

POSC 146
MASS MEDIA & PUBLIC OPINION
Fall 2010

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Office Hours: Monday and Tuesday, 2:30-3:30 p.m. and by appointment

Required Reading

Clawson, Rosalee A., and Zoe M. Oxley. 2008. *Public Opinion: Democratic Ideals, Democratic Practice*. Washington, DC: CQ Press. ISBN 0872893049.

Other readings available via links provided through course site at ilearn.ucr.edu.

Course Requirements

Literature review proposal	5%
Midterm exam	25%
Article reviews	15% (5% each)
Literature review project	25%
Final examination	30%

Course Description

We will study public opinion – its character, sources, and functions – with attention to how mass media relates to the public. The class is also designed to explore the methods of social science research, in particular how scholars study public opinion and the media using survey research, laboratory experiments, content analysis, in-depth interviews, and other systematic research tools.

My primary objective for you is that you will leave the class with a greater knowledge and understanding of social science research on public opinion and mass media. I want you to be curious and start figuring out how to *systematically* address your questions. In the pages that follow, I elaborate on the tasks you will undertake in this course, including the development of a social science literature review on a topic related to public opinion and mass media.

My office hours are listed at the top of this syllabus. Please do not hesitate to come by during these scheduled times or contact me to schedule an appointment.

Notes

Students with permanent and temporary disabilities should contact me to discuss arrangements, as well as contact Services for Students with Disabilities to request services.

All late papers will be graded, but with a 1/3 letter-grade reduction with each day it is late. Any paper that is turned in will receive partial credit.

Any student who plagiarizes, cheats, or fabricates data will receive no credit for the spoiled assignment. All cases will be referred to the Student Conduct and Academic Integrity Programs office.

Literature Review, Proposal, and Journal Article Critiques

You will write a 9-12 page paper reviewing literature on an aspect of public opinion and mass media. Choose a promising research question about public opinion and mass media and develop a review of the literature on that question. Here are a few examples: *What does Political Science have to tell us about how media agenda-setting affects the salience of an issue, how recent immigrants develop ideas about American politics, or how (or even whether) policy makers take public opinion into account?* This is an opportunity for you to develop your own interest in an area of research. For this paper, you will be required to choose and read 6-8 research articles outside of the readings on the syllabus. We will talk more about what I mean by a literature review during the course of the quarter. The paper will be due by 5 p.m. December 3.

In order to help you take full advantage of this opportunity to explore your interests in mass media and public opinion, I have designed several assignments related to the larger literature review. First, I would like each of you to propose a topic for your literature review in a 2-page memorandum due October 13 at the end of class, in class. This memorandum will note the research question you will investigate in the literature review, some preliminary insights about that research question, including the extent to which it is a topic of scholarly investigation, and list several sources you intend to incorporate. Based on your proposal, I can make suggestions aimed at helping you with the literature review.

On October 25, November 8, and November 22, you will turn in summaries of articles at the end of class, in class. Each must summarize a piece of scholarly research related to your literature review proposal. These should be listed on your initial proposal. The summaries will each be one page, provide a full bibliographic citation for the research article and identifying its research question, theoretical perspective, data and conclusions, as well as your own evaluation of the research. We will discuss more about what I am looking for in these summaries as the deadline approaches.

Importantly, you need to review research from academic journals. Here are a few relevant examples:

International Journal of Press/Politics
Journal of Communication
Journal of Elections, Public Opinion, and Parties
Party Politics
Political Behavior
Political Communication
Public Opinion Quarterly

Examinations

You will also complete two examinations. The mid-term exam is scheduled for **Wednesday, November 3, in class**. If you are unable to take the mid-term exam at the scheduled time, you may schedule an alternate time by contacting me prior to the scheduled exam time and providing appropriate original-copies documentation (medical, military, etc.) for your inability to take the exam at the scheduled time. Scheduling a makeup exam is your responsibility. I will consider extreme medical emergencies, again with complete original documentation. The final exam will have a similar but longer format. It will be cumulative. It is scheduled for **Saturday, December 4, 8-11 a.m.**

Course Schedule**BACKGROUND: MEDIA & POLITICS****Sept. 27 (M) Course introduction and outline****Sept. 29 (W) Thinking about public opinion**

Clawson & Oxley, Chapter 1

Converse, Phillip. 1987. "Changing Conceptions of Public Opinion in the Political Process." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 51S:12-24.**Oct. 4 (M) Journalism in the U.S.**Schudson, Michael, and Susan E. Tifft. 2005. "American Journalism in Historical Perspective." In Geneva Overholser and Kathleen Hall Jamieson, eds. *The Press*. New York: Oxford University Press. pp. 17-47.**Oct. 6 (W) First Amendment and balancing principles**Sanford, Bruce W., and Jane E. Kirtley. 2005. "The First Amendment Tradition and Its Critics." In Geneva Overholser and Kathleen Hall Jamieson, eds. *The Press*. New York: Oxford University Press. pp. 263-276.Horwitz Robert B. 2005. "Communication Regulation in Protecting the Public Interest." In Geneva Overholser and Kathleen Hall Jamieson, eds. *The Press*. New York: Oxford University Press. pp. 263-276.**Oct. 11 (M) Types of news**Baym, Geoffrey. 2005. "The Daily Show: Discursive Integration and the Reinvention of Political Journalism." *Political Communication* 22(3):259-276.Entman, Robert M. 2005. "The Nature and Sources of News." In Geneva Overholser and Kathleen Hall Jamieson, eds. *The Press*. New York: Oxford University Press. pp. 48-65.**INVESTIGATING MEDIA EFFECTS ON PUBLIC OPINION****Oct. 13 (W) Researching public opinion and media effects**Krosnick, Jon. 1999. "Survey Methodology." *Annual Review of Psychology* 50:537-67.Iyengar, Shanto, and Adam Simon. 2000. "New Perspectives and Evidence on Political Communication and Campaign Effects." *Annual Review of Psychology* 51:149-169.**Literature review proposal due in class****Oct. 18 (M) Media effects**

Clawson & Oxley, Chapter 3

Oct. 20 (W) Attitudes

Clawson & Oxley, Chapter 4

Oct. 25 (M) Ideology

Clawson & Oxley, Chapter 5

First article summary and critique due in class**Oct. 27 (W) Active audience**Bennett, W. Lance, and Shanto Iyengar. 2008. "A New Era of Minimal Effects? The Changing Foundations of Political Communication." *Journal of Communication* 58:707-731.LaMarre, Heather L., Kristen D. Landreville and Michael A. Beam. 2009. "The Irony of Satire: Political Ideology and the Motivation to See What You Want to See in *The Colbert Report*." *The International Journal of Press/Politics* 14(2):212-231.

Nov. 1 (M) New media
 Woody, Deva. 2008, "New Competencies in Democratic Communication? Blogs, Agenda Setting and Political Participation." *Public Choice* 134(1): 109-123.
 Lawrence, Eric, John Sides, and Henry Farrell. 2010. "Self-Segregation or Deliberation? Blog Readership, Participation, and Polarization in American Politics." *Perspectives on Politics* 8(1): 141-157.
Mid-term review

Nov. 3 (W) Midterm exam, in class

OTHER INFLUENCES ON PUBLIC OPINION

Nov. 8 (M) Other influences
Second journal article summary and critique due in class

Nov. 10 (W) Political socialization
 Clawson & Oxley Chapter 2

Nov. 15 (M) Genetic and biological influences on opinion
 Alford, John R., Cary L. Funk, and John R. Hibbing. 2005. "Are Political Orientations Genetically Transmitted?" *American Political Science Review* 99:153-167.

Nov. 17 (W) Political knowledge
 Clawson & Oxley Chapter 7

IMPLICATIONS OF OPINION FOR DEMOCRATIC FUNCTION

Nov. 22 (M) Civil rights and civil liberties
 Clawson & Oxley Chapters 8 & 9
Third journal article summary and critique due in class

Nov. 24 (W) Social and political trust
 Clawson & Oxley Chapter 10
 Mutz, D.C., Reeves, B. 2005. The New Videomalaise: Effects of Televised Incivility on Political Trust. *American Political Science Review* 99(1): 1-15.

Nov. 29 (M) Media, public opinion and public policy
 Clawson & Oxley Chapter 11
 Molotch, Harvey L., David L. Protest, and Margaret Gordon. 1987 "The Media-Policy Connection: Ecologies of News." In David L. Paletz, ed. *Political Communication Research: Approaches, Studies, Assessments*. Norwood, NJ: Ablex Publishing.

Dec. 1 (W) Expectations for media, citizens, and democracy
 Graber, D. 2003. The media and democracy: Beyond myths and stereotypes. *Annual Review of Political Science* 6:139-160. **ON-LINE**
 Zaller, John R., 2003. "A New Standard of News Quality: Burglar Alarms for the Monitorial Citizen." *Political Communication* 20(2):109-130.

Dec. 3 (F) Final paper due by 5 p.m.

Dec. 4 (Sa) Final exam, 8-11 a.m