

Political Psychology

This course examines what psychology (mostly social and cognitive) can tell us about political phenomenon – that is, rather than examining what happened in politics (e.g. who won an election) or how it happened (e.g. who voted for whom), we will look at *why* it happened by looking at the psychology of individuals. For example, what causes individuals to make decisions and form attitudes? Or, why do individuals identify with certain groups and not others? Answering these types of questions will allow us to explain phenomenon such as the role of media in politics, why people identify with parties, and who wins Presidential elections. Although this class will be heavily focused on politics in the United States, there will be examples from other countries.

In the course of learning about the substance of these topics, we will also consider how the knowledge was acquired – that is what type of research was conducted? How valid are the conclusions? How could the research be improved?

In addition to two short midterm quizzes and a final, all students will be asked to complete an original piece of political psychology research.

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1 Topics by Date

1. Introduction to class
 - **January 25:** the challenge of social science and examples of topics examined in class
2. Theories of behavior and cognition
 - (a) incentive based
 - **January 27:** How do individuals make decisions? classical economics, prospect theory, Presidential elections, and the paradox of voting
 - **February 1:** experiments and observational research in social science
 - (b) evolutionary/biological
 - **February 3:** evolutionary: cooperation, war, and patriarchy
 - (c) personality
 - **February 8:** Does personality matter? Is ideology genetically determined?
 - (d) symbolic
 - **February 10:** political violence and integrative busing

- (e) cognition and emotion
 - **February 15:** emotion: emotional man vs rational man
 - **February 17:** processing and heuristics: stereotyping, candidate appearance, and brain structure
 - **February 22:** dissonance and biases: Public opinion and the media
 - **February 24:** framing: why Americans hate welfare, and global warming
 - (f) decision making
 - **March 1:** political leadership and personality (again)
 - **March 3:** group decision making: wisdom of crowds, political leadership (again), and the Bay of Pigs
 - (g) Putting it together:
 - **March 8:** Group presentations on behavior and cognition
 - **March 10:** Midterm Quiz 1 and discussion of current politics
3. Theories of identity
- (a) dispositional versus situational identity
 - **March 22:** obedience to authority and the Stanford Prison Experiment
 - (b) social identity
 - **March 24:** immigration, group threat, and the challenges of identity politics research
 - (c) socialization
 - **March 29:** symbolic politics: college life and the mystery of ideology & partisanship
 - **March 31:** symbolic politics: college life and the mystery of ideology & partisanship (again)
 - **April 5:** social dominance
 - (d) political extremism
 - **April 7:** extremism, political violence, and terrorism
 - (e) Putting it together:
 - **April 12:** Group presentations on identity
 - **April 14:** Midterm Quiz 2 and lecture on Obama's election
4. Tying it together to try to answer some big questions
- **April 19:** heuristics, rational ignorance, and campaigns & elections
 - **April 21:** the paradoxes of ideology and equality in the United States
 - **April 26:** the psychology of evil

2 Assignments

There will be six assignments in this class: participation in section meetings, an original piece of political psychology research, some (non-graded) short surveys, two short midterm quizzes, and a final. Each of these will be described in more detail below:

2.1 section participation

All students are expected to attend section, participate in discussion, and complete any assignments as directed by their Teaching Fellow.

2.2 political psychology research

You will be expected to complete an original piece of political psychology research that validates or extends the research examined in class. This assignment will be completed with a group. Your research can take different forms - for example it could be an experiment or a behavioral observation, such as a survey or participant observation.

There will be two separate opportunities to complete the presentation portion of this assignment: March 8 and April 12. Approximately half the class will complete the first assignment, which will look at theories of behavior and cognition, and approximately half the class will complete the second assignment, which will look at theories of identity. These dates will be claimed on a first come, first serve basis. You will also have to turn in a written report on the assignment, which will be due on either March 25 or April 26, depending on which topic you choose.

You are responsible for choosing your own groups, within the guidelines set by your instructors. Your instructors reserve the right to alter groups in any way.

Your topic and research design must be approved by your Teaching Fellow prior to executing your research.

The assignment will have three parts:

1. **Research Design:** One for entire group. Prior to beginning your research, you must give a research design, in writing, to your Teaching Fellow for approval. If your research design is not approved, you may not begin your research.
2. **Group Presentation:** You are responsible, as a group, for making a short presentation to the class about your question, design, and findings.
3. **Written Report:** Each individual is responsible for turning in their own report of their question, design, and findings.

Detailed instructions for this assignment will be distributed in lecture on February 1.

2.3 Short Surveys

A few times during the semester, you will be asked to complete a short survey. These will only take a few minutes each and are designed to allow you to have firsthand experience with some of the research that you will be studying. These will not be graded, other than for completion, and your answers will be anonymous.

2.4 Midterm Quizzes

You will have two short midterm quizzes. These will be designed to test your knowledge of the reading and the presentations made by your classmates.

2.5 Final

A final exam during exams period.

3 Due dates for assignments

Assignments are due by midnight of these dates.

- **January 31:** introductory survey
- **February 7:** Big-5 personality survey
- **February 9:** Symbolic Racism survey
- **March 8:** Behavior and cognition group presentations
- **March 21:** Authoritarian Personality survey
- **March 23:** Implicit Attitude survey
- **March 25:** Behavior and cognition research reports
- **April 4:** Social Dominance Orientation survey
- **April 12:** Identity group presentations
- **April 27:** Identity research reports

4 Grades

Grades for this class will be based on the following:

- Midterm Quiz 1 (10%)
- Midterm Quiz 2 (10%)
- Final (35%)
- participation in section and completion of survey (15%)
- research presentation (15%)
- research written report (15%)

Grades will be assigned on a standard scale. Attendance and participation in discussion sections is mandatory.

5 Readings by Date

Readings should be completed by the dates below. Readings marked with a (*) are books available at the COOP for purchase. All other readings are available on the course website.

- **January 25:**
none
- **January 27:**
Downs, Anthony. 1957. *An economic theory of democracy.* New York: Harper-Collins, pp. 37–47.
Kahneman, Daniel. 2003. “A perspective on judgement and choice: mapping bounded rationality. *American Psychologist* 58, (9), pp. 697–720. **read pp. 697–706 only.**
- **February 1:**

- Addonizio, Elizabeth M., Donald P. Green and James M. Glaser. 2007.** “Putting the Party Back into Politics: An Experiment Testing Whether Election Day Festivals Increase Voter Turnout”. *PS: Political Science & Politics* 40, pp 721-727.
- Bailenson, Jeremy N., Philip Garland, Shanto Iyengar, and Nick Yee. 2006.** “Transformed Facial Similarity as a Political Cue: A Preliminary Investigation”. *Political Psychology* 27 (3). pp. 373–385.
- Nisbett, Richard E. and Dov Cohen. 1996.** *Culture of honor: the psychology of violence in the South*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press., chapters 1 and 4.
- Hyman, Ira E., S. Matthew Boss, Breanne M. Wise, Kira E. McKenzie, and Jenna M. Caggiano. 2010.** “Did You See the Unicycling Clown? Inattentional Blindness while Walking and Talking on a Cell Phone”. *Applied Cognitive Psychology* 24: pp. 597–607.
- **February 3:**
 - ***Axelrod, Robert. 1984.** *The Evolution of cooperation*. New York: Penguin., chapters 1–5
 - recommended:** Axelrod, chapters 6–7.
 - **February 8:**
 - Fowler, James H. and Darren Schreiber. 2008.** “Biology, politics, and the emerging science of Human Nature”. *Science* 322, 912–914.
 - Carney, Dana R., John T. Jost, Samuel D. Gosling, and Jeff Potter. 2009.** “The Secret Lives of Liberals and Conservatives: Personality Profiles, Interaction Styles, and the Things They Leave Behind”. *Political Psychology* 29 (6): pp. 807–840.
 - **February 10:**
 - Sears, David O., Carl P. Hensler, and Leslie K. Speer. 1979.** “White’s Opposition to ‘Busing’: Self-Interest or Symbolic Politics?”. *American Political Science Review* 73 (2), pp. 369–384.
 - Sears, David O. and John B. McConahay. 1973.** *The politics of violence; the new urban Blacks and the Watts riot*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin. chapters 1–3.
 - **February 15:**
 - Healy, Andrew J., Neil Malhotra, and Cecilia Hyunjung Mo. 2010.** “Irrelevant Events Affect Voters’ Evaluation of Government Performance.” *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 107 (29): pp. 12804–12809
 - MacKuen, Michael, Jennifer Wolak, Luke Keele, and George E. Marcus. 2010.** “Civic Engagements: Resolute Partisanship or Reflective Deliberation”. *American Journal of Political Science* 54 (2): pp. 440–458.
 - **February 17:**
 - Todorov, Alexander, Anesu N. Mandisodza, Amir Goren, and Crystal C. Hall. 2005.** “Inferences of Competence from Faces Predict Election Outcomes”. *Science* 308, 1623–1626.
 - Schreiber, Darren, Greg Fonzo, Alan N. Simmons, Christopher T. Dawes, Taru Flagan, James H. Fowler, and Martin P. Paulus. 2009.** “Red Brain, Blue Brain: Evaluative Processes Differ in Democrats and Republicans”. Paper presented as Annual meeting of the American Political Science Association:

Toronto.

Kahneman, Daniel. 2003. “A perspective on judgement and choice: mapping bounded rationality. *American Psychologist* 58, (9), pp. 697–720. **read pp. 706–720 only.**

optional: Atkinson, Matthew A., Ryan D. Enos, and Seth J. Hill. 2009. “Candidate faces and election outcomes: Is the face-vote correlation caused by candidate selection?”. *Quarterly Journal of Political Science* 4. 229–249.

- **February 22:**

Iyengar, Shanto and Donald R. Kinder. 1987. *News that matters: television and American opinion*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, Chapters 1–3 and 7.

Zaller, John. 2001. “Monica Lewinsky and the Mainsprings of American Politics” in *Mediated Politics: communication in the future of democracy*. W. Lance Bennett and Robert M. Entman (eds). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- **February 24:**

***Gilens, Martin. 2000.** *Why Americans hate welfare*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Chapters 1–3 & 5–7.

- **March 1:**

Byman, Daniel L. and Kenneth M. Pollack. 2001: “Let us now praise great men: bringing the statesmen back in”. *International Security: 25* (4). pp. 107–146.

Jervis, Robert. 1993: “The Drunkard’s Search” in *Explorations in Political Psychology*, Shanto Iyengar and William J. McGuire (eds.). Durham: Duke University Press.

- **March 3:**

Janis, Irving. 1983. *Victims of group think: a psychological study of foreign-policy decisions and fiascos*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin. Chapters: 1, 2, and 5.

Galton, Francis. 1907. “Vox Populi”. *Nature*. March 7: pp. 450–451.

“Letters to the Editor: The Ballot-Box”. *Nature*. March 28: pp. 509–510.

- **March 8:**

none

- **March 10:**

short popular press articles on the topic – to be posted to the website.

- **March 22:**

***Zimbardo, Philip. 2007.** *The Lucifer Effect: Understanding how good people turn evil*. New York: Random House. chapters 1, 10, 12–13

read **Zimbardo** chapters 2–9 OR watch **Musen, Ken and Philip Zimbardo. 1991.** *Quiet Rage: the Stanford Prison Experiment*. New York: Insight Video. (available on the course website)

- **March 24:**

Key, V.O. 1949. *Southern politics in state and nation*. New York: Knopf. pp. 509–517.

Posner, Daniel N. 2004. “The Political Salience of Cultural Difference: Why Chewas and Tumbukas Are Allies in Zambia and Adversaries in Malawi.” *American Political Science Review* 98 (4): pp. 529–545.

- March 29:
 - *Sidanius, Jim, Shana Levin, Colette van Laar, and David O. Sears. 2008. *The Diversity Challenge: Social Identity and intergroup relations on the college campus*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation. Chapters 1–5.
 - Converse, Philip. 1993. “The Nature of Belief Systems in Mass Publics” in *Ideology and Discontent*, David E. Apter (ed), New York: Free Press of Glencoe.
- March 31:
- April 5:
 - Sidanius, Levin, van Laar, and Sears, chapters 6 and 7.
- April 7:
 - Crenshaw, Martha. 1986. “The psychology of political terrorism”, in *Political psychology: contemporary problems and issues*, M. Harmann (ed), Jossey-Bass.
 - Abrahms, Max. 2006. “Why Terrorism Does Not Work,” *International Security* 31 (2).
- April 12:
 - None
- April 14:
 - *Tesler, Michael and Sears, David O. 2010. *Obama’s race: the 2008 election and the dream of a post-racial America*. Chicago: U of Chicago Press. chapters 1–6.
 - recommended: Tesler and Sears, chapters 7–8.
- April 19:
 - Bartels, Larry. 2008. “The Irrational Electorate”. *The Wilson Quarterly*. Autumn.
- April 21:
 - *Bartels, Larry. 2008. *Unequal Democracy: The Political Economy of the New Gilded Age*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. chapters 1, 3, & 5–7.
 - recommended: Bartels, chapters: 2, 4, & 8–10.
- April 26:
 - Zimbardo, chapters 14–15.