

- **Announcements**

- For the next class:
  - Read the seminar paper assigned to you.
  - Fill out the peer-evaluation form (available in the IS)
  - Bring both the form and the paper you read to the class
- Final exam dates: Fri Dec 18 1:30pm U42
  - Who needs the final grade early?
- Second final exam date: Thu Jan 14 9:45am

- **The plan for today**

- Political knowledge
  - Should democratic citizens be politically knowledgeable?
  - Are citizens politically knowledgeable?
  - What are the consequences?

## Political knowledge

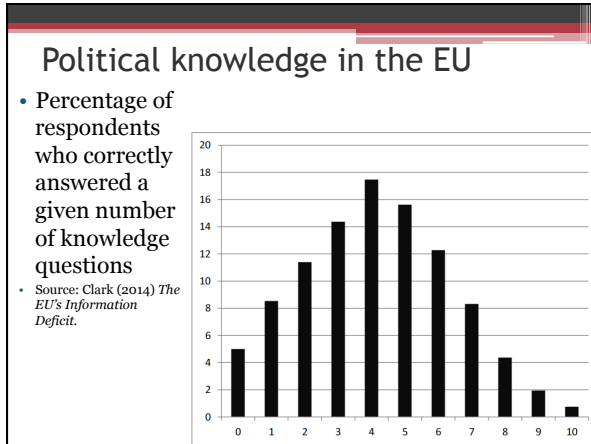
- What is it?
  - = “the range of factual information about politics that is stored in long-term memory”
- Is a politically knowledgeable public important for a democracy?

## Is a politically knowledgeable public important?

- **Elite democratic theory**
  - No. It’s even irrational to spend time learning about politics
  - Rely on cues (heuristics) from their environment
- **Participatory democratic theory**
  - Yes! Need to know their interests, what policies advance those interests and which parties advance those policies
  - Elites can’t be trusted that they will truly represent citizens’ interests

## U.S.-based research on political knowledge

- **Are people well informed?**
  - In general – low level of political knowledge
  - Highest levels of knowledge – “rules of the game”
  - Less knowledge about the substance of politics and about the people and players
- **Are citizens misinformed? If yes, does it matter?**
  - Yes. Misinformation influences their attitudes (support for welfare programs, support for war)



### “The EU currently consists of 28 member states.” True/false question

| knowledge   item 1 | Freq.         | Percent       | Cum.   |
|--------------------|---------------|---------------|--------|
| incorrect          | 3,760.9986    | 15.21         | 15.21  |
| correct            | 15,200.02     | 61.46         | 76.66  |
| DK                 | 5,771.9815    | 23.34         | 100.00 |
| <b>Total</b>       | <b>24,733</b> | <b>100.00</b> |        |

Source: Eurobarometer 80.1. Data collection in Fall 2013.

### “The members of the European Parliament are directly elected by the citizens of each Member State.” True/false question

| knowledge   item 2 | Freq.         | Percent       | Cum.   |
|--------------------|---------------|---------------|--------|
| incorrect          | 7,382.599     | 29.85         | 29.85  |
| correct            | 13,077.552    | 52.87         | 82.72  |
| DK                 | 4,272.8493    | 17.28         | 100.00 |
| <b>Total</b>       | <b>24,733</b> | <b>100.00</b> |        |

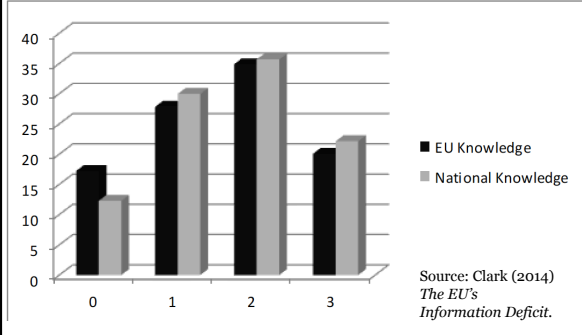
Source: Eurobarometer 80.1. Data collection in Fall 2013.

### “Switzerland is a member of the EU.” True/false question

| knowledge   item 3 | Freq.         | Percent       | Cum.   |
|--------------------|---------------|---------------|--------|
| incorrect          | 3,993.6674    | 16.15         | 16.15  |
| correct            | 17,823.958    | 72.07         | 88.21  |
| DK                 | 2,915.3741    | 11.79         | 100.00 |
| <b>Total</b>       | <b>24,733</b> | <b>100.00</b> |        |

Source: Eurobarometer 80.1. Data collection in Fall 2013.

Do citizens know more about domestic politics than about the EU?

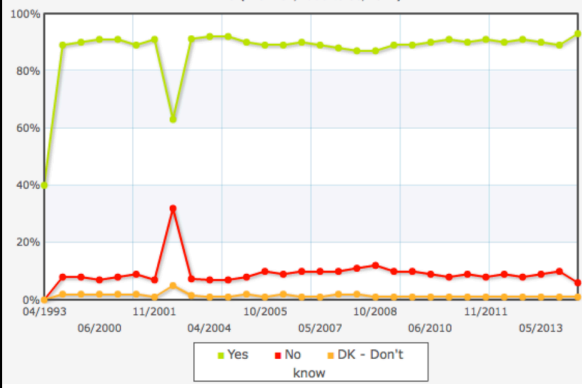


Does the level of political knowledge change over time?

- Comparing 1940s and 1989 – the level of political knowledge is about the same (despite the gains in education)
- Do new opportunities such as the internet and social media make people more informed about politics?
  - Not really
  - Comparing 1989 and 2007 – levels of knowledge are about the same

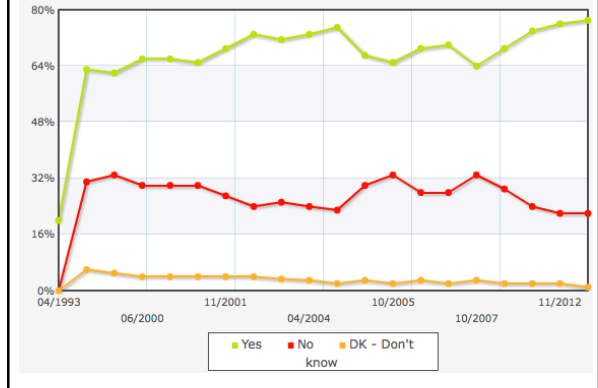
Have you heard of...? The European Parliament

EU ( from 04/1993 to 06/2014)



Have you heard of...? The European Court of Justice

EU ( from 04/1993 to 05/2013)



## Are citizens generalists or specialists

- Generalist = ?
- Specialist = ?
- Research shows that citizens are generalists.

## Why may this research on political knowledge be problematic?

- Questions asked may not be equally relevant for all respondents
  - gender gap in political knowledge
- Too much emphasis on factual knowledge
  - We should focus on what citizens need to know

## Consequences of political knowledge

### United States:

- Higher knowledge – more tolerant, participate more

### EU

- Clark and Hellwig (2012)
  - Lower knowledge → lower support of the EU
- More knowledgeable
  - → more likely to vote in EP elections
  - → more likely to base their vote on European (rather than domestic) issues

## Are some citizens more knowledgeable?

### U.S.-based research:

- More knowledgeable
  - Wealthy, better educated, men, white, older
- EU-based research – similar findings
  - Education
  - Income (matters more than education)
  - Occupation (managers and professionals)
  - Men are more knowledgeable
  - Older are more knowledgeable