Public Opinion (790-582)
Wednesdays, 12:00 - 2:40, Hickman 313

Instructor: Professor Richard Lau (x2-9261; ricklau@rci.rutgers.edu)
Office Hours: By appointment, Hickman 505

Class Description

This course attempts to survey the vast and sprawling literature devoted to public opinion (mostly American). It is based on the assumption that we have learned a lot in the last six decades. Granted the literature is complicated and ridden with debates; nonetheless, our understanding of public opinion is substantially deeper today than it was when V.O. Key was completing *Public Opinion and American Democracy* over 65 years ago. Isn't it?

Reading

Each week's reading assignment is detailed below. Most of the reading will be from journal articles, all of which are available in Alexander Library or can be downloaded from the library’s electronic resources. (When the readings are single chapters from books, I have put scanned copies on Sakai, which I have tried to note on the syllabus.)

In addition, the following required books have been ordered from the (Barnes and Noble) bookstore and should be purchased for class. They are all classics (well, nor Berinsky, but it is a good overview), and you will want to have them all on your bookshelves. The should all be on reserve at Alexander Library as well ...


Requirements

The requirements for this class are simple:

1. Do the reading every week, and come to class prepared to discuss it.

2. Make one short presentations in class, where you will be responsible for doing some of the "optional" reading for a week (about 3 articles, or an extra book), and reporting on it to the rest of us. We will coordinate these reports the second week of class.

The purpose of this practice (on which we will typically spend the second half of class every week) is to expose all of us to more of the literature than I am comfortable asking you to read every week. Thus I want whoever is responsible for the class presentation to prepare a brief (one-paragraph; or an outline) summary of every optional article/chapter you read, to be distributed to the other members of the class. But the focus of the presentation should be integrating this optional material with what we have all been reading and discussing in class.

3. Write a longer survey-based (?) research paper on some topic related to public opinion.

In fact, the goal of this paper is to actually contribute to the public opinion literature, and thus to produce a paper of publishable quality (one that you would be happy to present at a convention, and eventually be willing to submit for publication). The paper can take the form of an extensive, integrating literature review, empirical analyses of extant public opinion data (the norm in this field), or some new data collection. (If you chose the last option, I will not expect your paper before the end of next Fall semester – which is fine with me.) Your topic must be approved by me, and you should choose it by the end of February at the latest.

I will ask any of you "auditing" this class to do the short class presentations but not the larger paper (although feel free ...)

Grades will be based on:

   Class Participation ......................... 50%
   Short Class Presentation ................. 10%
   Larger Research Paper ................. 40%
WEEKLY TOPICS/READING ASSIGNMENTS

I. COMING TO GRIPS WITH THE HOLY GHOST

Sept. 7 Defining Public Opinion (Class Organization/Get Acquainted)


-------------------------------- Optional --------------------------------


Sept. 14 Theoretical and Informational Underpinnings


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II. IDEOLOGICAL BASIS OF PUBLIC OPINION

Sept. 21    Ideological Innocence?


SAKAI.

Lane, Robert E. 1962.  _Political Ideology_. New York: Free Press.  (Read enough to get a sense  
of this book, e.g., the Introduction, Ch. 1, Ch. 4, Ch. 22).  On SAKAI.

-------------------------- Optional -------------------------

Quarterly_, 41, 159-180.

Bennett, W.L. 1977.  The growth of knowledge in mass belief studies:  An epistemological  


Campbell, Angus, Philip E. Converse, Warren E. Miller, and Donald E. Stokes. 1960. _The  

(Ed.), _The Quantitative Analysis of Social Problems_ (pp 168-189).  New York:  
Addison-Wesley.

Political Science_, 3: 331 - 353.

Opinion.  _American Political Science Review_, 81, 797-813.

Geertz, C. 1973.  Ideology as a cultural system.  _The Interpretation of Cultures_.  New York:  
Basic Books.  (particularly Chapter 8, pp 193-229).


Sept. 28  Possible Sources of Ideological Constraint:  Political and Psychological


-------------------------------- Optional --------------------------------


Oct. 5 Reasons for Political Ignorance


III. A COMPREHENSIVE MODEL OF PUBLIC OPINION, AND THE POSSIBILITY OF DELIBERATIVE DEMOCRACY

Oct. 12  Deliberation and Zaller’s RAS Model


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IV. ALTERNATE BASES OF PUBLIC OPINION

Oct. 19 Political Tolerance and the Values Underlying Public Opinion


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Davis, Darren W., and Christian Davenport. 1999. “Assessing the Validity of the Post-materialism Index.” *American Political Science Review*, 93(September): 649-664. (See also reply by Inglehart and Abramson)


See the special issue of *Political Psychology*, March 1995 (Vol. 16, No. 1).


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Norpoth, Helmut. 1996. "Presidents and the Prospective Voter." *Journal of Politics*, 58 (August):776-792. (See also response by MacKuen et al., and rejoinder by Norpoth, that follow.)


--------------------------- Optional ---------------------------


Mendelberg, Tali. 2008. “Racial Priming Revived.” Perspectives on Politics, 6(March): 109 - 124. [See also response by Huber and Lapinski, and rejoinder by Mendelberg.]


Sibley, Chris G., John Duckitt, Robin Bergy, Danny Osborne, Ryan Perry, Frank Asbrock, Andrew Robertson, Gavin Armstrong, Marc Stewart Wilson, and Fiona Kate Barlow.


Nov.  9     (No class this week, Charter Day preparation!)

Nov. 16     **Mass Media, Framing, and Public Opinion**


--------------------------------------------------------------------- Optional ---------------------------------------------------------------------


Dreier, Peter, and Christopher R. Martin. 2010. “How ACORN was Framed: Political Controversy and Media Agenda Setting.” *Perspectives on Politics*, 8(September): 761 - 792.


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See also the “Symposium: Media and Politics” in *PS: Political Science and Politics*, 29, 10-36.
V. PUBLIC OPINION AND DEMOCRACY

Nov. 30  Presidential Popularity


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Dec. 7 Public Opinion and Public Policy


Bartels, Larry M. 2008. Unequal Democracy. (Chs 6, 7, and 9)

Barber, Michael J. 2016. “Representing the Preferences of Donors, Partisans, and Voters in the US Senate.” Public Opinion Quarterly, 80 (Special Issue): 225 - 249. MUST ADD.


--------------------------- Optional ---------------------------


Barber, Michael J. 2016. “Representing the Preferences of Donors, Partisans, and Voters in the US Senate.” Public Opinion Quarterly, 80 (Special Issue): 225 - 249. #Correct voting


See comment by Lupia, Levine, Manning, and Sin, *Perspectives on Politics*, 2005, 5(December): 773 - 784; and response by Bartels immediately following ... 


Key, V.O., Jr. (Op cit). (Chapters 16-21).


Dec. 14  

**Collective Public Opinion**

Page and Shapiro 1992. *The Rational Public.* [particularly Chs 1, 2, 8, 9, and 10]


------------------------------------ Optional ------------------------------------


Dec. xx  Student Presentations  (not this year)

Date                        Topic

|-----------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

Optional:


Political Attitudes, Inference, and Persuasion

Reading:  


Also worth a look:


Charney, Evan. 2008. “Genes and Ideologies.” *Perspectives on Politics*, 6(June): 299 - 320. [See also responses by Alford, Funk and Hibbing, and Hannagan and Hatemi, that follow, and rejoinder by Charney.]


Judd, Charles M., and James W. Downing. 1995. “Stereotypic Accuracy in Judgments of the Political Positions of Groups and Individuals.” In Milton Lodge and Kathleen M.


**Metaphors and Public Opinion**

DROP? Certainly drop Lakoff


--------------------------- Optional ---------------------------


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