

Political Science 146 – Public Opinion and Mass Media

Loren Collingwood, Political Science

April 4, 2013

Course Information

- <http://www.collingwoodresearch.com/posc-146.html>

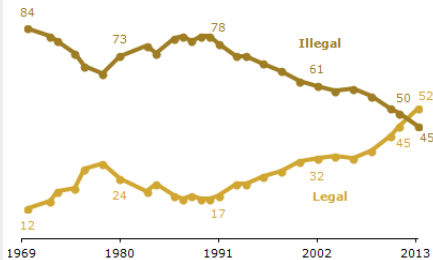
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- **Contact Information: Watkins 2229; loren.collingwood@ucr.edu**

New Poll: Changing Attitudes on Marijuana

Views of Legalizing Marijuana: 1969-2013

% saying marijuana should be ...



PEW RESEARCH CENTER March 13-17, 2013.
1973-2008 data from General Social Survey; 1969 and 1972 data from Gallup.

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- Politicians often heed public opinion and pass laws (NY State, same-sex marriage 2011)
- Politicians sometimes do not (Obama: Health care reform, Bush: setting timetable for Iraq)
- But, how should public function in a democracy?

Theories of Democracy

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- Are citizens even capable of self-government?
- Who should be allowed to vote? All adults? At what age are you an adult? Should there be educational requirements? Literacy requirements? Knowledge requirements?

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- Direct democracy: All citizens meet, discuss, and decide on content of the laws
- Later theorists have criticized classical democratic theory as unpractical and unworkable (i.e., women and slaves did not have voting/participatory rights, 40 debates a year!)

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- Critiques: Some groups possess more resources than others (i.e., business/trade groups); not all viewpoints are represented; less focus on citizen participation and benefits accrued from that

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- Critique: Assumptions about citizens are unrealistic (e.g., Motor Voter)

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- Preferences of individuals, tallied such that each person's opinion counts equally

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- How can 1,000 people represent 40 million?

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- Polls used to tell policymakers what voters want
- Can be good for democracy
- A healthy skepticism of polls is fine, but understand why a poll is good or bad and you will be fine