by the Office of the Registrar during the final exam period).

Final exams always require supporting documentation to obtain a makeup exam

The exams will be based on instruction during lectures and weekly assigned readings. Exams will be closed book. Midterms will be held during the regular instruction period in class (see above), and the final will be scheduled for the fall final exam period. Electronic devices, cheat sheets, notes and textbooks are prohibited on midterms and the final Exam.

Note on makeup exams: I understand the need for a makeup exam as sometimes extenuating circumstances disrupt one's ability to make it to a test. However, I also believe that makeup tests need to be fundamentally different to avoid peers providing each other with answers to test questions. For that reason, all make up tests will consist of essay questions instead of multiple choice or short answer questions.

Review Assignments Each Worth 5% (Total 15%) (2.5% for your questions, and 2.5% for your explanation)

Review assignments will be due on the Friday before the exam for each midterm. For the final, the review assignment will be due at the end of the last week of instruction (see schedule). For the review assignments you will compose 5 multiple choice questions on the subjects covered during the previous weeks before each exam. You will also provide a short discussion paragraph, 3-4 sentences, detailing why you believe these questions to be relevant to the course material, and appropriate for the exam.

Review assignments will be submitted online using Brightspace.

****Avoid AI for your review assignments, these are designed to help you improve your studying. If you use AI for this assignment, you defeat the purpose of the activity and rob yourself of the benefit of the exercise for helping you learn the material. Additionally, it is cheating and plagiarism to put forward AI generated content as your own work. Also be aware that there are clues and giveaways that have been identified as obvious AI, suspected use of AI will be treated as plagiarism. ****

For the review assignments, students are expected to submit the assignment by the deadline listed. Should illness or extenuating circumstances arise, students are permitted to submit their assignment up to 48 hours past the deadline without academic penalty. Review assignments submitted past this flexible deadline will not be accepted.

Use of Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI):

All assignments must be completed independently, without the aid of artificial intelligence (AI). See above statement regarding AI and the review assignments.

Electronic Devices:

Students are allowed laptop devices to take down notes during regular non-examination classes. Students who use laptops are encouraged to refrain from non-class related activities during class as it is distracting for other students. Although laptops are allowed, it is recommended that students take handwritten notes. Notes written by hand help with information retention. **No electronic devices will be allowed during exams.**

Academic Offences: Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at the following website: https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf

Students must write their assignments in their own words. Whenever students take an idea from another author, they must acknowledge their debt both by using quotation marks where appropriate and by proper referencing such as footnotes or citations. Plagiarism is a major scholastic offence.

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com (<https://www.turnitin.com/>).

Students are expected to retain all research notes, rough drafts, essay outlines, and other materials used in preparing assignments. In the unlikely event of concerns being raised about the authenticity of any assignment, your instructor may ask you to produce these materials; an inability to do so may weigh heavily against you.

Computer-marked multiple-choice tests and/or exams may be subject to submission for similarity review by software that will check for unusual coincidences in answer patterns that may indicate cheating.

Copyright: Students may not record or distribute any class activity, including conversations during office hours, without written permission from the instructor, except as necessary as part of approved accommodations for students with disabilities. Any approved recordings may only be used for the student's own private use.

Absence from Course Commitments: Students must familiarize themselves with the [Policy on Academic Consideration](#) – Undergraduate Students in First Entry Programs https://uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/academic_consideration_Sep24.pdf

Students missing course work for medical, compassionate or extenuating circumstances can request academic consideration by completing a request using the Student Absence Portal (SAP) https://registrar.uwo.ca/academics/academic_considerations/index.html . Students are permitted one academic consideration request per course per term without supporting documentation. Note that supporting documentation is always required for academic consideration requests for examinations scheduled by the office of the registrar (e.g. December and April exams) and for practical laboratory and performance tests typically scheduled during the last week of the term. Students should also note that the instructor may designate one assessment per course per term that requires supporting documentation. This designated assessment is described in the course outline. Supporting documentation for academic considerations for absences due to illness must include the completed Western Student Medical Certificate (SMC) <https://registrar.uwo.ca/academics/pdfs/student-medical-certificate.pdf> or, where that is not possible, equivalent documentation by a health care practitioner. Students must request academic consideration as soon as possible and no later than 48 hours after the missed assessment.

Once the request and supporting documentation have been received and reviewed, appropriate academic consideration, if granted, shall be determined by the instructor in consultation with the academic advisor, in a manner consistent with the course outline. Students with an approved absence from an in-class test or exam will be required to write a makeup exam, unless otherwise specified in the course outline. The course instructor or teaching assistant(s) may not be available to respond to questions during the makeup text/exam. Students should be aware that the make-up test/exam will not necessarily be in the same format, be of the same duration, or cover the same material as the original test/exam.

Note: missed work can *only* be excused through one of the mechanisms above. Being asked not to attend an in-person course requirement due to potential COVID-19 symptoms is **not** sufficient on its own. Students should check the Western website to see what directives for Covid are to be followed. Western has been and will continue to follow directives established by the Middlesex-London Health Unit. That directive will state whether students should or should not come to campus/class and any other requirements (e.g., masks are mandatory). Please check on your own and do not email the instructor, the Department Undergraduate Advisor/Coordinator or the Faculty Academic Counselling Office.

Students who fail to write a make-up test or special examination will receive a grade of zero on that assessment. No other make-up opportunities will be provided unless further academic consideration is granted by the student's Home Faculty Academic Counselling office.

Religious Accommodation: Students should review the policy for Accommodation for Religious Holidays https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/accommodation_religious.pdf. Where a student will be unable to write examinations and term tests due to a conflicting religious holiday, they should inform their instructors as soon as possible but not later than two weeks prior to writing the examination/term test. In the case of conflict with a midterm test, students should inform their instructor as soon as possible but not later than one week prior to the midterm.

Contingency plan for an in-person class pivoting to 100% online learning: In the event of a COVID-19 resurgence or University approved emergency during the course that necessitates the course delivery moving away from face-to-face interaction, affected course content will be delivered entirely online, either synchronously (i.e., at the times indicated in the timetable) or asynchronously (e.g., posted on OWL Brightspace for students to view at their convenience). The grading scheme will **not** change. Any remaining assessments will also be conducted online as determined by the course instructor.

Code of Student Conduct: It is the responsibility of every student to read the Code and familiarize him or herself with its contents. The Code is available at http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/code_of_conduct.pdf. Sanctions for non-compliance range from a warning or reprimand to expulsion from the University.

Student Responsibility: Students in a degree program must select courses in accordance with the published requirements. Students are responsible for ensuring that their selection of courses is appropriate and accurately recorded, that all course prerequisites have been successfully completed, and

that they are aware of any antirequisite course(s) they may have taken. Students must familiarize themselves with the Student Responsibility for Course Selection policy https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/general/academic_counselling.pdf and the Registration and Progression policy https://uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/registration_progression_grad/registration_progression.pdf. Students are responsible for the successful completion of the Graduation Requirements for their degree program https://uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/registration_progression_grad/graduation.pdf.

Support Services:

Office of the Registrar Services <http://www.registrar.uwo.ca>

[Faculty Academic Advising](#) - Please visit your Home Faculty Academic advising webpage for information regarding adding/dropping courses, important dates, academic considerations for absences, appeals, exam conflicts, and many other academic related matters https://registrar.uwo.ca/faculty_academic_counselling.html.

[USC services](#) offers information about student the health/dental plan, Bus Pass, food support services, Peer support Centre etc <http://westernusc.ca/services/>.

[Mental health](#) – Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to Mental Health@Western <http://www.uwo.ca/uwocom/mentalhealth/> for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.

[Health & Wellness Services](#) – Registered part-time and full-time students can book a physical health appointment at <https://www.uwo.ca/health/shs/index.html>. Additional on-campus services are also available <https://www.uwo.ca/health/shs/services/index.html>.

[Accessible Education](#) provides supports and services to students with disabilities at Western, in all programs and faculties. Students with disabilities or accessibility challenges should work with Accessible Education (formerly SSD) http://academicsupport.uwo.ca/accessible_education/index.html, which provides recommendations for accommodation based on medical documentation or psychological and cognitive testing.

[Gender-Based and Sexual Violence](#) – Western is committed to reducing incidents of gender-based and sexual violence (GBSV) and providing compassionate support to anyone who is going through or has gone through these traumatic events. If you are experiencing or have experience GBSV (either recently or in the past), you will find information about support services for survivors, including emergency contacts at the following website: http://uwo.ca/health/student_support/survivor_support/get-help.html

[Western Libraries](#) – Visit the many library locations on campus. Western Libraries provide access to material in physical and digital formats <https://www.lib.uwo.ca/catalogue/index.html>. Research support is available <https://www.lib.uwo.ca/research/index.html>.

[Writing support](#) – Online writing resources, writing support and writing modules are available <https://writing.uwo.ca/undergrads/>

Bookstore: Search for Textbook availability and cost <https://bookstore.uwo.ca/textbook-search>