

POSC 256
SEMINAR IN PUBLIC OPINION & MASS MEDIA
Fall 2011
Monday 9AM-12PM

Martin Johnson
Department of Political Science
University of California, Riverside

e-mail: martin.johnson@ucr.edu
Office: Watkins Hall, Room 2222
Telephone ext. 8-4612

Hours: Tuesday 1:30-3:30 p.m. and by appointment

This course will introduce you to contemporary research investigating media politics, political communication, political psychology, and public opinion in the U.S. It is organized around the most contemporary research to which I can provide you access—unpublished research papers—but includes a survey of classic and contemporary research that should round out your introduction to research on public opinion and media.

Anchor articles. Your primary reading each week will be an unpublished research paper. I will mask the author names for each of these papers and will not provide a complete citation until later.

Additional readings. Each week, I have also assigned additional readings that represent key published work related to the anchor article. My suggestion is that you read these additional readings first, give yourself at least a day to mull them over and then read the anchor article. The rationale will become clear as you understand the writing assignment each week.

Course assignments

Weekly Referee Report for Anchor Article

Each week you are responsible for writing a referee report for the anchor article. The peer review process is central to scholarly research. As an author, you submit your research, usually in the form of articles like these anchor pieces, to a journal editor (the process of publishing books is outside the feasible scope of this class). This editor circulates your work usually to 2-5 peer reviewers, people who have some expertise in your research area. In political science, the most common form of peer review is “double-blind”—the author is not told who the reviewers are and the reviewers are not told who the authors are.

For each anchor article, I would like you to write a referee report that evaluates the assigned paper’s argument, evidence, and overall contribution. I would like you to imagine that you are reviewing this paper for a general interest journal in political science, such as *Journal of Politics*, *American Journal of Political Science*, or *Political Research Quarterly*. In this referee report, I would like you to express a summary judgment: reject, R&R, or accept, and justify the decision based on the qualities of the paper.

I provide additional notes on referee reports at the end of the syllabus.

The referee reports are due each week on Saturday at 5 p.m. and should be e-mailed to me (martin.johnson@ucr.edu). Shoot for two single-spaced pages, 1” margins, 12-point Times New Roman or Arial. You may want a third page and some weeks you might come up short (e.g., 1½ pages). Do not turn your referee reports in late. These weekly writing assignments are worth 40 percent of your grade.

Original Public Opinion or Media Research Project

I want to promote your engagement with empirical political science the development of your ideas. For the major paper in this class, I would like you to sketch a short paper, around a basic analysis of survey data: 10-12 pages of text with additional tables as needed and references (thus, the paper will be 15-18 pages in all. The paper will have a rudimentary literature review, develop an argument, present expectations/ hypotheses and show data to test them. The conclusion should envision how to move this paper forward, toward publication, directing the analytical tools you develop to evaluate other people's work on your own. Note that I understand that some of you have very little preparation for data analysis and will evaluate your work accordingly. You should envision using developmentally and field-appropriate analytical tools, including document analysis, cross-tabulation, logistic regression, and other forms of analysis. This might even lead to some collaborative research. I will provide more details about this project and my expectations during the next few weeks. The assignment will be due by 5 p.m. on Friday, December 11. It will be worth 40 percent of your grade.

Summary

Weekly referee reports on anchor articles	40%
Participation and class leadership	20%
Original public opinion research project	40%

Schedule of readings

Sept. 26: Introduction

Oct. 3: Civic Education and Knowledge of Government and Politics

Required

- Delli Carpini, Michael X., and Scott Keeter. 1993. "Measuring Political Knowledge: Putting First Things First." *American Journal of Political Science*, 37(4): 1179-1206
- Luskin, Robert C., and John G. Bullock. 2011. "'Don't Know' Means 'Don't Know': DK Responses and the Public's Level of Political Knowledge." *Journal of Politics*, 73(2): 547-557.
- Mondak, Jeffery J, and Belinda Creel Davis. 2001. "Asked and Answered: Knowledge Levels When We Will Not Take 'Don't Know' for an Answer." *Political Behavior* 23: 199-224.
- Prior, Markus, and Arthur Lupia. 2008. "Money, Time, and Political Knowledge: Distinguishing Quick Recall and Political Learning Skills." *American Journal of Political Science*, 52 (1): 168-182.
- Prior, Markus. 2005. "News v. Entertainment: How Increasing Media Choice Widens Gaps in Political Knowledge and Turnout." *American Journal of Political Science*, 49 (3): 594-609.

Suggested

- Dolan, Kathleen. 2011. "Do Women and Men Know Different Things? Measuring Gender Differences in Political Knowledge." *Journal of Politics*, 73: 97-107.
- Galston, William A. 2001. "Political Knowledge, Political Engagement, and Civic Education." *Annual Review Political Science*, 4: 217-234.

Oct. 10: Micro-participation: The Role of Microblogging in Planning

Blumer, Herbert. 1948. "Public Opinion and Public Opinion Polling." *American Sociological Review* 13: 542-54.

Converse, Philip. 1987. "Changing Conceptions of Public Opinion in the Political Process." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 51 S: 12-24.

Herbst, Susan. 1995. *Numbered Voices: How Opinion Polling Has Shaped American Politics*. University of Chicago Press.

Price, Vincent. 1992. *Public Opinion*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications. Chapter 3. Conceptualizing the Public. pp. 22-44.

Oct. 17: The Attentive Citizen: The Dynamic Impact of Emotions on Attention to Political News

Brader, Ted. 2005. "Striking a Responsive Chord: How Political Ads Motivate and Persuade Voters By Appealing to Emotions." *American Journal of Political Science* 49:388-405.

Ladd, Jonathan M., and Gabriel S. Lenz. 2008. "Reassessing the Role of Anxiety in Vote Choice" *Political Psychology* 29:275-96.

Marcus, George E., Michael B. MacKuen and W. Russell Neuman 2011. "Parsimony and Complexity: Developing and Testing Theories of Affective Intelligence." *Political Psychology* 32(2)(April): 323-336.

Miller, Patrick R. 2011. "The Emotional Citizen: Emotion as a Function of Political Sophistication." *Political Psychology*. 32(4): 575-600.

Redlawsk, David P., Andrew Civettini, and Richard R. Lau. 2007. "Affective Intelligence and Voter Information." In W. Russell Neuman, George Marcus, Michael MacKuen, and Ann Crigler, eds. *The Affect Effect: Dynamics of Emotion in Political Thinking and Behavior*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. pp. 152-179.

Oct. 24: Conformity in Groups: The Effects of Groups on Expressed Attitudes

Required

Asch, S. E. 1951. "Effects of Group Pressure upon the Modification and Distortion of Judgments. In H. Guetzkow, ed. *Group Leadership and Men*. Pittsburgh, PA: Carnegie. pp. 177-190.

Feldman, Stanley. 2003. "Enforcing Social Conformity: A Theory of Authoritarianism." *Political Psychology* 24(1):41-74.

Huckfeldt, R., and J. Sprague. 1987. "Networks in Context: The Social Flow of Political Information." *American Political Science Review* 81: 1197-216.

McClurg, S.D. 2006. "The Electoral Relevance of Political Talk: Examining the Effect of Disagreement and Expertise in Social Networks on Political Participation." *American Journal of Political Science*. 50(3):737-54.

Noelle Neumann, E. 1974. "The Spiral of Silence a Theory of Public Opinion." *Journal of Communication* 24: 43-51.

Suggested

Ahn, T. K., Huckfeldt, R. and Ryan, J.B. 2010. "Communication, Influence, and Informational Asymmetries among Voters." *Political Psychology*, 31(5), 763-787.

Mutz, D. C. 2002. "Cross-cutting Social Networks: Testing Democratic Theory in Practice." *American Political Science Review*, 96(1), 111-126.

Oct. 31: Attributing Blame in Tragedy: Understanding Attitudes about the Causes of Three Mass Shootings

Required

- Iyengar, Shanto. 1989. "How Citizens Think about National Issues: A Matter of Responsibility." *American Journal of Political Science*, 33(4):878-900
- Kruglanski, Arie W. and Donna M. Webster. 1996. "Motivated Closing of the Mind: Seizing and Freezing." *Psychological Review*, 103(2):263-283.
- Kunda, Ziva. 1990. "The Case for Motivated Reasoning." *Psychological Bulletin* 108(3):480-498.
- Maestas, Cherie D., Lonna Rae Atkeson, Thomas Croom, and Lisa A. Bryant. 2008. "Shifting the Blame: Federalism, Media, and Public Assignment of Blame Following Hurricane Katrina." *Publius* 38(4):609-32.
- Taber, Charles S., and Milton Lodge. 2006. "Motivated Skepticism in the Evaluation of Political Beliefs." *American Journal of Political Science* 50: 755-769.

Suggested

- Lord, Charles G., Lee Ross, and Mark R. Leeper. 1979. "Biased Assimilation and Attitude Polarization: The Effects of Prior Theories on Subsequently Considered Evidence." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 37: 2098-2109.

Nov. 7: Framing and Biased Information Search

Required

- Bartels, Larry M. 2002. "Beyond the Running Tally: Partisan Bias in Political Perceptions." *Political Behavior* 24: 117-150.
- Chong, Dennis, and James N. Druckman. 2007. "Framing Theory." *Annual Review of Political Science* 10:103-126.
- Druckman, James N. 2001. "The Implications of Framing Effects for Citizen Competence." *Political Behavior* 23:225-256.
- Iyengar, Shanto, and Kyu S. Hahn. 2009. "Red Media, Blue Media: Evidence of Ideological Selectivity in Media Use." *Journal of Communication* 59: 19-39.
- Nelson, Thomas E., Rosalee A. Clawson, and Zoe M. Oxley. 1997. "Media Framing of a Civil Liberties Conflict and Its Effect on Tolerance." *American Political Science Review* 91:567-583.

Suggested

- Chong, Dennis, and James N. Druckman. 2007. "A Theory of Framing and Opinion Formation in Competitive Elite Environments." *Journal of Communication* 57 (1): 99-118.
- Stroud, Natalie Jomini. "Media Use and Political Predispositions: Revisiting the Concept of Selective Exposure." *Political Behavior* 30(3):341-366.

Nov. 14: War through Partisan Glasses

Required

- Berinsky, Adam. 2007. "Assuming the Costs of War: Events, Elites, and American Public Support for Military Conflict." *Journal of Politics* 69: 975-997.
- Horowitz, Michael and Matthew Levendusky. 2011. "Drafting Support for War: Conscription and Mass Support for Warfare." *Journal of Politics* 73: 1-11.
- Zaller, John. 1992. *The Nature and Origins of Mass Opinion*. Cambridge University Press.

Suggested

- Gartner, Scott, and Gary Segura. 1998. "War, Casualties and Public Opinion." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 42: 278-300.

Nov. 21: Biology, Ideology, and Epistemology

Required

- Alford, John R., Carolyn L. Funk, and John R. Hibbing. 2005. "Are Political Orientations Genetically Transmitted?" *American Political Science Review*, 99(2): 153-167.
- Beckwith, Jon, and Corey Morris. 2008. "Twin Studies of Political Behavior: Untenable Assumptions?" *Perspectives on Politics*. 6: 785-792.
- Charney, Evan. 2008. "Genes and Ideologies." *Perspectives on Politics*, 6(2): 299-319.
- Converse, Philip, E. 1964. "The Nature of Belief Systems in Mass Publics." In David E. Apter, ed., *Ideology and Discontent* (pp 206-261). New York: Free Press.
- Freese, J. (2008). "Genetics and the Social Science Explanation of Individual Outcomes." *American Journal of Sociology*, 114, S1-S35.

Suggested

- Hatemi, Peter K., N. Gillespie, L. Eaves, B. Maher, B. Webb, A. Heath, S. Medland, D. Smyth, H. Beeby, S. Godon, G. Montgomery, G. Zhu, E. Byrne, N. Martin.. 2011b "Genome-Wide Analysis of Political Attitudes." *Journal of Politics* 73(1):1-15
- Medland, Sarah E., and Peter K. Hatemi. 2009. "Political Science, Biometric Theory, and Twin Studies: A Methodological Introduction." *Political Analysis* 17(2): 191-214.

Nov. 28: Personality, Values and Attitudes toward Foreign and Security Policies

- Carney, Dana R., John T. Jost, Samuel D. Gosling, and Jeff Potter. 2008. "The Secret Lives of Liberals and Conservatives: Personality Profiles, Interaction Styles, and the Things They Leave Behind." *Political Psychology* 29: 807-40.
- Gerber, Alan S., Gregory A. Huber, David Doherty, Conor M. Dowling and Shang E. Ha. 2010. "Personality and Political Attitudes: Relationships across Issue Domains and Political Contexts." *American Political Science Review*, 104(1): 111-133.
- Hibbing, M.V., Ritchie, M., & Anderson, M.R. (2010). "Personality and Political Discussion." *Political Behavior*. Online First, 5 November 2010.
- Mondak, Jeffery J., Matthew V. Hibbing, Damaris Canache, Mitchell A. Seligson, and Mary R. Anderson. 2010. "Personality and Civic Engagement: An Integrative Framework for the Study of Trait Effects on Political Behavior." *American Political Science Review* 104(1): 85-110.
- Smith, Kevin B., Douglas R. Oxley, Matthew V. Hibbing, John R. Alford, and John R. Hibbing. 2011. "Linking Genetics and Political Attitudes: Reconceptualizing Political Ideology." *Political Psychology* 32(3):369-397.

Suggested

- Caprara GV, Schwartz S, Capanna C, Vecchione M, Barbaranelli C. 2006. "Personality and Politics: Values, Traits, and Political Choice." *Political Psychology* 27:1-28
- Hibbing Political Discussion

Dec. 9 Original public opinion research project due

REFeree REPORTS

Reviewers examine a research article and critique it. They help a journal editor by discussing the strengths and weaknesses of a paper. They also provide a summary judgment:

- **Reject** – the most common judgment of reviewers. *Political Research Quarterly*, journal of the Western Political Science Association, outright rejects about half of the articles it receives to review. The rejection rate is more than 60% for *American Journal of Political Science* (Midwest). This judgment suggests the journal should not consider publishing this article at this time. The referee is obligated to explain why the paper should be rejected and offers constructive feedback to the authors.
- **Revise and resubmit, or “R&R”** – the next most common decision: The author should have an opportunity to revise the paper for additional consideration. R&R reviews make specific recommendations for how the authors can improve their paper for publication. These could focus on clarifying the argument, revising data analysis to provide more appropriate hypothesis tests, or both.
- **Accept** or *conditionally accept*. This is rare and an indication that the paper is ready for publication “as is” or with minor changes that the reviewer trusts the editors to oversee with the authors.

What criteria should you use? To help with this, here are some statements from these exemplar journals:

Journal of Politics

Submitted manuscripts to the JOP are evaluated based on their contributions to theory, technical proficiency, and breadth of appeal, and we ask reviewers to address all three criteria to the best of their ability when reviewing a manuscript. If, as a reviewer, you have significant reservations about some aspects of a manuscript, we also would like you to address how reasonable it is to expect the authors to be able to revise the paper in ways that would make it suitable for publication in the JOP. We would also appreciate an explicit recommendation in the text of the review. Should it be accepted as is or pending only minor revisions? If it needs major revisions, would you recommend that we invite the authors to revise and resubmit the paper for further review by the JOP or do you think the revisions are too great or their success too uncertain to encourage the author’s investment of time and energy? If you recommend that the manuscript should be declined by the JOP, can you suggest other journals more appropriate in your view?

American Journal of Political Science

AJPS requests that reviews address the following points about the merits of the manuscript in as long a review as a reviewer chooses to provide. The points include, but are not limited, to:

- The extent to which the manuscript addresses an interesting and important research problem or question.
- The amount of creativity or innovation of research informing the manuscript.
- The extent to which the manuscript engages the relevant research literature and contributes to the accumulation of knowledge.
- The quality of:
 - Thought and/or theorizing (as appropriate).
 - Conceptual development or use (as appropriate).
 - Analysis or methodological use (as appropriate).
 - Evidence bearing on the argument, theory, or rival hypotheses, models, or theories introduced (as appropriate).
 - Organization of the manuscript.
 - Communication or written expression in the manuscript.

At the end of a review, the reviewer should provide his/her summary evaluation and her/his overall recommendation:

- *Summary Evaluation*
 - **Excellent** – the manuscript is superb in all respects.
 - **Very Good** – the manuscript is very good in several respects with few minor and fixable problems
 - **Good** – the manuscript is good in several respects, has several minor but fixable problems and possibly one or more (un) fixable problems
 - **Fair** – the manuscript is inadequate in most respects and has many minor and major, and largely unfixable, problems
 - **Poor** – the manuscript is inferior in all respects.
- *Overall Recommendation*
 - **Must publish as is.**
 - **Must publish with minor revisions** (with particular revisions stated in the review).
 - **Revise and Resubmit** – must include a statement of particular improvements. It should be made only when the research and manuscript fundamentals are sound (e.g., theory and hypotheses, and the models or models, as appropriate, are strong, the dataset, as appropriate, is complete, and the literature is consulted), and the manuscript has a >85% probability-of-successful revision.
 - **Decline to publish.**

Political Research Quarterly

1. Does the manuscript make a significant contribution to knowledge or theory-building within political science?
2. Does the manuscript address an important social question or political problem? If not, could the presentation be reframed in a way that would better highlight its broader social relevance?
3. Is this manuscript of sufficiently broad interest to be published in PRQ? Would it be more appropriately placed in a specialized journal? Could you recommend other journals that the author(s) should consider?
4. Does the author(s) utilize methods appropriate to the research question? Would the discussion be more comprehensive, and of greater interest to the discipline, if research within other methodological traditions was also addressed?
5. Is the writing clear, well-organized, and free of unnecessary jargon?
6. Are there specific revisions you would regard as necessary for publication?

Recommendation

- Publish in its present form with only routine copyediting
- Publish contingent on minor changes; further external review not necessary
- Likely to be publishable after minor revision
- May be publishable after substantial revision
- Requires fundamental revision to be considered for publication
- Not publishable even with fundamental revision
- Inappropriate for PRQ

NOTE: Look beyond typographical errors, misspelled words and more trivial concerns.

Is the theory sound and well reasoned?

Did the author(s) test the hypotheses proposed?

Does the evidence support the claims made?

Are there obvious or subtle flaws in the research design or methods used?

Does the paper justify its importance?