

PLAP 2270: Public Opinion and Political Behavior

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S385 Gibson Hall

office hours: after class/by appointment

Summer 2010 (Session I)

Mon-Fri 1:00–3:15pm

Gibson Hall 141 (South Lawn)

<https://collab.etc.virginia.edu/>

This course will examine public opinion and assess its place in the American political system. The course will emphasize both how citizens' thinking about politics is shaped and the role of public opinion in political campaigns, elections, and government. While the course will focus on research on the current state of public opinion, throughout the course we will also discuss historical change in opinion's place in politics. We will also consider normative questions, including the role opinion *should* play in American democracy.

Course Requirements

Requirements for this course include attendance and participation in class, an in-class *midterm examination*, one *paper*, and a comprehensive *final examination*, held during the allotted final exam time slot for this class. There may be additional short writing assignments, quizzes, and the like as part of class.

The paper assignment and midterm study guides will be posted to Collab and announced in class.

Grades will be based on the following breakdown:

Item	Points	Date
Attendance & participation	25 percent	—
Midterm	20 percent	Friday, May 28 in class
Paper	25 percent	June 10 at the beginning of class
Final exam	30 percent	Friday, June 11, 1:00-3:30pm

Readings

All readings for the course are available through Collab.

Other Policies

I respect and uphold University policies and regulations pertaining to the observation of religious holidays; assistance for physically handicapped and visually and/or hearing impaired students; plagiarism; racial, ethnic, gender, sexual orientation, or religious discrimination; and all forms of harassment.

If you have (or suspect you have) a learning or other disability that requires academic accommodations, you must contact the Learning Needs and Evaluation Center (<http://www.virginia.edu/studenthealth/l nec.html>) as soon as possible, at least two to three weeks before any assignments are due. I take learning disabilities very seriously and will make whatever accommodations you need to be successful in class but they must be properly documented by LNEC.

Plagiarism, or academic theft, is passing off someone else's words or ideas as your own without giving proper credit to the source. You are responsible for not plagiarizing and are expected to abide by the University of Virginia Honor Code (see <http://www.virginia.edu/honor/fraud.html>).

Participation in this class implies permission from students to submit their written work to services that check for plagiarism; you may be required to submit both hard and digital copies of your papers.

Papers turned in late without prior arrangement will not be considered for a grade.

Course Schedule and Outline

I. INTRODUCTION TO THE COURSE

M May 17 Introduction to the course

II. MEANING AND MEASUREMENT

T May 18 What is “public”? What is “opinion”? Is “public opinion” the intersection of the two?
V.O. Key. 1961. *Public Opinion and American Democracy*, chapter 1 (3-17).

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

W May 19 Measurement and analysis

Asher, Herbert. 2007. *Polling and the Public* (7th ed.), chapters 3 & 8.
For more on the mechanics of polling and survey research, you may want to skim other chapters that interest you—the book is available used on-line.

III. DEMOCRATIC COMPETENCE

R May 20 The public’s political information and sophistication
Political tolerance

“Dunce Cap Nation.” *Newsweek*. September 4, 2007. <http://www.newsweek.com/id/39529>

Schudson, Michael. 2003. “Click Here for Democracy: A History and Critique of an Information-Based Model of Citizenship.” In *Democracy and New Media*, ed. Henry Jenkins, David Thorburn, and Brad Seawell. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 49-60.

Brady, Henry E., James S. Fishkin, and Robert C. Luskin. 2003. “Informed Public Opinion About Foreign Policy.” *Brookings Review*: 21(3):16.

F May 21 Movie Day 1

Boogie Man: The Lee Atwater Story

M May 24 Ideology and the organization of opinion
Self-interest and opinion

Kinder, Donald R. 1983. “Diversity and Complexity in American Public Opinion.” In Finifter, Ada W. (ed.) *Political Science: State of the Discipline*, 391-401.

Bartels, Larry M. 2004. “Unenlightened Self-Interest: The Strange Appeal of the Estate Tax Repeal.” *The American Prospect* 15(6):A17-A19.

T May 25 Groups

Ladd, Everett C. 1997. “Media Framing of the Gender Gap.” In *Women, Media, and Politics*, ed. Pippa Norris. New York: Oxford University Press, 113-28.

Fahey, Anna C. 2007. “French and Feminine: Hegemonic Masculinity and the Emasculation of John Kerry in the 2004 Presidential Race.” *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 24(2):132-50.

W May 26 Core values**Emotion**

Brewer, Paul R. 2003. "The Shifting Foundations of Public Opinion About Gay Rights." *Journal of Politics* 65(4):1208-20.

Brader, Ted. 2005. "Striking a Responsive Chord: How Political Ads Motivate and Persuade Voters by Appealing to Emotions." *American Journal of Political Science* 49(2):388-405.

R May 27 Movie Day 2

The War Room

F May 28 Midterm**M May 31 No Class (Happy Memorial Day!)****V. OPINION IN POLITICAL CONTEXT****T June 1 Zaller's theory of opinion formation & expression**

Zaller, John. 1994. "Elite Leadership of Mass Opinion: New Evidence from the Gulf War," In *Taken by Storm: The Media, Public Opinion and U.S. Foreign Policy in the Gulf War*, ed. Lance Bennett and David Paletz, chapter 9 (186-209).

W June 2 The media and framing

Iyengar, Shanto, Mark D. Peters, and Donald R. Kinder. 2004. "Experimental Demonstrations of the 'Not-So-Minimal' Consequences of Television News Programs." In *Political Psychology: Key Readings*, ed. John T. Jost, and Jim Sidanius. New York: Psychology Press, 139-49.

Mayer, Jane. 2007 (February 19). "Whatever It Takes: The Politics of the Man Behind '24.'" *The New Yorker* 83(1).

http://www.newyorker.com/reporting/2007/02/19/070219fa_fact_mayer

R June 3 More framing**Implicit Attitudes**

Lakoff, George. 2004. "Framing 101: How to Take Back Public Discourse." In *Don't Think of an Elephant!* White River Junction, VT: Chelsea Green Publishing, chapter 1.

Gladwell, Malcolm. 2005. "The Warren Harding Error: Why We Fall For Tall, Dark, and Handsome Men." In *Blink: the Power of Thinking Without Thinking*. New York: Little, Brown, Chapter 3 (72-98).

Wilson, Timothy D. 2002. *Strangers to Ourselves: Discovering the Adaptive Unconscious*. Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, Chapter 6 (117-135).

F June 4 Movie Day 3

Journeys with George

M June 7 Political campaigns

Mendelberg, Tali. 2001. *The Race Card: Campaign Strategy, Implicit Messages, and the Norm of Equality*, Chapter 4.

Freedman, Paul, Michael Franz, and Kenneth Goldstein. 2004. "Campaign Advertising and Democratic Citizenship." *American Journal of Political Science* 48(4):723-41.

**T June 8 Collective opinion
Political discourse**

Bartels, Larry M. 2008. "The Irrational Electorate." *Wilson Quarterly* 32(4):44-50.

Zaller, John R. 2001. "Monica Lewinsky and the Mainsprings of American Politics." In *Mediated Politics: Communication in the Future of Democracy*, ed. W. L. Bennett, and Robert M. Entman. New York: Cambridge University Press, 252-78.

Price, Vincent, Lilach Nir, and Joseph N. Cappella. 2005. "Framing Public Discussion of Gay Civil Unions." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 69(2):179-212.

W June 9 Representation

Zaller, John. 2003. "Coming to Grips With V.O. Key's Concept of Latent Opinion." In *Electoral Democracy*, ed. Michael MacKuen and George Rabinowitz. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 311-36.

VII. CONCLUSIONS

R June 10 Conclusion & Movie Day 4

PAPER DUE

In Class: By the People: The Election of Barack Obama

Ginsberg, Benjamin. 1986. *The Captive Public*, chapter 3 (59-85).

Zaller, John. 1992. *The Nature and Origins of Mass Opinion*, epilogue (310-332).

F June 11 Final Examination