

BAK13: PUBLIC OPINION AND VOTING

Summer 2021

Instructor: Daniel Weitzel	Time: Wednesday 13:15 – 14:45
Email: daniel.weitzel@univie.ac.at	Place: Online

Office Hours: After class, or by appointment, or post your questions in the forum provided for this purpose on Moodle.

Main References: This course is centered around reading recent and seminal research on public opinion and voting. Most of the assigned readings are articles published in prominent political science journals. The field of public opinion is ever evolving and does so at a rapid pace. Hence, there is not really one good textbook that covers the entire subject satisfactorily. However, I am providing a short list of books that represent a selection of important works. You can use these references to supplement your required reading for this course.

1. Berinsky, Adam (ed.), 2012. *New Directions in Public Opinion*, New York: Routledge.
2. Zaller, John, 1992. *The Nature and Origins of Mass Opinion*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
3. Tourangeau, Roger, Lance Rips and Kenneth Rasinski, 2000. *The Psychology of Survey Response*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
4. Schuman, Howard and Stanley Presser, 1996. *Questions and Answers in Attitude Surveys*, London: Sage.
5. Alvarez, R. Michael and John Brehm. 2002. *Hard Choices, Easy Answers*, Princeton: Princeton University Press.

A list of journal articles or book chapters is provided for each week. These are all required reading for that week and so the work requirements for BAK13 Public Opinion and Voting can be significant.

Objectives: The goal of this seminar is to introduce students to recent and seminal work on public opinion and voting. We will explore debates about the origin, nature, measurement, and analysis of public opinion in the forms of attitudes and behavior. Public opinion is a field in which academic research and real-world application are closely connected. The design of this course reflects this connection and we will dedicate time to understanding the academic debate as well as learning practical skills to conduct empirical research with public opinion data. The theoretical knowledge about the current research as well as the practical skills of analyzing data are required skills for anyone seeking employment in the polling industry or wishing to conduct further research in the fields of political attitudes and behavior. They will also enable students to become critical consumer of reporting about public opinion.

The seminar falls into two broad sections: In the first section (Sessions 1-9), we will read and discuss the nature and origins of public opinion, examining different perspectives on how attitudes are formed, structured and influenced. In the second section (Sessions 10-15) we will deal with theoretical discussions about measuring attitudes and behavior in surveys and learn to analyze survey data with the statistical programming language R. The applied sections of the seminar in the final few weeks will allow students to practice the most important statistical techniques for handling opinion data, generating analyses that could serve as the basis for their later dissertation.

Prerequisites: Students are required to have an appropriate command of English that will allow them to read the assigned readings, write all class assignments, and participate in the class discussion.

Grading Policy: Grading is based on three components. In order to complete the course with a positive grade students have to pass all four grading components with a positive assessment. In cases of suspected plagiarism you may be called upon to reasonably demonstrate that any work you have submitted is your own. Submission of each assignment on time is mandatory. You must demonstrate an appropriate use of academic sources and the capacity to look for scientifically relevant sources.

- Participation (10%): Preparation of the assigned readings ahead of every session (students will be assigned weekly participation assignments, only two assignments can be missed if you want to pass the class). Assignments for a given lecture must be submitted before the lecture starts. Late submissions will not be accepted.
- Three Discussion Papers (25%): Students will write three single-spaced one page discussion papers in which they engage at least two of the weekly readings (You advance a hypothesis or an argument that is based on and grounded in the assigned readings).
- Final paper (65%): At the end of the course, you will be required to write a final paper of 2500-3000 words. Joint work is *NOT* allowed for the final assignment. I strongly recommend that students make use of the empirical sections of the class to write a paper centered around a quantitative analysis of a research hypothesis. Deadline for handing in the final assignment: TBD.

Software: You will be required to analyze survey data using the statistical programming language R in the integrated development environment (IDE) **R Studio**. No prior experience with statistical analysis in general or R more specifically is required.

- R is a very powerful and capable free and open source programming language for statistical computing. R Studio is an excellent integrated development environment (IDE) for R that makes writing code and analyzing data a lot easier. Please follow the instructions [here](#) to install both R and R Studio.
- Below are free online resources that can help you understand the program:
 1. James Long and Paul Teetor. *R cookbook* (2nd edition), O'Reilly Media, 2019. Available as paperback and ebook or for free at <https://rc2e.com/>.
 2. Hadley Wickham and Garrett Grolemund, *R for Data Science: Import, Tidy, Transform, Visualize, and Model Data*, O'Reilly Media, 2017. Available as paperback and ebook or for free at <https://r4ds.had.co.nz/>

Data: We will use survey data from the Austrian Corona Panel Project (ACPP) to analyze public opinion in Sessions 12, 14, and 15 of this course. The ACPP scientific use data file is available on the [AUSSDA archive](#). Students need to register and download the data themselves.

Data set citation: Kittel, Bernhard; Kritzing, Sylvia; Boomgaarden, Hajo; Prainsack, Barbara; Eberl, Jakob-Moritz; Kalleitner, Fabian; Lebernegg, Noëlle S.; Partheymüller, Julia; Plescia, Carolina; Schiestl, David W.; Schlogl, Lukas, 2020, "Austrian Corona Panel Project (SUF edition)"

Class Policy:

- Regular attendance is essential and expected. You can only miss two participation assignments.
- All homework and exam submissions must be through *turnitin* and you must submit your write up and your code (if applicable).
- The material in the class can be challenging and difficult at first. It is hence of utmost importance that you follow the seminar closely, prepare for the class, do the homework, and always contribute to an open and engaging class environment. I strongly encourage students to ask questions. If you don't understand something or are stuck on a problem you are usually not alone.
- The Moodle page has a Forum for students to ask questions, help each other, and interact. I expect professional and courteous behavior that adheres to the rules of academic honesty.
- Due to the Coronavirus I expect that issues will arise over the course of the semester. The course is already designed to give students maximum flexibility. They have one week to submit their participation assignments and sufficient time will be given for homework and the final assignment. Lectures covering the use of R will be recorded and all scripts will be made available to the students. Please reach out to me as soon as possible (i.e. before the issue arises) if you encounter problems that might put your academic success in this class at risk.
- Students are not required to activate their video camera in Zoom sessions. However, an active participation in the discussion, the chat, and in in-class activities is required.

Academic Honesty: Lack of knowledge of the academic honesty policy is not a reasonable explanation for a violation. Exercises and class papers will be examined from violations of the university's academic honesty policy.

Tentative Course Outline:**Session 1:** Introduction to public opinion research 2021-03-10

1. Converse, Philip, 1987. "Changing conceptions of public opinion in the political process". *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 50 th Anniversary Supplement, 51.
2. Tourangeau, Roger, Lance Rips and Kenneth Rasinski, 2000. "The Psychology of Survey Response", Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Ch. 1.
3. Alvarez, R. Michael and John Brehm. 2002. "Hard Choices, Easy Answers", Princeton: Princeton University Press. Ch. 1.

Additional Readings

1. Blumer, Herbert, 1948. "Public opinion and public opinion polling". *American Sociological Review*, 13: 542-54.
2. Lippmann, Walter, 1922. "Public Opinion". New York: Macmillan, chs. 1 and 13.
3. Herbst, Susan, 2012. "The history and meaning of public opinion", in Berinsky, Adam (ed.), *New Directions in Public Opinion*, New York: Routledge
4. Clawson, Rosalee, and Zoe Oxley, 2013. "Public Opinion: Democratic Ideals, Democratic Practice". Los Angeles, CA: Sage/CQ Press, ch. 1 (excluding appendix).
5. Maio, Gregory R., and Geoffrey Haddock, 2010. "The Psychology of Attitudes and Attitude Change". London: Sage, ch. 1

Session 2: Origins of public opinion 1: Biological 2021-03-17

1. Carmen, Ira, 2007. "Genetic configurations of political phenomena: New theories, new methods". *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 614: 34-55
2. Alford, John R., Carolyn L. Funk and John R. Hibbing. 2008. "Beyond Liberals and Conservatives to Political Genotypes and Phenotypes." *Perspectives on Politics* 6: 321- 328.
3. Charney, Evan. 2008. "Genes and Ideologies." *Perspectives on Politics* 6: 299-319 (see also the following debate with Hannagan & Hatemi).

Additional Readings

1. Petersen, M. B., Sznycer, D., Cosmides, L. and Tooby, J., 2012. "Who deserves help? Evolutionary psychology, social emotions and public opinion about welfare". *Political Psychology*, 33(3), 395-418.
2. Merolla, Jennifer L., Guy Burnett, Kenneth V. Pyle, Sheila Ahmadi and Paul J. Zak, 2013. "Oxytocin and the biological basis for interpersonal and political trust", *Political Behavior*.

Session 3: Origins of public opinion 2: Psychological 2021-03-24

1. 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): 111-33.
2. Jost, John T., Jack Glaser, Arie W. Kruglanski, and Frank J. Sulloway. 2003. "Political Conservatism as Motivated Social Cognition." *Psychological Bulletin* 129: 339-375.
3. Burke, Brian L., Spee Kosloff and Mark J. Landau, 2013. "Death goes to the polls: A meta-analysis of mortality salience effects on political attitudes". *Political Psychology*, 34(2), 183-200.

Additional Readings

1. Markus, George, W Russell Neuman and Michael Mackuen, 2000. "Affective Intelligence and Political Judgement". Chicago: University of Chicago Press, chs. 4 and 6.
2. Rokeach, Milton, 1973. "The Nature of Human Values". New York: Free Press, chs, 1, 2 and 4.
3. Altemeyer, Bob, 1988. "Enemies of Freedom: Understanding Right-Wing Authoritarianism". San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, chs. 1-2.

Session 4: Origins of public opinion 3: Social 2021-04-14

1. Tajfel, Henri. 1982. "The Social Psychology of Intergroup Relations." *Annual Review of Psychology* 33: 1-39.
2. Huckfeldt, Robert, Paul Allen Beck, Russell Dalton, and Jeffrey Levine. 1995. "Political Environments, Cohesive Social Groups, and the Communication of Public Opinion." *American Journal of Political Science*, 39(4): 1025-54.
3. Olson, L. R., Cadge, W. and Harrison, J. T., 2006. "Religion and Public Opinion about Same-Sex Marriage". *Social Science Quarterly*, 87: 340-360.

Additional Readings

1. Kinder, Donald R., and Nicholas Winter. 2001. "Exploring the Racial Divide: Blacks, Whites and Opinion on National Policy." *American Journal of Political Science*, 45(2): 439-56.
2. Christopher Achen. 1992. "Social psychology, demographic variables, and linear regression: Breaking the iron triangle in voting research." *Political Behavior* 14(2): 195-211.

Session 5: The minimalist view of public opinion 2021-04-21

1. Converse, Philip E. 1964. "The nature of belief systems in mass publics." In David Apter, *Ideology and its Discontents*. Free Press of Glencoe, pp. 206-261.
2. Zaller, John, 1992. "The Nature and Origins of Mass Opinion", Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, chs. 4-5.
3. Luskin, Robert. 1987. "Measuring political sophistication". *American Journal of Political Science*, 31(4), 856-99.

Additional Readings

1. Wilson, Timothy D.; Hodges, Sara D., 1992. "Attitudes as temporary constructions", in Martin, Leonard L. and Tesser, Abraham (eds), *The construction of social judgments*. Hillsdale, NJ, England: Lawrence Erlbaum, pp. 37-65
2. Schwarz, Norbert and Bohner, Gerd, 2002. "The construction of attitudes", in Tesser, A. and Schwarz, N. (eds.): *Blackwell Handbook of Social Psychology: Intraindividual Processes*, Volume 1, Oxford: Blackwell.

Session 6: The reaction against minimalism 2021-04-28

1. Achen, Christopher, 1975. "Mass political attitudes and the survey response". *American Political Science Review*, 69: 1218-31.
2. Sniderman, Paul M., Michael G. Hagen, Philip E. Tetlock and Henry E. Brady, 1986. "Reasoning chains: Causal models of policy reasoning in mass publics". *British Journal of Political Science*, 16(4): 405-30.
3. Luskin, Robert C. and John G. Bullock. "'Don't Know' Means 'Don't Know': DK Responses and the Public's Level of Political Knowledge." *Journal of Politics*, 73 (2011): 547-557.

Additional Readings

1. Druckman, James N., Cari Lynn Hennessy, Kristi St. Charles, and Jonathan Webber. 2010. "Competing Rhetoric Over Time: Frames versus Cues". *Journal of Politics*, 72 (1): 136-148.
2. Arceneaux, Kevin. 2012. "Cognitive Biases and the Strength of Political Arguments". *American Journal of Political Science*, 56 (2): 271-285.
3. 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): 309-26.
4. Sniderman, Paul M., Brody, Richard and Tetlock, Philip E., 1991. "Reasoning and Choice", Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, ch. 2
5. Page, Benjamin and Robert Shapiro, 1992. "The Rational Public". Chicago: University of Chicago Press, chs. 1-2.

Session 7: Shaping and shifting opinion2021.05.05

1. Zaller, John, 1992. "The Nature and Origins of Mass Opinion", Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, ch. 7.
2. Druckman, Jamie N. and Thomas Leeper, 2012. "Is public opinion stable? Resolving the micro-macro disconnect in studies of public opinion". *Daedalus*, 141(1): 50-68.
3. Davis, Darren W. and Brian D. Silver, 2004. "Civil liberties vs. security: Public opinion in the context of the terrorist attacks on America". *American Journal of Political Science*, 48(1): 28-46.

Additional Readings

1. Olson, J. and Zanna, M., 1993. "Attitudes and attitude change", *Annual Review of Psychology*, 44: 117-154.
2. Herrmann, R. K., Tetlock, P. E. and Visser, P. S., 1999. "Mass public decisions to go to war". *American Political Science Review*, 93, 553-73.
3. Luskin, Robert, James S. Fishkin and Roger Jowell, 2002. "Considered opinions: Deliberative polling in Britain". *British Journal of Political Science*, 32(3): 455-87.

Session 8: Shapers of public opinion 1: The Media2021.05.12

1. Berinsky, Adam and David R. Kinder, 2006. "Making Sense of Issues Through Media Frames: Understanding the Kosovo Crisis". *Journal of Politics*, 68(3): 640-56.
2. Soroka, Stuart, 2006. "Good News and Bad News: Asymmetric Responses to Economic Information". *Journal of Politics*, 68(2): 372-85.
3. Druckman, James N. and Michael Parkin, 2005. "The Impact of Media Bias: How Editorial Slant Affects Voters". *Journal of Politics*, 67(4): 1030-49.

Additional Readings

1. Zaller, John R., 1996. "The Myth of Massive Media Impact Revived: New Support for a Discredited Idea", in Diana Mutz, Paul M. Sniderman and Richard Brody (eds.), *Political Persuasion and Attitude Change*, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 17-78.
2. Morris, Jonathan S., 2007. "Slanted objectivity? Perceived media bias, cable news exposure and political attitudes". *Social Science Quarterly*, 88(3): 707-28.
3. DellaVigna, Stefano and Ethan Kaplan, 2007. "The Fox News effect: Media bias and voting". *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 122(3): 1187-1234.

Session 9: Shapers of public opinion 2: Political Parties 2021.05.19

1. Zaller, John, 1992. "The Nature and Origins of Mass Opinion", Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, chs. 6, 12.
2. Ray, Leonard, 2003. "When Parties Matter: The Conditional Influence of Party Positions on Voter Opinions about European Integration". *Journal of Politics*, 65(4): 978-94
3. Bullock, John G. 2011. "Elite Influence on Public Opinion in an Informed Electorate." *American Political Science Review*, 105(3): 496-515.

Additional Readings

1. Nicholson, Stephen P., 2012. "Polarizing cues". *American Journal of Political Science*, 56(1): 52-66.
2. Lau, Richard R., Lee Sigelman and I. B. Rovner, 2007. "The effects of negative political campaigns: A meta-analytic reassessment". *Journal of Politics*, 69(4): 1176-1209.
3. Evans, Geoffrey, and Sarah Butt, 2007. "Explaining Change in British Public Opinion on the European Union: Top Down or Bottom Up?" *Acta Politica*, 42(2), 173-190.

Session 10: How respondents answer survey questions 2021.05.26

1. Zaller, John R. 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.
2. Krosnick, Jon, 1991. "Response strategies for coping with the cognitive demands of attitude measures in surveys". *Applied Cognitive Psychology*, 5, 213-36.
3. Nisbett, Richard E., and Timothy D. Wilson, 1977. "Telling more than we can know: Verbal reports on mental processes". *Psychological Review*, 84, 231-59

Additional Readings

1. Tourangeau, Roger, Rips, Lance, and Rasinski, Kenneth, 2000. "The Psychology of Survey Response", Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, chs. 1-2.
2. Wilson, Timothy D. and Richard E. Nisbett, 1978. "The Accuracy of Verbal Reports About the Effects of Stimuli on Evaluations and Behavior". *Social Psychology*, 41(2), 118-131.
3. Galesic, Mirta, Roger Tourangeau, Mick P. Couper, Frederick G. Conrad (2008). "Eye-tracking Data: New Insights on Response Order Effects and Other Cognitive Shortcuts in Survey Responding." *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 72(5): 892-913.
4. Weisberg, Herbert F., 2005. "The Total Survey Error Approach". Chicago: University of Chicago Press, ch. 5.

Session 11: Measuring behavior in surveys2021.06.02

1. Atkeson, L. (1999). "Sure, I voted for the winner! Overreport of the primary vote for the party nominee in the NES", *Political Behavior*, 21, 197-215
2. Stocke, V. (2007), "Response privacy and elapsed time since election day as determinants for vote overreporting", *International Journal of Public Opinion Research*, 19, 237-46.
3. Rehm J., Greenfield, T., Walsh, G. et al. (1999), "Assessment methods for alcohol consumption, prevalence of high risk drinking, and harm: A sensitivity analysis". *International Journal of Epidemiology*, 28, 219-24.

Additional Readings

1. Tourangeau, R., Rips, L., and Rasinski, K. (2000), "The Psychology of Survey Response", chs. 3-5.
2. Schwarz, Norbert, 1999. "Self-reports: How questions shape the answers". *American Psychologist*, 54(2), 93-105.

Session 12: Analyzing behavior using survey data in R 2021.06.09**Session 13:** Measuring attitudes in surveys 2021.06.16

1. Schuldt, J. P., Konrath, S. H., and Schwarz, N. (2011), "'Global warming' or 'climate change'? Whether the planet is warming depends on question wording", *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 75(1), 115-24.
2. Streb, M., Burrell, B., Frederick, B. and Genovese, M. (2008), "Social desirability effects and support for a female American president", *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 72, 76-89.
3. Berinsky, Adam J. 1999. "The Two Faces of Public Opinion". *American Journal of Political Science*, 43(4): 1209-30.

Additional Readings

1. Schuman, H. and Presser, S. (1996), "Questions and Answers in Attitude Surveys", London: Sage, chs. 9-10.
2. Tourangeau, Roger, Rips, Lance, and Rasinski, Kenneth, 2000. "The Psychology of Survey Response", Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, chs. 6-7.
3. Alvarez, R. Michael and John Brehm, 2002. "Hard Choices, Easy Answers", Princeton: Princeton University Press, ch. 10.

Session 14: Analyzing attitudes using survey data in R 2021.06.23

1. Christopher Achen. 1992. "Social psychology, demographic variables, and linear regression: Breaking the iron triangle in voting research." *Political Behavior* 14(2): 195-211.

Session 15: More advanced survey data analysis in R 2021.06.30

Additional Literature: In case you want to go further I can recommend the following books to you:

- Arceneaux, Kevin and Martin Johnson. 2013. *Changing Minds or Changing Channels?: Partisan News in an Age of Choice*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Ellis, Christopher and James A. Stimson. 2012. *Ideology in America*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.
- Kahneman, Daniel. 2011. *Thinking, Fast and Slow*. Farrar, Straus, Giroux.
- Kinder, Donald R. and Cindy D. Kam. 2010. *Us Against Them: Ethnocentric Foundations of American Opinion*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Gabriel S. Lenz. 2012. *Follow the Leader? How Voters Respond to Politicians' Policies and Performance*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Nisbett, Richard. 2004. *The Geography of Thought: How Asians and Westerners Think Differently ... and Why*. New York, NY:Free Press.
- Rolfe, Meredith. 2013. *Voter Turnout: A Social Theory of Political Participation*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.
- Sinclair, Betsy. 2012. *The Social Citizen: Peer Networks and Political Behavior*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.