# Analysis of Public Opinion

## Prof. Ferdinando Pagnoncelli; Prof. Domenico Rossignoli

***COURSE AIMS AND INTENDED LEARNING OUTCOMES***

The course aims to provide students with basic knowledge of the different ways of creating surveys and analyses the ways people formulate their opinions, with reference to the display to traditional and new means of information. Particular emphasis will be placed on the so-called “new media”, to internet, to socialnetworks, to communities and blogs. Students will deal with the topic of the risk of perceptions which prevail over reality and finally, they will examine the risks deriving from the establishment of the so-called “survey-ocracy” both in terms of people forming opinions as well as the definition of political and communication strategy by leaders, parties and institutions.

The course also examines the difficulties encountered by pre-election polls in forecasting the result of important elections in Italy (elections 2013) and abroad (Brexit referendum, USA presidential elections, etc.) and studies the solutions adopted.

During the course the results of public surveys and numerous case studiesregarding the social and economic situation in Italy (with particular reference to the reactions to the COVID-19 health emergency, the war in Ukraine, the Italian future with PNRR, as well as the opinions, attitudes, and the behaviour adopted by the citizens) will be presented, as well as the recent elections, research commissioned by political leaders and parties, national bodies, institutions and entrepreneurial and trade union associations. There will be exercises regarding the planning of questionnaires.

At the end of the course, students will be able to demonstrate knowledge of the aims and methods to conduct opinion polls and, more generally, surveys. Students will also be able to recognize the difference between surveys and pseudo surveys or forms of citizens' consultation based on non-probabilistic samples that produce results that cannot be generalized to the entire population.

Student will also be able to show understanding of how citizens form opinions and to evaluate opportunities and problems related to measuring public opinion.

***COURSE CONTENT***

– Analysis of public opinion: an historical outline.

– The development of opinion polls in Italy: the main causes of change.

– Surveys and politics: opportunities and risks.

– Difficulties in forecasting pre-election polls: causes and solutions.

– The aims and main types of opinion surveys.

– Election programmes: exit poll and election forecasts.

– Procedure for creating a survey: design, the interview stage, processing data, analysis and presentation of results.

– Methodological aspects: sampling, questionnaires, interview techniques.

– The state of information in Italy: the development of the supply of information and Italian people’s “media diet”; considerations on the formulation of opinions, the risk of awareness and fake news.

– Surveys and the media: critical aspects.

– The effects of the publication of a survey on public opinion.

– Social responsibility and legislative aspects.

***READING LIST***

1. P. Natale, *Il sondaggio*, Laterza, Roma, 2004.

2. *Choose* on of the following three:

1. N. Pagnoncelli, *La penisola che non c’è. La realtà su misura degli italiani,* Mondadori, Milano, 2019.
2. N. Pagnoncelli, *Le mutazioni del signor Rossi*, EDB, Bologna, 2015.
3. V. Meloni, *Il crepuscolo dei media, Informazione, tecnologia e mercato,* Laterza, Bari-Roma, 2017.

3. *Choose* one of the following three:

1. G. Mazzoleni, *La comunicazione politica*, Il Mulino, Bologna, 2012, only Chapter 8 (I mezzi di informazione) and 10 (Gli effetti su atteggiamenti e voto).
2. I. Diamanti-F. Bordigno-L.Ceccarini, *Elezioni 2013. Un salto nel voto*, Laterza, Roma, 2013, only Chapter 14 (Un tweet non fa l’elettore) and 15 (Elezioni e sondaggi: la tempesta perfetta).
3. N. Pagnoncelli-D. Rossignoli, *Sondaggi e corto circuito della democrazia*, Vita&Pensiero, 2016, XCIX (2)

*For full-time students onlyi*, the book in point 2 will be replaced by slides presented during lectures.

***TEACHING METHOD***

Lectures.

***ASSESSMENT METHOD AND CRITERIA***

The exam will consist of a two-part oral exam: the first part will cover the methodological aspects related to creating a survey. The second part will focus on the role of polls in contemporary democracy.

The evaluation will be determined by relevance of answers, appropriate use of specific terminology, argumentative and coherent structuring of the discourse, ability to identify conceptual links and open issues.

***NOTES AND PREREQUISITES***

Students must show interest in current Italian and foreign political and social affairs.

Further information can be found on the lecturer's webpage at http://docenti.unicatt.it/web/searchByName.do?language=ENG or on the Faculty notice board.