

Public Opinion and Political Psychology

POL 715

131 Deupree Hall

1:00 pm - 3:30 pm

Thursday

Contact Information

Miles T. Armaly
Assistant Professor
Department of Political Science
Deupree Hall 233
Email: mtarmaly@olemiss.edu

Office Hours: After class. Or email me. Or just find me.

Course Description

In this seminar, we will review and evaluate studies of mass public opinion and political psychology. By and large, we will not differentiate between these two topics (although I suspect people in each field would take issue with that). There are two major reasons these topics are worthy of intense study. First, one justification for electoral democracy is the inherent value of popular sovereignty. If we can understand what, how, and why Americans believe the things they do about politics, perhaps we can understand the calculations one makes in the realm of self-governance. Second, the topics are worthy of merit on their own. In the last half century, social scientists have made great strides in determining the ways ordinary citizens think about, understand, and react to the political world around them. Public opinion is not merely a summary of individual's attitudes about policies, issues, or political actors. Instead, it is a powerful force that works to express the preferences of ordinary individuals and constrain the actions of political elites.

We will discuss the basic elements of public opinion, focus on measurement, highlight the psychological underpinnings of public opinion, and detail the consequences of particular attitudes. There is, of course, work to be done. My hope is that this seminar will highlight some promising avenues for future expansions of American public opinion and political psychology. Students are expected to be active participants in this seminar. As you can see below, a major component of your grade is active participation and discussion leading. Minimally, all students should complete the required readings on each topic before our relevant class meeting. We will by no means ignore seminal works in this class, but we simply do not have time to read all of the fantastic work that has been produced on each topic. If at all possible, it would be helpful to examine some of the additional works listed in this syllabus, and seek out others on your own.

Course Materials

All readings for this class can be found via the University of Mississippi library's electronic resources. Otherwise, they will be disseminated via Blackboard.

Course Requirements

WEEKLY ASSIGNMENTS (40%)

There will be two weekly assignments that are due no later than 10:30 am on the days we meet. They can be delivered via email or to my department mail box. Critical memos must also be delivered via email to the student in charge of class discussion that week.

You are **NOT** required to turn in article summaries – but are still required to turn in critical memos – when you are (a) leading class discussion that week (per Leading and Participation in Class Discussion below) or (b) I have assigned another writing assignment due that week (per Other Writing Assignments below).

Finally, you can select one week – any week – where you do not submit article summaries. You do not need to approve it with me beforehand.

- Article Summaries: Each week, each student will write an article summary for each of that week's required readings (i.e., if we have 4 required readings, you will produce 4 article summaries). These summaries should answer the following questions:
 1. What is the article's contribution? What does it do? Answer in a single sentence
 2. Identify the article's dependent variable, key independent variable(s), and each null and alternative hypothesis
 3. Briefly summarize the motivation and reasoning behind the article's research question and hypothesis (the theory) and data selection (if relevant)
 4. Briefly summarize the results (do they support the hypotheses?) and offer any specific criticisms/comments you have (broader comments about the research area as a whole should be covered in the critical memo, not the article summaries. See below)

Each article summary should be no longer than one side of a single sheet of paper, double-spaced, with 12-point font and one-inch margins. In other words, be concise. These will be evaluated on how accurate, concise, and informative they are. The purpose of these summaries is twofold. First, they are a tool for me to assess factual learning. Second, brief summaries are helpful studying tools, *especially* for those of you who will take comprehensive exams.

- Critical Memo: Each student will also be responsible for a weekly memo critical of the collection of research we read for the week. This memo is also not to exceed one page in length. To be clear, you should produce ONE memo each week, not a separate memo for each research article. A satisfactory memo will include several components. In particular, it will:

1. Begin with a critical question that you would use if you were to run that day's discussion
2. Include observations about why the/a question addressed in the readings is important
3. If applicable, identify shortcomings in the research area
4. Explain what points you would hope to elicit during the discussion
5. Discuss how such points are connected to that week's readings (and possibly any other readings in the course).

Memos should not summarize, but should be critical reviews of the research as a whole. That is, your memo should pay attention to the theme of the week's research. What makes sense about this particular area of research? What doesn't? Are the theories relevant? Are there measurement issues? Does the research tend to use appropriate data? How should shortcomings be addressed? Exceptional memos will also describe a potential research project (or projects) related to the topic for a given week.

LEADING AND PARTICIPATION IN CLASS DISCUSSION (25%)

Class participation is the most important element of your grade. This grade is not a function of how often you talk or how frequently you are "right" or "wrong" in class. Instead, it will reflect your ability to provide reason to and insight on the course material and contribute to class discussion. My intent is for you to develop and express a worldview on public opinion and political psychology research. I am interested in *your* perspective. Your class participation grade will reflect your personal ownership of that perspective. I'd rather you defend a "wrong" perspective to the ends of the earth rather than be "right" by regurgitating another's worldview (or by guessing).

Each member of the class will lead discussion at least once. This will be arranged in advance and we will discuss this in further detail in class. In short, there is no right or wrong way to lead class, provided that we discuss the readings and the themes they elicit.

FINAL PAPER (25%)

There are a variety of students at different levels in this course. I will tailor the final paper to each individual and his/her specific circumstances. I will meet with each of you briefly during the first few weeks of class so that we can discuss and decide upon a set of requirements for you.

More advanced students are expected to produce unique research papers that utilize data. I recognize that not all students are primarily interested in public opinion, or even American politics; we can figure out something that works for you. Newer students will be expected to produce, at the very least, detailed research proposals.

OTHER WRITING ASSIGNMENTS (10%)

From time to time, I will ask you to write a short – maybe somewhere in the 2-4 page range – paper on a particular topic. I expect to assign 2 or 3 such papers. Only one appears in the schedule below – in week 3 – and others will be announced a week or two ahead of time. More information will be given about these when the time comes. The purpose of these assignments is identical to that of the article summaries and critical memos, but will be used when I wish to elicit certain attitudes and opinions from you.

Grades

The grading scale is as follows:

| | | | |
|----|---------|----|--------|
| A | 93-100% | A- | 90-92% |
| B+ | 87-89% | B | 83-86% |
| B- | 80-82% | C | < 80% |

As a general rule in this seminar, B- and C grades are a cause for concern.

Course Policies

GENERAL STATEMENT

You are responsible for informing yourself of all departmental, college, and university policies governing your conduct in this course. This includes, but is not limited to, policies relating to plagiarism/academic integrity and the accommodation of students with documented disabilities.

COURSE COMMUNICATIONS

Updates and additional materials will be sent out via email or our course's Blackboard page. Please alter your Blackboard settings such that you are notified when announcements are posted.

INSTRUCTOR AVAILABILITY

If you have any questions, quips, queries, qualms, comments, or concerns, please contact me via email. I will endeavor to respond to all email messages within 12 hours on weekdays and 24 hours on weekends. If you have not received a response within 24 hours, please resend your message. For time sensitive matters, resend your message after 12 hours.

I will be available immediately following class. But, I'm in my office a lot, so just come see me. If you can't find me, I'm generally pretty responsive to email and am flexible in regard to meeting times and locations.

ATTENDANCE POLICY

I don't have one. You are expected to come to class. I recognize things come up (illness, kids, etc.), so just keep me in the loop.

GRADE APPEALS

All grading concerns should be brought to me in person or submitted via email with a concise statement expressing why you believe your grade should be altered. All concerns – arithmetic or otherwise – must be raised within *one week* of when the grade was posted. No grade challenges will be entertained after one week. I reserve the right to *reduce points* on any grade appeal.

ACADEMIC HONESTY

This course has a zero tolerance policy in regards to academic dishonesty. Academic dishonesty is defined as conduct that violates any of the following principles: (a) supplying or using work or answers that are not one's own (this includes mis-citing a source); (b) providing or accepting assistance with completing assignments or examinations beyond collaborative learning; or (c) interfering through any means with another's academic work. Collaborative learning (i.e., working or studying with your peers) in this course is encouraged, but if you study together, you must produce your own work. This includes not submitting verbatim or near-verbatim answers to assignments. To do so violates both the spirit and the letter of academic integrity. The penalties for dishonesty will vary from getting 0 points on an individual assignment up to getting a 0.0 grade for the entire semester. All instances of academic dishonesty will be reported to your college and department.

If you are not sure a certain action will be considered academically dishonest, it is in your best interest to assume it is until told otherwise. **Please feel free to ask if any action will be considered academic dishonesty in this course.** And, remember that what may be acceptable in this course may be inappropriate in another, and vice versa. Additionally, consult the University *M Book* for more information.

STATEMENT ON DISABILITIES

The University of Mississippi is committed to the creation of inclusive learning environments for all students. If there are aspects of the instruction or design of this course that result in barriers to your full inclusion and participation or to accurate assessment of your achievement, please contact the course instructor as soon as possible. Barriers may include, but are not necessarily limited to, timed exams and in-class assignments, difficulty with the acquisition of lecture content, inaccessible web content or the use of non-captioned or non-transcribed video and audio files. You must also contact Student Disability services at 662-915-7128 so that office 1) provide you with an Instructor Notification form, 2) facilitate the removal of barriers and 3) ensure that you have equal access to the same opportunities for success that are available to all students.

All reasonable accommodations will be made in this course. I encourage students not only to take advantages of these services when appropriate, but to inform the instructor of any qualifying consideration *as soon as possible*. Accommodations for disabilities should be arranged well in advance of any student assessment. Please see University Student Disability Services for more information.

Course Schedule

Weekly reading assignments are listed below. Reading assignments are listed according to the day on which the subject will be discussed. Thus, you should read the assigned material *prior* to the date listed.

I encourage you to read the materials in the order they're listed.

The material is broken up into two major categories, the second far outnumbering the first. We will begin by asking what, exactly, is public opinion? How do we define it? And, what sorts of ways should we measure it? What's an attitude? A belief? Then, each week we will dive into a particular source of public opinion, such as partisanship, racial attitudes, and misperceptions/conspiracies.

Below, underlined text highlights the theme of the week and is followed by a few thoughts and/or questions about that theme. You may find it helpful to keep these blurbs in mind when writing your critical memos (although recall I care about *your* worldview).

1. **Introductory Material:** Before we ask what influences public opinion, we should establish a baseline about what, exactly, we are studying.
 - Week 1 (August 23): Intro and Orientation. We will approach the study of public opinion and political psychology using a very specific theoretical orientation. That orientation is beautifully laid out in the seminal work *The American Voter*. Although that section repeatedly refers to studying political behavior and/or voting behavior – a topic we will not broach in this course – the principles it espouses apply equally to the study of mass public opinion. This orientation is by no means the only approach one can take when studying public opinion. In my view, it is the one that yields the most consistent, informative, and replicable information. Nearly all (if not all) of the research we read in this course will rely on this orientation or a variant thereof.
 - Campbell, Angus, Philip E. Converse, Warren E. Miller, and Donald E. Stokes. 1960. “Theoretical Orientation.” *The American Voter*. University of Chicago Press. (on Blackboard).
 - Week 2 (August 30): Basic definitions and historical views of public opinion. What is public opinion? What things – behaviors, opinions, attitudes, etc. – are “political?” Where do we draw the line between opinion and public opinion? Has the concept changed?

- Converse, Philip E. 1987. “Changing Conceptions of Public Opinion in the Political Process.” *Public Opinion Quarterly* 51: S12-S24.
- Herbst, Susan. 2012. “The History and Meaning of Public Opinion” in *New Directions in Public Opinion*, ed. Adam J. Berinsky. Routledge pages 19-31.
- Pew Research Center. April 25, 2013. “Civil Engagement in the Digital Age.”
- Igo, Sarah E. 2007. *The Averaged American: Surveys, Citizens, and the Making of a Mass Public*.
- Lippmann, Walter. 1922. *Public Opinion*. Chapter 1.
- Week 3 (September 6): Attitudes, preferences, beliefs, and behavior. What, exactly, should we study? How do those things – attitudes, preferences, beliefs, opinions, etc. – differ, and do those differences matter? Can political scientists differentiate those concepts, accurately measure them, and bring them to bear on studies of other outcomes of interest (e.g., behavior)? Perhaps most importantly, do attitudes, preferences, opinions, etc. actually exist in the minds of ordinary citizens, or are they merely constructed by surveys and researchers?
 - **FIRST PAPER DUE**
 - Zaller, John and Stanley Feldman. 1992. “A Simple Theory of the Survey Response: Answering Questions Versus Revealing Preferences.” *American Journal of Political Science* 36: 579-616.
 - Berinsky, Adam J. 1999. “The Two Faces of Public Opinion.” *American Journal of Political Science* 43(4): 1209-1230.
 - Kahneman, Daniel, Ilana Ritov, and David Schkade. 1999. “Economic Preferences or Attitude Expression?” *Journal of Risk and Uncertainty*. 19(1-3): 203-235.
 - Bartels, Larry M. 2003. “Democracy with Attitudes” in *Electoral Democracy*, eds. Michael MacKuen and George Rabinowitz. University of Michigan Press. Pages 48-82. [LINK](#)
 - Miller, Joanne M. and David A.M. Peterson. 2004. “Theoretical and Empirical Implications of Attitude Strength.” *Journal of Politics* 66: 847-867.
 - Barabas, Jason and Jennifer Jerit. 2010. “Are Survey Experiments Externally Valid?” *American Political Science Review* 104(2): 226-242.

2. **The Sources of Public Opinion:** From here on out, each week we will focus on a particular set of properties that may lead to, influence, or otherwise relate to public opinion and/or political psychology. Be certain to focus on what the presented research can tell us, what it cannot, and whether there is consensus on that property’s influence.

- Week 4 (September 13): Political socialization. Were you an informed voter at 18? Probably not. But you had some ideas about politics. Where did those ideas come from? What about the values that underlie many political decisions? Family, education, peer groups, and other parts of one’s formative years play a role in one’s beliefs about politics.

- Jennings, M. Kent and Richard G. Niemi. 1968. “The Transmission of Political Values from Parent to Child.” *American Political Science Review* 62(1): 169-184.
- Jacoby, William G. 2006. “Value Choices and American Public Opinion.” *American Journal of Political Science* 50(3): 706-723.
- Erikson, Robert S. and Laura Stoker. 2011. “Caught in the Draft: The Effects of Vietnam Draft Lottery Status on Political Attitudes.” *American Political Science Review* 105(2): 221-237.
- Highton, Benjamin. 2009. “Revisiting the Relationship between Educational Attainment and Political Sophistication.” *Journal of Politics* 71(4): 1564-1576.
- **Week 5 (MUST BE RESCHEDULED):** Knowledge, heuristics, cues, etc. Basic democratic theory suggests that citizens should make informed decisions about the politics that govern their lives. A major criticism of American democracy has been the relative lack of sophistication among average citizens. So, what do people know about politics? Are their opinions stable? What types of information do they bring to bear on political decisions? The answers vary. One important thing to consider when reading this research is what the relevant baseline should be. What is an “informed” citizen? Do researchers always do a good job of determining who is and isn’t “informed?” Finally, we will conclude with an article that asks whether there are *actually* normative implications to low knowledge.
 - *Reacquaint yourself with Highton’s article from last week.*
 - Luskin, Robert C. 1990. “Explaining Political Sophistication.” *Political Behavior* 12(4): 331-361.
 - Feldman, Stanley and John Zaller. 1992. “The Political Culture of Ambivalence: Ideological Responses to the Welfare State.” *American Journal of Political Science* 36(1): 268-307.
 - Lupia, Arthur. 1994. “Shortcuts versus Encyclopedias: Information and Voting Behavior in California Insurance Reform Elections.
 - Lodge, Milton, Marco R. Steenbergen, and Shawn Brau. 1995. “The Responsive Voter: Campaign Information and the Dynamics of Candidate Evaluations.” *American Political Science Review* 89(2): 309-326.
 - Druckman, James N., Jordan Fein, and Thomas J. Leeper. 2012. “A Source of Bias in Public Opinion Stability.” *American Political Science Review* 106(2): 430-454.
 - Gibson, James L. and Gregory A. Caldeira. 2008. “Knowing the Supreme Court? A Reconsideration of Public Ignorance of the High Court.” *The Journal of Politics* 71(2): 429-441.
 - Lau, Richard R. and David P. Redlawsk. 1997. “Voting Correctly.” *The American Political Science Review* 91(3): 585-598.

* This article asks whether knowledge – or the lack thereof – matters in the behavioral realm. It’s not public opinion, per se, but the “so what” question is answered here.

Additional Readings:

- Delli-Carpini, Michael X. and Scott Keeter. 1996. “What Americans Know About Politics.”
- Week 6 (September 27): Ideology: The most common conception of ideology is a system of beliefs and ideas that forms the basis of one’s politics. An overarching worldview that, in theory, links all facets of political life (e.g., values, beliefs, votes). In reality, do Americans have ideologies? If so, do they look like the “gold standard?” Is the left-right, liberal-conservative ideological continuum a useful tool to understand complex beliefs about the political world? The answer is far from straightforward and has changed over time. Again, it is important to consider our baseline. What does it mean for an individual to be “constrained?” What does constraint look like when various political stimuli vary in their levels of ideological content?
 - Converse, Philip E. 1964. “The Nature of Belief Systems in Mass Publics.” In *Ideology and Discontent*, ed. David E. Apter. New York, NY: Free Press, p. 206-219.
 - Jacoby, William G. 1995. “The Structure of Ideological Thinking in the American Electorate.” *American Journal of Political Science* 105(2): 221-237.
 - Feldman, Stanley, and Christopher Johnston. 2014. “Understanding the Determinants of Political Ideology: Implications of Structural Complexity.” *Political Psychology*. 35: 337-58.
 - Klar, Samara. 2014. “A Multidimensional Study of Ideological Preferences and Priorities among the American Public.” *Public Opinion Quarterly*. 78:344-59.
 - Devine, Christopher J. 2014. “Ideological Social Identity: Psychological Attachment to Ideological In-Groups as a Political Phenomenon and a Behavioral Influence.” *Political Behavior*. 37:1-27.
 - Mason, Lilliana. 2018. “Ideologues without Issues: The Polarizing Consequences of Ideological Identities.” *Public Opinion Quarterly*. 82(S1): 280-301.
 - * This article discusses a topic – polarization – that we haven’t reached yet in this course. The concept is intuitive, and described in the article, but I want you to focus on Mason’s more controversial claim: ideology as an identity, as opposed to a system of beliefs about the political world. If an ideology is an identity, is it actually an ideology?
- Week 7 (**MUST BE RESCHEDULED**): Partisanship & Groups: Political parties are, in their purest form, simply organizations that agree upon some proposed policies and aim to promote their shared version of the collective good, further their supporters’ interests, and hold power in government in pursuit of those interests. In reality, political parties in the United States are groups to which individuals are affectively (i.e., emotionally and psychologically) attached. Over the next two weeks, we will focus on what party identification is, how it helps mold opinions, whether it moves or is a mover, and whether it influences merely opinions or actual behaviors.

There are two streams of literature this week. One refers to micropartisanship (i.e., individual level partisanship) and the other macropartisanship (i.e., the partisanship of the electorate). Although they may seem disparate at first, these works debate what, exactly, partisanship is. I encourage you to think about the ecological fallacy – the fallacy where inferences about individuals are deduced from inferences for the group as a whole – while reading these. Does partisanship move people to behave a certain way politically, or does politics cause partisanship to move? Some call it “the unmoved mover.” Others think it itself is a product of the political environment. Can they both be true?

- Campbell, Angus, Philip E. Converse, Warren E. Miller, and Donald E. Stokes. 1960. “The Impact of Party Identification” and “The Development of Party Identification.” *The American Voter*. University of Chicago Press. (both chapters on Blackboard).

* I **strongly** recommend that you read the entire book. It is perhaps the most foundational text in the behavioral tradition in American politics. If we had a Mt. Rushmore of political scientists, it'd be the American Voter crew.

- Fiorina, Morris. 1978. “Economic Retrospective Voting in American National Elections: A Micro-Analysis.” *American Journal of Political Science* 22(1978): 426-443.
- MacKuen, Michael B., Robert S. Erikson, and James A. Stimson. 1989. “Macropartisanship.” *American Political Science Review* p. 1125-1142.
- MacKuen, Michael B., Robert S. Erikson, James A. Stimson, Paul R. Abramson, and Charles W. Ostrom Jr. 1992. “Question Wording and Macropartisanship.” *American Political Science Review* 86(02): 475-486.
- Green, Donald P., Bradley Palmquist, and Erick Schickler. 1998. “Macropartisanship: A Replication and Critique.” *American Political Science Review* p. 883-899.
- Bartels, Larry M. 2000. “Partisanship and Voting Behavior, 1952-1996.” *American Journal of Political Science* 44(1): 35-50.
- Carsey, Thomas M. and Geoffrey C. Layman. 2006. “Changing Sides or Changing Minds? Party Identification and Policy Preferences in the American Electorate.” *American Journal of Political Science* 50(2): 464-477.

Additional Readings:

- Green, Donald P. and Bradley Palmquist. 1990. “Of Artifacts and Partisan Instability.” *American Journal of Political Science* p. 872-902.
- Green, Donald P. and Bradley Palmquist. 1994. “How Stable is Party Identification?” *Political Behavior* 16(4): 437-466.
- Green, Donald P., Bradley Palmquist, and Erick Schickler. 2004. *Partisan Hearts and Minds: Political Parties and the Social Identity of Voters*. Yale University Press.
- Goren, Paul. 2005. “Party Identification and Core Political Values.” *American Journal of Political Science* 49(4): 881-896.

- Box-Steffensmeier, Janet M. and Renee M. Smith. 1996. “The Dynamics of Aggregate Partisanship.” *American Political Science Review*. p. 567-580.
- Week 8 (October 11): Partisan Bias & Motivated Reasoning: *The American Voter* described partisanship as a perceptual screen through which we perceive the political world. Is partisanship truly the lens through which we *perceive* political stimuli, or does it merely precede conscious evaluation of political stimuli? The short answer is it is truly a perception lens. This week we will look at several examples of times that partisanship produces bias and forces us to perceive information in a manner consistent with what we already believe.
 - Bartels, Larry M. 2002. “Beyond the Running Tally: Partisan Bias in Political Perceptions” *Political Behavior* 24: 117-150.
 - Taber, Charles S. and Milton Lodge. 2006. “Motivated Skepticism in the Evaluation of Political Beliefs.” *American Journal of Political Science* 50(3): 755-769
 - Nyhan, Brendan and Jason Reifler. 2010. “When Corrections Fail: The Persistence of Political Misperceptions.” *Political Behavior* 32: 303-330.
 - Leeper, Thomas J. and Rune Slothuus. 2014. “Political Parties, Motivated Reasoning, and Public Opinion Formation.” *Advances in Political Psychology* 35(S1): 129-156.
 - Gaines, Brian, James H. Kuklinski, Paul J. Quick, Buddy Peyton, and Jay Verkuilen. 2007. “Same Facts, Different Interpretations: Partisan Motivation and Opinion on Iraq.” *Journal of Politics* 69(3): 957-974.

Additional Readings (many of these apply to Week 9, as well):

- Bullock, John G., Alan S. Gerber, Seth J. Hill, and Gregory A. Huber. 2015. “Partisan Bias in Factual Beliefs about Politics.” *Quarterly Journal of Political Science* 10: 519-578.
- Druckman, James N. 2012. “The Politics of Motivation.” *Critical Review* 24(2): 199-216.
- Kam, Cindy D. 2005. “Who Toes the Party Line? Cues, Values, and Individual Differences.” *Political Behavior* 27(2): 163-182.
- Rahn, Wendy M. 1993. “The Role of Partisan Stereotypes in Information Processing about Political Candidates.” *American Journal of Political Science* 37: 472-496.
- Cohen, Geoffrey L. 2003. “Party over Policy: The Dominating Impact of Group Influence on Political Beliefs.” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 85(5): 808-22.
- Lenz, Gabriel S. 2012. *Follow the Leader: How Voters Respond to Politicians’ Policies and Performance*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Week 9 (October 18): Social identity and polarization (both ideological and affective): Two weeks ago, we read work – particularly by Green and his colleagues –

that suggests partisanship is a social identity. Two of the major behavioral consequences of identity-based partisanship are (1) sorting, or increasing alignment between partisanship, ideology, and other identities and, relatedly, (2) polarization, or an increasing difference between the two major partisan groups. But what, exactly, does polarization look like at the mass level? We will start by discussing polarization in the ideological realm before moving to social polarization. While Americans tend to agree on many policy positions, they increasingly loathe members of the out-group. Is partisanship a social group? Do social groups influence partisanship?

Two things are *crucial* for you to pay attention to during these readings. The first is the idea of partisanship as a social identity. Second, mind how “polarization” is defined differently across articles (e.g., “social polarization,” “affective polarization,” etc.).

Ideological polarization:

- Abramowitz, Alan I. and Kyle L. Saunders. 2008. “Is Polarization a Myth?” *Journal of Politics* 70(2): 542-556.

Social identity & other forms of polarization:

- Iyengar, Shanto, Gaurav Sood, and Yphtach Lelkes. 2012. “Affect, Not Ideology: A Social Identity Perspective on Polarization.” *Public Opinion Quarterly* 76(5): 405-431.
 - Huddy, Leonie, Lilliana Mason, and Lene Aarøe. 2015. “Expressive Partisanship: Campaign Involvement, Political Emotion, and Partisan Identity” *American Political Science Review*. 109:117.
 - Iyengar, Shanto and Sean J. Westwood. 2015. “Fear and Loathing across Party Lines: New Evidence on Group Polarization.”
 - Mason, Lilliana. 2015. “‘I Disrespectfully Agree’: The Differential Effects of Partisan Sorting on Social and Issue Polarization.” *American Journal of Political Science*. 59:12845.
 - Mason, Lilliana and Julie Wronski. 2018. “One Tribe to Bind Them All: How Our Social Group Attachments Strengthen Partisanship.” *Political Psychology* 39(S1)
- Week 10 (October 25): Media Effects: Is the news media informative, or persuasive? Can it shape our perceptions of the political world? The short answer is it’s persuasive and, yes, it can shape our perceptions. One thing I’d like you to think a lot about is the normative implications of this source of public opinion. Do we truly have control over the news media?
 - Gilens, Martin, Lynn Vavreck, and Martin Cohen. 2007. “The Mass Media and the Public’s Assessments of Presidential Candidates, 1952-2000.” *Journal of Politics* 69(4): 1160-1175.

- Prior, Markus. 2005. “News vs. Entertainment: How Increasing Media Choice Widens Gaps in Political Knowledge and Trust.” *American Journal of Political Science* 49(3): 577-592.
 - Gilliam, Franklin D., Jr., and Shanto Iyengar. 2000. “Prime Suspects: The Influence of Local Television News on the Viewing Public” *American Journal of Political Science* 44(3): 560-573.
 - Jacoby, William G. 2000. “Issue Framing and Public Opinion on Government Spending.” *American Journal of Political Science* 44(4): 750-767.
 - Ladd, Johnathan McDonald and Gabriel S. Lenz. 2009. “Exploiting a Rare Communication Shift to Document the Persuasive Power of the News Media.” *American Journal of Political Science*. 53(2).
 - Something fake news related. TBD.
- Week 11 (November 1): Racial Attitudes: Since the Civil Rights era, it has been seen as socially undesirable to express outwardly racist sentiments. That is, most people aren’t overtly racist anymore (at least not on public opinion surveys). This type of racism has been replaced by a more symbolic variant. What do these symbolic racist sentiments yield politically?

There are two things that are very interesting in this line of research. First, there is an ongoing measurement controversy that we will discuss. Second, both Presidents Obama and Trump – for **very** different reasons – altered racial attitudes in the United States.

- Rabinowitz, Joshua L., David O. Sears, Jim Sidanius and Jon A. Krosnick. 2009. “Why Do White Americans oppose race-targeted policies? Clarifying the impact of symbolic racism.” *Political Psychology* 30(5):805-828.
 - Tesler, Michael. 2012. “The Spillover of Racialization into Health Care: How President Obama Polarized Public Opinion by Race and Racial Attitudes.” *American Journal of Political Science* 56(3): 690-704.
 - Tesler, Michael. 2013. “The Return of Old Fashioned Racism to White Americans Partisan Preferences in the Early Obama Era.” *The Journal of Politics* 75(1):110-123.
 - Enders, Adam M. and Jamil Scott. 2018. “The Increasing Racialization of American Electoral Politics, 1988-2016.” *American Politics Research*.
 - Enders, Adam M. 2018. “A Matter of Principle? On the Relationship Between Racial Resentment and Ideology.”
- Week 12 (November 8): Personality: Public opinion research was long criticized for simultaneously asserting that the average American was politically unconstrained and unsophisticated, but that they also made political judgments deliberately. Much of the research we’ve discussed – particularly on motivated reasoning and partisanship as a social identity – in part rejects the idea that political judgments are made deliberately.

Research on personality tries to go a step beyond “deliberate” or “not” by revealing what’s in the “black box” of personality-driven political attitudes. Are certain people, by the nature of their personality, predisposed to certain attitudes? If so, it would be hard to conclude attitudes are a function of deliberately assessing the political world. But, there are many important questions in this area. Most importantly, do personality traits *cause* political attitudes? If not, what does understanding that correlations exist between personality and political attitudes offer?

- Gerber, Alan S., Gregory A. Huber, David Doherty, and Conor M. Dowling. 2011. “Personality and Political Attitudes: Relationships Across Issue Domains and Political Contexts.” *American Political Science Review* 104(1): 11-133.
- Gerber, Alan S., Gregory A. Huber, David Doherty, and Conor M. Dowling. 2012. “Personality and the Strength and Direction of Partisan Identification.? *Political Behavior* 34: 653-688.
- Gerber, Alan S., Gregory A. Huber, David Doherty, and Conor M. Dowling. 2012. “Disagreement and the Avoidance of Political Discussion: Aggregate Relationships and Differences across Personality Traits.? *American Journal of Political Science* 56: 849-874.
- Jonason, Peter K. 2014. “Personality and politics.” *Personality and Individual Differences* 71: 181-184.
- Verhulst, Brad, Lindon J. Eaves, and Peter K. Hatemi. 2012. “Correlation not Causation: The Relationship between Personality Traits and Political Ideologies.” *American Journal of Political Science* 56(1): 34-51.
- Hatemi, Peter K. and Brad Verhulst. 2015. “Political Attitudes Develop independently of Personality Traits.” *PLoS One* 10(3).
- Week 13 (November 15): Neuro-, geno-, and bio-politics: This is effectively an extension of last week’s topic, swapping biology, epigenetics, and brain behavior for personality. These are also some of the “black box” explanations for certain political attitudes and opinions. Are certain people, by the nature of their genetic makeup, biochemical markers, and cognitive processes, predisposed to certain attitudes? If so, it would be hard to conclude attitudes are a function of deliberately assessing the political world.

Here, I am presenting research that indicates these factors **do** meaningfully influence politics. This is by no means a settled question. If you are interested in this line of work, I **strongly** recommend you read some of the additional materials that call the findings here assigned into question.

- Alford, John R., Carolyn R. Funk, and John R. Hibbing. 2005. “Are Political Orientations Genetically Transmitted?” *American Political Science Review* 99(2): 153-167.
- McDermott, Rose, Dustin Tingley, and Peter K. Hatemi. “Assortative Mating on Ideology Could Operate Through Olfactory Cues.” *American Journal*

of Political Science 58(4)

- Petersen, Michael Bang and Lene Aarøe. 2013. “Politics in the Mind’s Eye: Imagination as a Link between Social and Political Cognition.” *American Political Science Review* 107(2)
- Eaves, L.J., and Peter K. Hetemi. 2008. “Transmission of Attitudes toward Abortion and Gay Rights: Parental Socialization or Parental Mate Selection?” *Behavior Genetics* 38: 247-256.
- Aarøe, Lene, Michael Bang Peterson, and Kevin Arceneaux. 2017. “The Behavioral Immune System Shapes Political Intuitions: Why and How Individual Differences in Disgust Sensitivity Underlie Opposition to Immigration” *American Political Science Review* 111(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* 35(4): 753-776.

Additional Readings: There is ongoing debate as to whether genopolitics is a worthwhile endeavor. I highly recommend you familiarize yourself with the debate. Moreover, there are questions as to whether certain biochemical agents (i.e., hormones) actually operate in the political realm in the way it is speculated.

- Fowler, James H. and Christopher T. Dawes. 2013. “In Defense of Genopolitics” *American Political Science Review* 107(2).
 - Charney, Evan and William English. 2013. “Genopolitics and the Science of Genetics” *American Political Science Review* 107(2).
 - Wronski, Julie et al.
- Week 14 (**NO CLASS [THANKSGIVING]**)
 - Week 15 (November 29): Discrete Emotions: Psychologists hold that there are 6 universal emotions – fear, anger, disgust, surprise, happiness, and sadness. Do these emotions play distinct roles on the political world? Do they predict certain preferences? Do they have meaningful behavioral consequences?

These questions, too, are an extension of the personality, neuro, geno, and biopolitics questions. All of these things interact with one another. For instance, conservatives are more prone to disgust than liberals; does this matter? (You’ll notice I’m particularly interested in the role of disgust. Do not take that to mean disgust is the only, or even the strongest, emotion influencing politics.)

- Re-familiarize yourself with the Aarøe, Peterson, and Arceneaux piece from last week.
- Armaly, Miles T. and Adam M. Enders. “Fight or Flight? The Role of Disgust in Exacerbating Social Polarization.”
- Kam, Cindy D. and Beth A. Estes. 2016. “Disgust Sensitivity and Public Demand for Protection.” *The Journal of Politics* 78(2).

- Clifford, Scott and Spencer Piston. 2017. “Explaining Public Support for Counterproductive Homelessness Policy: The Role of Disgust.” *Political Behavior* 39(2): 503-525.
- Webster, Steven W. and Alan I. Abramowitz. 2017. “The Ideological Foundations of Affective Polarization in the U.S. Electorate.” *American Politics Research* 45(4): 621-647.
- Suhay, Elizabeth. 2015. “Explaining Group Influence: The Role of Identity and Emotion in Political Conformity and Polarization
- Week 16 (December 6): Conspiracy Theories, Misunderstandings, & Distrust: What people *think* about how they fit into the political world, as opposed to how they *actually* fit into it, is an important distinction. We can probably predict how somebody will vote if they *think* they are being represented by their Congressperson, even if that belief does not reflect reality. How do perceptions differ from reality? What types of consequences does the difference have on thinking about politics?

A second line of research this week examines conspiracy theories. What does it look like when the distrust, skepticism, and misunderstandings that are present in everyday politics borders on the psychologically harmful? Importantly, how do we define “conspiracy theorist” and “conspiracy?” People who believed in Watergate were once considered conspiracy theorists, but we now recognize that event as a legitimate mover of political beliefs and attitudes. Overall, what role do conspiracy beliefs play in the formation of American public opinion?

Misperceptions of the Political World:

- Ahler, Douglas J. 2014. “Self-fulfilling Misperceptions of Public Polarization.” *The Journal of Politics* 76(3): 607-620
- Ahler, Douglas J. and Gaurav Sood. 2018. “The Parties in Our Heads: Misperceptions about Party Composition and Their Consequences.” *The Journal of Politics* 80(3).
- Westfall, Jacob, Leaf Van Boven, John R. Chambers, and Charles M. Judd. 2015. “Perceiving Political Polarization in the United States: Party Identity, Strength, and Attitude Extremity Exacerbate the Perceived Partisan Divide.” *Perspectives on Psychological Science* 10(2): 145-158.
- Enders, Adam M. and Miles T. Armaly. 2018. “The Differential Effects of Actual and Perceived Polarization.” *Political Behavior*.

Conspiracism and Conspiracy Theorists:

- Miller, Joanne M., Kyle L. Saunders, and Christina E. Farhart. 2016. “Conspiracy Endorsement as Motivated Reasoning: The Moderating Roles of Political Knowledge and Trust.? *American Journal of Political Science* 60(4): 824-844.
- Enders, Adam M., Steven M. Smallpage, and Robert N. Lupton. 2017. “Are All ‘Birthers’ Conspiracy Theorists?: On the Relationship between Conspir-

atorial Thinking and Political Orientations.” *British Journal of Political Science*.

- Enders, Adam M. and Steven M. Smallpage. 2018. “Who Are Conspiracy Theorists? A Comprehensive Approach to Explaining Conspiracy Beliefs.” *Social Science Quarterly*.