

# QS308-15 Public Opinion

**22/23**

**Department**

Politics & International Studies

**Level**

Undergraduate Level 3

**Module leader**

Andreas Murr

**Credit value**

15

**Module duration**

10 weeks

**Assessment**

100% coursework

**Study location**

University of Warwick main campus, Coventry

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## Description

### Introductory description

The module provides the core concepts and theoretical insights for analysing public opinion and political participation. It provides the theoretical frameworks for understanding the nature of mass beliefs, political participation, value change, elections and parties, social cleavages, partisanship, political attitudes, and political representation.

### Module aims

- To introduce key perspectives on the meaning of public opinion
- To develop a critical understanding of theories of public opinion change
- To develop research and analytical skills

### Outline syllabus

This is an indicative module outline only to give an indication of the sort of topics that may be covered. Actual sessions held may differ.

1. Introduction
2. The nature of mass beliefs
3. Political participation

4. Alignment and dealignment
5. Values in change
6. Reading week
7. Valence politics
8. Campaigning and the mass media
9. Electoral geography and electoral systems
10. Political representation

## Learning outcomes

By the end of the module, students should be able to:

- Describe and compare the main meanings of public opinion and understand the circumstances that influence which meaning is best.
- Understand and analyse the primary scholarly and political debates about public opinion throughout history up to the present day.
- Distinguish and appraise the key theories of public opinion.
- Know the basic methods to measure and analyse public opinion and understand their merits and limits.
- Communicate, interpret, and evaluate scholarly and professional studies of public opinion.

## Indicative reading list

Arzheimer, K. and J. Evans (2012) "Geolocation and voting: Candidate--voter distance effects on party choice in the 2010 UK general election in England", *Political Geography* 31: 301--310.

Converse, P. E. (2006 [1964]) "The Nature of Belief Systems in Mass Publics", *Critical Review* 18(1--3), 1--74.

Crewe, I., B. Särilvik and J. Alt (1977) "Partisan Dealignment in Britain 1964-1974", *British Journal of Political Science* 7(2), 129--190.

Dalton, R. J. (2020) *Citizen politics: public opinion and political parties in advanced industrial democracies*. Seventh edition. Los Angeles: SAGE.

Denver, D. T., Carman, C. J. and Johns, R. (2012) *Elections and voters in Britain*. 3rd ed. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Downs, A. (1957) "An Economic Theory of Political Action in a Democracy", *Journal of Political Economy* 65(2): 135--150.

Finkel, S. E. (1993) "Reexamining the "Minimal Effects" Model in Recent Presidential Campaigns", *Journal of Politics* 55(1): 1--21.

Hanretty, C., B. E. Lauderdale, and N. Vivyan (2017) "Dyadic Representation in a Westminster System", *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 42(2):235--267.

Hooghe, M. and R. Dassonneville (2018) "Explaining the Trump Vote: The Effect of Racist Resentment and Anti-Immigrant Sentiments", *PS: Political Science and Politics* 51(3), 528--534.

Inglehart, R. (1971) "The Silent Revolution in Europe: Intergenerational Change in Post-Industrial Societies", *American Political Science Review* 65(4): 991--1017.

John, P. (2017) "Quantitative Methods", in: Lowndes, Vivien, David Marsh and Gerry Stoker (eds.): *Theory and Methods in Political Science*, 250--270.

Jonathan, R. (2010) "The Geographic Distribution of Political Preferences", *Annual Review of Political Science* 13:321--40.

Margetts, H. and G. Stoker (2018) "The experimental method", in: Lowndes, Vivien, David Marsh and Gerry Stoker (eds.) *Theory and Methods in Political Science* (4th edition, pp. 290--305). London: Macmillan Education/Palgrave.

Prior, M. (2005) "News vs. Entertainment: How Increasing Media Choice Widens Gaps in Political Knowledge and Turnout", *American Journal of Political Science* 49(3), 577--592.

Sanders, D. (2017): "Behavioural Analysis", in: Lowndes, Vivien, David Marsh and Gerry Stoker (eds.): *Theory and Methods in Political Science*, 20--38.

Shephard, M. and Johns, R. (2012) "A Face for Radio? How Viewers and Listeners Reacted Differently to the Third Leaders' Debate in 2010", *British Journal of Politics and International Relations* 14(1): 1--18.

Stokes D. (1963) "Spatial Models of Party Competition", *American Political Science Review* 57(2): 368--377.

[View reading list on Talis Aspire](#)

## **Subject specific skills**

- To describe and compare the main meanings of public opinion and understand the circumstances that influence which meaning is best.
- To understand and analyse the primary scholarly and political debates about public opinion throughout history up to the present day.
- To distinguish and appraise the key theories of public opinion.
- To know the basic methods to measure and analyse public opinion and understand their merits and limits.
- To communicate, interpret, and evaluate scholarly and professional studies of public opinion.

## **Transferable skills**

- The ability to apply the concepts and theories that you have learned to review, consolidate, extend and apply your knowledge and understanding.
- The generic skills necessary for employment related to Politics and International Studies: lateral thinking; problem solving; detailed critical analysis and interpretation of a variety of primary and secondary sources; the ability to digest, retain and apply complex information and ideas; an understanding of language; skills in research, independent study, group discussion, and in oral and written presentation; the ability to consider unfamiliar ideas and ways of thinking.
- The skills necessary for the exercise of initiative and personal responsibility: e.g. the ability to

assess your own capacity for and progress in learning; the ability to organize your work and manage your time successfully; the ability to meet deadlines; the ability to reflect critically on the extent and limitations of how and what you have learned, discovered and understood.

- The ability to synthesize ideas drawn from different disciplinary areas in order to understand real world problems.
  - The ability to recognize and be sensitive to diversity.
  - Skills in the communication of information, ideas, and problems.
  - The ability to undertake appropriate further training of a professional or equivalent nature.
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## Study

### Study time

Type	Required
Lectures	9 sessions of 1 hour (6%)
Seminars	9 sessions of 1 hour (6%)
Private study	132 hours (88%)
Total	150 hours

### Private study description

tbc

## Costs

No further costs have been identified for this module.

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## Assessment

You must pass all assessment components to pass the module.

### Assessment group A2

	Weighting	Study time
3000 word essay	100%	

### Feedback on assessment

Feedback form provided via Tabula; optional verbal consultation

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## Availability

### Courses

This module is Optional for:

- UECA-4 Undergraduate Economics 4 Year Variants
  - Year 4 of LM1H Economics, Politics & International Studies with Study Abroad
  - Year 4 of LM1H Economics, Politics & International Studies with Study Abroad
- UECA-LM1D Undergraduate Economics, Politics and International Studies
  - Year 3 of LM1D Economics, Politics and International Studies
  - Year 3 of LM1D Economics, Politics and International Studies
- UHIA-VM14 Undergraduate History and Politics (with Year Abroad and a term in Venice)
  - Year 3 of VM14 History and Politics (with Year Abroad and a term in Venice)
  - Year 4 of VM14 History and Politics (with Year Abroad and a term in Venice)
- Year 3 of UHIA-VM13 Undergraduate History and Politics (with a term in Venice)
- Year 3 of UPOA-M162 Undergraduate Politics, International Studies and Quantitative Methods

This module is Option list C for:

- UHIA-VM11 Undergraduate History and Politics
  - Year 3 of VM11 History and Politics
  - Year 3 of VM11 History and Politics
  - Year 3 of VM11 History and Politics
- Year 4 of UHIA-VM12 Undergraduate History and Politics (with Year Abroad)