

Political Science 703: Readings in Public Opinion

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Spring 2006
M & W , Derby 0062, 1:30 - 3:18

“To speak with precision of public opinion is a task not unlike coming to grips with the Holy Ghost.” (V. O. Key, 1961, *Public Opinion and American Democracy*, p. 8)

Course Description: Key’s famous proclamation (citation of which is seemingly mandatory in all introductory discussions of public opinion, and so now can be dispensed with) underscores the point that the scholarly field of public opinion is vast, ill-defined, daunting, and requires some element of faith in the very existence of the construct. Inevitably, structuring a course on such a vast topic is a process in elimination – there are an awful lot of relevant and interesting things that we won’t be able to get to. I have tried to maintain a balance between coverage of historically important works and more contemporary empirical contributions.

Required Texts and Readings

Two textbooks (paperbacks) are required for the class, and they can be purchased directly from the publisher or Amazon:

1. Benjamin I. Page & Robert Y. Shapiro. 1992. *The Rational Public: Fifty Years of Trends in Americans’ Policy Preferences*. Univ. of Chicago Press. (\$27.50 at <http://www.press.uchicago.edu/cgi-bin/hfs.cgi/00/7360.ctl>)

2. John R. Zaller. 1992. *The Nature and Origins of Mass Opinion*. Cambridge Univ. Press. (\$25.99 at <http://www.cambridge.org/us/catalogue>)

There are a large number of additional readings, both empirical journal articles and book chapters. Most of the journal articles are available online (marked with an * on the syllabus). You are responsible for obtaining copies of those articles. All chapters and articles that are not accessible on line will be available in files outside my office.

One of our key readings is a lengthy chapter (90 pages with references) by Don Kinder, *Opinion & Action in the Realm of Politics*, published in the 1998 edition of the *Handbook of Social Psychology*¹. Although I have revised the syllabus from the last time the course was taught (which relied very heavily on Kinder’s organization), I still invoke some of his themes when labeling topics. At the beginning of many course topics, the syllabus specifies the relevant section of the Kinder chapter – this should always be read first as a general overview of the topic. It is also the single best reference for preparation for the public opinion subfield of the American Politics general exam.

¹ Full reference: Donald R. Kinder. 1998. Opinion and Action in the Realm of Politics. In Daniel T. Gilbert, Susan T. Fiske, and Gardner Lindzey (eds.), *The Handbook of Social Psychology* (4th edition). New York: McGraw-Hill.



Each class will center on a critical analysis of the assigned readings. Much of the class time will be devoted to discussion, but I will also open with a commentary or overview.

METHOD OF EVALUATION: A total of 100 points can be earned in this class. Your grade will be based on the number of points out of the 100 possible you earn. Grades for the course will be based on three sets of criteria:

1. **Class preparation and participation.** There is a lot of reading, and every student is expected to have completed the readings for each class. You should view our class meetings as opportunities for the scholarly exchange of ideas, and all of us have should participate in that scholarly exchange. Much of the class time will be devoted to discussion, but I will also open with a commentary or overview. Students will be assigned to present specific empirical pieces. Preparation and participation contribute 20% (up to 20 points) to your final grade.

2. **Weekly Essays.** Each student will write **eight brief essays**. These essays should try to engage the concerns of a set of readings, by, for example: juxtaposing and commenting on alternative theoretical or methodological approaches to a topic; critiquing methodologies and proposing alternative research strategies; discussing the implications of a set of findings; suggesting new questions or hypotheses for research; developing similarities and contrasts with research found in readings from previous topics in this course, or other courses you have taken. These should not be summaries of the readings, you can safely assume the reader (me) knows the details. These essays should be one- or two single-spaced pages.

Each essay must address a topic that will be discussed, not a reaction to something we already discussed (ie, you can't turn in an essay for Wednesday based on the readings discussed that Monday). While I prefer to have them before class, you can turn the essays in at the start of class.

You are free to choose the eight sets of readings that are of most interest to you. There are some constraints (eg, only one essay on Zaller, even though we will take two classes to cover that book). Each essay is worth 5 points, for a total of 40% of the course grade

3. **Final Paper.** The final paper will be a research proposal for a project that might be (and, ideally, will be) carried out at a later point in your graduate career. This is not intended to be a completed research project, but will be the basis and design for a piece of research. Papers will typically be 20 or so pages, and show an understanding of the development of knowledge in a chosen area as well an idea for extending that knowledge. It will include a literature review, a statement of the research problem, and a presentation of the research design. It may or may not include preliminary data analysis (that is, empirical analysis is not required). The design could make use of existing data sources, in which case you should detail the questions you would use, and justify why they are suitable for your problem. Or the design might require original data collection, in which case you should outline and justify your proposed research methods. The proposed research must be doable, within the context of resource constraints. (See me if you aren't sure what is, and is not, "doable".) More generally, see the Guidelines on the next page.

You should feel free to consult with me earlier in the quarter about this paper. I expect that this paper will be original to this course, ie, not submitted as part of a requirement from a different course. I am willing to consider an substantial modification of a paper submitted to another class, but you must consult with me on this first.

The final paper is due the Wednesday of Finals week (i.e., June 7th); you should deliver a hard paper copy to me in my office or place in my departmental mail box. The paper is worth 40% of your final grade.

Summary of Course Requirements and Calculation of Final Grade:

- 1. Class attendance, preparation and participation: 20%
- 2. Weekly essay (one or two pages single spaced): 8 @ 5% each, or 40%
- 3. Final paper: 40%

Guidelines for Final Paper in Political Science 703

The paper should consist of a literature review, statement of hypotheses, and proposed research design on some topic involving public opinion. The introduction of the paper should tell me, in general, what question you will be addressing, why it is interesting and/or important in advancing knowledge, and the general theoretical framework in which you place the question. In general, I am looking for evidence that you can find and understand the literature in on a question that interests you, can relate existing literature to a research question, and can propose a research question based on that literature.

The literature review should show me that you understand how to find scholarly literature on the topic that interests you, and relate that literature to your research question. You will almost certainly need to move beyond the readings assigned in class.

The literature review should flow into your research question, which should be stated in the form of an hypothesis (or a few hypotheses). In other words, after your review of the existing literature, what outstanding question(s) or puzzles need to be resolved? Why is this question interesting? What are the theoretical, political, and normative implications? How will the answer to the question further our collective knowledge in the field? What contribution will you be making? **You need to convince your reader that the research is worth undertaking.**

From the research question, the paper should flow into the research design which tells me how you will carry out the research. You will need to identify what kind of research method you will be adopting, and justify why that is appropriate to your research question. You need to define the important concepts and describe how you will operationalize (measure) them. Finally you need to describe the sample (if individuals are the unit of analysis).

Other considerations and a checklist:

1. *Style*: I expect the paper to follow style guidelines for submission to a political science journal (checkout the guidelines for contributors for the *APSR* or *AJPS*). If you are from another discipline (e.g., psychology), adopt your home discipline's style guidelines.

2. *Introduction*: Is the purpose of the paper clearly stated? Is the question placed in some theoretical context or contexts?

3. *Literature Review* :

Does the paper identify and describe the major orientations to the question?

Does the paper properly place major pieces of research into those orientations, and show how each piece fits and contributes to that orientation?

Does the paper identify the major concepts that others have used, and how those concepts are used in the research?

Does the paper reflect the nature of the empirical research (research designs, data) and how that might affect the findings in the field?

4. *Research Question*

Is the research question stated in the form of an hypothesis (or hypotheses), with clearly defined independent and dependent variables?

Does the paper place the research question in the context of the literature that has been reviewed?

5. *Research Design*

Is the chosen research design appropriate for the question being asked?

Does the paper identify the sample that will be used to investigate the question; and is that sample appropriate?

Does the paper discuss how the variables will be measured? If this is secondary analysis, are the items available and suitable for measuring the variables of interest?

Does the paper discuss the kind of analysis that would be appropriate for the data that will be examined?

6. *General Considerations*:

Is the paper well written? Focused? Integrated? Can the reader follow the ideas that are expressed?

Can the research design actually be carried out, given available resources (it is ok to propose designs for which some funding might be required, but please don't propose projects that are inconceivable.)

Abbreviated Class Meeting Schedule and Overview

Part 1: Introduction

1. M, March 27: Introduction to the course
2. W, March 29: Meaning & Measurement of public opinion

Part 2: Policy Responsiveness (Public Opinion as Cause of Policy Outputs?)

- 3 & 4. M & W, April 3 & 5: Policy Responsiveness

Part 3: “Surely the most familiar fact to arise from sample surveys in all countries is that popular levels of information about public affairs are, from the point of view of the informed observer, astonishingly low” (Converse, 1975, p. 79)

5. M, April 10: Challenge: Awash in Ignorance?
6. W, April 12: Solution 1? Heuristics
7. M, April 17: Solution 2? Miracles of Aggregation
8. W, April 19: Solution 3? The On-Line Model

Part 4: “Perhaps the Best Book ever Written about Public Opinion” (Stimson, 1995, p. 182)

- 9 & 10. M & W, April 24 & 26: Zaller’s Model

Part 5: The principled basis of public opinion (Ideology, Moral Values, including Self-Interest) as well as the structural implications, with a foray into two substantive topics, race and tolerance

11. M, May 1: Challenge: Unsophisticated in the Extreme?
12. W, May 3: Principles and Values
- 13 & 14. M & W, May 8 & 10: Conflict, Ambivalence, Uncertainty, Nonseparable Preferences, Silent Voices
15. M, May 15: Material or Symbolic Interests
16. W, May 17: Race and Public Opinion
17. M, May 22: Challenge: Intolerance Galore?

Part 6: Impact of the Political Information Environment on Public Opinion

- 18 & 19. W & M, May 24 & 29: Campaigns, Media Effects, and the Manipulation of Public Opinion
20. W, May 31: Wrapping Up

1. March 27: Introduction to the course

2. March 29: The meaning and measurement of public opinion

Kinder, pp. 778-784.

Price, Vincent. 1992. Problems of public opinion; conceptualizing the public; conceptualizing opinions (pp. 4-48). From *Public Opinion*. Sage Publications.

Glynn, Carroll J., Susan Herbst, Garrett J. O'Keefe, and Robert Y. Shapiro. 1999. Methods for studying public opinion. Chapter 3 from *Public Opinion*. Westview Press.

Key, V. O. 1961. Introduction (pp. 3-18) from *Public Opinion and American Democracy*. Knopf.

Zaller, John. 1994. Positive constructs of public opinion. *Critical Studies in Mass Communication* 11: 276-287.

* Sanders, Lynn. 1999. Democratic politics and survey research. *Philosophy of the Social Sciences* 29: 248-280. (Go directly to <http://pos.sagepub.com> and search for this)

3 & 4: April 3 & 5: Policy Responsiveness

* Page, Benjamin I and Robert Y. Shapiro. 1983. Effects of public opinion on policy. *APSR* 77:175-190.

* Stimson, James A., Michael B. MacKuen, and Robert S. Erikson. 1995. Dynamic representation. *APSR* 89:543-565.

* Jacobs, Lawrence R. and Robert Y. Shapiro. 1994. Studying substantive democracy. *PS: Political Science and Politics* 27:9-16.

* Page, Benjamin I. 1994. Democratic responsiveness? Untangling the links between public opinion and policy. *PS: Political Science and Politics* 27: 25-28.

Jacobs, Lawrence R. and Robert Y. Shapiro. 2002. Politics and policymaking in the real world: Crafted talk and the loss of democratic responsiveness. In *Navigating Public Opinion: Polls, Policy, and the Future of American Democracy*, Jeff Manza, Fay Lomax Cook and Benjamin I. Page (eds.). Oxford University Press.

Erikson, Robert S., Michael B. MacKuen, and James A. Stimson. 2002. Panderers or shirkers? Politicians and public opinion. In *Navigating Public Opinion: Polls, Policy, and the Future of American Democracy*, Jeff Manza, Fay Lomax Cook and Benjamin I. Page (eds.). Oxford University Press.

* Gilens, Martin. 2005. Inequality and democratic responsiveness. *Public Opinion Quarterly* 69: 778-796.

* Bartels, Larry M. 2005. Economic inequality and political representation. Manuscript available at <http://www.princeton.edu/~bartels/economic.pdf>

5. April 10: Challenge: Awash in ignorance?

Kinder, pp. 784-789

Delli Carpini, Michael X., and Scott Keeter. 1996. From democratic theory to democratic practice: The case for an informed citizenry. Chapter 1 From *What Americans Know about Politics and Why it Matters*. Yale University Press.

* Delli Carpini, Michael X., and Scott Keeter. 1993. Measuring political knowledge: Putting first things first. *AJPS* 37:1179-1206.

* Bartels, Larry M. 1996. Uninformed votes: Information effects in presidential elections. *AJPS* 40:194-230.

* Gilens, Martin. 2001. Political ignorance and collective policy preferences. *APSR* 95:379-396.

* Althaus, Scott L. 1998. Information effects in collective preferences. *APSR* 92:545-558.

6. April 12: Solution 1? Heuristics

* Lupia, Arthur. 1994. Shortcuts versus encyclopedias: Information and voting behavior in California insurance reform elections. *APSR* 88:63-76.

Sniderman, Paul M., Richard A. Brody, and Philip E. Tetlock. 1991. The role of heuristics in political reasoning: a theory sketch. Chapter 2 from *Reasoning and Choice: Explorations in Political Psychology*. Cambridge University Press.

Kuklinski, James H., and Paul J. Quirk. 2000. Reconsidering the rational public: Cognition, heuristics, and mass opinion. In *Elements of Reason: Cognition, Choice and the Bounds of Rationality*, Arthur Lupia, Mathew D. McCubbins, and Samuel L. Popkin (eds.). Cambridge University Press.

* Lau, Richard R. and David P. Redlawsk. 2001. Advantages and disadvantages of cognitive heuristics in political decision making. *AJPS* 45: 951-971.

7. April 17: Solution 2? Miracles of Aggregation

Kinder, pp. 797-800

Page, Benjamin I., and Robert Y. Shapiro. 1992. *The Rational Public: Fifty Years of Trends in American Policy Preferences*. Univ. of Chicago Press. (sections to be assigned)

Stimson, James A. 2002. The microfoundations of mood. In *Thinking About Political Psychology*, James H. Kuklinski (ed.). Cambridge Univ. Press.

(Note: The data file for Stimson's "policy mood" variable is available here <http://www.unc.edu/~jstimson/>)

8. April 19: Solution 3? The On-Line Model

Kinder, pp. 812-815

McGraw, and Patrick Stroh. 1989. An impression-driven model of candidate evaluation. *APSR* 83:399-420.

* Lodge, Milton and Marco Steenbergen, with Shawn Brau. 1995. The responsive voter: Campaign information and the dynamics of candidate evaluation. *APSR* 89:309-326.

* Rahn, Wendy, Jon Krosnick, and Marijke Breuning. 1994. Rationalization and derivation processes in survey studies of political candidate evaluation. *AJPS* 38:582-600

* Redlawsk, David. 2001. You must remember this: A test of the on-line model of voting. *Journal of Politics* 63:29-58.

Lavine, Howard. 2002. On-line versus memory-based models of candidate evaluation. In *Political Psychology*, Kristen R. Monroe (ed). Erlbaum.

* Zaller, John and Stanley Feldman. 1992. A simple theory of the survey response: Answering questions versus revealing preferences. *AJPS* 36:579-618.

* McGraw, Kathleen M., and Thomas M. Dolan. 2006. Personifying the state: Consequences for attitude formation. Manuscript under review.

9 & 10. April 24 & 26 "Perhaps the Best Book ever Written about Public Opinion"*

* Jim Stimson, *APSR* review, 1995, p.

182.

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

11. May 1 Challenge: Unsophisticated in the Extreme?

Kinder, pp. 793-797

Converse, Philip E. 1964. The nature of belief systems in mass publics. In David E. Apter (ed.), *Ideology and Discontent*. Free Press.

* Achen, Christopher H. 1975. Mass political attitudes and the survey response. *APSR* 69:1218-1231.

- * Sullivan, John L., James Piereson, and George E. Marcus. 1979. Ideological constraint in the mass public. *AJPS* 22:223-249.
- * Converse, Philip E. 2000. Assessing the capacity of mass electorates. *Annual Review of Political Science* 3:331-353.
- * Krosnick, Jon. 1991. The stability of political preferences: Comparisons of symbolic and nonsymbolic attitudes. *AJPS* 31: 547-576.

12. May 3 Principles and Values

Kinder, pp. 808-812

Feldman, Stanley. 2003. Values, ideology and the structure of political attitudes. In *Oxford Handbook of Political Psychology*, David O. Sears, Leonie Huddy, and Robert Jervis (eds.). Oxford Univ. Press.

- * Feldman, Stanley. 1988. Structure and consistency in public opinion: The role of core beliefs and values. *AJPS* 32:416-440.
- * Hurwitz, Jon and Mark Peffley. 1987. How are foreign policy attitudes structured? A hierarchical model. *APSR* 1099-1120.
- * Inglehart, Ronald and Paul Abramson. 1994. Economic security and value change. *APSR* 88:336-354.

13 & 14. May 8 & 10: Conflict, Ambivalence, Uncertainty, Nonseparable Preferences, and Silent Voices

- * Tetlock, Philip E. 1986. A value pluralism model of ideological reasoning. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 50:819-827. (Note that listing says only 1988 and later, but this particular 1986 volume is available on-line)
- * Alvarez, R. Michael & Charles Franklin. 1994. Uncertainty and political perceptions. *Journal of Politics* 56 :671-688.
- * McGraw, Kathleen M., Edward Hasecke, and Kimberly Conger. 2003. Ambivalence, uncertainty, and processes of candidate evaluation. *Political Psychology* 24:421-428.
- * Lavine, Howard. 2001. The electoral consequences of ambivalence toward presidential candidates. *AJPS*, 45:915-929.
- * Alvarez, R. Michael and John Brehm. 1995. American ambivalence towards abortion policy: Development of a heteroskedastic probit model of competing values. *AJPS* 39:1055-82.
- * Alvarez, R. Michael and John Brehm. 1997. Are Americans ambivalent towards racial politics. *AJPS* 41:345-374.

- * Lacy, Dean. 2001. A theory of nonseparable preferences in survey responses. *AJPS* 45: 239-258.
- * Berinsky, Adam J. 2002. Silent voices: Social welfare policy opinions and political equality in America. *AJPS* 46: 276-287.

15. May 15

Material or Symbolic Interests?

Kinder, pp. 800-803

- * Sears, David O., Richard R. Lau, Tom R. Tyler, and Harris M. Allen, Jr. 1980. Self-interest vs. symbolic politics in policy attitudes and presidential voting. *APSR* 74:670-684.
- Sears, David O. and Carolyn L. Funk. 1990. Self-interest in Americans' political opinions. In Jane J. Mansbridge (ed.), *Beyond Self-Interest*. University of Chicago.
- * Tedin, Kent. 1994. Self-interest, symbolic values and the financial equalization of the public schools. *Journal of Politics* 55:628-649.
- * Green, Donald Philip, and Ann Elizabeth Gerken. 1989. Self-interest and public opinion toward smoking restrictions and cigarette taxes. *Public Opinion Quarterly* 53: 1-16.
- * Campbell, Andrea L. 2002. Self-interest, social security, and the distinctive participation patterns of senior citizens. *APSR* 96: 565-574.
- * Kinder, Donald, Gordon Adams, and Paul Gronke. 1989. Economics and politics in the 1984 Presidential elections. *AJPS* 33:491-515.
- * Feldman, Stanley. 1982. Economic self-interest and political behavior. *AJPS* 26: 446-466.
- * Gomez, Brad T., and J. Matthew Wilson. 2001. Political sophistication and economic voting in the American electorate: A theory of heterogeneous attribution. *AJPS* 45: 899-914.

16. May 17

Race and Public Opinion

- David O. Sears, John J. Hetts, Jim Sidanius, and Lawrence Bobo. 2000. Race in American politics. (pp. 1-43). In D. O. Sears, J. Sidanius, and L. Bobo (Eds.), *Racialized Politics*. University of Chicago Press.
- Sniderman, Paul M., Gretchen C. Crosby, and William G. Howell. 2000. The politics of race. (pp. 236-279). In D. O. Sears, J. Sidanius, and L. Bobo (Eds.), *Racialized Politics*. University of Chicago Press.
- Kinder, Donald R. and Lynn M. Sanders. 1996. The racial divide in public opinion; Subtle prejudice for modern times. Chapters 2 & 5 from *Divided by Color: Racial Politics and Democratic Ideals*. University of Chicago Press.
- * Feldman, Stanley and Leonie Huddy. 2005. Racial resentment and white opposition to race-conscious programs: Principles or prejudice. *AJPS* 49: 168-183.
 - * Oliver, J. Eric and Tali Mendelberg. 2000. Reconsidering the environmental determinants of white racial attitudes. *AJPS* 44: 574-589.

- * Kellstedt, Paul M. 2000. Media framing and the dynamics of racial policy preferences. *AJPS* 44: 245-260.

17. May 22

Challenge: Intolerance Galore?

Kinder, pp. 789-793

- * Sullivan, John L., George E. Marcus, Stanley Feldman, and James E. Piereson. 1981. The sources of political tolerance: A multivariate analysis. *APSR* 75: 92-106.

- * Kuklinski, James, et al. 1991. The cognitive and affective bases of political tolerance judgments. *AJPS* 35:1-27.

- * Gibson, James L. 1992. The political consequences of intolerance: Cultural conformity and political freedom. *APSR* 86:338-356.

- * Gibson, James L. 2006. Enigmas of intolerance: Fifty years after Stouffer's *Communism, Conformity, and Civil Liberties*. *Perspectives on Politics* 4:

Gibson, James L. Forthcoming. Political intolerance in the context of democratic theory. In R. J. Dalton and Hans-Dieter Klingemann (Eds.), *Oxford Handbook on Political Behavior*. Oxford University Press. (I will email pdf to class)

18 & 19. May 24 & 29 Campaigns, Media Effects, and the Manipulation of Public Opinion

Kinder, p.817-821

- * Dalton, Russell, Paul A. Beck, and Robert Huckfeldt. 1998. Partisan cues and the media: Information flows in the 1992 presidential election. *APSR* 92: 111-126.

- * Beck, Paul A., Russell J. Dalton, Steven Greene, and Robert Huckfeldt. 2002. The social calculus of voting: Interpersonal, media, and organizational influences on presidential choices. *APSR* 96:57-75.

- * Bartels, Larry M. 1993. Messages received: The political impact of media exposure. *APSR* 87: 267-285.

- * Zaller, John. 1998. Monica Lewinsky's contribution to political science. *PS: Political Science and Politics* 31: 182-189.

- * Iyengar, Shanto, Mark D. Peters, and Donald R. Kinder. 1982. Experimental demonstrations of the "not-so-minimal" consequences of television news programs. *APSR* 76: 848-858.

- * Behr, Roy L. and Shanto Iyengar. 1985. Television news, real-world cues, and changes in the public agenda. *Public Opinion Quarterly* 49: 38-57.

- * Iyengar, Shanto. 1987. Television news and citizens' explanations of national affairs. *APSR* 81: 815-832.

- * Druckman, James N. 2004. Political preference formation: Competition, deliberation, and the (ir)relevance of framing effects. *APSR* 98: 671-686.
- * Nelson, Thomas E., Rosalee A. Clawson, and Zoe M. Oxley. 1997. Media framing of a civil liberties conflict and its effect on tolerance. *APSR* 91: 567-583.
- * Krosnick, Jon A., and Donald R. Kinder. 1990. Altering the foundations of support for the president through priming. *APSR* 84:497-512.
- * Ansolabehere, Stephen, Shanto Iyengar, Adam Simon, and Nicholas Valentino. 1994. Does attack advertising demobilize the electorate. *APSR* 88: 829-838.
- * Lau, Richard, Lee Sigelman, Caroline Heldman, and Paul Babbitt. 1999. The effects of negative political advertisements: A meta-analytic assessment. *APSR* 93:851-889.

Page and Shapiro, *The Rational Public*, Chapter 9

McGraw, Kathleen M. 2003. Strategies of impression management; Deception, manipulation and citizens' responses to elites' communications. Pages 409-421 of *Political Impressions: Formation and management*. In *Oxford Handbook of Political Psychology*, David O. Sears, Leonie Huddy, and Robert Jervis (eds.). Oxford Univ. Press.

20. May 31

Wrapping Up