

# PP5385-H01

## ATTITUDE FORMATION

Online, Fall Term: 8/28/2017-12/17/2017

|                      |                                                                                                                                                               |
|----------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Professor:           | Thomas Craemer                                                                                                                                                |
| E-mail:              | <a href="mailto:thomas.craemer@uconn.edu">thomas.craemer@uconn.edu</a>                                                                                        |
| Online Office Hours: | By appointment                                                                                                                                                |
| Credits              | 3                                                                                                                                                             |
| Prerequisites        | Admission to the Graduate Program in Survey Research or MPA Programs or permission of the instructor.                                                         |
| Availability         | I will check email and the course website daily during the week and at least once on the weekend. I will do my best to respond to all emails within 48 hours. |

### Software Requirements

- Word processing software
- Microsoft excel
- SPSS
- Adobe Acrobat Reader (<http://get.adobe.com/reader/>)
- Internet access

This course is completely facilitated online using the learning management platform, **HuskyCT** (<http://huskyct.uconn.edu/>). Ensure your Internet browser and browser settings are HuskyCT compatible by viewing the **settings information** at <http://lrc.uconn.edu/ct/browserhelp.html>. If you have difficulty accessing HuskyCT, call the **Digital Learning Center** (DLC) at (860) 486-1187, or visit its online help (including instant chat) at <http://dlc.uconn.edu/>.

All software can be accessed via UConn's **virtual computer center** <http://vpc.uconn.edu/>.

### Minimum Technical Skills

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

- Use electronic mail with attachments.
- Save files in commonly used word processing program formats.
- Copy and paste text, graphics or hyperlinks.
- Work within two or more browser windows simultaneously.
- Open and access PDF files.

## Course Overview

This course will examine theories of attitude formation and attitude change paying special attention to the psychology of the survey response. The course will begin with a psychological look at the historical conundrum of Converse's (1964) Non-Attitude claim. We will investigate different models of attitude formation political scientists have devised to explain Converse's findings (e.g., 'memory based' and 'on-line' models of the survey response). We will discuss the questions where individuals get their political attitudes from – parents, peers, and/or political events – and how public opinion may change over time. Over the course of the semester we will discuss a number of current political issues, for example: health care, affirmative action, abortion, gay marriage, etc. Based on our understanding of attitude formation we will discuss ways in which survey respondents may interpret the questions we as policy researchers may ask of them and how this may influence the results of our research. We will investigate current public opinion polls and interpret their findings in the light of the theories encountered throughout the course.

## Objectives

At the conclusion of the course, students will:

- Understand how difficult it is to sort political attitudes along a left-right dimension
- Be familiar different theories of the survey response
- Understand different sources of an individual's political attitudes
- Have insight into the process by which individual attitudes form aggregate public opinion

## Assignments and Activities

Course assignments will provide students with opportunities to apply the research methods covered in class to practical research scenarios. Assignments will be both individual and group and the format will vary based on the research method being covered.

All assignments will be available through HUSKY CT and must be submitted via HUSKY CT. The course can be accessed directly via:

<http://huskyct.uconn.edu/>

**Research Paper:** The research paper will require you to do a detailed analysis of the political debate surrounding a political issue of your choice. Give an overview over the development of the different sides of the issue and present current public opinion data. What psychological processes may lead a survey respondent to answer a given question about the issue in one way or another? Apply one or several of the psychological theories of the survey response that you have encountered and formulate hypotheses. Indicate how you could test your hypotheses in a survey experiment. The research paper should be 8 to 10 pages long and will count for 30% of the final grade. It will be due in session 11 (the assignment can be submitted any time during that week). If there is a reason why you cannot turn in the research paper during the week it is due you must

make arrangements with me before the start date of session 11.

Include the following aspects of the issue in your paper: (1) A summary of the issue (2) The nature of the debate surrounding the issue. What are the arguments on the various sides of the issue? How have the different sides of the issue developed historically? (3) How does the public currently feel about this issue? Include survey results in your paper – there are several good sources for public opinion data on the web. (4) Based on the theories of attitude formation you have encountered in class, how could you account for the way people respond to these survey questions? (5) Formulate a hypothesis and *propose a survey experiment* to test your hypothesis.

Choose one of the following issues:

- |                             |                                     |                             |
|-----------------------------|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1. income taxes             | 7. separation of state and religion | 13. gun control             |
| 2. penalties for drug use   | 8. public education                 | 14. public welfare programs |
| 3. health care reform       | 9. pornography                      | 15. the Iraq war            |
| 4. environmental protection | 10. reparations for slavery         | 16. civil liberties         |
| 5. affirmative action       | 11. gay rights / gay marriage       | 17. freedom of speech       |
| 6. abortion rights          | 12. the death penalty               | 18. other: _____            |

When you complete the paper, make sure that all of your sources are properly documented in a reference section at the end of the paper and be very careful to indicate the *sources of all factual claims and quotations* in the text. Inadequately documented papers are unacceptable. University rules hold that plagiarism automatically results in a grade of F. If you have any questions about citing sources, or any other aspect of the final paper assignment, please make sure to check with me. The research paper counts for 30% of the final course grade.

**Exam:** The exam will consist of short answer and essay questions. Questions will come from the readings, lectures, and class discussions. It makes up another 30% of the final course grade.

**Quizzes:** Following many lecture segments will be online quizzes consisting of a few multiple choice questions. All quizzes together count for 25% of the final course grade.

**Discussions:** In addition to the research paper, the quizzes, and the exam, there will be discussions on HuskyCT discussion boards. Many of these discussions will be graded and (together with class Wikis explained below) contribute towards the participation grade which accounts for the final 15% of the final course grade.

One of the advantages of taking your course online is that you may be able to engage in online discussions with your instructor and fellow students at times when it is convenient for you. The intention of the course discussions is to encourage lively, informative exchanges about course-related topics that increase your knowledge of those topics--but it's up to you to make this happen.

Post at least one message to each discussion area. There is no upper limit to the number of times you can contribute to a discussion, and you will find that a busy discussion is a good one. Each contribution should be well written and interesting to read, with evidence of originality and

considerable reflection. It should also demonstrate that you have read the relevant course materials.

***Here are some guidelines for participating in an online discussion:***

1. Do more than state agreement or disagreement. Justify and support your opinion. The most persuasive opinions are supported by evidence, examples, reasons, and facts. If you disagree with something, say why. If you really like something that you've read, let people know what makes you think that way.
2. Do the appropriate preparation, such as reading and lesson activity work, before you join the discussion.
3. Keep your comments fairly brief. A paragraph or two is plenty unless you are posting something that by nature has to be longer--a short story, for example.
4. Check your message before you send it. Pay attention to your spelling and grammar, and be sure your message makes the points you want to make in a clear and concise way. Remember, other students and instructors can read your messages.
5. Help move the discussion along. When contributing to a discussion, read other people's comments first. Introduce new ideas, but also build on what others have said ("Piggy-back" on other people's ideas).
6. Keep up with the discussion throughout the course. After you have made your contribution on a topic, check back a few times to find out how the discussion is evolving. Does someone's comment make you think twice about your view?
7. Share your experience with your fellow students. You may be able to offer advice to someone who is newer to the course.
8. Respect others' ideas and opinions. Feel free to disagree, but express your disagreement in a respectful manner. Disrespectful communication is poor communication and not acceptable

Often I will monitor a discussion but not participate immediately in an effort to give you and your classmates time to think and respond. I will respond to posts that are addressed to me directly.

***Grading of Discussion Boards***

Quality participation in all discussions is an important part of this course. Students are expected to participate actively in all discussions (as well as other activities). All students should offer comments, questions and replies to posted discussion questions and to the comments posted by classmates.

Discussion board postings will be evaluated based on the quality and frequency of the postings as well as the extent to which they promote discussion among the class. Each discussion will be evaluated separately. Online discussions will be assessed using the following:

| N: Number of Postings                                                                                                             | Q: Quality of Postings                                                                                                                                   | T: Timeliness of Postings                                                                                                                                           |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| All postings are counted even if they provide only minimal or basic response to the discussion question or postings of classmates | Quality postings are counted only. A quality posting fully addresses the discussion question or comment of a classmate and stimulates further discussion | While postings are counted under N and Q even if they fall outside session dates, the timeliness component counts only postings provided within the specified week. |

Counts N, Q, and T are ranked, average ranks are computed, and averages curved so that the classmate with the greatest number of postings, highest quality of postings, and most timely postings will receive the highest grade, and the student with the lowest N, Q, and T average rank the lowest grade. This grading scheme is designed to balance quantity and quality of postings.

**Wikis:** As a class you will design a Wiki-page for each reading that contains a ‘nutshell description,’ definition of important terms, and a summary of the findings. While you read each article think about how you would reduce the gist of the reading into a ‘nutshell’ description of just one or two sentences. The point is that you as a class summarize each reading together. Whenever you make changes to the Wiki, provide a brief message explaining your reasoning.

Summarizing a research article may be harder than it seems. Each original research article contains a lot of conceptual and technical detail, and it is hard to distill its message down to a single paragraph. Also, sometimes, the author’s message may not fully match the author’s empirical results. This makes writing ‘nutshell summaries’ tricky. But writing very brief summaries of articles is extremely helpful in graduate school and beyond. The Wiki summaries will come in handy when you prepare for the final exam. Grading of the Wiki contributions follows the same formula as the grading for discussions. Together with discussion postings, Wiki-contributions count towards the participation grade.

Final course grades will be based on the following:

**Final Course Grade:**

|                                        |     |
|----------------------------------------|-----|
| Research Paper                         | 30% |
| Exam                                   | 30% |
| Quizzes                                | 25% |
| Participation in Discussions and Wikis | 15% |

**Readings:** The required readings include four books and a number of articles which will be available on JSTOR (<http://www.jstor.org>). I will make articles available that JSTOR does not provide.

### **Required Book and Materials:**

#### **Book:**

- Zaller, John (1992): *The Nature and Origins of Mass Opinion*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

#### **Journal Articles (available on JSTOR [www.jstor.org](http://www.jstor.org) or on the course home page):**

- [Converse, Philip E. (1964): *The Nature of Belief Systems in Mass Publics*. In David E. Apter (ed.): *Ideology and Discontent*. New York, NY: The Free Press.]
- Lodge, Steenbergen and Brau (1995): *The Responsive Voter*. *American Political Science Review* 89: 309-326.
- Zaller and Feldman (1992): *A Simple Theory of the Survey Response: Answering Questions versus Revealing Preferences*. *American Journal of Political Science* 36: 579-616.
- Carmines & Stimson (1981): *Issue Evolution, Population Replacement & Normal Partisan Change*. *American Political Science Review*, V. 75, N. 1, pp. 107-118.
- Niemi & Jennings (1991): *Issues and Inheritance in the Formation of Party Identification*. *American Journal of Political Science*, V. 35, N. 4, pp. 970-988.
- Kuklinski, James H., Michael D. Cobb and Martin Gilens (1997): *Racial Attitudes and the 'New South'*. *Journal of Politics* 59(2): 323-249.

### **Ground Rules**

***Professionalism and conduct.*** This is a graduate-level course that demands that students be carefully prepared. It entails a substantial weekly workload. This course is presented within the context of a professional degree program, and will be conducted according to the standards of the professional workplace. Class members should consider themselves colleagues who will collaborate to help each other develop a solid understanding of course materials and concepts. That said, individual proficiency is a must, and all assignments should represent your own work.

***Integrity.*** Plagiarism, cheating, and other forms of academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. Disciplinary action will be pursued if such conduct is discovered. ***All work that you submit for credit during this course, including problem sets and exams, must represent your own work and no one else's.*** Students are expected to abide by the University of Connecticut's policies on academic misconduct which are found in Appendix B of the University of Connecticut student code located on the web at <http://www.dosa.uconn.edu>. Academic misconduct includes (but is not limited to):

- Writing someone else's paper or handing in a paper that someone else wrote
- "Sharing" answers during an exam
- Including the ideas or research of others in a paper, assignment or exam without proving proper documentation

***Students With Disabilities.*** According University of Connecticut policy, the university is committed to achieving equal educational opportunity and full participation for persons with disabilities. Assurance of equal educational opportunity rests upon legal foundations established by the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. By federal law, a person with a disability is any person who: 1. has a physical or mental impairment; 2. has a record of such impairment; or 3. is regarded as having such an impairment which substantially limits one or more major life activities such as self-care, walking, seeing, hearing, speaking, breathing, or learning. All students with disabilities are entitled to a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. Reasonable accommodation does not obviate the requirement for a student to meet course performance standards. If you believe you have a disability that requires an accommodation, please contact the Center for Students with Disabilities website at [www.csd.uconn.edu](http://www.csd.uconn.edu).

***Religious observances.*** Every reasonable effort will be made to accommodate absences from the course necessary to observe religious beliefs in accordance with the University Senate policy, which states that “students anticipating such a conflict should inform their instructor in writing within the first three weeks of the semester, and prior to the anticipated absence, and should take the initiative to work out with the instructor a schedule for making up missed work.”

## **Logistics and Support**

***Technical support.*** Most technical problems result from improper computer settings. For example, you must disable pop-up blocking to have full functionality in HuskyCT. Make sure your computer is properly configured for HuskyCT by clicking on the “Recommended Settings” link at the bottom left of the **HuskyCT** main page (<http://huskyct.uconn.edu/>). If you use different computers, check the settings on each computer you will use to access the course. If you encounter problems you cannot resolve, get help. You may be able to resolve problems using HuskyCT’s built-in help function. In addition, UConn’s **Digital Learning Center** maintains a help desk to assist students with technical issues, and can be reached at (860) 486-1187 or <http://dlc.uconn.edu/>.

***Email.*** I will communicate with you via your UConn email address (usually firstname.lastname@uconn.edu). It is your responsibility to check this email account for messages. If you have a personal email address that you prefer to use, you should forward your UConn email to this address.

***Late Policy.*** Make-up exams will not be given and late assignments will not be accepted unless arrangements are made **prior to the due date**. Exceptions will only be made in the cases of illness (I need a doctor’s note) or serious emergency (again, documentation must be provided). If you anticipate a problem meeting a deadline please see me IN ADVANCE.

**Course Schedule:**

Course sessions will become available on Mondays by 4 pm EST (Except on the week of Labor Day where the sessions will become available on Tue at 4pm). All assignments and session activities are due on Sundays before midnight (i.e., Sun 11:59pm).

| <b>Session Start Date (Session #)</b>                | <b>COURSE SCHEDULE:</b>                                               | <b>Readings</b>            |
|------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------|
| Mon. 8/28 (0)                                        | Course Introduction                                                   | Course Syllabus            |
| <i>I. Psychological Models of Attitude Formation</i> |                                                                       |                            |
| Tue. 9/5 (1)                                         | Attitudes or Non-Attitudes ?                                          | Converse (1964)            |
| Mon. 9/11 (2)                                        | On-Line Model of Attitude Formation                                   | Lodge et al. (1995)        |
| Mon. 9/18 (3)                                        | Ambivalence Model of Attitude Formation                               | Zaller & Feldman (1992)    |
| Mon. 9/25 (4)                                        | Political Sophistication and Persuasion                               | Zaller (1992) chs. 1-5     |
| Mon. 10/2 (5)                                        | Economic and Sociological Models                                      | Niemi & Jennings (1991)    |
| Mon. 10/9 (6)                                        | Evolution of Partisan Predispositions                                 | Carmines & Stimson (1981)  |
| <i>II. Explicit and Implicit Attitudes</i>           |                                                                       |                            |
| Mon. 10/16 (7)                                       | Racial Attitudes and Social Desirability                              | Kuklinski et al. (1997)    |
| Mon. 10/23 (8)                                       | Implicit Racial Attitudes                                             | Craemer et al. (2009) vol. |
| <i>III. Dynamics of Attitude Change</i>              |                                                                       |                            |
| Mon. 10/30 (9)                                       | Attitude Change and the Media I                                       | Zaller (1992) chs. 6-8     |
| Mon. 11/6 (10)                                       | Attitude Change and the Media II                                      | Zaller (1992) chs. 9-12    |
| Mon. 11/13 (11)                                      | In class experiment<br><b>Final Paper due between 11/14 and 11/20</b> | No readings                |
| Mon. 11/20                                           | <b>Thanksgiving Recess (No Class)</b>                                 |                            |
| Mon. 11/27 (12)                                      | Review for exam                                                       | No readings                |
| Mon. 12/4 (13)                                       | <b>Exam</b>                                                           |                            |