Course information:

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1. Course name: Capstone in Political Science

2. Department: PSC

3. Number: 498

4. Cluster requirement: Capstone Study

Faculty information:

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5. Name: Shannon Jenkins

6. Email: [sjenkins@umassd.edu](mailto:sjenkins@umassd.edu)

7. Phone: 8036

Required components:

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8. Master syllabus: [http:///webroots/www.umassd.edu/genedchecklist/holding/psc5amastersyllabus.docx](http://webroots/www.umassd.edu/genedchecklist/holding/psc5amastersyllabus.docx)

9. Course overview statement:

A culminating seminar in political science. Topics will vary, but may include public opinion, international environmental policy, comparative legal systems, and the rules of war. This course is intended for advanced political science majors and fulfills the University Studies capstone requirement.

10. Signed faculty and chair sponsor sheet: sent separately.

11. Official course catalog description for the course:

A culminating seminar in political science. Topics will vary, but may include public opinion, international environmental policy, comparative legal systems, and the rules of war. This course is intended for advanced political science majors and fulfills the University Studies capstone requirement.

12. Course approval form: [http:///webroots/www.umassd.edu/genedchecklist/holding/psc5amastersyllabus.docx](http://webroots/www.umassd.edu/genedchecklist/holding/psc5amastersyllabus.docx)

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**Master Syllabus**

**Course: PSC 498**

**Capstone Seminar in Political Science**

**Cluster Requirement: 5A**

This University Studies Master Syllabus serves as a guide and standard for all instructors teaching an approved course in the University Studies program. Individual instructors have full academic freedom in teaching their courses, but as a condition of course approval, agree to focus on the outcomes listed below, to cover the identified material, to use these or comparable assignments as part of the course work, and to make available the agreed-upon artifacts for assessment of learning outcomes.

**Course Overview:**

PSC 498 provides the opportunity for advanced investigation of a topic in political science. For the capstone project in the seminar, students will complete a project of independent and original research and analysis, within parameters established by the instructor. Students will communicate their findings both orally and in writing.

**Learning Outcomes:**

Course-Specific Learning Outcomes:

Upon completion of the seminar, students will be able to:

1.  understand concepts, theories and empirical findings in political science;

2.  utilize basic research skills including research design, data analysis and interpretation;

3.  access, understand and synthesize professional and popular writing on public affairs.

4.  formulate and analyze arguments including their structure and force; and

5.  assess the relevance and weight of evidence;

6.  write clearly and persuasively; and

7.  organize their ideas in a focused paper or presentation.

University Studies Learning Outcomes:

**Capstone Study**

Upon completion of the capstone study, students will be able to:

1. Synthesize the knowledge and skills gained within major courses, independently complete a research-based project or creative work and integrate the results of both in an open-ended project or experience (projects within the major are encouraged).

2. Integrate knowledge and principles from the field of study with those of the broader University Studies curriculum.

3. Demonstrate advanced information literacy skills by selecting, evaluating, integrating and documenting information gathered from multiple sources into discipline-specific writing.

4. Communicate effectively, both orally and in writing, the results of the project or experience.

**Examples of Texts and/or Assigned Readings:**

Course readings will vary by topic and instructor. Readings primarily will be original political science research from scholarly books or peer-reviewed journals. These may be supplemented with writings for popular audiences and/or textbooks.

**Example Learning Activities and Assignments:**

All sections of this course, regardless of topic and instructor, shall include the following assignments:

1. At least one research-based **paper** of no less than 10 pages that demonstrates independent, original integration and analysis. Students will be required to locate original political science research and synthesize this literature as part of this assignment.
2. Each student will have flexibility to select a specific question within the parameters set by the instructor. Each student will be required, in a written topic **proposal**, to explain how the choice of topic was shaped by earlier coursework both inside and outside of the major. The topic proposal will thus provide an assessable artifact for University Studies outcome 4.B.2.
3. At least one **oral presentation** of no less than 10 minutes. The presentation may involve analysis of the literature explored in the class, the student's research question and research design, and/or the results of the student's individual project.

These three assignments constitute a minimum common denominator for the purposes of assessment across sections and do not by any means exclude additional assignments. However, as the mapping below shows, they provide an opportunity for student development and assessment for all of the course-specific learning outcomes (CSLOs) and University Studies Learning Outcomes (USLOs).

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Learning Outcome | Paper | Proposal | Oral Presentation |
| CSLO 1 | X | X |  |
| CSLO 2 | X |  |  |
| CSLO 3 | X |  |  |
| CSLO 4 | X |  |  |
| CSLO 5 | X |  |  |
| CSLO 6 | X | X |  |
| CSLO 7 | X |  | X |
| USLO 1 | X |  |  |
| USLO 2 |  | X |  |
| USLO 3 | X |  |  |
| USLO 4 | X |  | X |

**Sample Course Outline:**

INTRODUCTION

*The Field of Public Opinion*

1: Norrander and Wilcox. 2010. “Introduction: The Diverse Paths to Understanding Public Opinion.” In *Understanding Public Opinion*, 3rd ed., eds. Barbara Norrander and Clyde Wilcox. Washington, DC: CQ Press.

*Studying Public Opinion*

1: Brians, Willnat, Manheim and Rich. 2011. *Empirical Political Analysis*, Boston, MA: Longman. “Chapter 8: Survey Research: Characterizing a Broader Population.”

2: Neuman. 2003. *Social Research Methods*, 5th ed. Boston, MA: Allyn and Bacon. “Chapter 10: Survey Research,” pp 268-282.

3: Norrander and Wilcox. 2010. “Appendix: A Primer on Statistics and Public Opinion.” In *Understanding Public Opinion*, eds. Barbara Norrander and Clyde Wilcox. Washington, DC: CQ Press.

THE CAUSES OF PUBLIC OPINION

*Social Identities*

1: Sapiro and Sames. 2010. “Chapter 1: The Gender Basis of Public Opinion.” In *Understanding Public Opinion*, 3rd ed., eds. Barbara Norrander and Clyde Wilcox. Washington, DC: CQ Press.

2: Garcia. 2010. “Chapter 2: Latino Public Opinion: Identity Politics and Policy Preferences.” In *Understanding Public Opinion*, 3rd ed., eds. Barbara Norrander and Clyde Wilcox. Washington, DC: CQ Press.

(Survey questions are due on myCourses by February 7)

*Nature and Nurture*

1: Alford and Hibbing. 2010. “Chapter 3: The Ultimate Source of Political Opinions: Genes and the Environment.” In *Understanding Public Opinion*, 3rd ed., eds. Barbara Norrander and Clyde Wilcox. Washington, DC: CQ Press.

2: Zaller. 1991. “Information, Values and Opinions” *American Political Science Review* 85(4): 1215-1237. (In JSTOR)

IS PUBLIC OPINION RATIONAL?

*Political Knowledge*

1: Delli Carpini and Keeter. 1996. *What Americans Know About Politics and Why It Matters*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press. “Chapter 2: What Americans Know about Politics.”

2: Jerit, Barabas and Bolsen. 2006. “Citizens, Knowledge and the Information Environment.” *American Journal of Political Science* 50(2): 266-282.

*Saving Public Opinion*

1: Page and Shapiro. 1992. *The Rational Public*. Chicago, IL: Chicago University Press. “Chapter 1: Rational Public Opinion.”

2: Popkin. 1991. *The Reasoning Voter*. Chicago, IL: Chicago University Press. “Chapter 2: Acquiring Data: The Process of Becoming Informed.”

(Bibliography is due on myCourses by February 28)

ISSUE ATTITUDES

*Foreign Policy*

1: Berinsky. 2010. “Chapter 4: Public Opinion and the Iraq War.” In *Understanding Public Opinion*, 3rd ed., eds. Barbara Norrander and Clyde Wilcox. Washington, DC: CQ Press.

2: Davis. 2010. “Chapter 5: Public Opinion, Civil Liberties, and Security in the Post-9/11 Context.” In *Understanding Public Opinion*, 3rd ed., eds. Barbara Norrander and Clyde Wilcox. Washington, DC: CQ Press.

*Domestic Policy*

1: Atkeson and Maestas. 2010. “Chapter 6: Race and the Formation of Attitudes: Responses to Hurricane Katrina.” In *Understanding Public Opinion*, 3rd ed., eds. Barbara Norrander and Clyde Wilcox. Washington, DC: CQ Press.

2: Wilcox and Carr. 2010. “Chapter 7: The Puzzling Case of the Abortion Attitudes of the Millennial Generation.” In *Understanding Public Opinion*, 3rd ed., eds. Barbara Norrander and Clyde Wilcox. Washington, DC: CQ Press.

ATTITUDE STRUCTURE

*Ideology*

1: Converse. 1964. “The Nature of Belief Systems in Mass Publics (pages 206-234 only).” In *Ideology and Discontent*, ed. David Apter. New York, NY: Free Press.

2: Jacoby. 2010. “Chapter 8: Is a Liberal-Conservative Identification an Ideology?” In *Understanding Public Opinion*, 3rd ed., eds. Barbara Norrander and Clyde Wilcox. Washington, DC: CQ Press.

*Party Identification*

1: Carsey and Layman. 2010. “Chapter 9: Party Identification, Party Polarization, and “Conflict Extension” in the American Electorate.” In *Understanding Public Opinion*, 3rd ed., eds. Barbara Norrander and Clyde Wilcox. Washington, DC: CQ Press.

2: Roscoe and Christiansen. 2010. “Exploring the Attitudinal Structure of Partisanship.” *Journal of Applied Social Psychology* 40(9): 2232-2266.

GOVERNMENTAL CONNECTIONS

*Trust in Government*

1: Gronke, Hicks, and Cook. 2010. “Chapter 10: Trust but Verify: Three Lenses on Americans’ Trust in Government.” In *Understanding Public Opinion*, 3rd ed., eds. Barbara Norrander and Clyde Wilcox. Washington, DC: CQ Press.

2: Chanley, Rudolph and Rahn. 2000. “The Origins and Consequences of Public Trust in Government.” *Public Opinion Quarterly* 64: 239-256. (In JSTOR)

*Institutional Support*

1: Harper and Norrander. 2010. “Chapter 11: The Rise and Fall of George W. Bush: Popular Support for the President.” In *Understanding Public Opinion*, 3rd ed., eds. Barbara Norrander and Clyde Wilcox. Washington, DC: CQ Press.

2: Kimball and Patterson. 1997. “Living Up to Expectations: Public Attitudes Toward Congress.” *Journal of Politics* 59(3): 701-728. (In JSTOR)

*Public Opinion and the Judiciary*

1: Wald, Silverman, Scicchitano, and Johns. 2010. “Chapter 12: In the Court of Public Opinion: Prejudging Defendants in Terrorism Trials.” In *Understanding Public Opinion*, 3rd ed., eds. Barbara Norrander and Clyde Wilcox. Washington, DC: CQ Press.

2: Mishler and Sheehan. 1993. “The Supreme Court as a Countermajoritarian Institution? The Impact of Public Opinion on Supreme Court Decisions.” *American Political Science Review* 87(1): 87-101. (In JSTOR)