

212G: Does Public Opinion Matter?

Department of Political Science and Government
Aarhus University

September 4, 2013

1 Public Opinion?

2 Objectives and Exam

3 Outline for the course

4 Introductions

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What comes to mind when you think of the term “public opinion”?

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Course Objectives

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- 5 Evaluate arguments about the proper role of public opinion in democracy and government.

Exam

- 7-day written “take-home” exam
- 4,000 words
- Answer two questions using relevant literature
- Prepare using weekly writing activities
- Date: not finalized yet, but probably week of Dec 9

Weekly Activities

- Reading before class
- Discussion
- Short writing assignments
- A “preview” lecture

Proposal: Short assignments and discussion

- One student writes a one-page commentary
- Another student writes a one-page response
- These are distributed 24 hours before class
- Both students structure that week's discussion

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Outline

- What is public opinion? (4 weeks)
- Effects on and of opinion (4 weeks)
- Democratic implications (4 weeks)

What is public opinion?

- Theory – What is public opinion? (11 Sep)
- Psychology I – How do people form opinions? (18 Sep)
- Psychology II – Are opinions constrained? (2 Oct)
- Methods – How to measure opinion? (25 Sep)

Effects on and of opinion

- Influences I – What shapes public opinion(s)? (9 Oct)
- Influences II – Are opinions responsive? (23 Oct)
- Participation I – Do people act on their opinions? (30 Oct)
- Participation II – Do campaigns help citizens? (6 Nov)

Democratic implications

- Aggregation – From Micro to Macro? (13 Nov)
- Representation I – Public opinion matters? (20 Nov)
- Representation II – Groups matter? (27 Nov)
- Opinion and Representation – Theory and practice? (4 Dec)

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Introduce us to you

- What is your name?
- Where are you from?
- What do you plan to do after AU?
- What do you hope to learn in this class?

Me

- Name: Thomas Leeper

Me

- Name: Thomas Leeper
- From: Shoreview, Minnesota, United States

Me

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- Plans: I plan to teach and research in the US

Me

- Name: Thomas Leeper
- From: Shoreview, Minnesota, United States
- Plans: I plan to teach and research in the US
- Learn: How to get all of you engaged in this course & What your perspectives are on the public opinion and its role in contemporary democracy

Form groups and introduce yourselves for 2–3 minutes

