POL615 RESEARCH SEMINAR IN PUBLIC OPINION AND ELECTORAL BEHAVIOR
SPRING 2013 (Thursdays 7:00-9:50 BRNG B206) Dr. Suzanne Parker 2254 Beering
OFFICE HOURS: Thursdays 3-5 or by appointment
EMAIL: parker5@purdue.edu

COURSE DESCRIPTION:
This research seminar focuses on public opinion. The course has three main foci: (1) an
analysis of theories, concepts, and controversies in the study of public opinion; (2) an
examination of different kinds of data, research designs (experimental, quasi-experimental, panel,
longitudinal, and cross-sectional), and levels of analysis; (3) the design and execution of research
projects of publishable quality by seminar participants using public opinion data. We will focus on
the development of measures for analyzing public opinion and will examine several major
approaches to public opinion—sociological, social-psychological, and economic explanations.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:
Each student will be required to write a research paper in the area of American Politics which is of
convention quality. The paper should be no longer than 20 pages (excluding tables but including
the bibliography), and should be quantitative in nature. This may be a replication that extends the
original research in some way, or an original research effort that employs one of the research
strategies explored in the class.

The student will also be assessed on the basis of participation in the class. Students will be
asked to bring examples of articles applicable to the topic being discussed in the class period,
and will be expected to explain their article to the class.

REQUIRED BOOKS:
Asher, Herbert. 2001. POLLING AND THE PUBLIC: WHAT EVERY CITIZEN SHOULD
KNOW. C.Q. Press. (Any edition is acceptable)
Mutz, Diana. 2011. POPULATION-BASED SURVEY EXPERIMENTS. Princeton University
Press

RECOMMENDED BOOKS:
Oskamp, Stuart. 1991. ATTITUDES AND OPINIONS. Prentice Hall. (NOTE: You will not be
tested on this book; however, it is an excellent text written from the point of view of
political psychology. It introduces sketches of people who have contributed to the study
of political psychology. Any edition of this book is good
PRINT). This is a basic book on the analysis of survey data; however, it is still very
relevant and it is well-written and easy to understand.

CLASS WEB PAGE:
http://web.ics.purdue.edu/~parker5/
Click on POL415 and then on POL611

Students will be provided with copies of out of print books (and other
materials not in JSTOR); each student can make one copy for their
own use (as permitted by copyright laws).

IN CASE OF AN EMERGENCY ON CAMPUS:
In the event of a major campus emergency, course requirements, deadlines and grading
percentages are subject to changes that may be necessitated by a revised semester calendar or
other circumstances. Here are ways to get information about changes in this course. Blackboard
Vista web page, my email address: parker5@purdue.edu, and my office phone: 4963923. You
can also find instructions on the web page for this class.
SYLLABUS POL611—SPRING 2013

WEEK 1
THE QUESTION OF MEASUREMENT IN SURVEY RESEARCH—Data collection and concerns about survey data

What are attitudes?
How do we measure attitudes?
How do we collect information about them?
What do we need to watch for when collecting attitudes?
How do we analyze the data that we collect?

Herbert Asher, Polling and the Public: What Every Citizen Should Know.

INTERNET RESOURCES ON SURVEY RESEARCH:
http://www.amstat.org/sections/srms/whatsurvey.html
http://www.gslis.utexas.edu/~palmquis/courses/survey.html
Oskamp, chapters 1, 3, and 5

WEEK 2
MEASUREMENT IN PUBLIC OPINION RESEARCH, PART 1—Reliability of indicators

How stable are political attitudes over a period of time, such as a 2-year period?
If attitudes are not stable, how meaningful are they?
Are some attitudes more stable than other attitudes?
Which attitudes are more stable and which are less stable?
What causes attitudes to change and how much of the change we see is due to unreliability of the measures?


Using factor analysis in the construction of scales and determination of dimensionality of indicators


Examples of Q and R Factor Analysis


University of Tennessee Press. Chapters 2 (Issue Conflict and Consensus) and Chapter 3 (Partisan and Ideological Cleavages).
Examples of Arguments over Measurement

ATTITUDES AND NON-ATTITUDES CONTROVERSY
Converse’s Arguments About The Stability Of Political Attitudes

Answers to Converse’s Non-Attitudes Arguments

Converse’s Responses to His Critics

What do the trust in government questions measure?

How do you measure tolerance?

News Reception
WEEK 3
MEASUREMENT IN PUBLIC OPINION RESEARCH, PART 2—Measurement models and theory testing

Using Confirmatory Factor Analysis to determine validity and to check measurement models


How do you measure political efficacy?

What do the trust in government variables measure?

WEEK 4
EXPERIMENTATION IN PUBLIC OPINION, PART 1—Classic and quasi-experimental techniques

Cook, Thomas and Donald Campbell. 1979. QUASI EXPERIMENTATION: DESIGN AND ANALYSIS ISSUES FOR FIELD SETTINGS. Houghton Mifflin Company. Chapter 1—Causal Inference and the Language of Experimentation. (Chapter 3—Quasi experiment nonequivalent control group design.)

Classic Experiments

Quasi-Experiments

WEEK 5
EXPERIMENTATION IN PUBLIC OPINION, PART 2—Population-based survey experiments


WEEK 6
EXPLAINING CHANGE ON THE INDIVIDUAL LEVEL—Panel analysis in public opinion
Markus, Gregory. 1979. ANALYZING PANEL DATA. Sage University Press.

WEEK 7
EXPLAINING CHANGE ON THE AGGREGATE LEVEL, PART 1—Trend analysis using cross-sectional data

WEEK 8
EXPLAINING CHANGE ON THE AGGREGATE LEVEL, PART 2—Cohort
analysis of cross-sectional data
Riley, Malide White. 1973. Aging and Cohort Succession: Interpretation and
Misinterpretations. PUBLIC OPINION QUARTERLY. Spring: 35-49.
Palmore, Erdman. 1978. When Can Age, Period and Cohort Be Separated? SOCIAL
FORCES. 57: 292-295.

Using aging, period and cohort explanations of over-time aggregate
changes in opinion.

1. PERIOD EFFECTS:
AMERICAN POLITICAL SCIENCE REVIEW. 64: 18-34.
Parker, Suzanne. 1995. Toward an understanding of rally effects: Public
opinion in the Persian Gulf War. PUBLIC OPINION QUARTERLY.
Winter.
Beck, Paul Allen and M. Kent Jennings, 1979, "Political Periods and Political
Participation," AMERICAN POLITICAL SCIENCE REVIEW, 737-50.

Davis, James A. 1992. Changeable Weather in a Cooling Climate Atop the
Liberal Plateau: Conversion and Replacement in Forty-two General
Social Survey Items, 1972-1989. PUBLIC OPINION QUARTERLY 56:
261-306.
Converse, Philip. 1992. Comment on Davis's 'Changeable Weather in a Cooling
Climate Atop the Liberal Plateau. PUBLIC OPINION QUARTERLY 56:
307-310.

2. AGING EFFECTS
the Elderly. JOURNAL OF POLITICS. 55 (May):

Jennings, M. Kent and Gregory Markus. 1988. Political Involvement in the later
years: a longitudinal survey. AMERICAN JOURNAL OF POLITICAL
SCIENCE. 32: 302-16.

3. GENERATION EFFECTS
AMERICAN POLITICAL SCIENCE REVIEW. (June) 477-96.
 Abramson, Paul R. 1976. "Generational Change and the Decline of Party
 Identification in America." American Political Science Review. 70:
469-78.
of Life-Cycle, Generational, and Period Effects. AMERICAN JOURNAL
OF POLITICAL SCIENCE. 23: 78-96.
WEEK 9
EXPLAINING CHANGE ON THE AGGREGATE LEVEL, PART 3—Pooled cross-sectional analysis and time-series analysis

Using pool-cross-sectional analysis

Using time-series analysis

WEEK 10 SPRING BREAK

WEEK 11
CAUSAL MODELING AND PATH ANALYSIS IN PUBLIC OPINION, PART 1—Causal modeling using regression

Causal Modeling of Voting Behavior

**WEEK 12**
**CAUSAL MODELING AND PATH ANALYSIS IN PUBLIC OPINION, PART 2—Causal modeling using LISREL**


**WEEK 13**
**META-ANALYSIS IN PUBLIC OPINION**

Church, Allan. 1993. Estimating the effect of incentives on mail survey response rates: a meta-analysis