Leiden University | Political Science

Public Opinion and Political Decision-Making

**Research Master in Political Science & Public Administration
Semester 1, Blocks 1 & 2, 5 ECTS, Level 600, Course Code: 6447RPOPD**

Wednesday, September 7 - December 21, 2016, 11:00-13:00

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Course Description

Public opinion – the will of the people – plays a central role in democratic systems, at least in principle. The political preferences of the public are expressed formally in fairly regular intervals in parliamentary and, depending on the institutional design, presidential elections as well as in referenda. But even between elections, when important policies, measures, and decisions are on the political agenda, political elites and intermediary actors such as the media take public opinion not only into account but also try to influence and shape it. Even individual citizens take the opinion of others (or what they perceive it to be) into account when expressing their own preferences and opinions and when making political decisions. At the same time, public opinion remains a defuse and elusive object that is difficult to define and measure. The seminar will examine some of these issues in detail, reviewing classic and contemporary literature with a focus on both theoretical and methodological aspects. Based on these discussions, students will identify a topic they think is in need of further exploration and empirical research, and develop and carry out a research project that addresses their specific research question. Especially in the second half of the seminar, students present and discuss their research proposals and progress and complete a finished research paper by the end of the course (in the style and format of a conference paper and/or article manuscript).

Method of Instruction

Seminar-style discussion and student presentations

Readings

Journal articles and book chapters.

Assignments, Research Paper, and Participation

Your final grade is based on (1) four reaction papers, (2) one short presentation, (3) a final research paper, and (4) class participation.

4 Reaction Papers:	30% (7.5% each)
Short Presentation (Article)	10%
Research Paper:	50%
Participation:	10%

Reaction Papers. Students are expected to write 4 short individual reaction papers of approx. 1000 words during the course, before class meetings of their choice, except when giving a presentation. The papers should offer a short, critical evaluation of either one or more of the readings covered in a given class by discussing the research design or theoretical concepts (if possible in light of the material covered before). Keep in mind that reaction papers *do not summarize* beyond one or two sentences but discuss and evaluate concepts and methods. Likewise, no lengthy introduction, outline, or summary/conclusion is needed. The reaction papers have to be submitted *before* class via *Turnitin*. Late submissions are *not* accepted.*

Presentation. Students are expected to give a short individual presentation (15 minutes) during the course. The presentation should summarize and discuss a research study relevant to the topic of a given class meeting. Presenters should be prepared to lead a short discussion following the presentation. Students can choose research articles from the syllabus but are also encouraged to find research articles on their own (but note that all articles have to be approved by the instructor first). The following rules apply:
- There can be at most one presentation per class meeting.
- Students will sign up for a presentation topic by the second class meeting.
- On the day of the presentation, students should distribute a one-page summary handout to the class (by email).

The presentations will be evaluated using the following criteria:
- Clear statement of topic
- Summary of key points
- Link to previous course literature/discussion
- Critical evaluation
- Discussion question(s)
- Quality of presentation
- Quality of handout

Research Paper. At the end of the course, students are expected to write an original individual research paper (ca. 5000 words). The basic idea is to choose a topic, do a literature review (covering at least 10 relevant research studies), develop an idea for a new study, formulate a research question (and usually very specific and testable hypotheses), propose a research design to answer (or test) them (using either a quantitative or qualitative approach; and using either existing data or by collecting new data such as a survey, experiment, or observational study etc.), and conduct the research. The key steps and deadlines are:

November 2, 2016: Submission of research project idea (single page as hardcopy)
November 23, 2016: Presentation and submission of research project proposal (10-15 pages as hardcopy)
December 14, 2016: Full research project presentation
December 21, 2016: Final research paper submission deadline (*Turnitin* and hardcopy).
The grade will be based on the final research paper but requires successful completion of all deadlines.

Participation. The seminar requires active and informed participation of the students in class discussions. Students are expected to read the assigned readings before each class.

Class Attendance. Class attendance is mandatory. Students who miss more than one class unexcused will automatically fail the course. Properly documented emergencies and in advance requested and permitted absences are exempt from this rule.

*Deadlines. Assignment and paper deadlines are final and late submissions are not accepted. Properly documented emergencies and *in advance* requested and permitted extensions are exempt from this rule.

If you have a physical, psychological, medical, or learning disability that may impact on your ability to carry out the assigned course work, please contact the staff in the Institute of Political Science. All information and documentation of disability is confidential.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism is understood as presenting, intentionally or otherwise, someone else's words, thoughts, analyses, argumentations, pictures, techniques, computer programs, etc., as your own work. Plagiarism is not allowed and has serious consequences. Students must be familiar with Leiden University's rules about plagiarism. They are available at:
http://www.regulations.leiden.edu/education-students/plagiarism.html
The departmental rules and procedures with regard to plagiarism can be found at:
http://www.socialsciences.leiden.edu/politicalscience/students/postgraduate/regulations/plagiarism.html

Important note: Plagiarism occurs in both of the following situations:
- Quoting and paraphrasing work from other (and outside) sources without attribution;
- Copying the work of other students when completing individual assignments.

Course Schedule & Literature

September 7, 2016	Introduction	Meaning & Measurement of Public Opinion	[1A03]

Taber, Charles S. 2003. "Information Processing and Public Opinion." In *Oxford Handbook of Political Psychology*, ed. David O. Sears, Leonie Huddy, and Robert Jervis. New York: Oxford University Press, 433-476.

Blumenthal, Mark. 2016. "Polling: Crisis or Not, We're in a New Era." *Linkedin Pulse*, June 7, 2016. https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/polling-crisis-were-new-era-mark-blumenthal

Optional

Taber, Charles S., and Ernest Young. 2013. "Political Information Processing." In *Oxford Handbook of Political Psychology*, ed. Leonie Huddy, David O. Sears, and Jack S. Levy. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 525-558.

September 14, 2016	Belief Systems and Political Attitudes	[1A03]

***Deadline*: Sign-up for presentations.**

Converse, Philip E. 1964. "The Nature of Belief Systems in Mass Publics." In *Ideology and Discontent*, ed. David Apter. New York: Free Press, p. 206-261.

Achen, Christopher H. 1975. "Mass Political Attitudes and the Survey Response." *American Political Science Review* 69 (4): 1218–1231.

Chong, Dennis. 1993. "How People Think, Reason, and Feel about Rights and Liberties." *American Journal of Political Science* 37 (3): 867–899.

Althaus, Scott L. 2006. "False starts, dead ends, and new opportunities in public opinion research." *Critical Review* 18 (1-3): 75–104.

September 21, 2016   The Converse/McGuire/Zaller-Model of Public Opinion   [1A03]

Zaller, John, and Stanley Feldman. 1992. "A Simple Theory of the Survey Response: Answering Questions versus Revealing Preferences." *American Journal of Political Science* 36 (3): 579-616

Zaller, John. 1996. "The Myth of Massive Media Impact Revived: New Support for a Discredited Idea." In *Political Persuasion and Attitude Change*, ed. Diana C. Mutz, Paul M. Sniderman, and Richard A. Brody. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 17-78.

Zaller, John. 2001. "Monika Lewinsky and the Mainsprings of American Politics." In *Mediated Politics: Communication in the Future of Democracy*, eds. W. Lance Bennett and Robert M. Entman. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 252-278.

    Optional

Price, Vincent, and John Zaller. 1993. "Who Gets the News? Alternative Measures of News Reception and their Implications for Research." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 57 (2): 133-164.

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

September 28, 2016   Explaining Stability: Ideology and Core Values   [1A03]

Treier, Shawn, and D. Sunshine Hillygus. 2009. "The Nature of Political Ideology in the Contemporary Electorate." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 73 (4): 679–703.

Jost, John T., Jack Glaser, Arie W. Kruglanski, and Frank J. Sulloway. 2003. "Political Conservatism as Motivated Social Cognition." *Psychological Bulletin* 129 (3): 339–375.

Schwartz, Shalom H. et al. 2014. "Basic Personal Values Underlie and Give Coherence to Political Values: A Cross National Study in 15 Countries." *Political Behavior* 36 (4): 899–930.

Jacoby, William G. 2006. "Value Choices and American Public Opinion." *American Journal of Political Science* 50 (3): 706–723.

    Optional

Tetlock, Philip E. 1986. "A Value Pluralism Model of Ideological Reasoning." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 50 (4): 819–827.

| October 5, 2016 | Explaining Change: The Information Environment & Political Competence | [1A03] |

Jerit, Jennifer, Jason Barabas, and Toby Bolsen. 2006. "Citizens, Knowledge, and the Information Environment." *American Journal of Political Science* **50 (2): 266–282.**

Kuklinski, James H., Paul J. Quirk, Jennifer Jerit, and Robert F. Rich. 2001. "The Political Environment and Citizen Competence." *American Journal of Political Science* **45 (2): 410–424.**

Kuklinski, James H., Paul J. Quirk, Jennifer Jerit, David Schwieder, and Robert F. Rich. 2000. "Misinformation and the Currency of Democratic Citizenship." *Journal of Politics* **62 (3): 790–816.**

Lupia, Arthur. 2006. "How elitism undermines the study of voter competence." *Critical Review* **18 (1-3): 217–232.**

Lodge, Milton, Marco R. Steenbergen, and Shawn Brau. 1995. "The Responsive Voter: Campaign Information and the Dynamics of Candidate Evaluation." *American Political Science Review* **89 (2): 309-326**

Optional

Fortunato, David, Randolph T. Stevenson, and Greg Vonnahme. 2016. "Context and Political Knowledge: Explaining Cross-National Variation in Partisan Left-Right Knowledge." *Journal of Politics* 78 (4): 1211–1228.

Delli Carpini, Michael X., and Scott Keeter. 1996. *What Americans Know About Politics and Why It Matters.* **New Haven: Yale University Press.**

Neuman, W. Russell, Marion R. Just, and Ann N. Crigler. 1992. *Common Knowledge: News and the Construction of Political Meaning.* **Chicago: University of Chicago Press.**

Lavine, Howard. 2002. "On-Line Versus Memory-Based Process Models of Political Evaluation." In *Political Psychology*, ed. Kristen Renwick Monroe. Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum, 225-247.

| October 12, 2016 | Information Processing & Heuristics | [1A03] |

Simon, Herbert A. 1985. "Human Nature in Politics: The Dialogue of Psychology with Political Science." *American Political Science Review* **79 (2): 293–304.**

Quattrone, George A., and Amos Tversky. 1988. "Contrasting Rational and Psychological Analyses of Political Choice." *American Political Science Review* **82 (3): 719–736.**

Lupia, Arthur. 1994. "Shortcuts Versus Encyclopedias: Information and Voting Behavior in California Insurance Reform Elections." *American Political Science Review* **88(1): 63–76.**

Lau, Richard R., and David P. Redlawsk. 2001. "Advantages and Disadvantages of Cognitive Heuristics in Political Decision Making." *American Journal of Political Science* **45 (4): 951–971.**

October 19, 2016   Motivated Reasoning   [1A03]

Rahn, Wendy M., Jon A. Krosnick, and Marijke Breuning. 1994. "Rationalization and Derivation Processes in Survey Studies of Political Candidate Evaluation." *American Journal of Political Science* **38 (3): 582–600.**

Nir, Lilach. 2011. "Motivated Reasoning and Public Opinion Perception." *Public Opinion Quarterly* **75 (3): 504–532.**

Taber, Charles S., and Milton Lodge. 2006. "Motivated Skepticism in the Evaluation of Political Beliefs." *American Journal of Political Science* **50 (3): 755-69.**

Redlawsk, David P., Andrew J. W. Civettini, and Karen M. Emmerson. 2010. "The Affective Tipping Point: Do Motivated Reasoners Ever 'Get It'?" *Political Psychology* **31 (4): 563–593.**

Optional

Lau, Richard R., and David P. Redlawsk. 2006. *How Voters Decide: Information Processing during Election Campaigns.* **Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.**

Lodge, Milton, and Charles S. Taber. 2013. *The Rationalizing Voter.* **Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.**

October 26, 2016   Reading week

November 2, 2016   Priming   [1A03]

*Deadline***: Submission of Research Project Idea**

Goren, Paul, Christopher M. Federico, and Miki Caul Kittilson. 2009. "Source Cues, Partisan Identities, and Political Value Expression." *American Journal of Political Science* **53 (4): 805–820.**

Devine, Patricia G. 1989. "Stereotypes and Prejudice: Their Automatic and Controlled Components." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* **56 (1): 5–18.**

Arendt, Florian. 2013. "Dose-Dependent Media Priming Effects of Stereotypic Newspaper Articles on Implicit and Explicit Stereotypes." *Journal of Communication* **63 (5): 830–851.**

Erisen, Cengiz, Milton Lodge, and Charles S. Taber. 2014. "Affective Contagion in Effortful Political Thinking." *Political Psychology* **35 (2): 187–206.**

Optional

Iyengar, Shanto, and Donald R. Kinder. 1987. *News That Matters. Television and American Opinion.* **Chicago: University of Chicago Press.**

Krosnick, Jon A., and Donald R. Kinder. 1990. "Altering the Foundations of Support for the President Through Priming." *American Political Science Review* 84 (2): 467-512.

Krosnick, Jon A., and Laura A. Brannon. 1993. "The Impact of the Gulf War on the Ingredients of Presidential Evaluations: Multidimensional Effects of Political Involvement." *American Political Science Review* 87 (4): 963-975.

November 9, 2016   Framing   **[1A03]**

Entman, Robert M. 1993. "Framing: Toward Clarification of a Fractured Paradigm."
***Journal of Communication* 43 (4): 51-58**

**Druckman, James N. 2004. "Political Preference Formation: Competition, Deliberation,
and the (Ir)relevance of Framing Effects." *American Political Science Review* 98 (4):
671-686.**

**Chong, Dennis, and James N. Druckman. 2010. "Dynamic Public Opinion:
Communication Effects Over Time." *American Political Science Review* 104 (4): 663–
680.**

**Lenz, Gabriel S. 2009. "Learning and Opinion Change, Not Priming: Reconsidering the
Priming Hypothesis." *American Journal of Political Science* 53 (4): 821-837.**

>   **Optional**

Chong, Dennis, and James N. Druckman. 2007. "Framing Theory." *Annual Review of
Political Science* 10: 103-126.

November 16, 2016   Social Identity   **[1A03]**

**Klandermans, P. G. 2014. "Identity Politics and Politicized Identities: Identity
Processes and the Dynamics of Protest." *Political Psychology* 35 (1): 1–22.**

**Ben-Nun Bloom, Pazit, Gizem Arikan, and Marie Courtemanche. 2015. "Religious
Social Identity, Religious Belief, and Anti-Immigration Sentiment." *American Political
Science Review* 109 (2): 203–221.**

**Sniderman, Paul M., Louk Hagendoorn, and Markus Prior. 2004. "Predisposing Factors
and Situational Triggers: Exclusionary Reactions to Immigrant Minorities." *American
Political Science Review* 98 (1): 35–49.**

**Iyengar, Shanto, and Sean J. Westwood. 2015. "Fear and Loathing across Party Lines:
New Evidence on Group Polarization." *American Journal of Political Science* 59 (3):
690–707.**

>   **Optional**

Huddy, Leonie. 2001. "From Social to Political Identity: A Critical Examination of Social
Identity Theory." *Political Psychology* 22 (1): 127–156.

Mason, Lilliana. 2015. "'I Disrespectfully Agree': The Differential Effects of Partisan Sorting
on Social and Issue Polarization." *American Journal of Political Science* 59 (1): 128–145.

Teney, Céline, Onawa Promise Lacewell, and Pieter De Wilde. 2014. "Winners and losers of
globalization in Europe: attitudes and ideologies." *European Political Science Review* 6 (4):
575–595.

Van Der Brug, Wouter, and Joost Van Spanje. 2009. "Immigration, Europe and the 'new'
cultural dimension." *European Journal of Political Research* 48 (3): 309–334.

November 23, 2016   Presentation of research proposals   [1A03]

Deadline: Presentation and submission of Research Project Proposal

November 30, 2016   Political Decision Making (Electoral Behavior)   [1A03]

Lau, Richard R., Parina Patel, Dalia F. Fahmy, and Robert R. Kaufman. 2014. "Correct Voting Across Thirty-Three Democracies: A Preliminary Analysis." *British Journal of Political Science* 44 (2): 239–259.

Gschwend, Thomas, and Marc Hooghe. 2008. "Should I Stay or Should I Go? An Experimental Study on Voter Responses to Pre-Electoral Coalitions." *European Journal of Political Research* 47 (5): 556–577.

Faas, Thorsten, Christian Mackenrodt, and Rüdiger Schmitt-Beck. 2008. "Polls that Mattered: Effects of Media Polls on Voters' Coalition Expectations and Party Preferences in the 2005 German Parliamentary Election." *International Journal of Public Opinion Research* 20 (3): 299-325.

Meffert, Michael F., and Thomas Gschwend. 2011. "Polls, Coalition Signals, and Strategic Voting: An Experimental Investigation of Perceptions and Effects." *European Journal of Political Research* 50 (5): 636-667.

December 7, 2016   (Collective) Public Opinion & Public Policy   [1A03]

Stimson, James A., Michael B. MacKuen, and Robert S. Erikson. 1995. "Dynamic Representation." *American Political Science Review* 89 (3): 543–565.

Wlezien, Christopher. 1995. "The Public as Thermostat: Dynamics of Preferences for Spending." *American Journal of Political Science* 39 (4): 981–1000.

Enns, Peter K., and Paul M. Kellstedt. 2008. "Policy Mood and Political Sophistication: Why Everybody Moves Mood." *British Journal of Political Science* 38 (3): 433–454.

Jacobs, Lawrence R., and Benjamin I. Page. 2005. "Who Influences U.S. Foreign Policy?" *American Political Science Review* 99 (1): 107–123.

   Optional

Stimson, James A. 2004. *Tides of Consent: How Public Opinion Shapes American Politics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Althaus, Scott L., and Kevin Coe. 2011. "Social Identity Processes and the Dynamics of Public Support for War." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 75 (1): 65–88.

December 14, 2016   Presentation of Research Projects   [1A03]

Deadline: Research Project Presentation

December 21, 2016   Research Paper

Deadline: Final Research Paper