

POL 561 Dynamics of Public Opinion

Spring 2020
Monday 1 -4
SBS N703

Professor Stanley Feldman
Office: SBS S715
Hours: M 10-12, Wed 2-4
and by appointment

This course will provide a broad overview of current knowledge of the nature and determinants of public opinion, with an emphasis on the psychology of political attitudes and opinions. The class will summarize what social scientists know about public opinion and illustrate how research on public opinion is conducted. We will discuss the nature and structure of public opinion – how informed people are, how stable their opinions are, and how those opinions are structured. We will then review a number of factors that influence public opinion: socialization, the media, groups, values, personality, and biology. We will also examine public opinion data in the class and in many of the course readings.

Grading:

The course will run as a mix of lecture and discussion. *It is essential that you carefully read all the assigned readings for each class.* I expect everyone to take part in class discussions. Class participation will count toward 20% of your grade. You will also have to submit 4 short papers during the semester and final research paper. I will post (on Blackboard) topics for short papers most weeks of the course. You can submit papers on any four topics (weeks) you wish as long as they are handed in the day the assignment is due. *Late papers will not be accepted.* Each short paper will be worth 10% of your grade (40% in total). If you receive a score you don't like on the *first paper*, you can write five papers and I will drop the first grade (this is only an option for your first short paper). The topic of the final research paper is subject to negotiation. All topics must be approved by me. The research paper will require some additional reading on a topic in public opinion that interests you. The research paper will be worth 40% of your grade.

Required readings:

Rosalee Clawson and Zoe Oxley, *Public Opinion: Democratic Ideals, Democratic Practice*, 3rd Ed.

Adam Berinsky, *New Directions in Public Opinion*, 3rd Ed.

Other readings will include journal articles and book chapters. The articles can be downloaded by going through the University library web site. Copies of book chapters will be available on Blackboard.

University Procedures:

If you have a physical, psychological, medical, or learning disability that may impact your course work, please contact Disability Support Services at (631) 632-6748 or <http://studentaffairs.stonybrook.edu/dss/>. They will determine with you what accommodations are necessary and appropriate. All information and documentation is confidential.

Students who require assistance during emergency evacuation are encouraged to discuss their needs with their professors and Disability Support Services. For procedures and information go to the following website: <http://www.sunysb.edu/ehs/fire/disabilities.shtml>.

Each student must pursue his or her academic goals honestly and be personally accountable for all submitted work. Representing another person's work as your own is always wrong. Faculty are required to report any suspected instances of academic dishonesty to the Academic Judiciary. For more

comprehensive information on academic integrity, including categories of academic dishonesty, please refer to the academic judiciary website at <http://www.stonybrook.edu/uaa/academicjudiciary/>.

Stony Brook University expects students to respect the rights, privileges, and property of other people. Faculty are required to report to the Office of Judicial Affairs any disruptive behavior that interrupts their ability to teach, compromises the safety of the learning environment, or inhibits students' ability to learn.

Class Topics and Readings:

1. Introduction to the study of public opinion (January 27)

2. Political attitudes, opinions, and surveys (February 3)

Read: Clawson and Oxley, ch. 1 and Appendix to ch. 1

Adam Berinsky, "Introduction." In Berinsky.

D. Sunshine Hillygus, "The Practice of Survey Research." In Berinsky.

3. Political sophistication (February 10)

Read: Clawson and Oxley, chs. 4, 8

Martin Gilens, "Citizen Competence and Democratic Governance." In Berinsky.

Benjamin Highton, "Revisiting the Relationship between Educational Attainment and Political Sophistication." *Journal of Politics* 71 (2009): 1564-1576.

4. Political Ideology (February 17)

Read: Clawson and Oxley, ch. 5

Christopher Federico, "Ideology and Public Opinion." In Berinsky.

Brendon Swedlow and Mikel Wyckoff, "Value Preferences and Ideological Structuring of Attitudes in American Public Opinion." *American Politics Research* 37 (2009): 1048-1087.

5. Socialization and Change (February 24)

Read: Clawson and Oxley, ch. 2

M. Kent Jennings and Richard Niemi, "The Transmission of Political Values from Parent to Child." *American Political Science Review* 62 (1968): 169-184.

Jennifer Jerit, "How People Learn About Politics." In Berinsky.

6. Media and Persuasion (March 2)

Read: Clawson and Oxley, ch. 3

Shanto Iyengar, "News and Public Opinion." In Shanto Iyengar, *Media Politics*, 2nd Ed., ch. 8. pdf on Blackboard.

Shanto Iyengar, Mark Peters, and Donald Kinder, "Experimental Demonstrations of the Not-So-Minimal Consequences of Television News Programs." *American Political Science Review* 76 (1982): 848-858.

Matthew Baum and Dannagai Young, "The 'Daily Them': Hybridity, Political Polarization and Presidential Leadership in a Digital Media Age." In Berinsky.

7. War, Events, and Public Opinion (March 23)

Read: John Mueller, "Presidential Popularity from Truman to Johnson." *American Political Science Review* 64 (1970): 18-34.

Matthew Baum, "Sex, Lies, and War: How Soft News Brings Foreign Policy to the Inattentive Public." *American Political Science Review* 96 (2002): 91-109.

Adam Berinsky, "Assuming the Costs of War: Events, Elites, and American Public Support for Military Conflict." *Journal of Politics* 69 (2007): 975-997.

Michael Horowitz and Matthew Levendusky, "Drafting Support for War: Conscripted and Mass Support for Warfare." *Journal of Politics* 73 (2011):524-534.

8. Self-Interest and Group Interest (March 30)

Read: Clawson and Oxley, ch. 7

David Sears, Richard Lau, Tom Tyler, and Harris Allen, "Self-Interest vs. Symbolic Politics in Policy Attitudes and Presidential Voting." *American Political Science Review* 74 (1980): 670-684.

Erica Czaja and Vladimir Medenica, "Race, Ethnicity, and Public Opinion." In Berinsky.

Donald Kinder, Molly Reynolds, and Nancy Burns, "Categorical Politics in Action: Gender and the 2016 Presidential Election." In Berinsky.

9. Personality and Values (April 6)

Read: Clawson and Oxley, ch. 6

Jeffrey Mondack and Karen Halperin, "A Framework for the Study of Personality and Political Behaviour." *British Journal of Political Science* 38 (2008): 335-362.

Gian Vittorio Caprara, et al., "Personality and Politics: Values, Traits, and Political Choice." *Political Psychology* 27 (2006): 1-28.

10. Civil Liberties, Intolerance, and Authoritarianism (April 13)

Read: Clawson and Oxley, ch. 9

Marc Hetherington, "Worldview Politics." In Berinsky.

Stewart McCann, "Social Threat, Authoritarianism, Conservatism, and U.S. State Death Penalty Sentencing (1977-2004)." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 94 (2008): 913-923.

11. Prejudice (April 20)

Read: Clawson and Oxley, ch. 10

"The Psychology of Racism and Political Intolerance." In David Patrick Houghton, *Political Psychology, 2nd Edition* (ch. 15). pdf on Blackboard.

Michael Tessler, "Racial Attitudes and American Politics." In Berinsky.

Deborah Schildkraut, "Ambivalence in American Public Opinion about Immigration." In Berinsky.

12. The Biology of Political Attitudes (April 27)

Read: Frank Gonzalez, Kevin Smith, and John Hibbing, "No Longer 'Beyond our Scope': The Biological and Non-Conscious Underpinnings of Public Opinion. In Berinsky.

Douglas Oxley, et al., "Political Attitudes Vary with Physiological Traits." *Science* 321 (September 19, 2008): 1667-1670.

"Biopolitics, Neuropolitics, and Genopolitics." In David Patrick Houghton, *Political Psychology, 2nd Edition* (ch. 11). pdf on Blackboard.

Ted Brader and Carly Wayne, "The Emotional Foundations of Democratic Citizenship." In Berinsky.

13. Trust, Cooperation, and Social Capital (May 4)

Read: Clawson and Oxley, ch. 11

Diana Mutz and Byron Reeves, "The New Videomalaise: Effects of Televised Incivility on Political Trust." *American Political Science Review* 99 (2005): 1-15.

Ernst Fehr and Herbert Gintis, "Human Motivation and Social Cooperation: Experimental and Analytical Foundations." *Annual Review of Sociology* 33 (2007): 43-64.