UCONN | COLLEGE OF LIBERAL ARTS AND SCIENCES

COMMITTEE ON CURRICULA AND COURSES

Proposal to Add a New Graduate Course

Last revised: September 24, 2013

1. Date: April 8, 2014
2. Department requesting this course: Public Policy
3. Semester and year in which course will be first offered: Fall 2014

Final Catalog Listing

Assemble this after you have completed the components below. This listing should not contain any information that is not listed below!

PP 5384. Political Polling
3 credits. Seminar.

An exploration of the role of opinion polling in American political campaigns, journalism, and academic research, as well as the methodological aspects of scientific opinion polling.

Items Included in Catalog Listing

Obligatory Items

1. Abbreviation for Department, Program or Subject Area: PP
2. Course Number: 5384
3. Course Title: Political Polling
4. Number of Credits (use digits, "3" not "three"): 3
5. Course Description (second paragraph of catalog entry): An exploration of the role of opinion polling in American political campaigns, journalism, and academic research, as well as the methodological aspects of scientific opinion polling.

6. Course Type, if appropriate:
   __Lecture __ Laboratory _X_ Seminar __ Practicum

Optional Items

7. Prerequisites: None.
8. Recommended Preparation: None.
9. Consent of Instructor: Not Required.
10. Exclusions: None.
11. Repetition for credit: None.
12. S/U grading: A-F Graded.

Justification

1. Reasons for adding this course: This course is a new addition to the online Master of Arts in Survey Research program, which commenced in 2011.

2. Academic merit: Political opinion polling is a significant segment of the professional landscape for survey researchers. This course will be critical for students whose interest in survey research is derived from a desire to work in politics or in opinion polling. It will deepen students' understanding of the role of polling in American politics.

3. Overlapping courses: None
4. Number of students expected: about 20
5. Number and size of sections: 1 section
6. Effects on other departments: none
7. Staffing: Staffing for the course will be provided by the Department of Public Policy. No new staff is necessary to offer this course.
8. Dates approved by
   Department Curriculum Committee:
   Department Faculty:
9. Name, Phone Number, and e-mail address of principal contact person:

Ken Dautrich
860-570-9090
K.Dautrich@uconn.edu

Syllabus

A syllabus for the new course must be attached to your submission email.

Additional Approval

New graduate courses must also be approved by the Graduate Faculty Council.

PP 5397: Political Polling - Syllabus

COURSE AND PROFESSOR INFORMATION

Course Title: PP 5397 - Special Topics: Political Polling

Prerequisites: Admission to the Graduate Program in Survey Research or Public Administration

Professor: Ken Dautrich, Ph.D.

Contact: Use the message function (NOT email) in HuskyCT. I will check HuskyCT messages at least once a day Monday through Friday during the semester.

COURSE OVERVIEW

Political polling is a core component of modern American political culture. Polls are used by journalists and commentators to describe the context of elections, assess the prospects for incumbents and challengers, and describe the mood of the country. Polls are also used by political candidates to understand their bases of support and to develop a strategy for winning elections. Further, social scientists use polls to test hypotheses and develop theories regarding the role of public opinion in policy-making and in assessing democratic governance. Also, bureaucrats use polls to assess the success and failures of public programs in serving citizens.

This course examines the roles of opinion polling in these various dimensions American politics. We will explore the value provided by polls as well as their negative effects. We will assess the survey techniques used to gauge American political opinion, and review the approaches that are used to analyze poll results. We will review how polls (1) gauge what Americans know and don't know about politics, (2) document the values and core beliefs of citizens (3) provide an understanding of election outcomes (4) monitor the performance of the economy and of political actors and institutions (5) reflect public opinion on social and domestic issues as well as foreign policy problems.

The course is organized into six distinct units. First we explore the nature and political relevance of polls in America. Second, we review the survey research techniques used by pollsters to measure political opinion. Third, we study the underlying dimensions of opinion (knowledge, values and political orientations) that influence pollsters measurements of political attitudes. Fourth, we review what polls tell us about voter decision-making in elections. Fifth, we explore the many ways in which polls provide a yardstick for assessing the performance of government and the direction of the economy. Sixth, we investigate public sentiments regarding key domestic and foreign policy topics and concerns.

COURSE MATERIALS

- **Required Books**: The following books should be purchased. Required readings from these books are referenced in the “weekly topics” section of this syllabus (below)
  - David Moore, *The Opinion Makers*
  - Traugott and Lavraskas, *The Voter’s Guide to Election Polls*
  - Stonecash, *Political Polling: Strategic information in Campaigns*
  - Flanigan and Zingale, *Political Behavior of the American Electorate*
- **Resources**: In most weeks, there are readings and other materials that student will need to access to complete course requirements. These readings and materials may be found in the Resources link on the course webpage menu. The readings and resources materials include both electronic copies of articles and reports, and links to webpages with reading material.
- **Learning Modules**: For each week of the course, there is a video lecture, which is supported by a lecture outline. The video lectures and supporting materials may be found in the “Learning Modules” link on the course webpage menu. These materials are organized by course weeks.

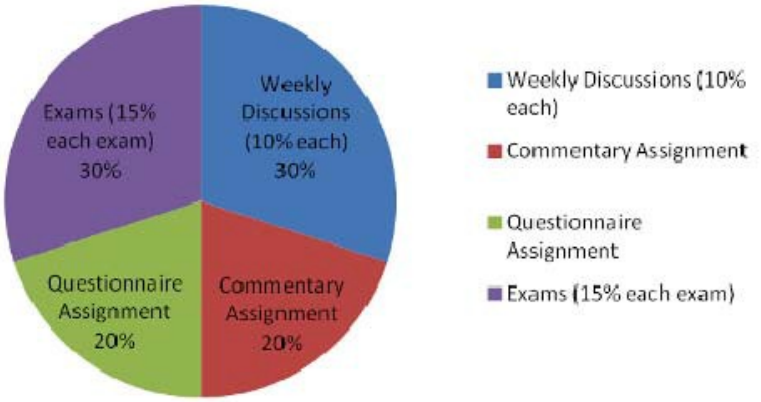
COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING

Final grades will be based on the following:

- **Weekly Discussion Participation** - A grade will be assigned at weeks 5, 10 and 15 for student performance in participating in the weekly discussion activities. Each grade is worth 10% of the final course grade (total of 30%

of final grade).

- **Commentary Assignment** - A grade will be assigned to the "commentary" paper submitted by the student. This paper is worth 20% of the final grade.
- **Questionnaire Assignment** - A grade will be assigned to the Questionnaire submitted by the student. This paper is worth 20% of the final grade.
- **Exams** - A grade will be assigned to the mid-tem exam essay and to the final exam essay. Each exam is worth 15% of the final grade (total of 30% of the final grade).



COURSE ORGANIZATION

The course is organized into 14 distinct weekly segments. Each weekly segment begins on a Monday. Prior to each weekly segment, students are required to read the book chapters, articles and other course materials assigned for each weekly segment.

At the start of a new weekly segment, a video lecture with a supporting lecture outline powerpoint will become accessible in the "Learning Modules" link on the course website menu. Students should review the video lecture/powerpoint for the weekly segment before Tuesday morning. The materials will be available the Saturday prior to the weekly learning module.

On Tuesday morning, a course activity/discussion will be posted in the "Discussion Board" tool on the course website menu. Students should read the activity/discussion question posted each week, and follow instructions regarding how they should respond to the discussion question on the “Discussion Board.”

WEEKLY TOPICS AND OUTLINE

Week	Requirements (Due dates noted in parentheses)	Activity (Due dates noted in parentheses)
Week 1: Introduction to Course	Introductory Lecture Using HuskyCT **(Complete all by 1/25)**	Participate in Introductory Discussion; Submit practice assignment. **(1/25)**
Week 2: Polling in American Politics I: The Uses and History of Polls in American	Readings **(prior to viewing lecture)**: ○ Schattshneider – Chapter 1 of *Semi-sovereign People* (available in Library Resources folder) ○ Stonecash - Chapters 1, 2, 3 ○ Traugott and Lavraskas - Chapter 1, 2, 3	Identify a policy decision enacted by the president and/or congress that was influenced by polls. Discussion item: Without

Politics	Review Week 2 Lecture **(1/28)**	public support, would this decision have been made? **(Leads: Post by 1/30. Group: Closes 2/1.)**
Week 3: Polling in America II: The History and Value of Political Polls	Readings **(prior to viewing lecture)**: *The Opinion Makers*, by David Moore Review Week 3 Lecture **(2/4)**	Do polls reflect public opinion or do they influence public opinion? Participate in weekly discussion. **(Leads: Post by 2/6. Group: Closes 2/8.)**
Week 4: Measuring Political Opinion Through Polls I: Survey Error	Readings **(prior to viewing lecture)**: ○ Groves, Robert and Lyberg, Lars (2010). "Total Survey Error: Past Present and Future." *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 74 849-879. ○ Groves, Robert. *Survey Error and Survey Costs*, chapter 1. Review Week 4 Lecture **(2/11)**	Identify a source of measurement error, sampling error, coverage error and non-response error in a political poll, and discuss how each error may contribute to problems with the poll result. **(Leads: Post by 2/13. Group: Closes 2/15.)**
Week 5: Measuring Political Opinion Through Polls II: Writing Questions and Getting Answers	Readings **(prior to viewing lecture)**: ○ Traugott and Lavraskas - Chapters 6 and 7 ○ Stonecash - Chapters 4 and 6 Review Week 5 Lecture **(2/18)**	Write a set of survey questions that measures public attitudes toward abortion Participate in weekly discussion. **(Leads: Post by 2/20. Group: Closes 2/22.)**
Week 6: Questionnaire Writing Assignment	Review Week 6 Lecture **(2/25)** No new readings this week.	Write Questionnaire (see details in Questionnaire assignment **(2/25)**) and participate in discussion. **(3/1)**
Week 7: Measuring Political Opinion Through Polls III: Scientific Sampling	Readings **(prior to viewing lecture)**: ○ Traugott and Lavraskas - Chapters 4, 5 ○ Stonecash – Chapter 5 ○ Paleologos and Wilson, "The Use of Bellweather Samples to Enhance Pre-election Poll Predictions" in American Behavioral Scientist, April 2011 vol 55 no 4, pp 390-418. Review Week 7 Lecture **(3/4)**	Find an example of a political poll that is based on an unscientific sampling approach. Identify the sources of error. **(Leads: Post by 3/6. Group: Closes 3/8.)**
Week 8	**Mid-Term Exam -** Due March 15	
Week 9	**Spring Break** - March 18-22	
Week 10:	Readings **(prior to viewing lecture)**:	Political Leaders

Measuring Political Opinion Through Polls IV: Analyzing Poll Results	○ Traugott and Lavraskas – Chapters 8, 9 ○ Stonecash – Chapters 8, 9, 10 Review Week 10 Lecture **(3/25)**	from either political party might make very different interpretations of the same poll finding. How might a Democrat differ from a Republican in interpreting results? **(Leads: Post by 3/27. Group: Closes 3/29.)**
Week 11: Political Knowledge, Values and Orientations	Readings **(prior to viewing lecture)**: ○ American Civic Literacy Report ○ Pew Center News IQ Quiz ○ "The World Outside and the Pictures in Our Heads" ○ Converse PE. 1964. The Nature and Origin of Belief Systems in Mass Publics. In David Apterl ed. Pp. 206-261. Ideology and Discontent. New York: The Free Press. ○ Flanigan and Zingale – Chapter 1, 3, 4, 5, 6 Review Week 11 Lecture **(4/1)**	Discussion on "Is the American public capable of having a meaningful contribution to policy debates? Of electing deserving leaders?" Value conflicts and value priorities are the basis for taking sides. Identify an issue that is the subject of debate and identify the values that underlie the positions. **(Leads: Post by 4/3. Group: Closes 4/5.)**
Week 12: Polling in Elections I: Projection Winners and Turnout	Readings **(prior to viewing lecture)**: ○ Flanigan and Zingale – Chapters 2, 7 ○ Traugott, "The Accuracy of the Pre-election Polls in the 2004 Presidential Election" in Public Opinion Quarterly (Special issue 2005): 69:5, pp. 642-654. Review Week 12 Lecture **(4/8)**	Discussion on the topic of whether horse race polls influence voter opinions on who to vote for. **(Leads: Post by 4/10. Group: Closes 4/12.)**
Week 13: Polling in the Elections II: How Voters Make Choices	Readings **(prior to viewing lecture)**: ○ Flanigan and Zingale – Chapter 8 Review Week 13 Lecture **(4/15)**	Commentary Paper on public opinion due. **(4/19)**
Week 14: Using Polls to Monitor Government Performance	Readings **(prior to viewing lecture)**: ○ Cook and Gronke, "The Skeptical American; Revisiting the Meanings of Trust in Government and Confidence in Institutions," in Journal of Politics, vol 67 issue 3, August 2005, pp. 784-803. ○ http://www.gallup.com/poll/116479/barack-obama-presidential-job-approval.aspx	Why do Americans love their congressperson but hate congress? **(Leads: Post by 4/24. Group: Closes 4/26.)**

	○ http://online.wsj.com/public/resources/documents/info-presapp0605-31.html ○ http://www.ropercenter.uconn.edu/data_access/data/presidential_approval.html Review Week 14 Lecture **(4/22)**	
Week 15	**Final Exam** – Available April 27; Due May 3.	

NOTE: Schedule is subject to change.

STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES AND RESOURCES

As a member of the University of Connecticut student community, you are held to certain standards and academic policies. In addition, there are numerous resources available to help you succeed in your academic work. This section provides a brief overview to important standards, policies and resources.

Student Code

You are responsible for acting in accordance with the University of Connecticut's Student Code, available at http://www.community.uconn.edu/student_code.html. Review and become familiar with these expectations. In particular, make sure you have read the section on Academic Integrity in Graduate Education and Research:

Cheating and plagiarism are taken very seriously at the University of Connecticut. As a student, it is your responsibility to avoid plagiarism. If you need more information about the subject of plagiarism, use the following resource:

- Plagiarism: How to Recognize it and Avoid it

Netiquette and Communication

At all times, course communication with fellow students and the instructor are to be professional and courteous. It is expected that you proof read all your written communication, including discussion posts, assignment submissions, and mail messages. If you are new to online learning or need a netiquette refresher, please look at this guide titled, The Core Rules of Netiquette.

Adding or Dropping a Course

If you should decide to add or drop a course, there are official procedures* to follow:

- Matriculated students should add or drop a course through Peoplesoft.

You must officially drop a course to avoid receiving an "F" on your permanent transcript. Simply discontinuing class or informing the instructor you want to drop does not constitute an official drop of the course. For more information, refer to the Graduate Catalog.

Academic Calendar

The University's Academic Calendar contains important semester dates.

Students with Disabilities

Students needing special accommodations should work with the University's Center for Students with Disabilities . You may contact the Center by calling (860) 486-2020 or by emailing csd@uconn.edu . If your request for accommodation is approved, an accommodation letter will be provided. Please present your official letter to the instructor as soon as possible so special arrangements, as appropriate, can be made. (Note: Student requests for accommodation must be filed each semester.)

The University of Connecticut's online course management system, HuskyCT, is a product of Blackboard, Inc. "Blackboard measures and evaluates accessibility levels using two sets of standards; Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act issued from the United States federal government and the Web Accessibility Initiative (WAI) issued by the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C)." (Retrieved December 1, 2008 from http://www.blackboard.com/company/accessibility.aspx).

SOFTWARE AND PLATFORM REQUIRMENTS

- Word processing software
- Adobe Flash Player (Note: Please download the most recent version)
- Adobe Acrobat Reader
- Fast, reliable internet access
- Mediasite Player Requirements The lectures in this course use Mediasite technology.
- Mediasite Technical Requirements This page tests if your computer meets the minimum requirements to run the Mediasite Player.

This course is completely facilitated online using the learning management platform, HuskyCT. If you have difficulty accessing HuskyCT, call the Digital Learning Center (LRC) at (860) 486-1187, or visit its online help at http://dlc.uconn.edu/index.html.

MINIMUM TECHNICAL SKILLS

To be successful in this course, you will need the following technical skills:

- Use electronic mail (such as email) with attachments.
- Save files in commonly used word processing program formats.
- Copy and paste text or graphics.
- Work within two or more browser windows simultaneously.
- Open and access PDF files.
- View Mediasite streaming files.

EVALUATION OF THE COURSE

Students will be provided an opportunity to evaluate instruction in this course using the University's standard procedures, which are administered by the Office of Institutional Research.