

Public Opinion

Prof. Luke Keele
Political Science 503
Fall Quarter 2006
M W 1:30-3:18
Mendenhall Laboratory 115

In this course, you will learn about public opinion in the context of politics. Only in representative democracies is public opinion an important topic, since it is assumed that political leaders should care what the public thinks. But knowing what public opinion is on any given topic is not a trivial exercise. For that reason, we will spend the first part of the course understanding how we measure public opinion through the survey process. Later we will study what the public knows about politics and how it learns about the political world. Another theme running through the course will be how social scientists use public opinion data to learn about how attitudes are formed and how those attitudes affect political outcomes.

Email: keele.4@osu.edu. I will answer emails as soon as reasonably possible, but there is no guarantee I will answer emails on the weekend or late at night. Unreasonable and silly emails may go unanswered.

Contact Info and Office Hours: Tuesday and Thursday 9-10 AM in my office 2137 Derby Hall or by appointment if these times are unsuitable. I am very flexible when it comes to meeting students outside of office hours so long as they make an appointment. My office phone is 247-4256.

Attendance: I will not take attendance in this class. You are free to attend or not. The reverse of that is my lecture notes are not available to students. If you miss a class you will need to get a copy of other students' notes. Exams are designed to make attendance a good idea. Students who do poorly in this class are those that rarely attend.

Class website: <http://www.polisci.ohio-state.edu/faculty/lkeele/psci503.html>. Homework assignments will be posted on the website along with a reading for later in the class. It will also be a good place to check for announcements, get a copy of the syllabus, and the like.

Reading Material: The readings are an important part of the class. They will help you understand the lectures better, and will often be critical for the homework assignments. You should complete the reading before you come to class. I reserve the right to hold quizzes at the start of class since I suspect many students tend not to read before class.

Required Texts:

Asher, Herbert 2004. *Polling and the Public: What Every Citizen Should Know*. 6th Ed. Washington D.C.:CQ Press

Erikson, Robert A. and Kent Tedin. 2005. *American Public Opinion: Its Origins, Content and Impact*. 7th Ed. New York: Longman.

Johnson, Janet Buttolph, Richard A. Joslyn, and H.T. Reynolds. 2001. *Political Research Methods*. 4th Ed. Washington D.C.: CQ Press.

Requirements:

Homework and Project: These are short exercises on the analysis of public opinion data. There will be approximately six assignments, which will comprise 30% of your grade. Details will be supplied later. All assignments are due in class. Assignments turned in after class will be considered late. Late assignments are penalized 10% per day including weekends. The homework assignments will all come in the last third of the quarter.

Exams: There will be two exams, a midterm, 35% of your grade and a final exam 35% of your final grade.

Special Accommodations: Any student who feels s/he may need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact me privately to discuss your specific needs. Please contact the Office for Disability Services at 614-292-3307 in room 150 Pomerene Hall to coordinate reasonable accommodations for students with documented disabilities.

Academic Integrity: Dishonest practices on the examinations, on essays, or in the course are unacceptable. All work is to be the student's own. There will be no collaboration on exams. Any suspected cases of dishonesty will be reported to the University Committee on Academic Misconduct and handled according to university policy. The committee defines plagiarism as "the representation of another's works or ideas as one's own; it includes the unacknowledged word for word use and/or paraphrasing of another person's work, and/or the inappropriate unacknowledged use of another person's ideas." Plagiarism is unacceptable in this and all classes at OSU.

Class Schedule:

Week 1

Sept 20th: First Day of Class Issues
Why Study Public Opinion: Measuring Public Opinion
March 29th: Questionnaire Wording and
Design and Questionnaire Construction
Reading: E & T: Chapter 1
Asher: Chapter 1-2

Week 2

Sept 25th: Sampling

Reading: Asher: Chapters 4-5
Weds 27th: Interviewer Effects and Alternatives to Polls
Reading: Asher: Chapters 6-8

Week 3

Oct 2nd: Levels of Knowledge, Ideology, and Values
Reading: E & T: Chapter 3
Oct 4th: Party Identification

Week 4

Oct 9th: Opinion Formation
Oct 11th: Sophistication and Cognition

Week 5

Oct 16th: Rationality and Self-Interest
Oct 18th: Socialization and Personal Experience
Reading: E & T Chapter 5

Week 6

Oct 23rd: Midterm
Oct 25th: No Class

Week 7

Oct 30th: Social Influences
Reading: Mutz, Diana C. and Gregory Fleming. 1999. "How Good People Make Bad Collectives: A Social Psychological Perspective on Attitudes Toward Congress." In *Congress and the Decline of Public Trust*. (Available On Website)
Nov 1st: The Mass Media
Reading: E & T Chapter 8

Week 8

Nov 6th: Campaigns and Elections
Reading: E & T Chapter 9
Nov 8th: Political Leaders and Tolerance
Reading: E & T Chapter 10

Week 9

Nov 13th: Data Analysis and Scientific Questions
Reading: Johnson, Joslyn, and Reynolds (JJR): Chapter 3

Nov 15th: Level of Measurement and Central Tendency
JJR : Chapter 11

Week 10

Nov 20th: Cross Tabulations

Reading: JJR: Chapter 12 p. 338-350

Nov 22nd: Measures of Association

Reading: JJR Chapter 12 p. 350-363

Week 11

Nov 27th: Measures of Association Contd.

Nov 29th: Control Tables

Reading: Chapter 13 p 393-402

Final Exam: Wednesday, Dec 6th @ 11:30. No exceptions