Graduate Seminar: Public Opinion  
COMM 7813  
Journalism 106  
WF, 935-1055 AM - Autumn 2013

Instructor  
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Course Summary  
Given the social scientific practice of communication research is grounded primarily in the journal model, deference is given to journal-length argumentation relative to book-length argumentation. One goal of this course is to focus intently on the unique characteristics of preparing a book-length argument. We will do so while covering the major content and methodological issues involved in the study of public opinion. There are many quality, book-length arguments on the topic of public opinion, several of which retain communication as a core element of the discussion. As a result, the seminar's topic matches well with my desire to focus on book-length argumentation. It may be good to cover this ground while you are still in graduate school and before it is a lost art.

Required Texts


* Additional readings offered in pdf form via CARMEN.
Grading

Short Essay 1 10%
Short Essay 2 10%
Secondary Analysis Presentation 35%
Secondary Analysis Paper 40%
Participation 5%

Assignments

Short Essay 1 - Public Opinion and Terrorism. Due: 9-11-13. Select three peer-reviewed journals articles on some topic associated with public opinion and terrorism. Produce a one-page summary bringing together the collective knowledge offered in these works, along with a one-page action statement on how a public opinion researcher could use this knowledge to aid the public.

Short Essay 2 - War and Framing. Due 10-25-13. Select three peer-reviewed journals articles on some topic associated with war and framing research. Produce a one-page summary bringing together the collective knowledge offered in these works, along with a one-page action statement on how a public opinion researcher could use this knowledge to aid the public.

Secondary Analysis Presentation. Due 11-15-13 or 11-20-13. We will utilize these two days for what would be a traditional conference panel. Each presentation would be 10-15 minutes in length based on number of students in class. Students will be divided evenly and randomly between the two days. The analyses offered in the presentation will build off of you secondary analysis of an existing data set you are asked to track down in the first two weeks of the semester.

Secondary Analysis Paper. Due 11-27-13. This paper will be a 15-18 page work offering a theoretical foundation, formal argumentation, presentation of hypotheses/research questions, and analyses for the public opinion topic you are exploring.

Course Breakdown

8-21 Introduction


I would like to discuss the points raised in the essay in relation to the academic study of public opinion, along with engaging in a broader discussion of what is gained or loss when embracing any one approach to being a scholar. Discussion will set stage for first two assignments (due 9-11-13 and 10-25, respectively).
8-23  Price, chapters 1-3
8-28  Price, chapters 4-5
8-30  Role of Communication and Theory


9-4  Sociological Perspectives


9-6  Psychological/Social Psychological Perspectives


9-11  Public Opinion: Terrorism

Creation of own reading list (three peer-reviewed journal articles)
Short Paper 1 due and Presentations

9-13  Discussion

What can public opinion scholarship bring to the table in the topic of terrorism? How can this area of research be more engaged with the public? Aid the public?

9-18  Zaller, chapters 1-4
9-20  Zaller, chapters 5-8
9-25  Zaller, chapters 9-12
9-27 Critical Discussion of Zaller


10-2 Prior, chapters 1-3

10-4 Prior, chapters 4-6

10-9 Prior, chapters 7-8

10-11 International Perspectives on Media Systems


10-16 Baum & Groeling, chapters 1-3

10-18 Baum & Broeling, chapters 4-6

10-23 Baum & Groeling, chapters 7-9

10-25 War and Framing

Creation of own reading list (three peer-reviewed journal articles)

Short Paper 2 due and Presentations

10-30 Stroud, chapters 1-3

11-1 Stroud, chapters 4-5

11-6 Stroud, chapters 6-7

11-8 Additional Forays into Partisanship and Selective Exposure


11-13  Methodological Issues


11-15  Presentations - secondary analysis paper

11-20  Presentations - secondary analysis paper

11-22  Concluding Remarks/Discussion

11-27  Final Papers Due