

Benjamin Toff

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Positions/Employment

University of Minnesota, Twin Cities

Assistant Professor, Hubbard School of Journalism and Mass Communication, 2017-present
Faculty Affiliate, Center for the Study of Political Psychology, 2017-present

University of Oxford

Research Associate, Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism, 2017-present
Postdoctoral Research Fellow, Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism, 2016-2017

Education

Ph.D. Political Science, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 2016.

Major Fields: American Politics, Methodology; *Minor Field:* Journalism and Mass Communication

Dissertation: "The Blind Scorekeepers: Journalism, Polling, and the Battle to Define Public Opinion in American Politics." *Committee:* Katherine Cramer (chair), Barry Burden, Young Mie Kim, Dhavan Shah, Michael W. Wagner, Charles Franklin (Marquette University Law School)

Recipient of the American Political Science Association's *E. E. Schattschneider Award* (2018) and *Thomas E. Patterson Award* (2017) as well as honorable mention for the International Communication Association's political communication division's *Best Dissertation Award* (2017)

M.A. Political Science, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 2012.

B.A. with High Honors, Social Studies, Harvard University, 2005.

Publications

Books

The Blind Scorekeepers: How Public Opinion Gets Defined In American Politics. Manuscript expected to be completed in 2018.

Refereed Journal Articles

Toff, Benjamin. N.d. "Exploring the Effects of Polls on Public Opinion: How and When Media Reports of Policy Preferences Can Become Self-Fulfilling Prophecies." *Research and Politics.* Forthcoming.

Toff, Benjamin, and Ruth A. Palmer. N.d. "Explaining the Gender Gap in News Avoidance: 'News-is-for-Men' Perceptions and the Burdens of Caretaking" (with Ruth Palmer). *Journalism Studies.* Forthcoming. DOI: 10.1080/1461670X.2018.1528882

Toff, Benjamin, and Elizabeth Suhay. N.d. "Partisan Conformity, Social Identity, and the Formation of Policy Preferences." *International Journal of Public Opinion Research*. Forthcoming. Available online at DOI:10.1093/ijpor/edy014

Toff, Benjamin. N.d. "The 'Nate Silver Effect' on Political Journalism: Gatecrashers, Gatekeepers, and Changing Newsroom Practices Around Coverage of Public Opinion Polls." *Journalism*. Forthcoming. Available online at DOI:10.1177/1464884917731655

Toff, Benjamin, and Rasmus Kleis Nielsen. 2018. "I Just Google It': Folk Theories of Distributed Discovery." *Journal of Communication* 18(3): 636-657. DOI:10.1093/joc/jqy009

Cramer, Katherine J., and **Benjamin Toff**. 2017. "The Fact of Experience: Rethinking Political Knowledge and Civic Competence." *Perspectives on Politics* 15(3): 754-770. DOI:10.1017/S1537592717000949

Recipient of the American Political Science Association's *Heinz Eulau Award* (2018)

Book Chapters, Review Articles, and Commentaries

Toff, Benjamin. N.d. "Effects of Horse-Race Journalism." In *The Oxford Handbook of Electoral Persuasion*. Forthcoming.

Toff, Benjamin. 2018. "Rethinking the Debate Over Recent Polling Failures." *Political Communication* 35(2): 327-332. DOI:10.1080/10584609.2018.1440908.

Other Publications

Toff, Benjamin, and Elizabeth Suhay. 2018. "How worried are you about an impending trade war? Your opinion might depend on what your fellow party members think." *Washington Post*, Monkey Cage blog. July 12. Available at <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2018/07/12/how-worried-are-you-about-an-impending-trade-war-that-might-depend-on-what-your-fellow-party-members-think/>.

Toff, Benjamin. 2017. "The 'Nate Silver Effect' Is Changing Journalism. Is That Good?" *Politico Magazine*. Oct. 5. Available at <https://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2017/10/05/nate-silver-effect-journalism-polling-five-thirty-eight-215683/>.

Toff, Benjamin. 2017. "Digital News Report—United States, 2017." In Nic Newman, Richard Fletcher, Antonis Kalogeropoulos, David A. L. Levy and Rasmus Kleis Nielsen (eds.) *Digital News Report, 2017*, Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism. Available at <http://www.digitalnewsreport.org/survey/2017/united-states-2017/>.

Toff, Benjamin. 2016. "Polls may be making voters worse at predicting elections." *Washington Post*, Monkey Cage blog. Nov. 18. Available at <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2016/11/18/polls-may-be-making-voters-worse-at-predicting-elections/>.

Research in Progress

Under Review

"How News Feels: Anxiety as a Barrier to Political Knowledge and Engagement" (with Rasmus Kleis Nielsen). *Under initial review*.

Working Papers

"All the News that's Fit to Ignore: A Comparative Analysis of News Avoidance" (with Antonis Kalogeropoulos)

"Are We Asking the Wrong Questions? News Exposure Measures in Political Communication Research, 1996-2017" (with Michael Myers).

"Correlates of News Use: Understanding Variation in Audiences for News Online, Offline, Across Countries, and Over Time" (with Rasmus Kleis Nielsen).

"The Changing Dynamics of Presidential Candidate Selection."

"Elite Ideology Across Media: Constructing a Measure of Congressional Candidates' Ideological Self-Presentation on Social Media" (with David Lassen).

"Words That Matter: Partisan Polarization in Networked Politics" (with Young Mie Kim).

Conference Presentations

"All the News that's Fit to Ignore: A Comparative Analysis of News Avoidance" (with Antonis Kalogeropoulos), Annual Meeting of the European Communication Research and Education Association, Lugano, Switzerland, November 2018. (Accepted.)

"All the News that's Fit to Ignore: A Comparative Analysis of News Avoidance" (with Antonis Kalogeropoulos), Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association, Boston, September 2018.

"Are We Asking the Wrong Questions? News Exposure Measures in Political Communication Research, 1996-2017" (with Michael Myers), Annual Meeting of the International Communication Association, Prague, May 2018.

"Is News for Men? A Qualitative Look at the Gender Gap in News Avoidance" (with Ruth Palmer), Annual Meeting of the International Communication Association, Prague, May 2018.

"Opinion Surveys in U.S. News Coverage of Presidential Elections, 1992-2016," International Communication Association Pre-Conference on Election Reporting, Prague, May 2018.

"Populist Predispositions among UK and Spanish News Avoiders" (with Ruth Palmer), International Communication Association Pre-Conference on Populism and the Media, Budapest, May 2018.

"Opinion Surveys in News Coverage of Presidential Elections, 1992-2016." Annual Meeting of the Midwest Political Science Association, Chicago, April 2018.

"Correlates of News Use: Understanding Variation in Audiences for News Online, Offline, Across Countries, and Over Time" (with Rasmus Kleis Nielsen). Future of Journalism Conference, Cardiff, UK, September 2017.

"If I'm curious about something, I will look it up': Exploring the link between active news use and citizenship in a changing media environment" (with Rasmus Kleis Nielsen). Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association, Political Communication Pre-Conference, San Francisco, August 2017.

"Does News Coverage of Policy Preferences Enhance Democratic Responsiveness or Serve to Legitimize Elite Agendas?," Annual Meeting of the World Association for Public Opinion Research, Lisbon, Portugal, July 2017.

"Lack of Resources or Lack of Relevance? How and Why People Avoid News," (with Rasmus Kleis Nielsen), Annual Meeting of the International Communication Association, San Diego, May 2017.

"Taking Cues from Fellow Citizens: How Poll Results Serve as Social Heuristic," Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association, Philadelphia, September 2016.

"When Public Opinion Data is Sponsored: Who Pays for Poll Results in the News," Annual Meeting of the International Communication Association, Fukuoka, Japan, June 2016.

"The Fact of Experience: Rethinking Political Knowledge and Civic Competence," (with Katherine Cramer), Annual Meeting of the International Communication Association, Fukuoka, Japan, June 2016.

"The Fact of Experience: Rethinking Political Knowledge and Civic Competence," (with Katherine Cramer), Annual Meeting of the Midwest Political Science Association, Chicago, April 2016.

"The Blind Scorekeepers: Journalism, Polling, and the Battle to Define Public Opinion in American Politics," Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association, Political Communication Pre-Conference, San Francisco, September 2015.

"How Media Reports about Opinion Polls Influence Future Survey Respondents," Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association, San Francisco, September 2015.

"Revisiting Press-State Relations in the Digital Age: Partisan Coalitions on Twitter," (with Young Mie Kim and David Lassen), Annual Meeting of the International Communication Association, San Juan, Puerto Rico, May 2015.

"How Poll-Driven Is Contemporary News About American Politics? Results from Two Content Analyses," Annual Meeting of the International Communication Association, San Juan, Puerto Rico, May 2015.

"How Media Reports about Opinion Polls Influence Future Survey Respondents," Annual Meeting of the Midwest Political Science Association, Chicago, April 2015.

"How Poll-Driven Is Contemporary American Politics? Results from Two News Content Analyses," Annual Meeting of the Southern Political Science Association, New Orleans, January 2015.

"Teaching an Old Dog New Tweets: Congressional Campaigns and the Political Content of Social Media Messages," (with David Lassen), Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association, Washington D.C., August 2014.

"Words That Matter: Twitter and Partisan Polarization," (with Young Mie Kim), Annual Meeting of the International Communication Association, Seattle, Wash., May 2014.

"Beyond the Party Decides: Modeling the Dynamic Interrelationship Between Party Elites, Media Coverage, and Public Opinion During the Invisible Primary," Annual Meeting of the Midwest Political Science Association, Chicago, April 2014.

Panels Organized

"Reinvigorating Theory in Journalism Studies: New Approaches and Lessons from News Audience Research," Annual Meeting of the International Communication Association, San Diego, May 2017.

Invited Talks

Research Presentations

University of Minnesota's Center for the Study of Political Psychology (2017); University of Leeds, UK (2016); London School of Economics, UK (2016); University of Texas-Arlington (2016); University of Minnesota (2016); George Washington University (2015)

Public Talks and Panels

"Views from the U: The Political Science of Election 2018," University of Minnesota (2018)

Teaching

University of Minnesota, Hubbard School of Journalism & Mass Communication

Undergraduate Level

JOUR 1001: "Introduction to Mass Communication" (Spring 2018)

JOUR 3551: "Economics of New Media" (Spring 2018)

JOUR 3796: "Media and Politics" (Fall 2018, Fall 2017)

JOUR 5501: "Communication, Public Opinion, and Social Media" (Fall 2018, Spring 2019)

Graduate Level

JOUR 8661: "Seminar: Mediated Political Communication in the Digital Age" (Spring 2019)

University of Maryland-College Park, Merrill School of Journalism

JOUR 175: "Media Literacy," Adjunct Teaching Assistant (Spring 2015)

University of Wisconsin-Madison

PS 104: "Intro to American Politics and Government," Head Teaching Assistant (Spring 2013, Fall 2013)

Honors and Awards

External

Heinz Eulau Award for best article published in *Perspectives on Politics* the previous calendar year, American Political Science Association (2018)

E. E. Schattschneider Award for best dissertation in the field of American government, American Political Science Association (2018)

Thomas E. Patterson Award for best dissertation, Political Communication section, American Political Science Association (2017)

Best Dissertation Award (honorable mention), Political Communication division, International Communication Association (2017)

Prestige-Cook Travel Award, Southern Political Science Association (2015)
Scholars Strategy Network Graduate Fellow (2014-2015)

Internal

University of Wisconsin-Madison

Summer Initiative Funding, Dept. of Political Science (2014, 2015, 2016)
Research Project Funding Competition, Elections Research Center (2015)
Vilas Conference Presentation Grant (2015, 2016)
University Fellowship and Chancellor's Opportunity Award (2011-2012)

Harvard University

Harvard College Research Program (Summer 2004)

Professional Journalism Experience

Researcher and fact-checker in Editorial department, *The New York Times* (2005-2011)
Freelance researcher for *New Yorker* staff writer (2011)
Freelance essays and articles published in *The New York Times* (2006-2011), *The Boston Globe* (2005), and *New York* magazine (2011).
Intern in news division of Boston.com (2005)
Co-editor of Editorial page, *Harvard Crimson* (2004)
Intern, *Arizona Daily Star* (2000)

Service

Department and University

Staff Assistant, Elections Research Center, UW-Madison (2015-2016)
Editorial Associate, Wisconsin's Equity and Inclusion Lab, UW-Madison (2012-2015)
Co-Coordinator, Political Science Grad Workshop, UW-Madison (2013-2014)

Other

Referee: *Electoral Studies*; *International Journal of Communication*; *International Journal of Press/Politics*; *International Journal of Public Opinion Research*; *Journal of Communication*; *PLOS ONE*; *Perspectives on Politics*; *Political Behavior*; *Political Communication*

Member: American Political Science Association, Midwest Political Science Association, Southern Political Science Association, International Communication Association, World Association for Public Opinion Research, National Lesbian & Gay Journalists Association

Skills

Data Analysis: Stata, R, NVivo

Programming Languages: Python, SQL, HTML

Last updated: October 2018
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