

ATTITUDES AND PUBLIC OPINION
SURVEY METHODOLOGY 699P
Fall 2005

Instructors: Stanley Presser (spresser@socy.umd.edu; 314-7836)
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Class meets Thursdays 3:00-5:40 in 1208 LeFrak
Office hours are by appointment in 1218 Lefrak

Overview

This course will examine research on the character of public opinion in contemporary America. The questions to be addressed include: What is public opinion? How well do surveys measure it? Where do attitudes and opinions come from? What shapes opinion? Does the nature of public opinion meet the requirements of democratic theory?

We will consider the answers that have been proposed to the questions and examine how the questions have been studied. Our assumption is that what we know about public opinion is linked to how we know it.

Classes will be structured by formal student presentations. Each student will prepare a ONE-PAGE memo based on one of the readings for the week. Memos will have three parts: a very brief summary of one key claim in the reading; a short overview of the evidence supporting the claim; and a critical evaluation of the evidence and/or of the connection of the evidence to the claim. Make sure the third part addresses the question "So what?" The memos are to be e-mailed to each of the instructors by Wednesday at 5:00 PM.

Students will also prepare a secondary analysis to replicate a published public opinion study in order to examine how, if at all, key analysis decisions influenced the results. Although the course will focus on American public opinion, this analysis may use non-American data. (*A good working knowledge of data analysis and statistical software is important.*)

Students will present ideas for their secondary analyses in class on October 20, and formally defend their proposals on November 10. Results are to be presented during the December 1 and December 8 classes, with final papers due by December 15.

The memos, contribution to class discussion, and the secondary analysis each counts for one-third of the final grade. The grade of A is only awarded for excellent work; B is assigned to good work, and C to satisfactory work.

Fall 2005 Schedule and Reading List

Introduction (9/1)

V. Price, *Public Opinion*, Sage: 1992.

A. Eagly and S. Chaiken, "Attitude Structure and Function," *The Handbook of Social Psychology*, McGraw Hill, 1998.

A Case Study: Support for War (9/8)

J. Mueller, "Trends in Popular Support for the Wars in Korea and Vietnam," *American Political Science Review*, June 1971.

A. Modigliani, "Hawks and Doves, Isolationism and Political Distrust," *American Political Science Review*, v. 66, Sept. 1972.

H. Schuman, "Two Sources of Anti-War Sentiment in America" *American Journal of Sociology*, vol. 78, Nov. 1972.

Non Attitudes (9/15)

P. Converse, "The Nature of Belief Systems in Mass Publics," in D. Apter, *Ideology and Discontent*, Free Press: 1964.

Response to Converse I (9/22)

C. Achen, "Mass Political Attitudes and The Survey Response," *American Political Science Review* v. 69 (1975): 1218-1231.

R. Erikson, "The SRC Panel Data and Mass Political Attitudes," *British Journal of Political Science* v. 9: 89-114

P. Converse and G. Markus, "Plus ca change...: The New CPS Election Study Panel," *American Political Science Review* v 73 (1979); 32-49.

Response to Converse II (9/29)

J. Zaller, *The Nature and Origins of Mass Opinion*, Cambridge University Press: 1992. Part I

Response to Converse III (10/6)

Chapters 6 in R. Tourangeau, L. Rips, and K. Rasinski, *The Psychology of Survey Response*, Cambridge University Press 2000

R. Fazio, D. Sanbonmatsu, M. Powell, M., and F. Kardes, " On the Automatic Activation of Attitudes," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* Feb. 1986: 229-238.

T. Wilson and S. Hodges. "Attitudes as Temporary Constructions. " In L. Martin & A. Tesser (Eds.), *The Construction of Social Judgments* (pp. 37-66). Springer-Verlag 1992.

Racial Attitudes and Stereotypes (10/13)

P. Devine, "Stereotypes and prejudice: Their Automatic and Controlled Components. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* Jan. 1989: 5-18.

J. Dovidio, and R. Fazio (1992). "New Technologies for the Direct and Indirect Assessment of Attitudes." In J. Tanur (Ed.), *Questions about questions: Inquiries into the cognitive bases of surveys*. (pp. 204-237). Russell Sage Foundation 1992

T. Wilson, S. Lindsey, and T. Schooler, "A Model of Dual Attitudes," *Psychological Review* Jan, 2002: 101-126.

Class Presentations (10/20)

The Role of Information (10/27)

M. Delli Carpini and S. Keeter, *What Americans Know about Politics and Why it Matters*, Yale University Press: 1996.

The Link between Attitudes and Behaviors (11/3)

R. LaPierre, "Attitudes vs. Actions," *Social Forces*, Dec. 1934.

H. Schuman and M. Johnson, "Attitudes and Behavior," *Annual Review of Sociology*, 1976.

R. Fazio, "Multiple Processes by which Attitudes Guide Behavior," *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology* v 23, 1990.

Class Presentations (11/10)

Measuring Attitudes in Surveys (11/17)

Chapters 7 in R. Tourangeau, L. Rips, and K. Rasinski, *The Psychology of Survey Response*, Cambridge University Press 2000

J. Krosnick (1991). "Response Strategies for Coping with the Cognitive Demands of Attitude Measures in Surveys." *Applied Cognitive Psychology*, May 1991: 213-236.

Class Presentations (12/1)

Class Presentations (12/8)