

Political Science 10: Introduction to American Politics

Week 3

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Plan for the Day

- Reading Quiz
- Go over learning outcomes
- Announcements
- Answer questions from lecture this week
- Discuss Zaller (2003): “Coming to Grips with V.O. Key’s Concept of Latent Opinion”

Reading Quiz

- Clearly write your name at the top of the quiz
- Turn your quiz over when you are finished
- Good luck!

By the end of section today, you should be able to:

- Define public opinion
- Define and explain the concept of latent opinion
- Explain whether and when public opinion and latent opinion are meaningful
 - Explain how this relates to latent opinion
 - Explain how this relates to the notion of representative government
 - Describe the conditions under which politicians listen to (or ignore) public opinion

Announcements

- Reminder: Office Hours are Wednesdays 8am-9:30am and 11am-12pm in SSB 341, or by appointment (tncarlson@ucsd.edu)
- If you would like feedback on your take-home essay, please turn a rough draft in to me in section by week 6 (November 9th). I will not give you a “grade,” but I am happy to provide comments.
- Recommendations for Preparing for the Final Paper:
 - Read the Constitution and Amendments! Is there anything that you find problematic? Why? What is the root cause of the problem and how would you go about fixing it?
 - Think about the reasons why real Amendments were introduced. What problem(s) did they address? Did the Amendment provide a sufficient solution?
 - “Free write” (write for 5-10 minutes without stopping! Just write!) about any problems you observe in the political world today. Read over your thoughts and think about how you might be able to solve those problems with a Constitutional Amendment.

Questions??

What questions do you have from lecture this week?

We will go over an example of the Median Voter Theorem in next week's section

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- Examples?

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 - No. Why?
- Examples?
 - Propensity of voters to “punish” presidents at the polls for bad economic performance (or reward for good economic performance)
 - Rally around the flag effect
 - Propensity to resist painful trade-offs and punish politicians who force choices

When are politicians constrained by public opinion?

Responsive to Public Opinion
(polls)

Responsive to Latent Opinion
(ignore polls)

Applying Latent Opinion to a Real World Example

As you study for the exam, you can work through the following example to apply your knowledge of latent opinion to the ACA.

A More Recent Example: the ACA (AKA Obamacare)

- Affordable Care Act or Obamacare? (53 seconds in)

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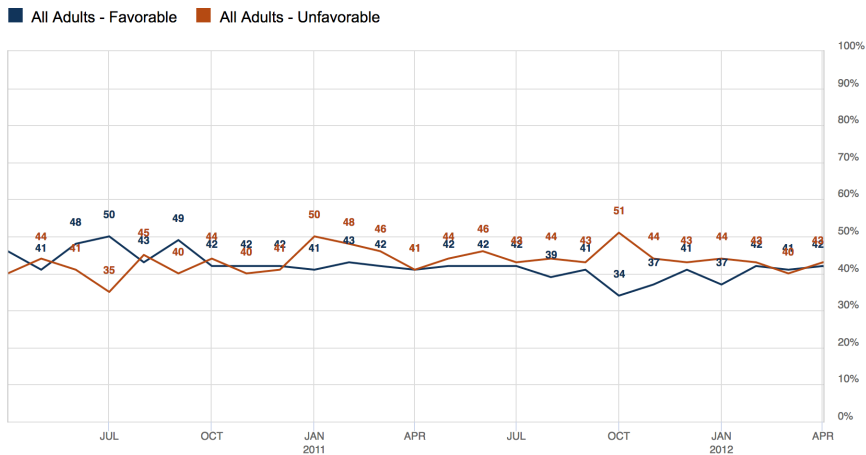
- Affordable Care Act or Obamacare? (53 seconds in)
- Some data supporting this (September 2013 poll)

A More Recent Example: the ACA (AKA Obamacare)

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- Some data supporting this (September 2013 poll)
- Let's look at the public opinion on the ACA/Obamacare over time

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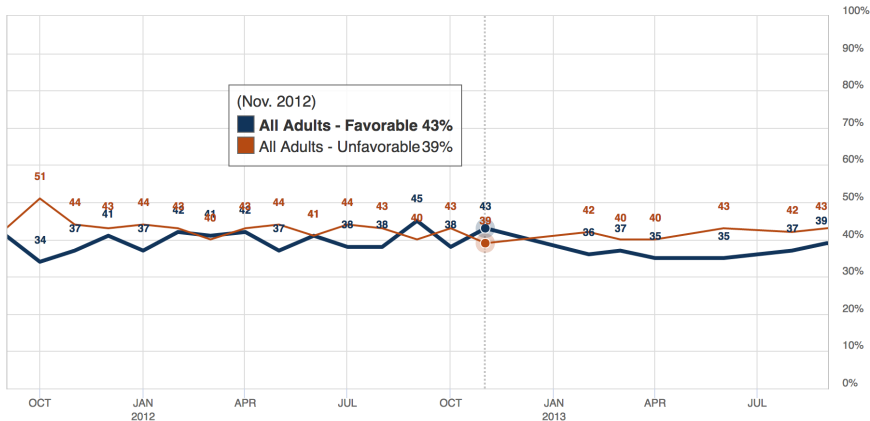
Source: Kaiser Family Foundation Health Tracking Poll



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■ All Adults - Favorable ■ All Adults - Unfavorable



Bringing it all together

- What does this Obamacare/ACA example tell us about whether public opinion about the ACA is meaningful? Do you think President Obama was responding to public or latent opinion? What about members of Congress?
- Thinking more broadly, what does Zaller's proposition about when presidents should respond to public vs. latent opinion tell us about representative government? Would you expect this to apply to other politicians as well?
- Should we continue to measure public opinion?