

University of Missouri-St. Louis  
Department of Political Science

Political Science 4040/6406  
Survey Research Practicum  
Winter 2009

2:30-5:00 pm Mondays in 106 CCB

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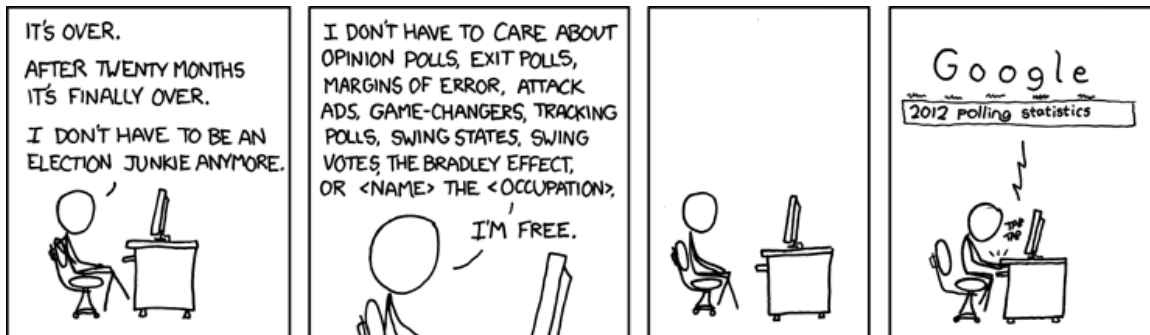
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This course will combine survey research and the study of voters in city politics. It will examine how St. Louis voters see the political world and how they participate in it. We will design and execute a survey of St. Louis voters in the March 3, 2009 primary election. The primary goal of the course is to give students experience participating in a survey research project from start to finish. We will cover human subjects review, sampling, questionnaire construction, measurement, interviewing, coding, data management, data analysis, and presentation of survey results. Conducting an exit poll is an enormous undertaking and the major part of the course. All class members are required to participate and your active participation, hard work, and enthusiasm will be vital to the success of the project. In the process, students will also learn some important concepts and current debates in the study of city politics, public opinion, and voting behavior.

### Course Objectives

1. Students will understand at least two theoretical perspectives to explain why voters choose a particular candidate.
2. Students will learn the fundamentals of survey research design and analysis.
3. Students will use statistics to make inferences about the relationships between variables that affect voting behavior or public opinion.
4. Students will understand debates about the relationship between public opinion and democracy.



Source: [www.xkcd.com/500/](http://www.xkcd.com/500/)

## **Required Reading**

Herb Asher. 2007. *Polling and the Public*, 7<sup>th</sup> ed. Washington, DC: CQ Press.

Buzz Bissinger. 1998. *A Prayer for the City*. New York: Vintage.

Lana Stein. 2002. *St. Louis Politics: The Triumph of Tradition*. St. Louis, MO: Missouri Historical Society Press.

Aside from the required books for the course, articles and excerpts from books on the assigned reading list will be posted on the MyGateway web site for the course. I highly recommend that you buy the required books.

## **Other Books**

Below is a list of books that are not required but are useful sources of information about city politics, public opinion, and survey research.

### City Politics and Elections

Dennis R. Judd and Todd Swanstrom. *City Politics: Private Power & Public Policy*. New York:

Karen M. Kaufmann. 2004. *The Urban Voter*. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press.

Clarence Stone. 1989. *Regime Politics*. Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas.

Jessica Trounstein. 2008. *Political Monopolies in American Cities*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

### Public Opinion

Rosalee A. Clawson and Zoe M. Oxley. 2008. *Public Opinion: Democratic Ideals, Democratic Practice*. Washington, DC: CQ Press.

Barbara Norrander and Clyde Wilcox, editors. 2002. *Understanding Public Opinion*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Washington, DC: CQ Press.

### Survey Research

Herbert F. Weisberg. 2005. *The Total Survey Error Approach*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

## Course Requirements

Questionnaire Memo. The first assignment is for each student to write a memo proposing two questions for the exit poll. The questions may address any number of topics (such as vote choice, issue opinions, the voting experience, evaluations of city government and leaders). A first draft of the questionnaire memo is due February 2 and the final memo is due February 9. More details on the memo will be announced on the first day of class. The questions you propose will heavily influence the content of the questionnaire we use for the exit poll.

Review Essay. Each student will be responsible for writing a short (3 page) critical review of one of the assigned readings, and you will be expected to assume a larger role in seminar discussions that week. The essay should help you crystallize your thoughts on the readings and will serve as a basis for your contribution to each seminar's discussion. Essays are due at the beginning of class. The essay should address the following questions about the study you review.

1. What is the main research question?
2. What are the main substantive findings and arguments?
3. [Very briefly] What methods and evidence are used to answer the research question?
4. Are the arguments and evidence presented by the author convincing?
5. Do the theory and concepts help us understand St. Louis politics?

Term Paper. You will use the data gathered in the exit poll to write a 20-page research paper. You can write the research paper on your own or with a partner. If you choose to work with a partner, I hope that this collaboration will help build on the strengths that each one of you possesses. However, I also expect that you will share equally in the responsibility of creating a quality research project.

Term paper proposals are due February 23, so that I can see that each research paper has a topic that is manageable given the questions asked on the exit poll. This proposal should be two pages and should contain a brief summary of the research topic, a hypothesis and a theoretical justification. It should also include a brief literature review with at least five significant citations that are directly relevant to your topic.

The final paper must contain an introduction to the research topic, a brief literature review, a theoretical justification for the hypotheses being tested, and a summary and analysis of the data. The paper must be well written and contain few errors in spelling, grammar, or syntax. The paper must also contain a title page and a complete and accurate works-cited page. You should use the citation guidelines outlined in the APSA Style Manual.

The final paper is due in class on the last day our seminar meets (May 4). On that day, each seminar participant or research team will present a summary of their paper. Your presentation should inform the rest of us about the topic of your research, the hypotheses you test, and the results of your analysis. You will have about 10 to 15 minutes to make your presentation to the class.

Final Exam. There will be a take-home final exam. It will be comprehensive and include short answer and essay questions. It will be handed out the last day of class (May 4) and due the following Monday (May 11).

Participation. The primary project in this course will be the St. Louis City Exit Poll. You will work very hard on exit poll preparations during the weeks leading up to and including the March 3 election. The following exit poll activities are required for the participation portion of your final grade in the course:

1. Complete the computer-based training module for human subjects research, hosted by the National Institutes of Health (NIH) at <http://phrp.nihtraining.com/users/login.php>. You will need to register (create your own username and password) the first time you log into the NIH web site. When you complete the training, print the certificate and show it to me to indicate that you completed the training.
2. Serve a six-hour shift administering the exit poll to voters on Election Day (March 3)
3. For a portion of the completed questionnaires, enter the survey responses into a computer database.
4. Work on one of the four committees for the St. Louis City Exit Poll (Questionnaire, Interview Training, Interview Packets, Crisis).

One of the most common concerns students and professors share about group projects is accountability. Students are concerned because those who want to perform well and put together a good project are often forced to work extra to make up for other students. Professors also worry about fairness because they want to assign grades based upon performance.

After the committees are formed, students will submit a weekly log of their personal work on the exit poll project (see the attached form). This will include a description of the work they have done on the exit poll during that week--things like preparing packets, training interviewers, and other work. It will not include things like reading for the course or work on personal research papers. It should go without saying that you are expected to be honest and objective on these weekly logs. The logs will be used to help us assess your contribution to the class project and to assign your grade for project participation.

I will also use a student peer evaluation to help assign grades. Students will briefly evaluate the other members of their committee. The first evaluation will take place within the first month of the semester and will be a simple progress report. The first evaluation will not count towards anyone's grade and will simply help me know where students stand with their peers in time to provide feedback. After all of the committee work has been finished, students will prepare a final evaluation that I will use to help assign grades.

Peer review systems, like this one, will make some of you uncomfortable. It is not always easy to evaluate peers, and if done inappropriately can lead to problems. Yet, without honest feedback those who contribute significantly to the project can be treated the same as those who leave the group tasks to others. I am simply asking for an honest, objective evaluation to help us treat each other with respect and fairness. I hope we can work together in a friendly, professional atmosphere to produce a quality product.

Each committee is also required to submit a committee report detailing how you completed the project. This report should include a timeline of activities, suggestions for improving it in future exit polls, and a copy of all relevant documents (both in paper and electronic format). If your committee does not provide a report, then all members of the committee will receive a failing grade for the committee report portion of their grade. The committee reports are due March 30.

Finally, full participation in the course means that you attend each class period, complete the assigned readings before class each week, and take part in class discussions of the readings.

Grading Percentages. Final grades will be based on the following percentages:

<u>Assignment</u>	<u>Weight</u>	<u>Due date</u>
Questionnaire Memo	10%	Feb. 9
Review Essay	15%	various
Research Paper/Presentation	30%	May 4
Final Exam	20%	May 11
Committee Report	10%	March 30
Participation	15%	

### Academic Honesty

I take academic misconduct (plagiarism, cheating, etc.) very seriously, and any cases of cheating or plagiarism will be reported to the university committee on academic misconduct and handled according to university policy. In addition, students will receive a grade of “0” for that assignment. According to the American Heritage Dictionary, plagiarism is “stealing and using the ideas or writings of another as one’s own” (p. 524). If you are uncertain about this definition or how it applies to your work, please see me.

### Students with Disabilities

If anyone has a health condition or disability, which may require accommodations in order to effectively participate in this class, please contact me and the **Disability Access Services Office in 144 Millennium Student Center at 516-6554**. Information about your disability will be regarded as confidential.

## Course Schedule and Topics

### **Week 1: January 26**

#### Introduction

Course Schedule and Organization

Introduction to Public Opinion Polling

#### *Assigned Reading:*

Sidney Verba. 1996. "The Citizen as Respondent: Sample Surveys and American Democracy." *American Political Science Review* 90:1-7.

Mark Lindeman and Rick Brady. 2006. "Behind the Controversy: A Primer on U.S. Presidential Exit Polls." *Public Opinion Pros.*

Lavrakas, Paul J. 1996. "To Err is Human: Embrace a 'Total Survey Error' Approach Perspective to Make the Most of Precious Resources" *Marketing Research* 8:30-36.

### **Week 2: February 2**

#### Questionnaire Design

Background on St. Louis politics

#### *Assigned Reading:*

Asher, chapters 1-3

Stein, chapters 6-11

Lana Stein speaks to the class on February 2

### **Week 3: February 9**

#### Sampling

Selecting polling places and voters for the exit poll

Turnout in City Elections

#### *Assigned Reading:*

Asher, chapter 4

Matt A. Barreto, et al. 2006. "Controversies in Exit Polling: Implementing a Racially Stratified Homogenous Precinct Approach." *PS: Political Science & Politics*. 39(July):477-483.

Zoltan Hajnal and Jessica Trounstein. 2005. "Where Turnout Matters: The Consequences of Uneven Turnout in City Elections." *Journal of Politics* 67:

**Final Survey and Application to Institutional Review Board due by Feb. 16**

**Week 4: February 16**  
Election Polls  
Exit Poll Controversies

*Assigned Reading:*  
Asher, chapters 6 and 7

Michael Traugott, Benjamin Highton, and Henry E. Brady. 2005. "A Review of Recent Controversies Concerning the 2004 Presidential Election Exit Polls." Social Science Research Council, New York, March 5, 2005: <http://elections.ssrc.org>

Patrick J. Egan and Kenneth Sherrill. 2009. "California's Proposition 8: What Happened, and What Does the Future Hold?" National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, January 6, [http://www.thetaskforce.org/downloads/issues/egan\\_sherrill\\_prop8\\_1\\_6\\_09.pdf](http://www.thetaskforce.org/downloads/issues/egan_sherrill_prop8_1_6_09.pdf)

**Institutional Review Board Meeting – February 19**

**Research Paper Proposals due February 23**

**Week 5: February 23**  
Interviewing Procedures

*Assigned Reading:*  
Asher, chapter 5  
Interviewing instructions

James H. Kuklinski and Norman L. Hurley. 1994. "On Hearing and Interpreting Political Messages: A Cautionary Tale of Citizen Cue-Taking." *Journal of Politics* 56:729-751.

**Week 6: March 2**  
Final Preparations for Exit Poll

**Tuesday, March 3 – Election Day!**

**Week 7: March 9**  
Data Entry  
Institutional structures in city government

*Assigned Reading:*  
Data entry instructions

Dennis R. Judd and Todd Swanstrom. "Democracy Versus Efficiency: The Reform Legacy." In *City Politics*. Longman.

## **Week 8: March 16**

### Race and City Politics

How does race influence city politics?

#### *Assigned Reading:*

Hajnal, Zoltan L. 2001. "White Residents, Black Incumbents and a Declining Racial Divide." *American Political Science Review* 95:603-618.

Melissa J. Marschall and Anirudh V. S. Ruhil. 2007. "Substantive Symbols: The Attitudinal Dimension of Black Political Incorporation in Local Government." *American Journal of Political Science* 51:17-33.

Franklin D. Gilliam, Jr. and Karen M. Kaufmann. 1998. "Is There an Empowerment Life Cycle? Long-Term Black Empowerment and its Influence on Voter Participation." *Urban Affairs Review* 33:741-766.

**No classes the week of March 23 (Spring Break)**

## **Week 9: March 30**

### Voting in City Elections

Beginning to Analyze Exit Poll Results

#### *Assigned Reading:*

Asher, chapter 8

Primer on using Stata (Statistical Software Program)

Thomas M. Carsey. 1995. "The Contextual Effects of Race on White Voter Behavior: The 1989 New York City Mayoral Election." *Journal of Politics* 57:221-228.

Karen Kaufmann. 1998. "Racial Conflict and Political Choice: A Study of Mayoral Voting Behavior in Los Angeles and New York." *Urban Affairs Review* 33:655-685.

Christopher Berry and William Howell. 2007. "Accountability and Local Elections: Rethinking Retrospective Voting." *Journal of Politics* 69:844-858.

Eric J. Oliver and Shang E. Ha. 2007. "Vote Choice in Suburban Elections." *American Political Science Review* 101:393-408.



**Week 10: April 6**

City Schools

*Assigned Reading:*

E. Terrence Jones. 2006. "Public Opinion Regarding St. Louis Public Schools." Report presented to the Greater St. Louis Community Foundation, December 13, 2006.

David C. Kimball and Lana Stein. 2007. "Democracy at Work? School Board Elections and Reform in St. Louis." Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Political Science Association, Chicago.

*Harvard Educational Review*. 2006. "Mayoral Leadership in Education." 76:141-200 (series of articles with an introduction by the editors).

**Week 11: April 13**

Governing Cities

Machines, Reform and Monopolies

*Assigned Reading:*

Bissinger, chapters 1-8

Lana Stein. 2003. "Mayoral Politics." In *Cities, Politics, and Policies*, ed. John C. Pelissero. Washington, DC: CQ Press.

**Week 12: April 20**

Urban Development

*Assigned Reading:*

Bissinger, chapters 9-end

Dennis R. Judd and Todd Swanstrom. "Urban Economic Development." In *City Politics*. Longman.

**Week 13: April 27**

Public Opinion Polling, Elections and Democracy

What is the impact of public opinion and elections in urban democracy?

*Assigned Reading:*

Asher, chapter 9

Jessica Trounstein. 2006. "Dominant Regimes and the Demise of Urban Democracy." *Journal of Politics* 68:879-893.

**Week 14: May 4**

Class Presentations

Results of Research Projects