

17.951 Public Opinion

Spring 2004
Tuesday 3:00-5:00
E51-390

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This course provides an introduction to the vast literature devoted to public opinion. In the next 12 weeks, we will survey the major theoretical approaches and empirical research in the field of political behavior (though we will only tangentially discuss political participation and voting). For the most part we will focus on American public opinion, though some of the work we will read is comparative in nature.

Each seminar will center on a critical analysis of the assigned readings for the week. Although I hope that much of our class time will be spent in group discussion, I will typically open with a commentary on the week's readings. At the end of each seminar I will introduce the next week's readings – describing them briefly and suggesting issues for you to think about.

Each week, one-half of the class will be required to write a short essay responding to the week's readings, no longer than one single-spaced page. These essays should try to engage a number of the week's readings, by, for example, doing one or more of the following: juxtaposing and commenting on alternative explanations or approaches to a substantive topic; criticizing the methodologies used and proposing other strategies of research; criticizing the conceptualization and/or measurement of a particular construct; analyzing the implications of a set of findings; suggesting new questions or hypotheses for research; developing similarities and contrasts with arguments or research found in the readings from previous weeks. More generally, these papers should contain an argument, not a summary or description of the readings. These papers should be turned in to me no later than noon on the Monday before the scheduled Tuesday meeting. I will comment on them and turn them back at the end of Tuesday's session. These essays will serve as the starting point for our discussion.

Your grade will depend on your performance on these papers (25%), your participation in class discussions (quality of participation weighted by volume of participation, another 25%), and a term paper due at the end of the term (50%). This paper may take several forms: a standard literature review on a topic of your choosing; a report of original empirical research; even a first run at a dissertation prospectus. I will provide more details about this paper later in the term.

I have not ordered books for the course. I will provide links to several recommended books on my homepage, but these are not required for purchase.

All readings are required, except those marked “recommended” – these are cites for further reading. Articles available on JSTOR are marked with a star. Those articles available from other electronic resources at MIT are marked with two stars.

Week 1: Introduction and Overview of the Course (February 3).

Preliminaries

Week 2: The Meaning and Measurement of Public Opinion (February 10).

Herbst, Susan. 1993. *Numbered Voices: How Opinion Polling Has Shaped American Politics*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Introduction, Chapter 3.

Key, V.O. 1961. *Public Opinion and American Democracy*. New York: Knopf. pp. 3-18.

Blumer, Herbert. 1948. “Public Opinion and Public Opinion Polling.” *American Sociological Review* 13:542-554.*

Converse, Philip. E. 1987. “Changing Conceptions of Public Opinion in The Political Process.” *Public Opinion Quarterly* 51/Supplement: 12-24*

Sanders, Lynn M. 1999. “Democratic Politics and Survey Research.” *Philosophy of the Social Sciences* 29:248-80. (available at <http://faculty.virginia.edu/lsanders/P29s2s5.pdf>)

Berinsky, Adam J. 2004. “Public Opinion in the 1930s and 1940s: The Analysis of Quota Controlled Sample Survey Data.” Working Paper, read through p. 25. (available at <http://web.mit.edu/berinsky/www/QCS.pdf>)

Recommended

Tilly, Charles. 1983. “Speaking Your Mind Without Elections, Surveys, or Social Movements.” *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 47:461-478.

Lippman, Walter. [1922] 1997. *Public Opinion*. New York: Free Press Paperbacks. Chapter 1, 3, 4.

Bryce, James. 1916. “The Nature of Public Opinion.” Reprinted in *Public Opinion and Propaganda*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1954. Katz, D., Dorwin Cartwright, Samuel Eldersveld, and Alfred McClung Lee (eds.). p. 3-11.

Fishkin, James S. 1995 *The Voice of the People*. New Haven, CT.: Yale University Press.

Brehm, John. 1993. *The Phantom Respondents*. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press.

Questions of Competence

Week 3: Political Ignorance: Causes and Effects (week of February 16 – Make Up Class)

- Downs, Anthony. 1957. *An Economic Theory of Democracy*. New York: Harper and Row. Chapters 11-13
- Zaller, John. 1992. *The Nature and Origins of Mass Opinion*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Chapters 2, 3, 6.
- Delli Carpini, Michael X. and Scott Keeter. 1996. *What Americans Know About Politics and Why It Matters*. New Haven: Yale University Press. Introduction and Chapters 4.
- Mondak, Jeffrey. 2001. Developing Valid Knowledge Scales. *American Journal of Political Science*, 45: 224-238.*
- Lupia, Arthur. 1994. "Shortcuts Versus Encyclopedias: Information and Voting Behavior in California Insurance Reform Elections." *American Political Science Review* 88: 63-76.*
- Lodge, Milton, Marco R. Steenbergen, Shawn Brau. 1995. "The Responsive Voter: Campaign Information and The Dynamics of Candidate Evaluation." *American Political Science Review* 89:309-26*

Week 4: The Search for Overarching Principles: Ideology and Political Reasoning (February 23)

- Campbell, Angus, Philip E. Converse, Warren E. Miller, and Donald E. Stokes. 1960. *The American Voter*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Chapter 10 **(SKIM!)**
- Converse, Philip E. 1964. "The Nature of Belief Systems in the Mass Publics," in David Apter (ed.) *Ideology and Discontent*. New York: Free Press.
- Lane, Robert E. 1962. *Political Ideology: Why the Common Man Believes What He Does*. New York: Free Press. Chapters, 4, 22
- Achen, Christopher H. 1975. "Mass Political Attitudes and the Survey Response." *American Political Science Review*. 69:1218-1231*
- Kinder, Donald R. 1983. "Diversity and Complexity in American Public Opinion." in *Political Science: The State of the Discipline*, ed. Ada Finifter. Washington, DC: APSA Press.
- Zaller, John. 1992. *The Nature and Origins of Mass Opinion*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Chapters 4,5.
- Converse, Philip. 2000. "Assessing the Capacity of Mass Electorates." *Annual Review of Political Science*. 3: 331-353**

Building From The Ground Up: Opinion Ingredients and The Micro-Foundations of Public Preferences

Week 5: Material Interests (Or Symbolic Politics?) (March 2)

Downs, Anthony. 1957. *An Economic Theory of Democracy*. New York: Harper and Row. Chapters 1-3

Sears, David O., Richard R. Lau, Tom Tyler and A.M. Allen Jr. 1980. "Self-Interest versus Symbolic Politics in Policy Attitudes and Presidential Voting." *American Political Science Review* 74: 670-684.*

Green, Donald Philip and Jonathan A. Cowden. 1992. "Who Protests: Self-Interest and White Opposition to Busing." *The Journal of Politics* 54:471-496.*

Kinder, Donald and Roderick Kiewiet. 1981. "Sociotropic Politics: The American Case," *British Journal of Political Science*. 11:129-41*

Kramer, Gerald. 1983. "The Ecological Fallacy Revisited: Aggregate- Versus Individual-Level Findings on Economics and Elections, and Sociotropic Voting." *American Political Science Review* 77:92-111*

Cambell, Andrea. 2002. "Self-Interest, Social Security, and the Distinctive Participation Patterns of Senior Citizens." *American Political Science Review* 96: 565-574 **

Recommended

Markus, Gregory B. 1988. "The Impact of Personal and National Economic Conditions On the Presidential Vote: A Pooled Cross-Sectional Analysis. *American Journal of Political Science* 32: 137-54.

Week 6: Groups in American Politics: Us and Them (March 9)

Conover, Pamela J. 1984. "The Influence of Group Identifications on Political Perception and Evaluation." *The Journal of Politics* 46:760-784.*

Converse, Philip E. 1964. The nature of belief systems in mass publics. In D.E. Apter (ed.), *Ideology and Discontent*. New York: The Free Press. Re-read pp. 234-238

Kinder, Donald R. 2003 "Belief Systems after Converse" in Michael MacKuen and George Rabinowitz, ed, *Electoral Democracy*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

Sears, David O. et al. 2000. *Racialized Politics: The Debate About Racism in America*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Chapter 1.

Kinder, Donald R. and Lynn M. Sanders. 1996. *Divided by Color: Racial Politics and Democratic Ideals*. Chicago: Chicago University Press. Chapters 2, 5.

Mendelberg, Tali. 2001. *The Race Card*, Chapters 1, 6, 7.

Recommended

Brady, Henry E. and Paul M. Sniderman (1985). "Attitude Attribution: A Group Basis for Political Reasoning", *American Political Science Review*, 79: 1061-1078

Dawson, Michael. 1994. *Behind the Mule: Race and Class in African American Politics*. Princeton University Press.

Lee, Taeku. 2002. *Mobilizing Public Opinion: Black Insurgency and Racial Attitudes in the Civil Rights Era*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press

Week 7: Principles and Values (March 16)

Feldman, Stanley. 1988. "Structure and Consistency in Public Opinion: The Role of Core Beliefs and Values." *American Journal of Political Science* 32: 416-440.*

Feldman, Stanley and John Zaller. 1992. "The Political Culture of Ambivalence." *American Journal of Political Science* 36: 268-307.*

Chong, Dennis. 1993. "How People Think, Reason, and Feel about Rights and Liberties," *American Journal of Political Science*, 37:867-99.*

Alvarez, R. Michael and John Brehm. 1997. "Are Americans Ambivalent Toward Racial Policies?" *American Journal of Political Science*, 41:345-75.*

Stoker, Laura. 2001. "Political Value Judgments." in James H. Kuklinski (ed.), *Citizens and Politics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Pp. 433-468.

Feldman, Stanley and Marco Steenbergen. 2001. "The Humanitarian Foundations of Public Support for Social Welfare." *American Journal of Political Science*, 45:658-677*

Recommended

Alvarez, R. Michael and John Brehm. 2002. *Hard Choices, Easy Answers: Values, Information, and American Public Opinion*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Hochschild, Jennifer L. 1981. *What's Fair? American Beliefs about Distributive Justice*. Cambridge Harvard University Press:

Luker, Kristin. 1984. *Abortion and the Politics of Motherhood*. Berkely: University of California Press. Chapters 1, 7, 8

McClosky, Herbert and Jon Zaller. 1984. *The American Ethos: Public Attitudes Toward Capitalism and Democracy*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.

Smith, Rogers. 1993. "Beyond Tocqueville, Myrdal, and Hartz: The Multiple Traditions of America." *American Political Science Review*. 87:549-566.

The World Out There: Society and Politics

Week 8: Social Influence (March 30)

Huckfeld, Robert and John Sprague. 1987. "Networks in Context: The Social Flow of Political Information." *American Political Science Review*. 81: 1197-1216.*

Oliver, Eric and Tali Mendelberg. 2000 "Reconsidering the Environmental Determinants of Racial Attitudes" *American Journal of Political Science* 44: 574-589.*

Mutz, Diana C. 1998. *Impersonal Influence: How Perceptions of Mass Collectives Affect Political Attitudes*. New York: Cambridge University Press. Chapters 1, 4, 8, 9.

Berinsky, Adam J. 2004. *Silent Voices: Public Opinion and Political Representation in America*, Chapters 2 and 3.

Recommended

Krysan, Maria. 1998. "Privacy and the Expression of White Racial Attitudes." *Public Opinion Quarterly*. 62:506-544.

Schuman, Howard and Jean M. Converse. 1971. "The Effect of Black and White Interviewers on Black Responses." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 35:44-68.

Tourangeau, Roger and Tom W. Smith. 1996. "Asking Sensitive Questions: The Impact of Data Collection Mode, Question Format, and Question Context." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 60:275-304.

Week 9: Framing, Priming and Media Effects (April 6)

Iyengar, Shanto and Donald Kinder. 1987. *News that Matters*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Chapter 1-3, 6-12

Miller, Joanne and Jon Krosnick. 2000. "News Media Impact on the Ingredients of Presidential Evaluations." *American Journal of Political Science*. 44(2) 301-15.*

Nelson, Thomas E., Rosalee A. Clausen and Zoe M. Oxley 1997. "Media Framing of a Civil Liberties Conflict and Its Effect on Tolerance." *The American Political Science Review* 91:567-83.*

Gilens, Martin. 1999. *Why Americans Hate Welfare*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Chapters 5 and 6.

Kinder, Donald R. 1998. "Communication and Opinion." *Annual Review of Political Science* 1: 167-197**

Druckman, Jamie. 2001. "The Implications of Framing Effects for Citizen Competence," *Political Behavior* 23: 225-256.**

Recommended

Bartels, Larry M. 1993. "Messages Received: The Political Impact of Media Exposure." *American Political Science Review* 87: 267-285.*

Zaller, John. 1996. "The Myth of Massive Media Impact Revived: New Support for a Discredited Idea." In *Political Persuasion and Attitude Change*. Diana C. Mutz, Paul M. Sniderman, and Richard A. Brody (eds.). p-17-78

Week 10: The Miracle of Aggregation and Enlightened Preferences (is anyone right?) (April 13)

Page, Benjamin I. and Robert Y. Shapiro. 1992. *The Rational Public: Fifty Years of Trends in American Policy Preferences*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Chapter 1,2,8,9

Converse, Philip E. 1990. "Popular Representation and the Distribution of Information." in *Information and Democratic Processes*, ed. John Ferejohn and James Kuklinski. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois.

Bartels, Larry M. 1996. "Uninformed Votes: Information Effects in Presidential Elections." *American Journal of Political Science* 40:194-230.*

Althaus, Scott L. "Information Effects in Collective Preferences" *American Political Science Review* 92 (2):545-558.*

Gilens, Marty. 2001. "Political Ignorance and Collective Policy Preferences." *American Political Science Review* 95:379-396.**

Recommended

Stimson, James A. 1999. *Public Opinion in America. Moods, Cycles, and Swings* (2nd edition). Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press.

Week 11: Public Opinion and Public Policy (April 27)

Stimson James A., Michael B. MacKuen, and Robert S. Erikson. 1995. "Dynamic Representation." *American Political Science Review* 89:543-565.*

Page, Benjamin I. and Robert Y. Shapiro. 1983. "Effects of Public Opinion on Policy." *American Political Science Review* 77: 175-190.*

Zaller, John.. 2003 "Coming to Grips with V.O. Key's Concept of Latent Opinion" in Michael MacKuen and George Rabinowitz, ed, *Electoral Democracy*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

Wlezien, Christopher. 1995. "The Public as Thermostat: Dynamics of Preferences for Spending." *American Journal of Political Science* 39: 981-1000.*

Hansen, Mark. 1998. "Individuals, Institutions, and Public Preferences over Public Finance." *American Political Science Review* 92:513-531.*

Bartels, Larry M. 2003. "Homer Gets A Tax Cut: Inequality and Public Policy in the Public Mind." Typescript, Princeton University (available from instructor)

Recommended

Bartels, Larry M. 1991. "Constituency Opinion and Congressional Policy Making: The Reagan Defense Buildup." *American Political Science Review* 85: 457-474.*

Jacobs, Lawrence R., and Robert Y. Shapiro. 2000. *Politicians Don't Pander: Political Manipulation and the Loss of Democratic Responsiveness*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Chapters 1, 2, and 9.

Week 12: Public Opinion and Foreign Policy (May 4)

Mueller, John. 1971. "Trends in Popular Support for the Wars in Korea and Vietnam," *American Political Science Review* 65: 358-75.*

Modigliani, Andre. 1972. "Hawks and Doves, Isolation and Political Distrust: An Analysis of Public Opinion on Military Policy." *American Political Science Review* 56: 960-978.*

Zaller, John. 1992. *The Nature and Origins of Mass Opinion*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Chapter 9.

Hurwitz, Jon, and Mark Peffley. 1987. "How Are Foreign Policy Attitudes Structured? A Hierarchical Model." *American Political Science Review* 81: 1099-120.*

Berinsky, Adam J. *Silent Voices: Public Opinion and Political Representation in America*, Chapter 5.

Berinsky, Adam J. "Public Opinion and World War II," Typescript.

Recommended

Holsti, Olie 1996. *Public Opinion and American Foreign Policy*

Reflections

Week 13: Final thoughts: The Place of Public Opinion in Democratic Politics (May 11)

Berelson, Bernard. 1950. "Democratic Theory and Public Opinion." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 16: 313-330.*

Bartels, Larry. 2003 "Democracy with Attitudes" in Michael MacKuen and George Rabinowitz, ed, *Electoral Democracy*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

Key, V.O. 1961. *Public Opinion and American Democracy*. New York: Knopf. Chapter 21.

Zaller, John. 1992. *The Nature and Origins of Mass Opinion*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Chapter 12

Page, Benjamin I. and Robert Y. Shapiro. 1992. *The Rational Public: Fifty Years of Trends in American Policy Preferences*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Chapter 10.

Verba, Sidney. 1996. "The Citizen as Respondent: Sample Surveys and American Democracy." *American Political Science Review* 90:1-7.*

Berinsky, Adam J. *Silent Voices: Public Opinion and Political Representation in America*, Conclusion.

Recommended

Jacobs, Lawrence R., and Robert Y. Shapiro. 2000. *Politicians Don't Pander: Political Manipulation and the Loss of Democratic Responsiveness*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Chapter 10.

Ginsberg, Benjamin. 1986. *The Captive Public*. New York: Basic Books. Chapter 3.