

## **COMM 7813: PUBLIC OPINION & COMMUNICATION (TENTATIVE)**

AU 2016

Class Time: Tuesdays and Thursdays 9:35 to 10:55 a.m.

Location: Derby 3116

Dr. Gerald Kosicki

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Office Hours: 3- 4 p.m. Tuesdays, and by appointment

### **Course Description**

This course examines contemporary and historical conceptions of public opinion, and emphasizes the importance of communication in the formation and study of public opinion. We will review both historical and philosophical conceptions of public opinion as well as modern interpretations of this concept.

Public opinion is at its core a perspective on population research. Methods for population study such as survey research are relevant, but so are issues of big data, text analysis, and other forms of social media analysis.

The invention of public opinion as an alternative to governance by kings or other aristocratic rulers was a significant achievement of western culture. This history a key to understanding the continuing importance and legitimacy of public opinion and the central role of communication. It is also relevant to consider the conditions by which informed public opinion was created and what conditions are needed for quality public opinion. To some extent, these discussions must also address the measurement of public opinion, focusing on the change over time and critiques of current measurement practices. We will also discuss how public opinion is evaluated in terms of its rationality, stability, and quality. Some research will deal with different kinds of theories and levels of analysis.

The readings for the class are listed later in this syllabus. We will talk about the priorities and order of importance of the readings each week. I expect that everyone will read these articles and chapters prior to class and be prepared to discuss them. Discussion leaders will be expected to read more deeply in the topic area they are discussing so that they may bring more to the table than the average student.

### **Class materials**

We will have a number of readings available on Carmen.

### **Requirements & grading**

Evaluations of student performance will be based on several criteria: in-class discussion leader duties, general in-class participation (on non-discussion leader days), the seminar paper. The weighting of these evaluation criteria will be the following:

Discussion leader duties	25%
General class participation	25%
One-page papers (5)	25%
Final paper	25%
Total:	100%

### **One-page response papers**

Each of you will complete five one-page papers over the course of the term. You will pick weeks and do one paper about each week's readings. Each paper should be one single-spaced page long (500 words) and printable on a single sheet of paper. These papers should discern a main theme across all of the readings and discuss something related to this. The papers should *not* be a summary of the main points. I am more interested in your reaction to the information. This might involve the usefulness of the information, the level of interest you have in it, anything that you found particularly surprising or disappointing, etc. The best essays of this type will articulate a *point of view* with respect to the main theme(s) of the materials and then use facts from all the readings to support this argument. You will sign up for due dates for these essays, but in general they will be due Wednesdays by noon of the week that you are writing about. Note that some of you could be asked in class to provide a brief discussion of your essay.

### **Discussion leading**

Beginning the second week, two or three students will volunteer to jointly prepare a series of discussion questions and to lead class discussion on the assigned readings for that day and any appropriate background information that might help put those readings in context. Each set of students should prepare about 15 minutes of introduction to the topic for the week (PowerPoints are encouraged as needed) and post 7-8 discussion questions that address individual readings/chapters as well as how the readings might relate to each other, or to previous readings.

The discussion questions should be emailed to the group the day before the first class of the week by about 4 p.m.

Discussion leaders will be evaluated based on the quality of their questions, depth of understanding of the material, amount of recommended readings they are able to bring into the discussion, and their performance in leading the discussion.

### **General in-class participation**

Students not serving as a discussion leader for a given class will be evaluated on their participation in debate and ability to intelligently discuss the assigned readings. The first, minimum component of this is class attendance. However, ALL students will be expected to participate fully in the seminar by both asking questions and answering them during each and every class period. While a reasonable quantity of verbal participation is a necessary condition for a positive evaluation, it is not sufficient. The quality of questions and answers will be considered when evaluating student participation.

### **Personal technology**

Your laptop computer, iPad or similar devices are welcome in class as long as they are used to enhance your ability to participate in an informed and constructive manner. You should not be using personal technology in the classroom to email, chat, check social media or otherwise distract yourself from the classroom discussion. I reserve the right to ban the use of technology from the room in general, or for specific individuals if these rules are abused.

### **Seminar paper**

The final paper will be about a 20-page proposal in which you design an original research study, using any method (e.g., experiment, survey, content analysis, case study, mixed-modes, etc.). The proposal should be inspired by, but not constrained, by the course material. Please prepare your paper using the guidelines of the American Psychological Association (APA). If students enroll from other disciplines in which other reference systems are customary, they should talk to me about this.

The proposal should include 1) substantive literature review that discusses your theoretical approach and develops your hypotheses (12-15 pages); and 2) a detailed methods section that describes how you would carry out the proposed study and test your hypotheses (e.g., sampling and data collection, questionnaire design, coding sheets, data analysis, etc.). This section might be 3-5 pages.

Alternatively, if you already have access to previously collected data, you might consider preparing a full original research/conference paper that includes a literature review, methods, results and discussion.

If you have additional paper ideas, you are welcome to discuss them with me.

Towards the middle of the semester, if not sooner, each of you should schedule an appointment with me to discuss your topic and approach to the final paper. If you wish to share early drafts with me, that can be arranged.

### **Academic Honesty**

It is your responsibility to complete your own work as best you can in the time provided. Cheating, plagiarism, submission of the same work for two different classes, and falsification of laboratory or other data are serious offenses, and it is my responsibility to make sure they do not occur. Anyone suspected of academic misconduct should expect to have a record of the matter forwarded to the Committee on Academic Misconduct, in accordance with Faculty Rule 3335-5-487. Academic misconduct will be punished to the fullest extent possible. For more information on definitions of plagiarism and academic misconduct more generally, please consult the Code of Student Conduct at [http://studentaffairs.osu.edu/resource\\_csc.asp](http://studentaffairs.osu.edu/resource_csc.asp).

### **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.

## WEEKLY SCHEDULE AND READINGS (SUBJECT TO CHANGE AS NEEDED)

### Week 1, August 23, 25

Introduction

Some basic ideas about public opinion

Tilly, C. (1983) Speaking your mind without elections, surveys or social movements. *Public Opinion Quarterly* 47, 461-478.

Gunnell, J.C. (2011). Democracy and the concept of public opinion. In G.C. Edwards III, Lawrence R. Jacobs, and Robert Y. Shapiro, (Eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of American Public Opinion and the Media*.

### Week 2, August 30, September 1

Enduring questions and new technologies for studying public opinion

Schober, M.F., et al. (2016). Social media analysis for social measurement. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 80, 1, 180-211.

Japac, L. et al. Big data in survey research. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 79,4, 839-880.

Pasek, J. (2015). Predicting elections: Considering tools to pool the polls. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 79,2, 594-619.

Lang, K. & Lang, G. E. (2012). What is this thing we call public opinion? Reflections on the Spiral of Silence. *International Journal of Public Opinion Research*, 24.

Recommended:

Price, V. (1992). *Public Opinion*. Sage Publications.

Bourdieu, P. (1973/1993). Public opinion does not exist. In P. Bourdieu. *Sociology in question* (pp. 149-157). London: Sage Publications.

Blumer, H. (1948). Public opinion and public opinion polling. *American Sociological Review* 13, 542-554.

Sanders, L.M. (1999). Democratic politics and survey research. *Philosophy of the Social Sciences* 29, 248-80.

Converse, P.E. (1987). Changing conceptions of public opinion in the political process. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 51, Supplement: 12-24.

### Week 3, September 6, 8

Collective intelligence and other arguments for democracy

Ober, J. (2012). Epistemic democracy in classical Athens: Sophistication, diversity and innovation. In H. Lanemore and J. Elster (Eds.), *Collective wisdom: Principles and Mechanisms* (pp. 118-147).

Landemore, H. (2013). *Democratic Reason: Politics, Collective Intelligence and Rule of the Many*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Chapter 2: Democracy of the rule of the dumb many? Pp. 27-52.

Ch. 3: A selective genealogy of the epistemic argument for democracy. Pp. 53-88.

#### **Week 4, September 13, 15**

Mechanisms for democratic reason

Landemore, H. (2013). *Democratic Reason: Politics, Collective Intelligence and Rule of the Many*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Chapter 4: First mechanism for democratic reason: Inclusive deliberation, pp. 89-117.

Chapter 6: Second mechanism for democratic reason: Majority rule, pp. 145-184.

Sunstein, C. (2006). *Infotopia*. New York: Oxford University Press. Chapter 5, Many working minds: Wikis, open source software, and blogs, pp. 147-196.

Week 5, September 20, 22

Sunstein, C. & Hastie, R. (2015). *Wiser: Getting beyond groupthink to make groups smarter*. Boston: Harvard Business Review Press. Chapter 6, Eight ways to reduce failures, pp. 103-124.

#### **Week 5, September 20, 22.**

Methods for studying populations and public opinion

Groves, R.M. & Lyberg, L. (2010). Total Survey Error: Past, present and future. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 74, 5, 849-879.

Biemer, P.P. (2010). Total Survey Error: Design, implementation, and evaluation. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 74, 5, 817-848.

Smith, T.W. (2011). Refining the Total Survey Error perspective. *International Journal of Public Opinion Research*, 23,4.

Couper, M.P. (2013). Is the sky falling? New technology, changing media, and the future of surveys. *Survey Research Methods*, 7, 2, 145-156.

Price, V. (2008). The public and public opinion in political theories. In W. Donsbach & M.W. Traugott, (Eds.), *The Sage Handbook of Public Opinion Research*. London: Sage Publications.

Goot, M. (2008). Mass-Observation and modern public opinion research. In W. Donsbach & M.W. Traugott, (Eds.), *The Sage Handbook of Public Opinion Research*. London: Sage Publications.

Gallup, G. (1947). The Quintamensional Plan of question design. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 3, 385-393.

Recommended:

Delli Carpini, M.X. (2011). Constructing public opinion: A brief history of survey research. In G.C. Edwards III, Lawrence R. Jacobs, and Robert Y. Shapiro, (Eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of American Public Opinion and the Media*.

Hillygus, D.S. (2011). The evolution of election polling in the United States. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 75, 5, 962-981.

### **Week 6, September 27, 29**

Issue publics

Price, V.E. et al. (2006). Locating the issue public: The multidimensional nature of engagement with health care reform. *Political Behavior*, 28,1.

Krosnick, J.A. (1990). Government policy and citizen passion: A study of issue publics in contemporary America. *Political Behavior*, 12, 1.

Anand, S. & Krosnick, J.A. (2003). The impact of attitudes toward foreign policy goals on public preferences among presidential candidates: A study of issue publics and the attentive public in the 2000 U.S. presidential election. *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, 33,1.

Bennett, W.L. (2011). News polls: Constructing and engaged public. In G.C. Edwards III, Lawrence R. Jacobs, and Robert Y. Shapiro, (Eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of American Public Opinion and the Media*.

### **Week 7, October 4, 6**

Public opinion and (mis)information about health care and the Affordable Care Act.

Hochschild, J. & Einstein, K.L. (2014). It isn't what we don't know that gives us trouble, it's what we know that ain't so: Misinformation and Democratic politics. *British Journal of Political Science*, 45, 467-475.

Leimbiger, B. & Lammert, C. (2016). Why health care reform now? Strategic framing and the passage of Obamacare. *Social Policy and Administration*, 50, 4, pp 467-481.

Wilkerson J., Smith, D. & Stramp, N. (2015). Tracing the flow of policy ideas in

legislatures: A text reuse approach. *American Journal of Political Science*, 59, 4, 943-956.

Jamieson, K.H. & Hardy, B.W. (2011). The effect of media on public knowledge. In G.C. Edwards III, L.R. Jacobs, and R.Y. Shapiro (Eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of American Public Opinion and the Media*.

Pasek, J., Sood, G. & Krosnick, J.A. (2015). Misinformed about the Affordable Care Act? Leveraging uncertainty to assess the prevalence of misperceptions. *Journal of Communication*, 65, 660-673.

### **Week 8, October 11**

Immigration and population dynamics

Craig, M.A. & Richeson, J.A. (2014). More diverse yet less tolerant? How the increasingly diverse racial landscape affects white Americans' racial attitudes. *Personality and Social Psychological Bulletin*.

Craig, M.A. & Richeson, J.A. (2014). On the precipice of a "Majority-Minority" America: Perceived status threat from the racial demographic shift affects white Americans' political ideology. *Psychological Science*, 25(6), 1189-1197. See also attached "Corrigendum" published in vol. 26(6), 950-952.

Fetzer, J.S. (2012). Public opinion and populism. M.R. Rosenblum & D.J. Tichenor, (Eds.), *Oxford Handbook of the Politics of International Migration*.

NOTE: Thursday is the first day of "Autumn Break." No classes.

### **Week 9, October 18, 20**

Social movements

Rohlinger, D.A. & Snow, D.A. Social psychological perspectives on crowds and social movements. In J. Delamater, (Ed.), *Handbook of Social Psychology*. New York: Kluwer Academic.

Weber, K. & King, B. (2014). Social movement theory and organization studies. In P. Adler et al. (Eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Sociology, Social Theory, and Organizational Studies: Contemporary Currents*.

Fligstein, N. & McAdam, D. (2012). *A theory of fields*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Chapter 1, The gist of it, pp. 3-33.

Chapter 2, Microfoundations, pp. 34-56.



Chapter 3, Macroconsiderations, pp. 57-82.

Week 10, October 25, 27

Philosophical and historical origins

Zaret, D. (2005). Neither faith nor commerce: Printing and the unintended origins of English public opinion. In J. Alexander (Ed.), *Real civil societies: The dilemmas of institutionalization*. London: Sage Publications.

Herbst, S. (2011). Critical perspectives on public opinion. In G.C. Edwards III, Lawrence R. Jacobs, and Robert Y. Shapiro, (Eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of American Public Opinion and the Media*.

Peacey, J. (2012). News, pamphlets, and public opinion. In L.L. Knoppers, (Ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Literature and the English Revolution*.

Kaiser, T.E. (2011). The public sphere. In W. Doyle (Ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of the Ancien Regime*.

Darnton, R. (2004). Mademoiselle Bonafon and the private life of Louis XV: Communication circuits in Eighteenth Century France. *Representations* 87, pp. 102-124.

Week 11, November 1, 3

Perspectives on deliberation and public consultation

Cappella, J.N. Zhang, J. & Price, V. (2011). Collective intelligence: The wisdom and foolishness of deliberating groups. In K. Kenski & K.H. Jamieson (Eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Political Communication*.

Fishkin, J. (2009). *When the people speak: Deliberative democracy and public consultation*. New York: Oxford University Press. Chapter 1, Democratic Aspirations, pp. 1-31.

Esterling, K.M. Neblo, M.A. & Lazer, D.M. (2011). Means, motive and opportunity in becoming informed about politics: A deliberative field experiment with members of congress and their constituents. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 75, 3, 483-503.

Sanders, L.M. (1997). Against deliberation. *Political Theory*, 25,3, 347-376.

Week 12, November 8, 10  
Media and public opinion

Jacobs, L.R., & Shapiro, R.Y. (2011). Informational interdependence: Public opinion and the media in the new communications era. In G.C. Edwards III, Lawrence R. Jacobs, and Robert Y. Shapiro, (Eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of American Public Opinion and the Media*.

Egan, P.J. (2011). Public opinion, the media and social issues. In G.C. Edwards III, Lawrence R. Jacobs, and Robert Y. Shapiro, (Eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of American Public Opinion and the Media*.

Jerit, J. & Barabas, J. (2011). Exposure measures and content analysis in media effects studies. In R.Y. Shapiro & L.R. Jacobs, (Eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of American Public Opinion and the Media*.

Van Meurs, L. (2013). Dimensionality of TV-news exposure: Mapping news viewing behavior with people-meter data. *International Journal of Public Opinion Research*, 25,1.

Week 13, November 15, 17  
Riots, crowds, bubbles and panics.

Moscovici, S. (1986). The discovery of the masses. In C.F. Graumann & S. Moscovici, (Eds.), *Changing conceptions of crowd, mind and behavior* (pp. 5-25). New York: Springer-Verlag.

Moscovici, S. (1985). *The age of the crowd*. New York: Cambridge University Press. Part V.2: Opinion, Public and the crowd, pp. 193-200.

Goode, E. & Ben-Yehuda (1994). Moral panics: Culture, politics and social construction. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 20, 149-71.

Wilkinson, S.I. (2009) Riots. *Annual Review of Political Science*, 12, 329-43.

Abolafia, M.Y. & Kiduff, M. (1988). Enacting market crisis: The social construction of a speculative bubble. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 33,2,177-193.

Parker, A., Corasanti, N. & Bererstein, E. (2016). Voices from Donald Trump's rallies, uncensored. *New York Times*, August 3. Film at [http://www.nytimes.com/2016/08/04/us/politics/donald-trump-supporters.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2016/08/04/us/politics/donald-trump-supporters.html?_r=0)

Halbfinger, D.M. (2016). Profanity, vitriol, slurs: Why The Times published unfiltered Trump rally video. *Times Insider*, August 5.

Week 14, November 22  
Entertainment narratives

Peters, C. (2015). Evaluating journalism through popular culture: HBO's *The Newsroom* and public reflections on the state of the news media. *Media, Culture & Society*, 37,4, 602-619.

TBA

NOTE: Thanksgiving break begins Nov. 23. No class Nov. 24.

Week 15, November 29, December 1  
Computational approaches to studying public opinion

Liu, B. (2015). *Sentiment analysis: Mining opinions, sentiments and emotions*. New York: Cambridge. Pp. TBA.

Evans, J.A. & Aceves, P. (2016). Machine translation: Mining text for social theory. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 42, 21-50.

Golder, S.A. & Macy, M.W. (2014). Digital footprints: Opportunities and challenges for online social research. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 40, 129-52.

Recommended:

Healy, K. & Moody, J. (2014). Data visualization in sociology. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 40, 105-28.

Week 16, December 6 (Last class day)  
Examples of computational methods applied to text analytics

Leskovec, J., et al. (200x). Meme-tracking and the dynamics of the news cycle.

Cody, E.M., et al. (2015). Climate change on Twitter: An unsolicited public opinion poll. *PLOS One*. August 20.

Mildenberger, M. et al. (2016). The distribution of climate change public opinion in Canada. *PLOS One*. Feb. 18.

Ratkiewicz, J., et al. (2010). Detecting and tracking the spread of Astroturf memes in microblog streams.

Jamal, A.A. et al. (2015). Anti-Americanism and anti-interventionism in Arabic Twitter discourses. *Perspectives on Politics*, 13, 1.

Recommended:

Bail, C. (2015). *Terrified: How anti-Muslim fringe organizations became mainstream*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Note: Semester classes end Dec. 7.

Final Exam Period: Friday, December 9, at 8 a.m.  
All final papers due.