



蘇州大學
Soochow University

COM 436 Mass Communication and Public Opinion

Summer 2024

Course Credits: 4

Contact Hours: 56 hours

Instructor: TBA

Email:TBA

COURSE OBJECTIVES

Combing theoretical discussion of the key literature and research, this course explores contemporary issues concerning public opinion and communication. Students will examine the various factors influencing the formation, expression, and change of public opinion, and how communication strategies shape and reflect public sentiments. The course integrates theoretical frameworks with practical applications to provide a comprehensive understanding of the interplay between media, persuasion, and public perception.

Upon Completion of this Course, students will be able to:

1. Understand the key theories and models related to public opinion formation.
2. Evaluate the impact of political communication on public perceptions and attitudes.
3. Analyze theoretical issues involved in the contemporary study of public opinion in populations from a communication perspective.
4. Analyze the role of mass media, social media, and interpersonal communication in shaping public opinion.
5. Become familiar with the key research methods and data sources used to study public opinion in populations.

PREREQUISITES

COM 210 Communication Research Methods; COM 320 Advanced Communication Theory



GRADING

Grades will be determined by accumulating points, with 100 points being the maximum, as follows:

ITEM	POINTS
3 Homework	15 Points
3 Research Projects	15 Points
Midterm	25 Points
Research Paper	10 Points
Final Exam	35 Points
Total	100 Points

Late submissions will be graded at the end of the course. Grades will be assigned according to the following rule:

$A \geq 90 > B \geq 80 > C \geq 70 > D \geq 60 > F$.

We reserve the right to make adjustments to the overall grading policy.

COURSE MATERIALS

Required Texts:

Mass Communication and American Social Thought: Key Texts, John Durham Peters (editor), Peter Simonson (editor), 2004.

American Public Opinion: Its Origins, Content, and Impact by Robert S. Erikson, Kent L. Tedin, 11th Edition, 2023.

Recommended (Optional) Texts or Other Materials:

None

COURSE TOPICS

MODULE	TASKS
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Module 1	<p>Topics: Topic 1: Public Opinion in Democratic Societies Topic 2: The Scientific Assessment of Public Opinion Topic 3: Microlevel Opinion: The Psychology of Opinion-Holding Topic 4: Macrolevel Opinion: The Flow of Political Sentiment</p> <p>Assessments: Homework 1 Research Project 1</p>
Module 2	<p>Topics: Topic 5: Political Socialization and Political Learning Topic 6: Public Opinion and Democratic Stability Topic 7: The News Media and Political Opinions Topic 8: Public Opinion and the Performance of Democracy</p> <p>Assessments: Homework 2 Research Project 2</p>
Module 3	<p>Topics: Topic 9: From Hope to Disillusionment: Mass Communication Theory Coalesces, 1897-1933 Topic 10: "The Process of Social Change," from <i>Political Science Quarterly</i> (1897); "The House of Dreams," from <i>The Spirit of Youth and the City Streets</i> (1909) Topic 11: From <i>the Introduction to the Science of Sociology</i> (1921); "Nature, Communication, and Meaning," from <i>Experience and Nature</i> (1925) Topic 12: "Manipulating Public Opinion: The Why and the How" (1928); "Communication," from <i>Encyclopaedia of the Social Sciences</i> (1931)</p> <p>Assessments: Midterm</p>
Module 4	<p>Topics: Topic 13: The World in Turmoil: Communications Research, 1933-1949 Topic 14: "The Integration of Communication," from <i>Communication Agencies and Social Life</i> (1933); "The Influence of Radio upon Mental and Social Life," from <i>The Psychology of Radio</i> (1935) Topic 15: "Needed Research in Communication," from the <i>Rockefeller Archives</i> (1940); "Art and Mass Culture," from <i>Studies in Philosophy and Social Science</i> (1941) Topic 16: "Consensus and Mass Communication," from <i>American Sociological Review</i> (1948); "What 'Missing the Newspaper' Means," from <i>Communications Research</i> (1949)</p> <p>Assessments: Homework 3 Research Project 3</p>



Module 5	<p>Topics: Topic 17: The American Dream and Its Discontents: Mass Communication Theory, 1949-1968 Topic 18: "Communication in the Sovietized State, as Demonstrated in Korea," from <i>Public Opinion Quarterly</i> (1951); "Technology and Political Change," from <i>International Journal</i> (1952) Topic 19: "A Theory of Mass Culture," from <i>Diogenes</i> (1953); "Mass Communication and Socio-cultural Integration," from <i>Social Forces</i> (1958) Topic 20: "The State of Communication Research: Comments," from <i>Public Opinion Quarterly</i> (1959); "Social Theory and Mass Media," from <i>Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science</i> (1961)</p> <p>Assessments: Research Paper Final Exam</p>
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ATTENDANCE

1) Class attendance is required. Missing classes without permission will lead to decrease in overall grade.

Missing less than two classes: no penalty.

Missing more than two classes: 7% will be taken off from the overall grade.

If the instructor reports a student's frequent missing of class to the Soochow University Academic Administration Office, the student might get a written warning and might be prohibited from attending final exam.

2) Participants in this course are expected to arrive in class promptly and adequately prepared. The primary objective of this course is to critically engage with the readings and the subject matter. Therefore, course participants are expected to have completed the reading prior to class and prepare thoughtful reflections/commentaries to share with fellow colleagues.

LEARNING REQUIREMENTS

- 1) Late assignments are not acceptable and are subjected to grade deductions.
- 2) Assignments submitted in the wrong format will be counted as not submitted.
- 3) Failure to submit or fulfill any required course component results in failure of the class.
- 4) Make-up for midterm and final exams only with valid excuses, as defined by the



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5) In order to earn a Certificate of Completion, participants must thoughtfully complete all assignments by stated deadlines and earn an average quiz score of 50% or greater.

TECHNOLOGY POLICY

The use of electronic devices in class is distracting, both for the user and for the rest of the class. Only non-programmable calculators can be used in the tests and exam. Any attempts to use cell phones and other electronic communication devices will be seemed as cheating. Laptops are discouraged, unless you use them for activities DIRECTLY related to the course (eg., note taking, reading course documents).

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY POLICY

Soochow University highly values the academic integrity and aims to promote the academic fairness, honesty and responsibility. Any academic dishonesty behaviors and any attempts to cheats and plagiarism will be reported to the university administration office. A written warning and the relevant penalties will be imposed. The record might be shown on the official university transcript.

DISABILITY ACCOMMODATION

Soochow University is committed to maintaining a barrier-free environment so that students with disabilities can fully access programs, courses, services, and activities at Soochow University. Students with disabilities who require accommodations for access to and/or participation in this course are welcome.

Note:

Please contact the University Administrative Office immediately if you have a learning disability, a medical issue, or any other type of problem that prevents professors from seeing you have learned the course material.