

Pol 157: American Public Opinion
California State University, Sacramento
Spring 2019
Seminar: Amador Hall 262: T,TR 1:30-2:45

Instructor: Carlos Algara, Ph.D. Candidate

Office: TBD

Office Hours: Tuesdays, 11:30am-1:20pm & by appointment

Course GitPage & Resources: <https://calgara.github.io/pol157s2019.html>

✉ calgara@ucdavis.edu

Course Objective: How do we study American Public Opinion & its implications on American Political Life?

This course offers an introduction to the systematic and meticulous study of American Political Behavior in the Mass Public. Building on the scientific foundation of political science, this course is designed to provide an understanding into the determinants of political preferences held by *citizens* and how these preferences influence how citizens *participate* and gain representation within the political framework of American government. The main question motivating the course is a simple, yet complex one: how do citizens develop (*or fail to develop*) their political attitudes and what are the implications of these attitudes on political decision-making by citizens (i.e., vote preferences) and elected elites (i.e., Congress & Presidency). Recognizing that coherent attitudes and engaged political participation is the “ideal” standard for representative democracy, the motivating question of the course hinges on understanding the following concept:

- How do political sciences study and measure *citizen* political attitudes and opinion? What are some of the challenges of using surveys to measure the opinions and attitudes of *citizens* across a range of salient and controversial political topics?
- How do citizens “*reason*” about political abstractions? What are the salient determinants of political attitudes and opinions of *citizens*? How do these attitudes and opinions get translated into *citizen electoral choice*? What is the role of *rational self-interest* and *group identity* in shaping the increasingly polarized nature of American political attitudes and preferences?
- What role do these political attitudes (*or lack thereof*) play in shaping the political decision-making process by *citizens*? Specifically, how do these attitudes determine how individual *citizens* participate in politics in the electoral arena? Does exercising these political preferences through *citizen political behavior* secure *dynamic representation* and *democratic policy responsiveness* by elected elites?

These thematic questions may seem daunting, but this course will give you the necessary framework to perform careful political and social science analysis to gain leverage on these questions.

This course will provide not only an understanding of how to think of the study of the causes and implications of American public opinion, but also how to engage in careful social science analysis. This course emphasizes the tools you need to assess political behaviors, practices, and institutional representation based on theory and evidence. Welcome to the class!

Brief Course Overview Outline

1. Foundations of American Public Opinion
 - (a) What is public opinion?
 - (b) How do we measure political attitudes held by citizens and study public opinion? How stable are these opinions and what are the challenges to measuring these opinions?
2. Citizen Capacity in “Political Thinking”
 - (a) How do people “learn” and “reason” about abstract political concepts?
 - (b) Are citizens able to think in “political terms”, such as engaging in ideological thinking regarding their issue positions (preferences) about the fundamental role of government in political life?
 - (c) How do citizens overcome the “democratic” dilemma? What sort of *heuristics* do citizens rely on to inform political attitudes and choice?
 - (d) Which models seek to explain the origins of the salient heuristic of partisanship? Where does partisanship come from and what are its effects on the political behavior of citizens? Does partisanship change?
3. Translating Preferences to Choice: The Role of Campaigns & Elections in American Political Life
 - (a) How are political preferences translated to representative choice? How do the partisan, spatial (ideological), and valence models differ in explaining citizen electoral preferences?
 - (b) What are the fundamental role of campaigns in determining how citizens translate their preferences to electoral choice? What sort of citizens are predisposed to participating in the electoral process?
 - (c) How well do these models of electoral choice perform in varying electoral context, such as ballot referendums, local elections, and non-partisan elections? Are there limitations to translating citizen preference to electoral choice in non-candidate and party-centered context?
4. Cleavages in the Mass Public-Are citizens polarized in political preference & attitude?
 - (a) Setting the debate: are citizens fundamentally polarized in their political preferences as elected elites (i.e., members of Congress) are? Is there variation in beliefs about political tolerance in the mass public?

- (b) What is the role of racial cleavages in American public opinion? Specifically, do different racial groups diverge in political preferences?
 - (c) What is the role of economic and class cleavages in American political life? Do different social classes diverge on political preferences, particularly on economic preferences, and what are the potential implications of this on the *resource bias* of representation?
5. Bringing the course together: Does opinion get translated into democratic responsiveness?
- (a) Does public opinion influence government policy? If it does, which citizen types are able to secure policy responsiveness from their government?
 - (b) Lastly, does the *institutional* framework of the United States facilitate or hinder the translation of American public opinion to legislative policy outcomes?

Course Logistics & Requirements

This section of the syllabus serves as a guide for course expectations (both for me and for you) and logistical information such as grade breakdown and course texts.

Course Texts, Materials, & Announcements: There is no assigned textbook for this course. The [Course GitPage](#) contains all relevant readings in the interactive syllabus. The interactive syllabus will also contain class lecture slidesets, exam study materials, and assignment materials. Course announcements will be made through [Canvas](#).

Grade Breakdown & Schedule:

- ★ 30% Midterm Exam (Exam Date: March 14th)¹
- ★ 35% Final Exam (TBD)
- ★ 25% American Political Behavior Model Evaluation Essay (Due: May 2nd)
- ★ 10% Seminar Participation & Interactive Research Participation

≥ 97% A+	87 - 89% B+	77 - 79% C+	67 - 69 D+	< 60% F
93 - 96% A	83 - 86% B	73 - 76% C	63 - 66% D	
90 - 92% A-	80 - 82% B-	70 - 72% C-	60 - 62% D-	

Exams: The midterm & final exam will feature three main components: short answer, analytical question, and essay. The short answer component will be both the *definition* and *significance* of a concept discussed in lecture and in the readings. The analytical question will require you to interpret data presented in a graph or table and then analyze how the presented findings relate to

¹Midterm exam held in regular lecture. Date subject to change with advance notice.

a question about course concepts. Lastly, the essays will require you to use the course concepts to **develop an argument** in response to stated essay question. This includes a thesis statement and supporting evidence for the thesis statement. Study guides will be provided a week before the exam along with “what constitutes an excellent” short answer and essay. The midterm is worth 30% while the **cumulative** final exam is worth 35%.

American Political Behavior Model Evaluation Essay: The essay assignment will ask students to choose a model discussed throughout the course of the quarter and write a critical analysis evaluating the model. The first half of the assignment will require the student to outline the model in detail, the mechanisms present in the model, and what the model predicts with respect to political behavior. The second half of the assignment will require the student to evaluate the model and how well the model predicts the political phenomena it seeks to explain. This second task requires students to leverage alternative material not presented in the course, particularly with finding scholarly evidence for the model. The parameters of this assignment will be outlined in detail and uploaded to the course [GitPage](#). The assignment is to be turned in via the [Canvas](#) portal under the essay assignment tab.

Make-Up Exams: I understand that throughout a quarter many exogenous, unanticipated events, may occur that would require the makeup of an exam. This course offers flexibility for administration of the *midterm exam* for whatever reason, independent of proper documentation such as a doctor’s note. Makeup examinations will consist of a robust single essay written during a ninety minute window. However, per university policy, the final exam cannot be given early and will be administered during the schedule time found on the [Office of Academic Affairs Schedule](#). Make-up *final exams* outside of this final exam period will *require* formal documentation and coordination at least a week in advance.

Seminar Participation & Research Participation: As stated earlier, there will be unannounced individual and group activities used to both 1) stimulate discussion during seminar and 2) assess student comprehension of a given day’s concepts. These exercises will generally be an in-class group exercises. These participation exercises will be incorporated into every other lecture and will be graded based on whether a student participated or not. In some exercises, students may participate on a computer or on their smart phone device. Thus, **attendance** is critical to receiving full points for the seminar participation.

Academic Dishonesty & Ethics: This course is about developing critical thought and developing personalized skill-sets necessary to examine politics in a systematic and rigorous way. Thus, it is important to develop your own arguments and work to hone in analytical skills. Academic dishonesty is not only a serious breach of ethics in the university community, but it is also detrimental to your scholarly growth. Ethics breaches, such as cheating and plagiarism, will be referred to the [Office of Student Conduct](#). Students may refer to the [University’s Code of Academic Conduct](#) for further clarification or may contact the instructor for any specific questions.

Course Resources: If accommodations are needed for you to succeed in this course, please speak with me and we will work together to make sure you are accommodated. If you are unsure if you need accommodations, please visit the [Division of Student Affairs](#). On another note, I

highly recommend taking advantage of the great campus resources offered by the [Student Academic Success Center](#), housed in the College of Health & Human Services, for strategies on how to succeed not only in this course but throughout your tenure here.

Successful Strategies for the Systematic Study of Politics

This section of the syllabus provides successful strategies on *how* to succeed in this course.

Note on Reading Scholarly Articles: Many of the readings of this course will be academic in nature. I understand that, as an introductory seminar, these works may contain empirical analysis that may seem daunting and confusing to read (i.e., lots of equations & statistics). I will convey the article's findings at length in lecture. The *only* expectation from you is to read the article carefully before seminar, attempt to understand the article's main argument (this includes what political phenomena does the article's argument seek to explain), how the article's findings fit with the theory presented, and what the implications of the author's empirical findings are for a given week's thematic orientation. I will provide a checklist that outlines how to read these works for content and using the content in seminar discussion.

Expectations: Students can expect me to come prepared to seminar. This entails that students can expect me to give a strong effort to convey the given seminar's course concepts and the implications these concepts have for the main questions highlighted in the course description. This seminar will be taught in a *dynamic* fashion which will require full participation from *everyone* in the seminar. As such, most lectures will incorporate activities designed to stimulate student involvement and gauge comprehension of the material. It is critical that everyone (including me) is **prepared** to discuss the seminar's assigned reading for the week and come ready to discuss the concepts in a scholarly fashion.

Coming Prepared: Each seminar will introduce *new* theories that, in one way or another, **will provide different conceptions of the political behavior of individual citizens and the mass public**. It is critical that you (and I) do the assigned readings before the class. Useful class discussion is conditional on both of us doing the readings, being familiar with the reading's argument/main points, and engaging the theories presented during that week. After understanding these different theories of democracy, we will evaluate whether the American political system as constructed works well or is in need of valuable reform. The better we prepare, the better we can assess our democracy.

Keeping an Open-Mind & Importance of Questions: It is critical to challenge partisan predispositions and other biases we may hold, even if that means confronting powerful myths that can bias our perceptions and assessments. Assessing whether our democracy functions well requires **questioning everything**, both of the theories themselves and my interpretation of them. Intellectual curiosity and asking questions is both a strong and desirable virtue. Asking questions and engaging in a conversation by sharing your ideas and thoughts help strengthen our assessments.

Course Road-Map

This section of the syllabus outlines the course schedule & readings². The course will be divided into three distinct sections outlined in the course objective. Understanding of these public opinion modules will help us collectively assess how political scientists study the political behavior of *citizens* and what the implications of these studies are on our collective understanding of what determines American public opinion and what implications mass public opinion has on the quality of American representative democracy. It is imperative that you treat each section as a part of a **framework** by which we judge the functioning of American democracy. Each section objective articulates the role of the section within the **analytical framework** guiding our assessment of American public opinion.

1. What is Public Opinion & How Do We Study It?

Section Objective: In the first module of this course, we dive into a broad overview of American Public Opinion. This section provides an understanding of what American Public opinion and the challenges political scientist face when studying this topic. We also explore the “ideal type” of polity, with respect to public opinion, as envisioned by the architects in the American Democratic System. In this section, we also gain applied experience of how to use survey methods (a very commonly used method by political scientists) to measure the opinions, attitudes, and preferences of citizens.

1. Week 1 & 2 (January 22nd, January 29th, & January 31st): Course Overview & Defining the “Ideal Citizen” in the American Democratic System. How do political scientists study public opinion? What are some of the challenges and pitfalls of such an approach?
 - Madison, James. 1787. “Federalist 10.” In [United States Congress Resources](#)
 - Madison, James (or Alexander Hamilton). 1788. “Federalist 51.” In [United States Congress Resources](#)
 - Berelson, Bernard. 1952. “Democratic Theory and Public Opinion.” *Public Opinion Quarterly*. 16(3):313-330.
 - Atkeson, Lonna R. 2010. “The State of Survey Research as a Research Tool in American Politics.” In Jan E. Leighley, ed., *The Oxford Handbook of American Elections and Political Behavior*.
 - Pasek, Josh & Jon A. Krosnick. 2010. “Optimizing Survey Questionnaire Design in Political Science: Insights from Psychology.” In Jan E. Leighley, ed., *The Oxford Handbook of American Elections and Political Behavior*.
 - Green, Amelia Hoover. 2013. “How to Read Political Science: A Guide in Four Steps.” *Note: This is a primer on how to read social science literature, particularly for students without previous experience with applied quantitative methods.*

²Each seminar slideset and supplemental material will be uploaded before seminar on the [Course GitPage](#).

Please Note: No Class on January 31st. In lieu of class, please fill-out the class Qualtrics survey assessing political attitudes. This survey design is based on a variant of the [Cooperative Congressional Election Study](#) and you will receive credit for completing it. Click [HERE](#) to take the survey.

2. Week 3 (February 5th & February 7th): How do we measure salient political topics in the mass public? How “stable” are some of the attitudinal measures?
 - Druckman, James N. & Arthur Lupia. 2000. “Preference Formation.” *Annual Review of Political Science*. 3:1-24.
 - Verba, Sidney. 1996. “The Citizen as Respondent: Sample Surveys and American Democracy.” *American Political Science Review*. 1-7.
 - Zaller, John & Stanley Feldman. 1992. “A Simple Theory of the Survey Response: Answering Questions versus Revealing Preferences.” *American Journal of Political Science* 36(3): 951-971.
 - Tourangeau, Roger and Tom W. Smith. 1996. “Asking Sensitive Questions: The Impact of Data Collection Mode, Question Format, and Question Context.” *Public Opinion Quarterly*. 60:275-304.

2. Citizen Reasoning & Determinants of Political Attitudes

Section Objective: In this second module of this course, we investigate the literature on how citizens reason about political abstractions and how they do (or don’t) think coherently about politics. We pay special attention to whether are able to think “ideologically” and develop coherent preferences about the “ideal” role of government in society. After discussing how citizens may fall short in this endeavor of specifying coherent preferences about government, we turn to potential *heuristics* (i.e., short-cuts) that may help citizens develop coherent political preferences.

1. Week 4 (February 12th & February 14th): How do citizens “reason” about politics in American Life? Are citizens generally able to “learn” in a political context?
 - Nyhan, Brendan & Jason Reifler. 2010. “When Corrections Fail: The Persistence of Political Misconceptions.” *Political Behavior* 32(2): 303-330.
 - Gilens, Martin. 2012. “Two-Thirds Full? Citizen Competence and Democratic Governance.” In Adam Berinsky, ed., *New Directions in Public Opinion Research*.
 - Huckfeldt, Robert. 2007. “Information, Persuasion, and Political Communication Networks.” In Russel J. Dalton & Hans-Dieter Klingemann, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of Political Behavior*.
 - Campbell, A.L. 2002. “Self-Interest, Social Security, and the Distinctive Participation Patterns of Senior Citizens.” *American Political Science Review*. 96:565- 74.

2. Week 5 (February 19th & February 21st): Now that we have discussed how citizens do (or do not) reason about politics, we turn to whether citizens hold coherent preferences that guide their micro-level political behavior. Does the mass public generally possess high levels of political knowledge and “ideological” thinking? How do citizens use (or do not use) heuristics to overcome the *democratic dilemma*?
 - Kuklinski, James H. & Buddy Peyton. 2007. “Belief Systems and Political Decision Making.” In Russel J. Dalton & Hans-Dieter Klingemann, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of Political Behavior*.
 - Klein, Ezra. 2017. “For elites, politics is driven by ideology. For voters, it's not.” [Vox](#).
 - Freeder, Sean, Gabriel S. Lenz, & Shad Turney. 2018. “The Importance of Knowing “What Goes with What”: Reinterpreting the Evidence on Policy Attitude Stability.” *Journal of Politics*. 81(1):1-17.
 - Lau, Richard R. & David P. Redlawsk. 2001. “Advantages and Disadvantages of Cognitive Heuristics in Political Decision Making.” *American Political Science Review* 45(4): 951-971.
3. Week 6 (February 26th & February 28th): Which models seek to explain the origins of *partisanship*, the most salient heuristic of political attitudes and choice? What are the effects of partisanship on the political behavior of citizens? Does partisanship change?
 - Bartels, Larry M. 2008. “The Study of Electoral Behavior.” In Jan E. Leighley, ed., *The Oxford Handbook of American Elections and Political Behavior*.
 - Huddy, Leonie & Alexa Bankert. 2017. “Political Partisanship as a Social Identity.” In *The Oxford Handbook of Political Science*.
 - Zingher, Joshua. 2018. “Polarization, Demographic Change, and White Flight from the Democratic Party.” *Journal of Politics*. 80(3): 860-872.
 - Barber, Michael & Jeremy C. Pope. 2018. “Does Party Trump Ideology? Disentangling Party and Ideology in America.” *American Political Science Review*. 1(1): 1-17.

3. Translating Preference to Behavior: The Role of Campaigns & Elections in American Political Life

Section Objective: In this section, we turn to how citizens translate their preferences into decisions of electoral choice. We investigate and assess three main models of electoral choice: the spatial model, the partisanship model, and the retrospective model. We then turn to how well these heuristics work in various electoral contexts, particularly electoral contexts lacking a clear partisan heuristic (i.e., non-partisan contexts). Lastly we discuss citizen participation in the electoral arena, with a particular focus on the *socioeconomic* model of electoral turnout.

1. Week 7 (March 5th & March 7th): How are political preferences translated to representative choice? How do the partisan, spatial (ideological), and valence models differ in explaining citizen electoral preferences?
 - Joesten, Danielle A. & Walter J. Stone. 2014. "Reassessing Proximity Voting: Expertise, Party, and Choice in Congressional Elections." *Journal of Politics*. 76(3): 740-753.
 - Bafumi, Joseph & Robert Y. Shapiro. 2009. "A New Partisan Voter." *Journal of Politics*. 71(1): 1-23.
 - Grose, Christian R. & Bruce I. Oppenheimer. 2007. "The Iraq War, Partisanship, and Candidate Attributes: Variation in Partisan Swing in the 2006 U.S. House Elections." *Legislative Studies Quarterly*. 32(4): 531-557.
 - Buttice, Matthew K. & Walter J. Stone. 2012. "Candidates Matter: Policy and Quality Differences in Congressional Elections." *Journal of Politics*. 74(3): 870-887.
2. Week 8 (March 12th & March 14th): Catch-Up/Review & Midterm Exam Week. For this week, we should plan on catching-up on left-over material and/or taking the class period on Tuesday (March 12th) to review the material ahead of the midterm exam.

Midterm Examination (March 14, 2019)

Spring Break: March 18th-March 22nd

3. Week 9 (March 26th & March 28th): What are the fundamental role of campaigns in determining how citizens translate their preferences to electoral choice? What sort of citizens are predisposed to participating in the electoral process?
 - Green, Donald P. & Michael Schwam-Baird. 2016. "Mobilization, Participation, and American Democracy: A Retrospective & Postscript." *Party Politics*. 22(2): 158-164.
 - Martinez, Michael D. 2010. "Why is American Turnout so Low and Why Should We Care?" In Jan E. Leighley, ed., *The Oxford Handbook of American Elections and Political Behavior*.
 - Leighley, Jan E. 1995. "Attitudes, Opportunities, and Incentives-a Field Essay on Political Participation." *Political Research Quarterly*. 48(1): 181-209.
 - Gomez, Brad T. & Thomas G. Hansford. 2014. "Economic Retrospection and the Calculus of Voting." *Political Behavior*. 37(1): 309-329.
 - Kalla, Joshua & David E. Broockman. 2017. "The Minimal Persuasive Effects of Campaign Contact in General Elections: Evidence from 49 Field Experiments." *American Political Science Review*. 112(1): 148-166.

4. Week 10 (April 2nd & April 4th): How well do these models of electoral choice perform in varying electoral contexts, such as ballot referendums, local elections, and non-partisan elections? Are there limitations to translating citizen preference to electoral choice in non-candidate and party-centered context?

- Boudreau, Cheryl & Scott A. MacKenzie. 2018. "Wanting What is Fair: How Party Cues and Information about Income Inequality Affect Public Support for Taxes." *Journal of Politics*. 80(2): 367-381.
- Boudreau, Cheryl, Christopher S. Elmendorf & Scott A. MacKenzie. 2015. "Lost in Space? Information Shortcuts, Spatial Voting, and Local Government Representation." *Political Research Quarterly*. 68(4): 843-855.
- Berry, Christopher R. & William G. Howell. 2007. "Accountability and Local Elections: Rethinking Retrospective Voting." *Journal of Politics*. 69(3): 844-858.
- Bonneau, Chris W. & Damon M. Cann. 2015. "Party Identification and Vote Choice in Partisan and Nonpartisan Elections." *Political Behavior*. 37(1): 43-66.

Please Note: No Class on April 4th due to the Annual Meeting of the Midwest Political Science Association in Chicago, IL.

4. Cleavages in the Mass Public-Are citizens polarized in political preference & attitude?

Section Objective: In this section module we dive into a salient debate in the American public opinion literature, the debate of issue preference polarization in the mass public. We begin by setting the debate around the key analytical question: Are Americans as polarized as elites in their issue preferences? Is there a clear answer to this question? We then investigate specific aspects of this issue polarization as it relates to race and class cleavages in American society. We explore this polarization assessing work on preferences are a vast array of issues. Lastly, we conclude this section discussing the implications of issue polarization on the potential prevalence of *resource bias* in American political representation.

1. Week 11 (April 9th & April 11th): Setting the debate: are citizens fundamentally polarized in their political preferences as elected elites (i.e., members of Congress) are? Is there variation in beliefs about political tolerance in the mass public?

- Abramowitz, Alan & Kyle Saunders. 2008. "Is Polarization a Myth?" *Journal of Politics*. 70(2): 542-555
- Fiorina, Morris P., Samuel A. Abrams, & Jeremy C. Pope. 2008. "Polarization in the American Public: Misconceptions and Misreadings." *Journal of Politics*. 70(2): 556-560.
- Smith, Amy E. 2016. "Do Americans still believe in democracy?" [The Washington Post: Monkey Cage](#).

- Claassen, Christopher & James L. Gibson. 2018. "This map shows where more Americans are willing to support free speech." *The Washington Post: Monkey Cage*.
 - Oliver, Eric & Thomas Wood. 2018. "Are young people today hostile to democracy and capitalism? Far from it." *The Washington Post: Monkey Cage*.
2. Week 12 (April 16th & April 18th): What is the role of racial cleavages in American public opinion? Specifically, do different racial groups diverge in political preferences?
- Valentino, Nicholas & David O. Sears. 2005. "Old Times There Are Not Forgotten: Race and Partisan Realignment in the Contemporary South." *American Journal of Political Science*. 49(3): 672-688.
 - Kinder, Donald & Nicholas Winter. 2001. "Exploring the Racial Divide: Blacks, Whites, and Opinion on National Policy." *American Journal of Political Science*. 45(2): 439-453.
 - Brader, Ted, Nicholas A. Valentino, & Elizabeth Suhay. 2008. "What Triggers Public Opposition to Immigration? Anxiety, Group Cues, and Immigration Threat." *American Journal of Political Science*. 52(4): 959-978.
 - Bowler, Shaun., Stephen P. Nicholson, & Gary M. Segura. 2006. "Earthquakes and Aftershocks: Race, Direct Democracy, and Partisan Change." *American Journal of Political Science*. 50(1): 146-159.
3. Week 13 (April 23rd & April 25th): What is the role of economic and class cleavages in American political life? Do different social classes diverge on political preferences, particularly on economic preferences, and what are the potential implications of this on the *resource bias* of representation?
- Page, Benjamin I., Larry M. Bartels, & Jason Seawright. 2013. "Democracy and the Policy Preferences of Wealthy Americans." *PS: Political Science and Politics*. 11(1): 51-73.
 - Soroka, Stuart N. & Christopher Wlezien. 2008. "On the Limits of Inequality in Representation." *PS: Political Science and Politics*. 41(2): 319-327.
 - Gilens, Martin. 2009. "Preference Gaps and Inequality in Representation." *PS: Political Science and Politics*. 42(2): 335-341.
 - Broockman, David E. & Neil A. Malhorta. 2018. "What Do Donors Want? Heterogeneity by Party and Policy Domain." *Working Paper Research Note*. 1-10.

5. Bringing the course together: Does opinion get translated into democratic responsiveness?

Section Objective: Lastly, we conclude the course with a discussion of perhaps the most seminal equation motivating the course: does American public opinion influence the policy outputs

produced by our elected agents (i.e, Congress & the Presidency)? If public opinion does influence government policy responsiveness, is there variation in which citizens are able to more effectively secure this responsiveness? What could be a potential explanation of this variation? We then conclude the course on a comparative note, by investigating whether other institutional designs are more effective at translating mass public opinion into congruent government policy responsiveness.

1. Week 14 (April 30th & May 2nd): Does American public opinion influence government policy? If it does, which citizen types are able to secure policy responsiveness from their government?

- Broockman, David E. & Christopher Skovron. 2018. "Bias in Perceptions of Public Opinion among Political Elites." *American Political Science Review*. 112(3): 542-563.
- Gilens, Martin. 2005. "Inequality and Democratic Responsiveness." *Public Opinion Quarterly*. 69(1): 778-796.
- Wlezien, Christopher. 1995. "The Public as Thermostat: Dynamics of Preferences for Spending." *American Journal of Political Science*. 39(4): 981-1000.

American Political Behavior Model Evaluation Essay Due May 2nd

2. Week 15 (May 7th & May 9th): Lastly, does the *institutional* framework of the United States facilitate or hinder the translation of American public opinion to legislative policy outcomes?

- Bafumi, Joseph & Michael C. Herron. 2010. "Leapfrog Representation and Extremism: A Study of American Voters and Their Members in Congress." *American Political Science Review* 104(3): 519-542.
- Wlezien, Christopher & Stuart N. Soroka. 2012. "Political Institutions and the Opinion-Policy Link." *West European Politics*. 35(6): 1407-1432.
- Golder, Matt & Benjamin Ferland. 2018. "Electoral Systems and Citizen-Elite Ideological Congruence." In Erik S. Herron, Robert J. Pekkanen & Matthew S. Shugart, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of Electoral Systems*.

Final Exam Review (May 9th)

Final Examination (TBD)