Overview: This course will investigate the various means, both direct and indirect, through which the mass media and public opinion can influence the foreign policy making process. We will review historical perspectives regarding the proper role (or lack thereof) of public opinion in foreign policy, as well as more recent challenges to this perspective. This review will include a discussion of whether and how the media influences what the public thinks about politics in general, and foreign affairs in particular. We will consider such issues as: How does the public learn about foreign policy? Do they care about it? If so, under what circumstances will political leaders be responsive to the public's preferences? Do politics really stop at the water's edge? What effect, if any, has the advent of real-time global news reporting had on U.S. foreign policy (e.g. the so-called "CNN Effect")? Does this represent a qualitative change, or are such claims exaggerated? The goal is to develop a coherent view of the interaction between the mass media, public opinion and political leaders with respect to foreign affairs.

Requirements: There will be one paper (20-30 pages, double spaced), based on the material covered in the course. Students will also present their preliminary research to the class, as well as prepare and present to the class brief summaries of select readings. The paper counts for 40% of your grade, the research presentation counts for 10%, oral participation in class counts for 35% and written summaries count for 15%.

Paper: The term paper can be either a literature review on one or two of the topics covered in the course or a research paper on a topic of the student’s choice. Students must submit a paper proposal, for approval, no later than the fifth meeting of the course. The final paper will be due on the day of the final exam.

Readings:
• There are three books assigned for the course:
• All other readings will be available either on-line (on the course page) or in a course packet (or both).

Introduction (September 2)

No Class September 7 (Labor Day)

I. Where Public Opinion Comes From (September 9 & 11)
• Nature and structure of opinions and belief systems
• Ideological innocence vs. low-information rationality
II. What the Public Thinks/Knows About Foreign Policy (September 14 & 16)
  • Public ignorance and/or knowledge of foreign affairs
  • Mass vs. elite beliefs about foreign affairs
  • Isolationism vs. Internationalism

III. How the Public Learns About Foreign Policy (September 21 & 23)
  • Priming, Framing & Agenda Setting
  • The Roles of the Media and Elites
    - Zaller, John. “Elite Leadership of Mass Opinion: New Evidence from the Gulf War.” In Taken by Storm (Chapter 9, pp. 186-209.)
IV. Determinants of Public Support: Short vs. Longer-term (September 28 & 30)

Short Term: The President and The Rally Effect

Longer Term: Casualties, Principle Policy Objective, Success, Framing

VI. Who Influences Whom? (October 5 & 7)


No class October 12 (Columbus Day)

V. Measuring Public Opinion (October 14)
- Public opinion polling: uses and misuses
- How leaders gauge public opinion
Uses and Misuses of Public Opinion Polling

How Leaders Gauge Public Opinion

VII. How the Media Cover Foreign Affairs (October 19 & 21)
- Incentive structures (economic, political, technological and institutional)
- Sources of news
- What gets covered?

VIII. Influence of Public Opinion on Foreign Policy (October 26 & 28)
IX Influence of the Media on Foreign Policy (November 2 & 4)

November 9: Research Presentations

No class on November 11 (Veterans Day)

November 16 & 18: Research Presentations

X. Domestic Politics and the Political Use of Force (November 23 & 25)

XI. Media, Public Opinion, and Foreign Policy, A Comparative View (November 30 & December 2)