

POLI 718 Agenda Setting, Baumgartner, Spring 2017

Questions for week 10 McCombs, Setting the Agenda + one article

Consider the following questions for discussion and for potential paper topics.

1. In Chapter One McCombs focuses on public opinion. Can this logically change if there is no change in media discussion? How would you test for that? What kinds of un-mediated direct experiences do you expect would affect public opinion in the aggregate? Where would you expect media effects to be higher / lower? How to test for that?
2. In Chapter Two he focuses on what kinds of things end up in the news. How does “newsworthiness” affect public opinion / debate / policy decision making within government? What is the distorting effect of journalistic norms of newsworthiness, man-bites-dog stuff?
3. Clearly, framing and priming affect public opinion, based on mediated coverage, as discussed in Chapter Three. Explain how to set up a study to analyze / test some aspect of this. Be specific.
4. In Chapter Five he discusses how long things stay in the media, once they are there; decay-effects. Go beyond what he writes there to discuss the best ways to study this, and how it might vary from issue to issue or topic to topic.
5. In Chapter Six the media is supposed to affect public opinion. In Chapter Seven the possibility that institutional actors such as the president affect the media. What are the logical ways to study these inter-agenda effects?
6. Why do political science, public policy, and media / communications scholars approach these questions so differently? How could a new literature be developed?