

POSC 146: Mass Media and Public Opinion
Midterm Exam Study Guide
Test Date: Next Tuesday!

The midterm will consist of multiple-choice, and true-false questions. Anything from the text covering the chapters below may be on the exam, but the questions below of course are most likely. Questions are also drawn from the slides presented in class. Expect between 60-80 questions depending on format.

Clawson and Oxley Chapters 1-6

Chapter 1

What is democratic theory? What is classical democratic theory?
What are some attributes that appear in classical models of democracy?

What is popular sovereignty? What is direct democracy? How does it differ today than in Rousseau's time?

What is the Athenian notion of democracy, and why might it not work today? What are the main critiques of classical democratic theory?

What is Democratic Elitism (DE) and how does it differ from classical democratic theory? Which system is the federal system based on? Are DEs worried about low levels of political knowledge or participation?

What is pluralism and are pluralists more similar to Democratic Elitists or classical democratic theory? What is the role of interest groups in pluralism? Know examples of interest groups, such as the NRA, AARP, NAACP.

What is representative democracy? How are the three branches of government/separation of powers a reflection of later variants of Democratic Elitism?

What are factions, in the Madisonian sense?

What is participatory democracy? What critiques do participatory democrats have of democratic elitism and pluralism? Some groups have more power than others, power is not equal. Think of business groups versus other groups.

What is citizen apathy? What do participatory democrats have to say about this and whether it should be accepted or a challenge to be met? But what do skeptics of participatory theory say in response?

What is public opinion? What is the consensus definition? Does polling do a good job of measuring the “public judgment”?

What is an attitude, opinion? What is a belief/value, how are beliefs different from emotions? What is prejudice? Stereotypes?

What is party identification? What is the most significant change in party identification over the past 50 years?

Appendix: What is a random sample? Why is it we can make inferences from sample to population? When can we not? Frugging, etc.

What are question wording effects? What are question order effects?

What’s a panel study, or longitudinal survey?

Survey mode: why might we get different effects on sensitive questions online vs. in-person interview?

What is a focus group? Why would a pollster conduct a focus group?

Chapter 2: Political Socialization

What/who are socializing agents? What is political socialization?

Benevolent leader imagery. Malevolent leader imagery

What is parental transmission of attitudes and party? What is the transmission especially good at relative to other attitudes?

Do pre-adult attitudes persist into adulthood? What is impressionable years model?

Influence of political campaigns during adolescence

What are racial/ethnic/class/age differences on leader imagery? Why is this the case?

What is the political reality explanation?

What is the impressionable years model? And how is this related to life cycle effects?

What is a generational effect and how does this explain attitudes on marijuana and same-sex marriage, respectively?

Chapter 3: Mass Media

What’s the watchdog role of the press and why is it important?

Intermediary; forum for diverse views

What are the three Cs? Is this the real media “bias”?

Soft news versus hard news.

News norms: neutrality, official sources, accuracy, etc.

Newsbeats; horse race.

Why are people more educated now but know less about politics than, say 40 years ago?

Traditional; advocacy; tabloid journalism. Know examples of these.

Pack journalism

Minimal Effects model – what is it, do you think it’s still true?

Reinforcement effect; activation effect; conversion effect

Subtle Effects model; agenda-setting/effects; Priming/framing

Chapter 4: Attitude Stability and Attitude Change

What is attitude stability? What is attitude change? What is attitude instability? What leads to attitude change? Is the public, as a whole more fickle or more stable?

What is a cross-sectional study? How did Converse measure attitude instability between 1958 – 1960? Know about panel data

What are non-attitudes as defined by Converse? What issues seem to have greater attitude stability? (hint: groups)

What is collective public opinion? How do Page and Shapiro study this? What are the general conclusions? What is the difference between thinking about public opinion as “collective” versus “individual.” What way of thinking about public opinion is more face-saving for the public?

What is presidential approval and how is it measured? Why is it important? What strengths does the president have with high levels of approval?

What are tracking polls? Why would campaigns use tracking polls? Have they increased or decreased over time? What is the phenomenon known as the

honeymoon period? What is the rally round the flag effect? Does it explain Bush 1 & 2's high popularity at certain points?

What leads to declines in presidential approval?

Know the basics of learning theory

Understand the basic Receive-Accept-Sample Model (John Zaller).

What are the roles of elites and elite discourse in this model? What does Zaller mean by reception? What is political awareness? How does acceptance of elite messages influence people with different levels of awareness? What are political predispositions?

What are considerations? How is it theorized that people sample from these considerations?

What is cognitive dissonance theory, and how do people resolve it? Think Drones.

Have Converse's conclusions generally withstood time?

Chapter 5

What is ideology? Understand the basic differences between liberals and conservatives? How do scholars think of the two in terms of a scale? Does the mass public generally think ideologically?

Understand Converse and ideological innocence. What were some of the critiques of Converse?

What is attitude constraint as defined by Converse?

Consensual politics; ideologically contentious

Symbolic vs. operational ideology

Partisan motivated reasoning; Political polarization; Affective polarization; Partisan news;