

PS 35500 - Public Opinion, W 1:30-4:10, Pick 218

Eric Oliver

Pick 518, Office Hours: Wednesdays 10-12

This course examines the measurement and impact of public opinion on American politics. We will explore what we mean by public opinion, how professional pollsters and scholars analyze it, and what its impact may be on American democracy writ large. Students will be expected to write short weekly papers (2-3 pages) on the readings. Students will also be expected to develop and implement their own public opinion poll, using a qualtrics research platform. For more information on this see: <https://sscs.uchicago.edu/page/qualtrics>. This will require applying for IRB approval of the survey. It will also require analyzing one's own data using software like Excel, STATA, SPSS, or R.

Most of the readings are journal articles that can be accessed via google scholar. A few readings are available on the course Chalk site. The following books are required for the class and available at the Seminary Co-op:

Herbert Asher. *Polling and the Public* (any recent edition).

Larry Bartels. *Unequal Democracy*.

Ellis, Christopher, and James A. Stimson. *Ideology in America*.

Kinder, Donald R., and Cindy D. Kam. *Us against Them: Ethnocentric foundations of American opinion*.

Gabriel Lenz. *Follow the leader?: how voters respond to politicians' policies and performance*.

James Stimson. *Tides of Consent*.

John Zaller. *The Nature and Origins of Mass Opinion*.

### Week 1: Introduction

Walter Lippman, *Public Opinion* (selections)

V.O. Key, *Public Opinion and American Democracy* pp. 3-18

### Week 2: What do we mean by public opinion?

John Zaller, *The Nature and Origins of Mass Opinion*, Chapters 1-6

Hebert Asher, *Polling and the Public*, Chapters 4,5 (skim the rest).

Zaller, John and Stanley Feldman. 1992. "A Simple Theory of Survey Response: Answering Questions versus Reveal Preferences." *American Journal of Political Science*.

Gilens, Martin. 2001. "Political Ignorance and Collective Policy Preferences." *American Political Science Review*.

### Week 3: Elites, Signals, and Framing

Lenz, Gabriel S. *Follow the leader?: how voters respond to politicians' policies and performance*. University of Chicago Press, 2013.

Chong, Dennis and James Druckman. 2010. "Dynamic Public Opinion: Communication Effects over Time" *American Political Science Review*.

Jacoby, William. 2000. "Issue Framing and Public Opinion on Government Spending." *American Journal of Political Science*

Prior, Markus. 2005. "News versus Entertainment: How Increasing Media Choice Widens the Gap in Political Knowledge and Turnout." *American Journal of Political Science*.

Druckman, James et al. 2013. "How Elite Partisan Polarization Affects Public Opinion Formation." *American Political Science Review*.

### Week 4: Vote Choice

Lewis-Beck et al. 2008. *The American Voter Revisited*. University of Michigan Press.

### Week 5: Predispositions I – Ideology

Ellis, Christopher, and James A. Stimson. *Ideology in America*. Cambridge University Press, 2012.

Converse, Philip. 1964. "The Nature of Belief Systems in Mass Publics."

Achen, Christopher. 1975. "Mass Political Attitudes and the Survey Response." *American Political Science Review*.

Wood, Thomas and J. Eric Oliver. 2012. "Towards Improving the Implementation of Ideology in Measures of Public Opinion." *Public Opinion Quarterly*.

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

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

#### Week 6: Predispositions II – Groups

Kinder, Donald R., and Cindy D. Kam. *Us against them: Ethnocentric foundations of American opinion*. University of Chicago Press, 2010.

Conover, Pamela. 1984. "The Influence of Group Identifications on Political Perception and Evaluation." *The Journal of Politics*.

Krysan, Maria. 2000. "Prejudice, Politics, and Public Opinion: Understanding the Sources of Racial Policy Attitudes." *Annual Review of Sociology*.

Nelson, Thomas and Donald Kinder. 1996. "Issue Frames and Group-Centrism in American Public Opinion." *The Journal of Politics*.

#### Week 7: Predispositions III – Rationality and Heuristics

James Druckman and Arthur Lupia. 2000. *Preference Formation*. *Annual Review of Political Science*.

Lupia, A. 1995 "Shortcuts versus Encyclopedias" *American Political Science Review*.

Kuklinski, James and Paul Quirk. "Reconsidering the Rational Public: Cognition, Heuristics, and Mass Opinion." In *Elements of Reason*, Lupia et al. eds.

Lodge, Milton et al. 2006. "First Steps Towards A Dual Process Model of Political Beliefs, Attitudes, and Behavior" in *Feeling Politics* (David Redlawsk ed.)

Brader, Ted. 2005. "Striking a Responsive Chord: How Political Ads Motivate and Persuade Voters by Appealing to Emotions." *American Journal of Political Science*.

Petersen, M.B., et al. 2012. "Who Deserves Help: Evolutionary Psychology, Social Emotions, and Public Opinion about Welfare" *Political Psychology*.

Oliver, J. Eric and Thomas Wood. 2014. "Conspiracy Theories and the Paranoid Style(s) of Mass Opinion." *American Journal of Political Science*.

Oliver, Eric and Tom Wood. *Enchanted America: Magical Thinking and U.S. Public Opinion*. (Chapters 2-4).

### Week 8: The Impact on Policy

Stimson, James. *Tides of Consent*

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

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

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

### Week 9: Representation

Bartels, Larry. *Unequal Democracy*.

Converse, Philip. "Assessing the Capacity of Mass Electorates." *Annual Review of Political Science* 3 (2000): 331-353.

### Week 10: Presentations of Survey Research