

PLSC 541, Fall 2008
Baumgartner

Questions for week 5

Readings: Edwards, *On Deaf Ears*

Questions:

1. Edwards takes an accepted wisdom and blows it out of the water. Do you get the sense his analysis is correct?
2. What is there about the journalists and political watchers that leads them to generate accepted wisdoms that can so easily be demonstrated as completely wrong? This is a serious question. Evaluate the biases in reporting or selective perceptions to come up with a serious theory to explain the accepted wisdom that presidents can and do lead public opinion.
3. What is the empirical scope of the polling work that Edwards did? How long would it take a person to do this if they had access to something like the Gallup archive? Be specific. How many polls did he analyze? How many incidents of presidential leadership? Could you do this for a dissertation?
4. The analysis here also incorporates things like George Washington's efforts to lead the public back in his day. Evaluate the contribution of those sections of the book.
5. The book includes some analyses that make Mayhew look wrong, as Edwards suggests at several points that divided government makes it very difficult for the president to lead the public. Discuss.
6. Going beyond this particular book, but to think of the literature on the presidency in general, why do we have a literature on the President that does not have much to do with the executive branch of government? Is it right to leave administrative behavior to the field of public administration? Be specific in discussing ways that the books you have read these past two weeks might be improved if they incorporated more discussion of the activities of the civil service and executive departments.