PLS 302, Section 1 **PUBLIC OPINION**

Microlevel Opinion: The Psychology of Opinion Holding

- Untitled introduction: types of opinion-holding
 - Arbitrary and capricious random patterns -- "doorstep" opinions (rational from a cost/benefit perspective)
 - Predictable patterns
 - Social group cues
 - 2. Economic self-interest cues
 - Psychological cues
 - Political cues: ideology and partisanship
- Political attention and opinion-holding I.
 - Political knowledge Table 3.1, p. 61
 - Explanations for variation
 - Intrinsic
 - (1) Less important: cognitive abilities & resources -- education, income
 - (2) More important: personal taste political "jocks" & issue specialists
 - Contextual
 - Level of news coverage & public debate (1)
 - (2) Level of technical complexity
 - Normative debate: should "informed" opinion carry greater weight?
 - Opinion differences by level of information Table 3.2, p. 65
 - Converting information into opinions
 - Anthony Downs: economic rationality explanation
 - Psychologists: information processing explanations
 - Online running tally of new information updates
 - Weighted average of remembered pros and cons
 - Depth (stability) of opinion-holding
 - Amount: panel data show roughly 10-25% switching polar extremes on policy issues Tables 3.3 3.5, pp. 67-69

- **Explanations:**
 - The "non-attitudes" explanation: Philip Converse
 - Theory: most respondents not concerned or knowledgeable but feel pressured to respond anyway
 - (2) Implications for public policy-makers: ignore/manipulate public opinion
 - The "measurement-error" explanation: Erikson
 - Theory: response instability varies little with political sophistication or knowledge; but instead is caused by
 - (a) Framing & wording problems
 - (b) Timing constraints of interviews that limit respondents to top-of-head judgments
 - (2) Implications for survey researchers: write better questionnaires and conduct longer interviews
 - The "environmental-stimuli" explanation: Zaller & Feldman
 - Theory: underlying attitudes are often stable, but due to multiple factors; therefore, expressed opinions can vary as changing environmental stimuli cause shifts in factor weighting
 - Implications for survey researchers: write better questionnaires and conduct longer interviews
- Liberal-conservative ideology and the organization of opinions
 - Definition of ideology: a coherent & consistent set of beliefs concerning the proper ends of government
 - Classification schemes
 - One-dimensional -- liberal/centrist/conservative
 - Straight line
 - Two-dimensional: three basic ends of government (freedom, equality, order)

GOVERNMENT GUARANTEED

EQUALITY

versus	liberals mixed views on a strong national government equality > freedom > order (Teddy Kennedy)	populists or communitarians positive views on a strong national government equality or order > freedom (Dick Gephardt)
	libertarians negative views on a strong national government freedom > equality or order (Jesse Ventura)	conservatives mixed views on a strong national government order > freedom > equality (George W. Bush)

versus

INDIVIDUAL FREEDOM GOVERNMENT GUARANTEED ORDER

	C.	Orde	er v. freedom [when conservatives & populists favor "big" and liberals & libertarians favor "small" government]
		1.	Political
			a. Term limits (except when in majority)
			b. Flag burning
		2.	Social
			a. Domestic tranquility
			(1) Self-incrimination
			(2) Right to counsel
			(3) Drug suppression
			(4) Capital and corporal punishment
			b. Common defense
			(1) Secrecy/censorship
		2	(2) Military-industrial complex
		3.	Economic Foreign to the (could not involve a country of first (and it involve a country))
			a. Foreign trade (multi-national corporate vs America-first/traditional conservatives)
		4	b. Immigration (except when labor shortages over-rule, e.g., high-tech & farm workers)
		4.	Moral a. Abortion
			c. Pornography (strange-bedfellows coalition with radical feminists)d. State-sponsored religion in public education
			(1) Prayer & religious exercises
			(2) State-funded charter schools
			(3) State-funded private-school vouchers
			(4) Creationism v. evolution
	D.	Fana	ality v. freedom [when liberals & populists favor "big" and conservatives & libertarians favor "small" government]
	ъ.	1.	Political
			a. Motor-voter Act
			b. Election-campaign advertising & financing
			c. Racial gerrymandering
		2.	Social
			a. Affirmative action
			b. Gun control
			c. Public-funding of the arts
		3.	Economic
			a. Health care
			b. Social security
			c. Environmental conservation
			d. Closed or union shop
			e. Minimum wage
			f. Class action lawsuits
			g. Consumer-product safety
		4.	Moral
			a. Speech codes
	E. Problem: many controversies can be defined or perceived in more than one way		
		1.	Civil War
			 a. Abolitionist Republicans saw the issue primarily as <i>equality</i> civil rights of blacks b. Lincoln saw the issue primarily as <i>order</i> preserving the union
		2.	Government regulation of the economy
			a. Federalists, Whigs, and early Republicans saw the issue primarily as <i>order</i> protecting property and contract rights and
			subsidizing nation building
			b. Progressive Republicans and New-Deal Democrats saw the issue primarily as <i>equality</i> providing an economic safety net
	F.	Term	ninology Table 3.6, p. 74
	G.		of ideological language Tables 3.7, p. 75; 3.8, p. 76; & 3.9, p. 77
	H.	Ideol	logy as liberal-conservative consistency Figures 3.1, p. 79; & 3.2, p. 83; & Table 3.10, p. 81
III.	Party id	lentifi	cation and the organization of political opinions
	A. Measurement		
		1.	Attitudinal
	D	2.	Behavioral
	В. С.		ility over time eptions of party differences Table 3.11, p. 85; 3.12, p. 87; Figure 3.4, pp. 87-88
	C.	rerce	epuons of party unferences 1 abic 3.11, p. 63, 3.12, p. 67; Figure 3.4, pp. 67-66

Trends: pre-1964 vs. post-1964
 Explanations: changes in parties & voters