

# GOVT 6461: Public Opinion

Monday 10:10am - 12:05pm (215 McGraw Hall), Fall 2012

## Instructor

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White Hall 205

Office Hours: Wednesdays 2:00–4:00pm; *and by appointment*

## Overview

GOVT 6461 is a graduate seminar on public opinion. The primary focus is public opinion in the United States. We will pay particular attention to opinion formation, how and why opinions change, and the relationship between the public's policy preferences and what government does. If you are a Ph.D. student, there are no prerequisites for the class.

In addition to completing all of the assigned readings, during the course of the semester, you will be responsible for writing two response papers, discussing two response papers, learning and teaching the class a specific method of opinion analysis, and writing a research paper. The research paper should be suitable for presentation at a professional conference.<sup>1</sup>

## Texts

- John Zaller. 1992. *The Nature and Origins of Mass Opinion*
- Robert Erikson, Michael MacKuen, and James Stimson. 2002. *The Macro Polity*
- Roger Tourangeau, Lance J. Rips, and Kenneth Rasinski. 2000. *The Psychology of Survey Response*
- Peter Enns and Christopher Wlezien (eds.). 2011. *Who Gets Represented?*

**Recommended Texts:** These are texts for which I am assigning a few chapters but reading the entire (or most) of the book would be helpful.

- Weisberg, Krosnick, and Bowen. 1996. *An Introduction to Survey Research, Polling, and Data Analysis*.
- Iyengar & Kinder. 1987. *News that Matters*.

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<sup>1</sup>As long as you obtain my permission ahead of time, you may revise a research paper that you have written for a previous class. Overlapping this paper with a paper from another course you are currently taking *may* also be an option, contingent on *both* my approval and that course instructor's approval.

## Incomplete Policy

Taking an “incomplete” is **not** an option. I only grant an incomplete if extenuating circumstances emerge (e.g., serious illness) and we consult about the situation during the course of the semester.

## Evaluation

Your performance in this class will be assessed by your class participation (including serving as a discussant), analyzing opinion assignment, reaction papers, and a final research paper. Each component of your grade will be weighted as follows:

Class Participation	10%
Analyzing Opinion Assignment	20%
Reaction Papers	20%
Research Paper	50%

## Office Hours

- Wed. 2:00pm–4:00pm and by appointment

## Student Accommodations

Students with Disabilities: Please give me your Student Disability Services (SDS) accommodation letter early in the semester so that I have adequate time to arrange your approved academic modifications. Meeting with me in my office hours will help ensure confidentiality. If you need an immediate accommodation for equal access, please speak with me after class or send an email message to me and/or SDS at [sds\\_cu@cornell.edu](mailto:sds_cu@cornell.edu). If the need arises for additional accommodations during the semester, please contact SDS.

## Academic Integrity

Each student in this course is expected to abide by the Cornell University Code of Academic Integrity (<http://cuinfo.cornell.edu/Academic/AIC.html>). Any work submitted by a student in this course for academic credit will be the student’s own work.

## Turnitin Notice

Students agree that by taking this course all required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to Turnitin.com for the detection of plagiarism. All submitted papers will be included as source documents in the Turnitin.com reference database solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of such papers. Use of Turnitin.com service is subject to the Usage Policy posted on the Turnitin.com site.

## Readings and Assignments

I have listed the assigned readings below. All readings that are not assigned texts are either available on blackboard, through the library's e-journals, or the links embedded in this syllabus. *Complete the day's reading before coming to class.* I may assign additional readings throughout the course.

Recommended Reading: For most weeks, I have listed several recommended readings. If you are conducting research that relates to the week's topics, you likely want to be familiar with these titles. However, it is worth emphasizing that although the course strives to provide a comprehensive overview of the public opinion literature, we *cannot* cover all topics or all relevant works. As a researcher, you are responsible for seeking out the relevant literature and becoming the expert on your topic of interest.

- **Week 1 (8/27): “New” Public Opinion Data**

- Chen, Anthony S., Robert W. Mickey, and Robert P. Van Houweling. 2008. “Explaining the Contemporary Alignment of Race and Party: Evidence from California’s 1946 Ballot Initiative on Fair Employment.” *Studies in American Political Development* 22: 204-228. (<http://dl.dropbox.com/u/24724021/studies08.pdf>)
- Salganik, Matthew J. and Karen E.C. Levy. 2012. “Wiki surveys: Open and quantifiable social data collection.” Unpublished Manuscript. (<http://arxiv.org/pdf/1202.0500v1.pdf>)
- Stephens-Davidowitz. 2012. “The Effects of Racial Animus on a Black Presidential Candidate: Using Google Search Data to find What Surveys Miss.” Unpublished Manuscript (<http://www.people.fas.harvard.edu/~sstephen/papers/RacialAnimusAndVotingSethStephensDavidowitz.pdf>)

- **9/3: No Class, Labor Day**

- **Week 2 (9/10): Causal Identification with Observational Opinion Data**

- Gabel, Matthew and Kenneth Scheve. 2007. “Estimating the Effect of Elite Communications on Public Opinion Using Instrumental Variables.” *American Journal of Political Science*. 51(4): 1013-1028. (<http://polisci.wustl.edu/files/polisci/gabelscheve.pdf>)
- Erikson, Robert S. and Laura Stoker. 2011. “Caught in the Draft: The Effects of Vietnam Draft Lottery Status on Political Attitudes.” *The American Political Science Review*. 105(2): 221-237.
- Sekhon, Jasjeet S. and Devin Caughey. 2011. “Elections and the Regression Discontinuity Design: Lessons from Close U.S. House Races, 1942-2008.” *Political Analysis* 19:385-408.

- \* Recommended Reading:

- \* Anderson, Michael and Jeremy Magruder. 2012. "Learning from the Crowd: Regression Discontinuity Estimates of the Effects of an Online Review Database." *The Economic Journal*.
- \* Bullock, John. 2012. "Education and Attitudes toward Redistribution in the United States." Unpublished Manuscript.
- \* Gerber, Alan S., Daniel P. Kessler, and Marc Meredith. 2011. "The Persuasive Effects of Direct Mail: A Regression Discontinuity Based Approach." *Journal of Politics* 73(1): 140-155.

• **Week 3 (9/17): Using Surveys to Measure Public Opinion**

- **Assignment:** Download survey data from ROPER iPOLL as an ascii file. Select one question (and weight variable if available) and convert to a Stata or R file (for Stata: [http://www.ropercenter.uconn.edu/ascii\\_to\\_stata.html#.UB1j-fWsyuk](http://www.ropercenter.uconn.edu/ascii_to_stata.html#.UB1j-fWsyuk)). Label the variable and the variable values (in Stata: <http://www.ats.ucla.edu/stat/stata/modules/labels.htm>). Turn in all code and a professional table or figure comparing your percentages with those of the Roper Center.
- Biemer, Paul P. 2010. "Total Survey Error: Design, Implementation, and Evaluation." *Public Opinion Quarterly*. 74(5): 817-848 [read to pg.825] (<http://poq.oxfordjournals.org/content/74/5/817.full.pdf+html>)
- Weisberg, Krosnick, & Bowen. 1996. *An Introduction to Survey Research, Polling, and Data Analysis*. Chs.1-3. (BB)
- Krosnick, Jon A. (1999). "Survey research." *Annual Review of Psychology* 50, 537-567.[Read pgs.546-560] (<http://comm.stanford.edu/faculty/krosnick/docs/1999/1999%20AnnRevSurvey.pdf>)
  - \* Recommended Reading:
  - \* Weisberg, Krosnick, & Bowen. 1996. *An Introduction to Survey Research, Polling, and Data Analysis*. (the rest of the book).
  - \* Chaudhuri and Stenger. 2005. *Survey Sampling Theory and Methods*
  - \* Graham Kalton. 1983. *Introduction to Survey Sampling*
  - \* Floyd J. Fowler, Jr. 2002. *Survey Research Methods*
  - \* John Brehm. 1993. *The Phantom Respondents Opinion Surveys and Political Representation*.
  - \* Public Opinion Quarterly. 2006. Special Issue: Nonresponse Bias in Household Surveys
  - \* Adam Berinsky. 2004. *Silent Voices Public Opinion and Political Participation in America*

• **Week 4 (9/24): Preference Stability and Issue Constraint**

*The dominant themes of two generations of research have been that citizens tend to be muddle-headed (the lack of constraint theme), empty-headed (the non-attitudes theme), or both (Sniderman and Bullock 2004, 337-338).*

- Philip E. Converse. 1964/2006. “The Nature of Belief Systems in Mass Publics.”
- Christopher H. Achen. 1975. “Mass Political Attitudes and the Survey Response.”
- Ansolabehere, Rodden, & Snyder. 2008. “The Strength of Issues: Using Multiple Measures to Gauge Preference Stability, Ideological Constraint, and Issue Voting.”
- John Zaller. 1992. *The Nature and Origins of Mass Opinion* Preface – Ch.4 (xi – 75)
  - \* Recommended Reading:
  - \* Pierce & Rose. 1975. “Nonattitudes and American Public Opinion: The Examination of a Thesis.”
  - \* Robert S. Erikson. 1979. “The SRC Panel Data and Mass Political Attitudes.”

- **Week 5 (10/1): Survey Response**

- **Paper Topic Proposal Due**
- John Zaller. 1992. *The Nature and Origins of Mass Opinion* Chs. 5–12 (76–332)
- James Stimson. 1995. “Book Review.” (esp. pgs. 182–183)
- Tourangeau, Rips, & Rasinski. 2000. *The Psychology of Survey Response*, Chs. 1,6,7,&8
  - \* Recommended Reading:
  - \* Druckman & Lupia. 2000. “Preference Formation” *Annual Review of Political Science*.
  - \* Alvarez & Brehm. 2002. *Hard Choices Easy Answers*

- **10/8: No Class, Fall Break**

- **Week 6 (10/15): Agenda Setting, Priming, & Framing**

- Scheufele and Tewskbury. 2007. “Framing, Agenda Setting, and Priming: The Evolution of Three Media Effects Models”
- Scheufele. 1999. “Framing as a Theory of Media Effects”
- Druckman. 2009. “What’s It All About?: Framing in Political Science.” ([http://scholar.google.com/scholar?hl=en&lr=&cites=9605930469995491318&um=1&ie=UTF-8&ei=T\\_ZAS4eKCpX01Ae0pZWfBw&sa=X&oi=science\\_links&resnum=1&ct=s1-citedby&ved=0CA8QzgIwAA](http://scholar.google.com/scholar?hl=en&lr=&cites=9605930469995491318&um=1&ie=UTF-8&ei=T_ZAS4eKCpX01Ae0pZWfBw&sa=X&oi=science_links&resnum=1&ct=s1-citedby&ved=0CA8QzgIwAA))
- Berinsky & Kinder. 2006. “Making Sense of Issues Through Media Frames: Understanding the Kosovo Crisis.”

- Lenz, Gabriel S. 2009. “Learning and Opinion Change, Not Priming: Reconsidering the Priming Hypothesis.” *American Journal of Political Science*. 53(4): 821-837.
- \* Recommended Reading:
- \* Iyengar, Shanto and Donald R. Kinder. 1987. *News That Matters*.
- \* *Journal of Communication*. 2007, vol.1 “Special Issue on Framing, Agenda Setting, and Priming.”
- \* Paul Kellstedt. 2000. “Media Framing and the Dynamics of Racial Policy Preferences.”
- \* Gamson and Modigliani. 1989
- \* Baumgartner, De Boef, & Boydston. 2008. *The Decline of the Death Penalty and the Discovery of Innocence*. Chs. 4 & 5

● **Week 7 (10/22): Motivated Reasoning and Partisan Bias**

- **Paper Outline Due**
- Taber and Lodge. 2006. “Motivated Skepticism in the Evaluation of Political Beliefs.”
- Gaines et al. 2007. “Same Facts, Different Interpretations: Partisan Motivation and Opinion on Iraq.”
- Markus Prior. 2007. *Post-Broadcast Democracy* Chs. 7 & 8
- Bullock. 2009. “Partisan Bias and the Bayesian Ideal in the Study of Public Opinion.” ([http://bullock.research.yale.edu/papers/disagreement/Bullock\\_disagreement\\_final.pdf](http://bullock.research.yale.edu/papers/disagreement/Bullock_disagreement_final.pdf))
- DellaVigna & Kaplan. 2007. “The Fox News Effect: Media Bias and Voting” (<http://elsa.berkeley.edu/~sdellavi/wp/FoxVoteQJEAug07.pdf>)
- \* Recommended Reading:
- \* Alan Gerber and Donald Green. 1999. “Misperceptions About Perceptual Bias.” (<http://arjournals.annualreviews.org/doi/pdf/10.1146/annurev.polisci.2.1.189>)

● **Week 8 (10/29): Dual Process Models**

- Markus, Neuman, MacKuen. 2000. *Affective Intelligence and Political Judgment* Ch.4&6
- Chaiken & Trope (eds.). 1999. *Dual-Process Theories in Social Psychology* Chs. 3&4
- Valerie F. Reyna. 2008. “A Theory of Medical Decision Making and Health: Fuzzy Trace Theory.”
- \* Recommended Reading:

- \* Hastie and Park. 1986. “The Relationship between Memory and Judgment Depends on Whether the Task is Memory-Based or On-Line.”

- **Week 9 (11/5): Analyzing Public Opinion**

- **Assignment:** Select 1 of the following methodologies. Learn it. Teach the methodology to the class, including a handout, replication results, and posting replication materials on Blackboard. (Note: See handout for relevant readings for each method.)<sup>2</sup>
  - \* Stimson’s Dyad Ratios (WCALC) Algorithm
  - \* Multi-Level Regression and Poststratification (MRP) (Jonathan Kastellec, Jeffrey Lax, & Justin Phillips)
  - \* Survey Weights in Stata and Survey Weights in Regression
  - \* Multiple Imputation (Using Amelia (Gary King) or Stata 11)
  - \* Weighting Opinion Data from the 1930s and 40s (Berinsky 2006)
  - \* Coarsened Exact Matching (or another matching program)

- **Week 10 (11/12): Aggregate (Macro) Opinion**

- The Genius of Swarms (<http://ngm.nationalgeographic.com/2007/07/swarms/miller-text>)
- *The Rational Public*, select chapters
- Scott Althaus. 1998. “Information Effects in Collective Preferences.”
- Ellis, Christopher and Christopher Faricy. 2011. “Social Policy and Public Opinion: How the Ideological Direction of Spending Influences Public Mood.” *Journal of Politics*.
- Christopher Wlezien. 1995. “The Public as Thermostat: Dynamics of Preferences for Spending”
  - \* Recommended Reading:
  - \* Enns, Peter K. and Paul M. Kellstedt. 2008. “Policy Mood and Political Sophistication: Why Everybody Moves Mood.”
  - \* Matthew Levendusky. 2011. “Rethinking the Role of Political Information.”
  - \* Christopher Hayes. 2008. “Polling Aggregate” *NYT Magazine* ([http://www.nytimes.com/2008/12/14/magazine/14ideas-section3-t-004.html?\\_r=1&scp=79&sq=clinton&st=nyt](http://www.nytimes.com/2008/12/14/magazine/14ideas-section3-t-004.html?_r=1&scp=79&sq=clinton&st=nyt))
  - \* Scott Althaus. 2003. *Collective Preferences in Democratic Politics*.
  - \* Martin Gilens. 2001. “Political Ignorance and Collective Policy Preferences.”

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<sup>2</sup>If you are particularly interested in another relevant methodology, we can discuss that option.

- \* James A. Stimson. 1999. *Public Opinion in America: Moods, Cycles, and Swings*.
- \* James A. Stimson. 2004. *Tides of Consent: How Public Opinion Shapes American Politics*.

- **Week 11 (11/19): The Macro Political System**

- Erikson, MacKuen, & Stimson. 2002. *The Macro Polity*
  - \* Recommended Reading:
  - \* Nathan J. Kelly. 2009. *The Politics of Income Inequality in the United States*.
  - \* Soroka & Wlezien. 2010. *Degrees of Democracy*

- **Week 12 (11/26): Who Gets Represented?**

- Larry Bartels. 2008. *Unequal Democracy*. Ch.9
- Enns & Wlezien (eds.) *Who Gets Represented?* Ch.1, Part 2, & Part 3
- Kelly & Enns. 2011. “Inequality and the Dynamics of Public Opinion.” *American Journal of Political Science*
- Jacobs & Page. 2005. “Who Influences U.S. Foreign Policy?”
- Clifford, Scott. 2012. “Reassessing the Unequal Representation of Latinos and African Americans.” *Journal of Politics* 74(3): 903-916.
  - \* Recommended Reading:
  - \* Page & Jacobs. 2009. *Class War? What Americans Really Think about Economic Inequality*
  - \* Griffin & Newman. 2008. *Minority Report*.
  - \* Hacker and Pierson. 2010 *Winner-Take-All Politics*

- Friday, Dec. 7: **Research Paper Due**