



## IN MEMORIAM

Herbert McClosky  
Professor of Political Science, Emeritus  
UC Berkeley  
1916 – 2006

Herbert McClosky, professor emeritus in the Department of Political Science, who used survey instruments to perform pioneering research into political beliefs, attitudes, and ideologies, died Monday, March 13, 2006, in Oakland of pneumonia and complications of Parkinson's disease. He was 89 years old.

McClosky, who joined the University of California, Berkeley, faculty in 1960 and taught here for almost three decades, was a major force in the establishment of “political behavior” as a graduate teaching field and in the work of the Survey Research Center, an Organized Research Unit operating under the jurisdiction of the vice chancellor for research that is the principal unit for survey and related social science methods on the Berkeley campus.

“His work helped transform political science and was unique in seamlessly integrating important normative questions with rigorous empirical research in elegant prose,” said political science professor Jack Citrin, who received his doctorate at Berkeley as a student of McClosky's. “He taught and inspired me and others and defined the trajectory of current research on issues ranging from the nature and influence of political ideologies to democratic commitment and partisan polarization.”

McClosky's publications include two major books, *Dimensions of Tolerance: What Americans Believe About Civil Liberties* (with Alida Brill, 1983) and *The American Ethos: Public Attitudes Toward Capitalism and Democracy* (with John Zaller, 1984), as well as numerous articles still cited and relied upon by researchers. One of these articles, “Consensus and Ideology in American Politics” (1964), was recently identified as the 13th- most- cited American Political Science Review article in the last 100 years. McClosky also wrote a major textbook on the Soviet Union, *The Soviet Dictatorship* (with J. Turner, 1960).

According to Dennis Chong, a Northwestern University political science professor and one of McClosky's former doctoral students, “Herb McClosky's survey research on the social- psychological foundations of democratic institutions helped transform the theory and methodology of modern political science. He illuminated the big imponderables of society, such as intolerance, political alienation, conformity, and ideological conflict, by showing how these phenomena could be explained — at least partly — by systematic social processes.”

McClosky was born in a working- class area of Newark, New Jersey, on September 18, 1916. Neither of his parents was educated beyond the beginnings of high school. He worked his way through the then- private University of Newark (now Rutgers- Newark), studying economic history, political philosophy, and comparative government. He received his bachelor's degree from the university in 1940, graduating with election to Phi Beta Kappa.

He repeated his academic success in graduate work at the University of Minnesota, earning a doctorate in 1946. As a very junior member of that faculty, his teaching in the humanities program and in political science was widely admired for its vitality and range. At Minnesota, McClosky made close lifelong friendships with

the novelists Saul Bellow and Isaac Rosenfeld, according to his wife, Mildred. She said he also joined the brain trust that the young Mayor Hubert Humphrey gathered about him in the course of consolidating the Minnesota Democratic and Farmer-Labor parties and while seeking to rid the municipal government of Minneapolis of corruption, anti-Semitism, and racial prejudice.

While at Minnesota, McClosky gravitated toward the world famous cluster of social psychologists that then taught on the Minneapolis campus, especially Paul Meehl, then chair of the university's psychology department; and with the help of a multiyear grant McClosky pursued postdoctoral training in social psychology, psychometrics, and survey research. From the mid-1950s onward, a hallmark of his work was the design and application of elaborate survey instruments to the study of political attitudes and their foundations in core ideological beliefs. After an immensely productive two decades at Minnesota, McClosky moved to Berkeley, where he set up his influential program of teaching and research in behavioral political science.

During his academic career McClosky was elected to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, served as vice president of the American Political Science Association, and worked with or led numerous research foundations and councils.

Upon his retirement from Berkeley in 1987, campus officials awarded him the Berkeley Citation for notable professional achievement and outstanding service to the University.

He is survived by his wife of 64 years, Mildred (Mitzi) of Berkeley; daughter Jane Greco of San Jose; son Dan McClosky of Oakland; brother Gerald McClosky of Eureka; and five grandchildren, Karine and David McClosky of Berkeley, Marc Weber of San Francisco, and Jonathan and Michael Greco of San Jose.

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