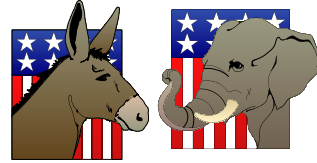


# POSC 124 -- Elections, Parties, and Political Opinion

Fall 2007



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Office Hours: M, W 3-5, T 10-noon  
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## Course Objectives:

The central question of the course is whether voters are rational. More specifically: whether they are capable of the behavior necessary to exert control of the government through the electoral process. Topics include political socialization, public opinion and the role of the media (can voters be manipulated?), ideology, political knowledge, issue positions, party identification, and why people vote the way they do. Emphasis is on national presidential and congressional races, with some attention to voter turnout and participation.

## Text:

Robert S. Erikson and Kent Tedin, *American Public Opinion* (7<sup>th</sup> Edition, Updated)

## Requirements:

Two papers, based on analysis of survey data. One will assess the shape of public opinion on some important public issue looking at different polls and different ways of asking the question. The other will assess the effect of a demographic variable you choose (race, income, gender, etc.) on particular political attitudes. Data will be obtained from electronic sources at Raynor Library, and from web sites. More detailed instructions will be posted on the course web page. The first paper will be due on October 5<sup>th</sup>, and the second on November 9<sup>th</sup>.

Two exams during the term (announced a week in advance) and a final will all contain both objective and essay material. There will be a study guide and a review session for each exam. Grade: each exam, 20%; final, 30%; each paper, 15%.

All readings are required. All besides the textbook will be available in a xeroxed packet.

## Course Outline:

### I. The Study of Public Opinion

Erikson & Tedin; Chapters 1-2.

### II. Where Attitudes Come From

#### A. Political Socialization

Erikson & Tedin; Chapter 5.

#### B. Social Groups

Erikson & Tedin; Chapter 7.

Angus Campbell, et. al., *The American Voter*, Chapter 12, 13.

John C. McAdams, "Testing the Theory of the New Class," *The Sociological Quarterly*, March 1987.

#### C. Self-Interest

David O. Sears, et. al. "Self-Interest vs. Symbolic Politics in Policy Attitudes and Presidential Voting," *American Political Science Review*, September 1980.

#### D. The Media

Erikson & Tedin; Chapter 8.

S. Robert Lichter, Stanley Rothman, and Linda Lichter, "Media and Business Elites," *Public Opinion*, October/November 1981.

S. Robert Lichter, Linda S. Lichter, and Daniel Amundson, "Does Hollywood Hate Business or Money?" *Journal of Communication*, Volume 47 Issue 1 Page 68-84, March 1997.

Robert Lichter, "The Media's Typical Homeless are Anything But," *The Wall Street Journal*, December 14, 1989.

Armin Brott, "The Facts Take a Battering," *The Washington Post National Weekly Edition*, August 8-14, 1994.

Thomas E. Patterson & Robert D. McClure, *The Unseeing Eye*, Chapters 5-7.

Andrew W. Barrett & Lowell W. Barrington, "Is a Picture Worth a Thousand Words?" *The Harvard International Journal of Press/Politics*, Vol. 10, No. 4, 98-113 (2005)

Andrew W. Barrett & Lowell W. Barrington, "Bias in Newspaper Photograph Selection," *Political Research Quarterly*, Vol. 58, No. 4, 609-618 (2005)

### III. Attitude Dimensions - Ideology

Erikson & Tedin; Chapter 3,4

### IV. Elite Groups

Barry Sussman, "Elites in America" (a *Washington Post* reprint)

### V. The Voter at the Polls

#### A. Presidential Elections

Erikson & Tedin; Chapter 9.

#### B. Voters and Parties

Erikson & Tedin; Chapter 10.

James Sundquist, *The Dynamics of the Party System*, Chapters 1-2.

#### C. Congressional Elections

Edward Tufte, "Determinants of the Outcomes of Midterm Congressional Elections," *American Political Science Review*, September 1975.

John McAdams and John C. Green, "Fat Cats and Thin Kittens: Are People Who Make Large Campaign Contributions Different?" *Cato Briefing Papers*, #76 (September 25, 2002)

Bradley A. Smith, "Campaign Finance Reform's War on Political Freedom," *City Journal*, 1 July 2007.

Norman Ornstein and Anthony Corrado Jr., "Reform That Has Really Paid Off," *Washington Post*, April 1, 2007.

John Samples, "A Reply to Ornstein and Corrado," *Cato@Liberty*, <http://www.cato-at-liberty.org/2007/04/02/a-reply-to-ornstein-and-corrado>

### VI. Summarizing

John McAdams, "Public Opinion as a Constraint on Political Elites," in Shay, *Arguments in American Politics*.

Erikson & Tedin, Chapter 11.