

Passion in American Politics: What Happens When Citizens Become Deeply Committed to Pressuring Government on a Policy Issue

2016 GIERACH LECTURESHIP

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LOCATION: 130 PSYCHOLOGY BUILDING

Free & Open to the Public, Reception to Follow in 108 Psychology



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For decades, political scientists have presumed that American citizens lack real opinions about what they want government to do on specific policy issues and that citizens' votes in elections are driven by other considerations, including identity-based affiliations with political parties, assessments of incumbent performance and personality, and more. But new work on the social psychology of attitudes suggests a different perspective: to understand a person's opinion on a policy issue requires measuring the strength of that opinion. And strength is multifaceted. For more than 20 years, Professor Jon Krosnick has been studying how people form and change their opinions on issues of government policy, what causes some of those opinions to become strong, and what the cognitive and behavioral effects of strong opinions are in the political arena. This perspective casts the American democracy in a new light, one that is more encouraging about its integrity than some alternative accounts.

The Gierach Lectureship: This lectureship is funded by the Christopher Gierach Memorial Fund. In 2007, it was established in loving memory of Christopher E. Gierach by his family. Christopher earned a bachelor's degree from the University of Florida in psychology in 2000. He attended the University of Denver Law School for his law degree and became a member of the Colorado Bar Association. He was an avid outdoorsman and loved the Gators, politics and family. He passed away on June 5, 2007 at the age of 28.