

Topics on Political Attitudes

Spring 2026

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Course Overview

This course examines how individuals form and express political attitudes and how these attitudes influence political life. We will explore key areas of public opinion including political ideology and polarization, political knowledge and misinformation, trust in democratic institutions, views on inequality and redistribution, attitudes toward immigration and multiculturalism, climate change and environmental policy, and perspectives on crime and punishment. The course considers the social, economic, and cultural forces that shape political views and how these views translate into political participation, voting behavior, and policy outcomes. Students will engage with empirical research, real-world case studies, and guided discussions to critically evaluate competing explanations for public opinion patterns and to understand the implications for democratic governance and how political attitudes change over time.

Course Objectives

There will be several goals that this course will focus upon; among them are:

1. To understand how political attitudes are formed and expressed.
2. To become familiar with major theories and concepts related to public opinion.
3. To be able to articulate how political attitudes influence participation, voting behavior, and policy outcomes.
4. To master basic empirical facts about public opinion in contemporary politics.
5. To understand how political attitudes vary across demographic groups and political contexts.
6. To learn to critically evaluate empirical research on political attitudes.
7. To develop the ability to interpret and discuss real-world cases and current events through the lens of public opinion research.

Class Schedule

NOTE: Reading for a particular day should be done before attending class on that particular day. Notes from the readings should be brought to the class session.

Week 1: 13 January, 12-14.00 - Pub309

Topic: *Political Ideology and Polarization*

Read:

- Hansen, Michael A. and Mikko Leino. 2024. "Conditional Single-Issue Political Entrepreneurship: The Impact of Education and Attitudinal Predictors on Support for the Finns Party," *Electoral Studies* 92(102874): 1-16.
- Hansen, Michael A. and Mila Seppälä. 2024. "Support for Gun Reform in the United States: The Interactive Relationship Between Partisanship and Trust in the Federal Government," *Political Behavior* 46(3): 2025-2045.
- Blumenau, Jack and Benjamin E. Lauderdale. 2025. "Liberals and Conservatives Rely on Very Similar Sets of Foundations When Comparing Moral Violations," *American Political Science Review* 119(2): 746-762.
- Broockman, David E. and Benjamin E. Lauderdale. 2025. "'Moderates'," *American Political Science Review* 1-10.

Additional Supplemental Reading:

- Hansen, Michael A. and Jonathan Olsen. 2022. "Sibling Rivalry: Voters for Radical Left Parties and Their Competitors in Germany, Sweden, and the Netherlands," *Party Politics* 28(5): 968-986.
- Gherghina, Sergiu and Inga Saikkonen. 2024. "Partisanship and Tolerance for Clientelism: Evidence from a Conjoint Experiment in Romania," *Political Studies* 72(3): 1250-1266.
- Heseltine, Michael, Hennes Barnehl, and Magdalena Wojcieszak. 2024. "Partisan temporal selective news avoidance: Evidence from online trace data," *American Journal of Political Science* 1-18.
- Hansen, Michael A. and Kathleen Dolan. 2025. "Cross-Cutting Identities in American Politics: Gender, Party, and Attitudes on Gun Reform," *American Politics Research* 53(4): 293-305.

Week 2: 20 January, 12-14.00 - Pub209

Topic: *Political Knowledge and Misinformation*

Read:

- Weitz-Shapiro, Rebecca and Matthew S. Winters. 2022. "Knowledge of Social Rights as Political Knowledge," *Political Behavior* 45(4): 1911-1931.

- Broockman, David E., and Joshua L. Kalla. 2025. "Selective exposure and echo chambers in partisan television consumption: Evidence from linked viewership, administrative, and survey data," *American Journal of Political Science* 69 (3): 847-865.
- Hansen, Michael A. 2025. "Measuring, Comparing, and Predicting Knowledge Related to Reproductive Healthcare in the United States," *Journal of Women, Politics & Policy* 46(2): 151-168.
- Vidigal, Robert. 2025. "Measuring Belief Certainty in Political Knowledge," *Political Behavior* 47(2): 529-551.

Additional Supplemental Reading:

- Mondak, Jeffery. 2001. "Developing Valid Knowledge Scales," *American Journal of Political Science* 45(1): 224-38.
- Barabas, Jason, Jennifer Jerit, William Pollock, and Carlisle Rainey. 2014. "The Question(s) of Political Knowledge," *American Political Science Review* 108(4): 840-855.
- Dolan, Kathleen, and Michael A. Hansen. 2020. "The Variable Nature of the Gender Gap in Political Knowledge," *Journal of Women, Politics & Policy* 41(2):127-43.
- Graham, Matthew H. 2020. "Self-Awareness of Political Knowledge," *Political Behavior* 42(1): 305-326.

Week 3: 27 January, 12-14.00 - Pub209

Topic: *Institutional Trust & Democratic Backsliding*

Read:

- Saikkonen, Inga A.-L., and Henrik Serup Christensen. 2022. "Guardians of Democracy or Passive Bystanders? A Conjoint Experiment on Elite Transgressions of Democratic Norms," *Political Research Quarterly* 76(1): 127-142.
- Devine, Daniel. 2024. "Does Political Trust Matter? A Meta-analysis on the Consequences of Trust," *Political Behavior* 46(4): 2241-2262.
- Jacob, Marc S. 2025. "Citizens as a democratic safeguard? The sequence of sanctioning elite attacks on democracy," *American Journal of Political Science* 69(2): 455-470.
- Davis, Nicholas T. and Matthew P. Hitt. 2025. "Partisan sorting, fatalism, and Supreme Court legitimacy," *American Journal of Political Science* 1-18.

Additional Supplemental Reading:

- Auerbach, Kiran and Bilyana Petrova. 2022. "Authoritarian or Simply Disillusioned? Explaining Democratic Skepticism in Central and Eastern Europe," *Political Behavior* 44(4): 1959-1983.

- Gessler, Theresa and Natasha Wunsch. 2025. “A new regime divide? Democratic backsliding, attitudes towards democracy and affective polarization,” *European Journal of Political Research* 1-25.
- Frederiksen, Kristian. 2025. “Does Priming Democratic Vulnerability Make Citizens Punish Undemocratic Behavior?,” *Political Behavior* 1-22.
- Marsh, Wayde Z. C. 2025. “Trust After Tragedy: How Traumatic Events Impact Trust in Government(s) and Voting,” *Political Behavior* 1-23.

Week 4: 3 February, 12-14.00 - Pub209

Topic: *Inequality & Redistribution*

Read:

- Huber, Gregory A. and Celia Paris. 2013. “Assessing the Programmatic Equivalence Assumption in Question Wording Experiments: Understanding Why Americans Like Assistance to the Poor More Than Welfare,” *Public Opinion Quarterly* 77(1): 385-397.
- Heide-Jørgensen, Tobias, Peter Thisted Dinesen, and Kim Mannemar Sønderskov. 2023. “Personality and Roots of Welfare State Support: How Openness to Experience Moderates the Influence of Self-Interest and Ideology on Redistributive Preferences.” *Politics and Behavior* 45(4): 1467–1489.
- Witko, Christopher, and Tobias Heinrich. 2025. “Deserving Government Assistance? Public Support for Aid to Struggling Firms and Workers,” *Political Behavior* 47(1): 19–40.
- Magistro, Beatrice, Sophie Borwein, R. Michael Alvarez, Bart Bonikowski, and Peter John Loewen. 2025. “Attitudes toward artificial intelligence (AI) and globalization: Common microfoundations and political implications,” *American Journal of Political Science* 1-18.

Additional Supplemental Reading:

- Ortiz, Selena E., Gary J. Adler Jr., and Bobbie L. Johannes. 2022. “Economic Elites and Support for Housing Affordability Policy: How a Housing-Health Belief Matters,” *Political Behavior* 44(2): 505–533.
- Cavaillé, Charlotte, and Anja Neundorff. 2023. “Elite Cues and Economic Policy Attitudes: The Mediating Role of Economic Hardship,” *Political Behavior* 45(4): 1355–1376.
- Wang, Yumin Hsu. 2024. “Information, Equal Treatment, and Support for Regressive Taxation: Experimental Evidence from the United States,” *Political Behavior* 46(3): 1609–1632.
- Cordero, Guillermo, Piotr Zagorski, and Jos Rama. 2024. “Economic Self-Interest or Cultural Threat? Migrant Unemployment and Class-based Support for Populist Radical Right Parties in Europe,” *Political Behavior* 46(2): 1397–1416.

Week 5: 10 February, 12-14.00 - Pub209

Topic: *Immigration & Multiculturalism*

Read:

- Hansen, Michael A. and Jonathan Olsen. 2023. "Identity and Belonging: Factors Affecting Emotional Assimilation in Two German Migrants Communities," *Journal of International Migration & Integration* 24(4): 1795-1815.
- Unan, Asli. 2024. "Media Exposure to Highly Skilled Immigrants and Attitudes Toward Immigration," *Political Behavior* 1-36.
- Schaeffer, Merlin, Krakowski Krakowski, and Asmus Leth Olsen. 2024. "Correcting misperceptions about ethno-racial discrimination: The limits of evidence-based awareness raising to promote support for equal-treatment policies," *American Journal of Political Science* 1-22.
- Emeriau, Mathilde, Jens Hainmueller, Dominik Hangartner, and David D. Laitin. 2025. "'Welcome to France.' Can mandatory integration contracts foster immigrant integration?," *American Journal of Political Science* 1-16.

Additional Supplemental Reading:

- Hansen, Michael A. and Jonathan Olsen. 2020. "Pulling up the Drawbridge: Anti-Immigrant Attitudes and Support for the Alternative for Germany (AfD) Among Russian-Germans," *German Politics & Society* 38(2): 109-136.
- Leino, Mikko, and Staffan Himmelroos. 2020. "How Context Shapes Acceptance of Immigrants: The Link Between Affective Social Distance and Locational Distance," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 43(10): 1890-1908.
- Avdagic, Sabina, and Lee Savage. 2024. "Does the Framing of Immigration Induce Welfare Chauvinism? The Effects of Negativity Bias and Motivated Reasoning," *Political Behavior* 46(4): 2169-2189.
- Attewell, David, Andreas Jozwiak, and Eroll Kuhn. 2025. "Backlash or Inclusion? The Political Effects of Co-Ethnic Immigration," *Political Behavior* 1-22.

Week 6: 17 February, 12-14.00 - Pub309

Topic: *Climate Change & Environmental Politics*

Read:

- Gaikwad, Nikhar, Federica Genovese, and Dustin Tingley. 2022. "Creating Climate Coalitions: Mass Preferences for Compensating Vulnerability in the World's Two Largest Democracies," *American Political Science Review* 116(4): 1165-1183.
- Arias, Sabrina B. and Christopher W. Blair. 2024. "In the Eye of the Storm: Hurricanes, Climate Migration, and Climate Attitudes," *American Political Science Review* 118(4): 1593-1613.

- Ahonen, Sami, Mikko Leino, and Aino Tiihonen. 2025. “Framing climate policy around energy independence enhances acceptance and perceived effectiveness: evidence from a Finnish survey experiment,” *Climatic Change* 178: 22.
- Genschel, Philipp, Julian Limberg, and Laura Seelkopf. 2025. “The Climate Crisis, Policy Distraction and Support for Fuel Taxation,” *European Journal of Political Research* 64(1): 207-228.

Additional Supplemental Reading:

- Smith, Keith E. and Lynn M. Hempel. 2022. “Alignment of values and political orientations amplifies climate change attitudes and behaviors,” *Climatic Change* 172(4): 1-28.
- Charnysh, Volha, Jared Kalow, Evan Leiberman, and Erin Walk. 2024. “How information about historic carbon emissions affects support for climate aid: evidence from a survey experiment,” *Climatic Change* 177(174): 1-17.
- Rudolph, Lukas and Sarah Gomm. 2024. “How does an economic shock affect environmental attitudes, preferences and issue importance? Evidence from Switzerland,” *Climatic Change* 177(63): 1-24.
- Benegal, Salil and Mirya R. Holman. 2025. “Hostile sexism and overconfidence shape the public’s views of climate change,” *Climatic Change* 178(153): 1-20.

Week 7: 24 February, 12-14.00 - Pub309

Topic: *Punishment & Criminal Justice Attitudes*

Read:

- Navarro, John C. and Michael Hansen. 2023. “‘Please Dont Be Too Nice’: The Role of Political Ideology in Approval of Police Use of Force,” *Policing: An International Journal* 46(5/6): 724-738.
- Hansen, Michael A. and John C. Navarro. 2024. “The Role of Political Ideology in Agreement with Prisoner Responsibility for Personal Safety and Well-Being,” *European Journal on Criminal Policy and Research* 1-16.
- Hansen, Michael A., Isabelle Johansson, and John C. Navarro. 2025. “Gender, Ethnicity, and Public Opinion: An Experimental Study of Attitudes Toward Sex Work,” *Crime & Delinquency* 1-26.
- Navarro, John C. and Michael A. Hansen. 2025. “An Experimental Study on the Effect of Prosecutorial Brady Violations on Confidence in Exonerating Individuals Wrongfully Convicted of Murder,” *Journal of Experimental Criminology* 1-24.

Additional Supplemental Reading:

- Hansen, Michael A. and John C. Navarro. 2023. “Gender and Racial Gaps in Support for Policing and Correctional Reforms: Are the Gaps a Consequence of Political Partisanship?,” *Crime & Delinquency* 69(9): 1672-1699.
- Hansen, Michael A. and John C. Navarro. 2023. “Bad Apples or Rotten Orchards? Public Attitudes of Interactions with Police and The Role of Political Ideology,” *Policing: An International Journal* 46(5/6): 861-877.
- Hansen, Michael A. and John C. Navarro. 2025. “It’s Just ‘Locker Room’ Talk:” The Impact of Gender and Political Partisanship On Agreement with Rape Myths Among U.S. University Students,” *Victims & Offenders* 1-21.
- Navarro, John C. and Michael A. Hansen. 2025. “Is it Black and White? Testing Racial Framing Effects of Public Reactions to Newspaper Vignettes of Fatal Officer-Involved Shootings,” *Journal of Experimental Criminology* 21(1): 1-22.