

PS 309: Public Opinion and Voting Behavior
Dr. Martha Kropf
University of Missouri-Kansas City
Tuesday/Thursday 2:00-3:15pm

Course Description: This course provides an introduction to the study of the formation, distribution and expression of public opinion and partisanship in the American political system. Additionally, we will study why people vote and how voting decisions are made.

Since this is an election year we will have a special opportunity to study the formation, distribution and expression of public opinion and voting behavior. There are at least three possible ways you have the opportunity to do so. First, you could have the responsibility of analyzing the political atmosphere in one state where there is a Senate election. Second, you could track the efforts of interest groups in Missouri on behalf of candidates. Finally, you could participate in a voter mobilization effort that is going on in the Kansas City community this election year. I have spent several hours this summer setting up a great service learning possibility for you this semester. You will have the opportunity to share with the rest of the class what you have learned at various points in the semester. A midterm and a final will help ensure that the information we have read in our books is firmly cemented in your minds!

Class meeting consist of lectures, the presentations of your classmates and discussions. In order to take part in and learn from all of these activities it is absolutely necessary for you to keep up with the course schedule. This means that all reading must be completed before each class.

Required Readings:

Asher, Herbert. 2004. *Polling and the Public: What Every Citizen Should Know*. 6th Edition. Washington, DC: Congressional Quarterly Press.

Flanigan, William H. and Nancy H. Zingale. 2002. *Political Behavior of the American Electorate*. 10th Edition. Washington, DC: Congressional Quarterly Press.

Various readings available on Blackboard.

Suggested Readings:

Try to read at least one newspaper each day such as *The Kansas City Star*, *The Washington Post*, *The New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal*, or *The Christian Science Monitor*.

Watch evening television newscasts, “The Jim Lehrer Newshour” (6pm, Broadcast Channel 19), CNN, and listen to National Public Radio’s “Morning Edition” and “All Things Considered”. (ME: 5:00am-10:00am and ATC: 4:00pm-6:30pm. You can find NPR at 89.3 FM.)

Contacting the Professor:

My office phone number is 816-235-5948. Please feel free to reach me via email at KropfM@umkc.edu. My office hours will be Monday, Wednesday and Friday mornings from

10:30-12:00. I will also be available at other times. Call me to see if I'm there or make an appointment with me.

Grades:

Your final grade for the course will be based upon the following:

Current Events: 100 points

Paper proposal: 50 points

In-class Final/Midterm: 300 points each

Research Paper and Presentation: 250 points

Grades are assigned based on the following:

930-1000:	A
900-929:	A-
870-899:	B+
830-869:	B
800-829:	B-
770-799:	C+
730-769:	C
700-729:	C-
670-699:	D+
630-669:	D
600-629:	D-
599 and below:	F

Expectations and Assignments:

Attendance:

I believe strongly that politics can best be understood and realized in a community. If we intend to study politics, we must work and question together (that includes me!). Therefore, attendance at all classes is expected, and missing more than three classes (unexcused) will result in ten points deducted from your final grade per absence.

Current Events (100 points):

You will hand in five newspaper article summaries (one every other week starting with Thursday of week #2; CURRENT EVENT DAYS ARE NOTED ON THE SYLLABUS).

For the newspaper article summaries, I will expect you each to read and write a summary of a newspaper article or website dealing with some aspect of public opinion or voting behavior. (It should not be difficult to find such information as it is an election year after all...) This summary should be typewritten and will be no more than three paragraphs. Each student will include the newspaper article clipping or printout with the assignment. Each student should relate the research to what we are learning in class. Each student will summarize their article on "current event days", every two weeks. The best summaries help you write your final paper.

Paper Proposal (50 points, due September 7):

In order for my service learning proposal to work, I need to have a sense quickly of what each student will be doing this semester. See below. I will pass out more information on this on August 31. But see below—if you want to do this, you will need to form a group of four to five students! If you want to write a paper, I need what interest group you are studying or what state you'd like to write about (actually, I'd like for you to make three state choices... and I'll pick one for you...)

Midterm/Final Exams (300 points each; October 21 and December 16):

These two classes will be in-class exams covering the information from class to that point. Two blue books are required for each test—please bring them but do not write your name on them. The final will not be cumulative. Make-up examinations for excused absences will be given on an announced date. Keep in mind it is at my discretion whether or not to allow a student to make up missed tests—I expect to know in advance if you are going to be gone, and I expect it will only be for an emergency or a university event, such as a sporting event, mock trial tournament or a debate tournament. One more rule: no cell phones are allowed on or on your desk during the exam. If I see one, you will not be allowed to finish your exam. (Sorry, I do keep hearing about these annoying—albeit inventive—ways that students can cheat!)

Research Paper and Paper Presentation (250 points; due Tuesday, November 23)

**Yes, I know it's due early...didn't want to kill those who are enrolled in both of my classes!
It's bad enough that current events are on the same day...**

There are four choices for your final paper.

1. Service learning option: You will form your own group of 4-5 other students with whom you can work (if you don't know anyone, but want to do the service learning option, I will assign you to a group). You will appoint one person as the leader of the group, who will contact Rick Bell from the Local Investment Commission (he will be in class on September 2 to describe the project). He will have a list of several neighborhoods in Kansas City and your group will pick one to conduct research on, help with “listening sessions” and help with a voter mobilization effort. (This effort is non-partisan.) Group leaders or a designate (or as many as want to) are expected to attend the Voter Activation Committee meetings on September 22 and October 20 (probably at 8:00am) and make a report there about how the project is going. Individually, each person will be required to do 15-20 hours of work on the service learning project over the entire semester (believe me, Mr. Bell and I have discussed the options and there is a lot to do). I expect this amount of hours is roughly equivalent to the amount I would expect you to conduct research on a paper. However, if you are finding you are short, please come talk to me as soon as you realize it. Mr. Bell and I will discuss some other ideas for work. Your group will be required to report how things are going periodically and at the end of the semester and will give to me the research you have completed about the neighborhood. Each individual will also turn in a 3-5 page reaction paper, telling me exactly what you did and what you've learned about public opinion and voting behavior over the semester. Also, I expect a reaction to the group work—how did it go? When students are giving final

presentations, I expect you briefly to describe your part in the project and what you learned.

OR---

2. You will prepare a final paper analyzing the Senate race in a state you and I will select (when you turn in your paper on September 7, I expect you to give me three choices and I'll pick one—Missouri and Kansas should NOT be selected). In the final paper, you should include information about who is running for Senate (including background), information about past voting in the state, information about the party membership both now and in the past, and information from current and past public opinion polls. You should also include information about the issues the candidates are mentioning and why you think they are including these issues. You should try to ascertain whom the candidates are appealing to in the state and whom they are ignoring. You may want to find out what commercials the candidates are airing and how much they are spending on their campaigns. The paper must be typewritten (double-spaced) and a length of 25-30 pages. The purpose of the paper is for you to learn about all aspects of public opinion and voting behavior within the context of an actual campaign. Please someone pick Illinois!

In doing your research about this paper, you should use at least one of each of the following:

**Newspaper articles or television or radio stories from the state (I expect you to be a regular reader of the state's biggest paper—or an important newspaper in the state. Your current event reports could and should come from this state.)

**Analysis from national sources such as *CQ Weekly* and the *Cook Political Report*. National Public Radio also has a great set of political reporters. Anything you obtain from national radio or television stories may be used. (Cook Political Report and other sources will be discussed throughout the semester.)

**Web page information, publications from political parties, or personal interviews

**Your course textbooks or any assigned readings from class or scholarly articles you find

**Analysis of original data obtained from the state

OR---

3. You will prepare an analysis of the work of an interest group both nationally and locally during this election cycle. I expect you to select a local interest group that also operates nationally and become very familiar with what they are doing in this year's election (one way is by participating in their activities and attending their meetings). First however in the paper, you must put the group in context. I suggest that you select books edited by David Magleby at Brigham Young University about soft money and issue advocacy during the last three election cycles (we are reading selections from the 2002 book). You will need to write about what interest groups are doing during election campaigns and how they are dealing with changes in campaign finance reform. Why are interest groups even important? Then, give me more specific information about the group. If I were you, I'd visit the television stations and find out how much the groups are spending on TV ads, and I'd compare that to the amount of effort they are putting into literature drops and other GOTV activities. Also, how does their work comport with what the campaigns are

doing? Are they supportive of a particular candidate? I expect that your interest group portrayal will include an interview with those involved in the campaign locally. This paper will also be 25-30 pages.

OR---

4. If you have a creative idea, I'm happy to listen to it. This is your education; I expect you to take an active role in it.

All papers will be graded for content, clarity, and writing quality. Use a style manual and proofread your paper carefully.

You will also be expected to give an oral presentation of your paper during one of the last three weeks of class. Depending on the total enrollment of the class, you will spend about 10 minutes summarizing your research. Approximately 10 minutes will be reserved for question and answer on the part of your fellow students. Please note I will assign a day for you to present. If for some reason you don't want to give your presentation that day feel free to trade days with one of your colleagues. All trades must be cleared with the professor and no more trading will take place after Week 10.

Late Paper Policy

All assignments are due in class by the date listed on the schedule unless I indicate otherwise. Since you are all advanced undergraduate students I expect there will not be any late papers or assignments. However, if you feel you need more time on any given project you can have it, but you will lose five percentage points of the grade for that project each day that it is late (for example, instead of getting 90% of the points for the assignment, you will only receive 85%). I want you to know I will leave this choice to you. Exceptions may be illness or family emergency, but I expect you to discuss these problems with me in advance. I reserve the right to ask for official documentation (i.e., a note from your doctor). If you are participating in an official university function (such as a debate tournament, mock trial or an athletic event) or have an excused absence of some sort, you must let me know in advance when you will be gone. **I expect such assignments to be turned in before you leave for your event, or late points will be subtracted as usual (commencing the day the paper is late whether that is when you are gone or not).**

Final Notes

1. If you have a physical, emotional, medical or learning disability that may impact on your ability to carry out the assigned course work, please let me know sometime during the first two weeks of class so that appropriate accommodations can be made. I am most happy to work with you. I am unable to make accommodations if you talk to me after the semester is over and you are disappointed with your grade.

2. Academic honesty is expected of every student. Cheating on examinations, quizzes or written work will result in an “F” for this course. Plus, I am now required to report cheating to the proper authorities here on campus. For more information about UMKC’s academic integrity policy, please see the 2003-2004 UMKC *General Catalog* (see <http://www.umkc.edu/umkc/catalog/html/append/policy/0020.html>)

According to the UMKC General Catalog, the definition of plagiarism is: "The term **plagiarism** includes, but is not limited to: (i) use by paraphrase or direct quotation of the published or unpublished work of another person without fully and properly crediting the author with footnotes, citations or bibliographical reference; (ii) unacknowledged use of materials prepared by another person or agency engaged in the selling of term papers or other academic materials; or (iii) unacknowledged use of original work/material that has been produced through collaboration with others without release in writing from collaborators."

Consider the following:

According to a statement from the high school/college dual credit program: "Plagiarism is the use of another person's writing or ideas without giving that person credit by means of source citation and (in some cases) quotation marks. All source material, whether presented through direct quotations or through summary, paraphrase, or precis, must have an adequate source citation."

UMKC’s English Department says: "...You plagiarize any time you use the words or thoughts of another person in your work without attribution. This includes copying passages, phrases, and significant terms without giving the proper citation. It also includes close paraphrasing. You can even plagiarize an idea if you try to pass it off as your own. ..."Academic honesty is expected of every student. Cheating on examinations, quizzes or written work will result in an “F” for this course and students will be reported to the proper university authorities. For more information about UMKC’s academic integrity policy, please see <http://www.umkc.edu/umkc/catalog/html/append/policy/0020.html>.

3. It is the policy of UMKC, and is my personal policy as well, that there will be no discrimination on the basis of racial, religious, or ethnic background, or on the basis of gender. You will be evaluated solely on the quality of your work.

Course outline:

Week 1: August 24/26, 2004

What is Public Opinion?

Flanigan and Zingale, Chapters 1&6

Bardes and Oldendick, Chapter 1 (posted on Blackboard)

No class on August 26: UMKC Day of Celebration

Week 2: August 31/September 2, 2004

August 31: Mr. Rick Bell, LISC to discuss your service learning options

Thursday, September 2: CURRENT EVENT DAY

Week 3: September 7/9, 2004

What is Public Opinion, continued...

Determinants of Public Opinion and Opinion Stability

Bardes and Oldendick, Chapter 5 (Blackboard)

F & Z, Chapter 7

Week 4: September 14/16, 2004

Opinion Stability, continued...

Page and Shapiro, Chapters 2 and 8 (on Blackboard)

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 18: CURRENT EVENT DAY

Week 5: September 21/23, 2004

How is Public Opinion Measured?

Asher, whole book

Flanigan and Zingale, Appendix

Week 6: September 28/30, 2004

How is Public Opinion Measured? Continued...

Finish Asher

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 30: CURRENT EVENT DAY

Week 7: October 5/7, 2004

What do polls mean? How are they used?

Brodie, et al. "Polling and Democracy: The Will of the People" (Posted on Blackboard)

Witt, "People Who Count." (Posted on Blackboard)

Week 8: October 12/14, 2004

Determinants of Vote Choice—An Overview

F&Z, chapter 8

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 14: CURRENT EVENT DAY

Week 9: October 19/21, 2004

October 19: Midterm Preparation

October 21: Midterm

Week 10: October 26/28, 2004

Determinants of Vote Choice—Partisanship

F&Z, Chapter 3

THURSDAY OCTOBER 28: CURRENT EVENT DAY

Week 11: November 2/4, 2004

Tuesday, November 2: No class...it is Election Day and you should be busy doing research for your paper...

Partisans and Partisan Change

F&Z, Chapters 4-5

Week 12: November 9/11, 2004

Political Persuasion?? Political Mobilization?? Outside Money and the Campaign...

Magleby and Monson, Chapters 1-3 and 12 (Blackboard)

NO MORE CURRENT EVENT DAYS

Week 13: November 16/18, 2004

Political Participation: Who Votes?

F&Z, Chapter 2

Brady, Verba and Schlozman, "Beyond SES: A Resource Model of Political Participation." (on Blackboard)

Week 14: November 23/25, 2004

Presentations

Final paper due on Tuesday, November 23

November 25 is Thanksgiving!!!

Week 15: November 30/December 2, 2004

Presentations

Week 16: December 7

Presentations

FINAL TEST: Thursday, December 16, 10:30-12:30am

(NOTE: THE LATE POLICY IS IN EFFECT FOR THE FINAL PAPER, BUT PAPERS NOT TURNED IN BY 2:00PM ON THE DAY BEFORE FINAL EXAM DAY WILL RECEIVE A 0...but if

you haven't turned in it by that point, you would only get 10% of the points for your paper anyway...)

Arts and Sciences Reading Days: December 10 and 11