Course Outline

Government 314 Public Opinion and Foreign Policy

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Note: This outline should not be used by students currently enrolled in this course. The current schedule, assigned readings, and requirements are available to enrolled students on the course Moodle.

For information on my grading policies, expectations, and the drop/add wait list process, see http://dfoyle.faculty.wesleyan.edu/.

Course Description

The relationship between leaders and the public remains a core concern of democratic theorists and political observers. This course examines the nature of public views on foreign policy, the ability of the public to formulate reasoned and interconnected perspectives on the issues of the day, and the public's influence on foreign policy decisions. The main focus is on the U.S. The role of the media and international events in shaping public perspectives and public attitudes toward important issues such as internationalism and isolationism, the use of force, and economic issues will be considered. Finally, the public's influence will be examined across a range of specific decisions. This course provides an intensive examination of a very specific area of research. As such, strong interest in learning about public opinion and foreign policy is recommended.

Requirements and Course Grading

Grades will be based on: (1) a take-home final (35%), (2) classroom participation (25%), (3) 2 essay papers (20% each).

Class periods will be devoted to a mixture of lecture and discussion. Students must come to class prepared to discuss the day's assigned reading.

Essays

Each paper should be between 2000-3000 words in length. (That is approximately 5-8 pages in length using Times New Roman 11 point font). Turn it in on the Moodle.

Topics: Students may respond to any of the daily discussion questions. Students may construct a topic of their own choosing with permission of the instructor.

You must write one essay from the first part of the course (due October 14) and one essay from the second part of the course (due December 7). You may turn in your essay paper at any point up until the deadline. Once midnight on the due date passes, late penalties apply.
Final

The take-home final will be comprised of 2 essays. Each essay has a page limit of 1900 words (about 5 pages each using Times New Roman 11 point font). My expectation is that answers should be written in the format of an essay from an in-class final, but with higher expectations in terms of editing (spelling, grammar, etc.). You do not need to footnote anything. No reference to material from outside the course is expected, but you may consult any source you wish (except for other people). Given space constraints, it would be best not to quote any of the readings verbatim, but references to them will be expected. Be sure to integrate the concepts from the course into your answers.

Participation

Participation will be evaluated based upon the student's contribution to discussion, responsiveness to other students, and quality of insight. Class attendance is a basic requirement of the participation grade.

Readings

Books:


Example Schedule

Section I: Introduction

Day 1: Who Should Be in Charge Here?

Day 2: The Meaning of Public Opinion

Glynn, Public Opinion, pp. 1-56, 89-104

Day 3: How to Measure Public Opinion

Glynn, Public Opinion, pp. 57-86.


Day 4: Where Do Opinions Come From? Cognitive Processes and Social Forces

Glynn, Public Opinion, pp. 105-175.


Day 5: Where Do Opinions Come From? Perceptions and Economics

Glynn, Public Opinion, pp. 176-234.

Section II: Foreign Policy In Public Opinion

Day 6: The Public: Rationality and Structure?

Holsti, Public Opinion and American Foreign Policy, pp. 41-98

Day 7: The Public: Should the Public Be Trusted With Foreign Policy?

Holsti, Public Opinion and American Foreign Policy 1-40.

Foyle, Counting the Public In, pp. 1-9.
Day 8: Public Attitudes: What Does the Public Think?

Holsti, Public Opinion and American Foreign Policy, pp. 241-289


Day 9: Comparisons of the Opinions of Elites and the Mass Public

Holsti, Public Opinion and American Foreign Policy, pp. 99-163


Day 10: Who Thinks What?

Holsti, Public Opinion and American Foreign Policy, pp. 163-241.

Day 11: The Influence of Public Opinion: General


Glynn, Public Opinion, pp. 237-329

Day 12: The Influence of Public Opinion: Attitudes and Decision Makers

Lawrence Jacobs and Benjamin Page, "Who Influences U.S. Foreign Policy?" American Political Science Review February 2005.

Douglas Foyle, Counting the Public In, pp. 9-49, 179-99.


Last day to turn in Essay #1.


James N. Druckman and Lawrence R. Jacobs, 2015 Who Governs?, 3-40

Foyle, Counting the Public In, Chapters 4 and 6 (Dien Bien Phu and New Look).

Day 14: Presidential Popularity


Day 15: Casualties and the Use of Force


Day 16: The Use of Force: Diversions and Constraint


Day 17: The Research Process and the Millennials

Section III: Mediators of Public Influence

Day 18: Presidents

Foyle, Counting the Public In, pp. 201-56. (Carter, Reagan, Bush, Clinton)


Day 19: Elections


Day 20: Congress


Day 21: Interest Groups


Day 22: Media


Day 23: Vietnam


1990-1991 Gulf War

Sobel, Impact of Public Opinion, pp. 141-74 (Moodle Readings)

2003 Iraq War


Michael Mazarr, “The Iraq War and Agenda Setting,” Foreign Policy Analysis, January 2007, pp 1-23 (Moodle Readings)

Day 25: War and the Political System


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Day 26: Public Opinion, Democracy, and Foreign Policy


Foyle, *Counting the Public In*, 257-89.

Last day to turn in Essay #2.

Final Due: Finals Day 1 at 11:59 p.m.