The Politics of Polling: The Impact of Public Opinion
Wednesdays 1 – 3 p.m.
September 23, 2020 – October 28, 2020
Professor Samara Klar, PhD.
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Course Description: Democracies rely on citizens to form and express preferences so that government can represent the will of the people. Campaigns and candidates rely on polling and surveys to help guide their platforms and predict their fates. It is therefore difficult to overstate the importance of measuring people’s opinions on everything from major scandals to small events. In this course, we will review how opinions are measured, what sorts of thing influence citizens’ opinions, how these opinions can be used (and abused), and whether citizens’ opinions really matter at all. This course will be offered over 6 weeks with one 2-hour live online session each week.

Instructor Bio: Dr. Klar is an Associate Professor at the University of Arizona School of Government and Public Policy. She studies how individuals’ personal identities and social surroundings influence their political attitudes and behavior. Most often, she uses experimental methods (in and outside the lab), surveys, and other statistical tools. Dr. Klar received her PhD in Political Science from Northwestern University and also holds degrees in political science from Columbia University and McGill University. Her work appears in over a dozen peer-reviewed journals and her book Independent Politics: How American Disdain for Parties Leads to Political Inaction was published by Cambridge University Press.

Course Schedule:

September 23: A brief history of horse-race polling from the very beginning to the 2016 Presidential Election

Suggested reading:

**September 30:** The magic of polling the public’s opinion: how does it work?

*Suggested reading:*


**October 7:** Where do our opinions on politics come from?

*Suggested reading:*


**October 14:** The use and abuse of opinion polls

*Suggested reading:*


**October 21:** Does (and should) public opinion matter?

*Suggested reading:*


**October 28:** Peering inside the Crystal Ball: Analyzing the polls in the 2020 General Election

*Suggested reading:* TBD!