

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 24:** Introduction to class: *the challenge of social science research*
2. Theories of behavior
 - (a) situational
 - **January 26:** classical economics, Presidential elections, and the paradox of voting: *How do individuals make decisions?*
 - **January 31:** bounded rationality, incumbency, and health care: *Are people good at making decisions?*
 - (b) social
 - **February 2:** symbolic politics: political violence and integrative busing
 - (c) biological and dispositional
 - **February 7:** personality, genetics, and gender: *Is partisanship genetic? Does gender affect politics?*
 - (d) group behavior

- **February 9:** cooperation, war, and legislatures: *Is social behavior evolutionary determined?*
 - **February 14:** groups making decisions: wisdom of crowds, group think, and the Bay of Pigs
3. Theories of cognition
 - (a) cognition
 - **February 16:** information processing, heuristics, and beautiful politicians: *Do looks matter in politics?*
 - **February 21:** dissonance, biases, and priming: *Does the media affect public opinion?*
 - **February 23:** framing and stereotypes *Why do Americans hate welfare?*
 - (b) emotion
 - **February 28:** emotion: *Does emotion matter?*
 - (c) neuroscience
 - **March 1:** brain structure and politics
 - (d) cognition and elite decision-making
 - **March 6:** The Drunkard's Search and the Cold War
 4. **March 8:** Midterm Quiz 1 and discussion of current politics
 5. Theories of identity
 - (a) situational identity
 - **March 20:** obedience to authority and the Stanford Prison Experiment *Why do people commit evil acts?*
 - **March 22:** xenophobia, ethnocentrism, & group threat *How to spot a bigot?*
 - (b) dispositional identity
 - **March 27:** Social Identity: *Is group conflict part of Human Nature?*
 - **March 29:** Social Dominance: *Why do we have hierarchies?*
 - (c) socialized identity
 - **April 3:** social identity and partisanship: *Why are people Democrats and Republicans?*
 - **April 5:** Symbolic Politics: *How did Obama win in 2008?*
 - (d) political extremism
 - **April 10:** extremism, political violence, and terrorism
 6. **April 12:** Midterm Quiz 2 and guest lecture on the Occupy Movement
 7. Tying it together to try to answer some big questions
 - **April 17:** Group Presentations
 - **April 19:** the paradoxes of ideology and inequality in the United States: *Have liberals been bamboozled?*
 - **April 24:** 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. Discussion sections will meet for one hour, every week, except for the first week of class.

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.

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 your section 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 covered in section during the week of February 7.

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 readings.

2.5 Final

A final exam during exams period.

3 Due dates for assignments

Assignments are due by midnight of these dates.

- surveys
 - **February 1:** introductory survey
 - **February 6:** Big-5 personality survey
 - **February 6:** Social Dominance Orientation survey
 - **March 19:** Authoritarian Personality survey
 - **March 21:** Implicit Attitude survey
 - **April 4:** Symbolic Racism survey
- presentations and reports:
 - **Week of April 9:** research presentations to your section
 - **April 26:** research report
- exams:
 - **March 8:** Midterm Quiz 1
 - **April 12:** Midterm Quiz 2
 - **Examination Period:** Final Exam

4 Grades

Grades for this class will be based on the following:

- Midterm Quiz 1 (12.5%)
- Midterm Quiz 2 (12.5%)
- Final (35%)
- participation in section and completion of survey (10%)
- 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 an (*) are books available at the COOP for purchase. All other readings are available on the course website.

- **JANUARY 24:**
none
- **JANUARY 26:**
Downs, Anthony. 1957. *An economic theory of democracy.* New York: Harper-Collins, pp. 37–47.
- **JANUARY 31:**
Kahneman, Daniel. 2003. “A perspective on judgement and choice: mapping bounded rationality. *American Psychologist* 58, (9), pp. 697–720. **read pp. 697–706 only.**

Ariely, Dan. 2009. "The truth about relativity" from *Predictably Irrational: the hidden forces that shape our decisions*. New York: Harper Perennial.

● **FEBRUARY 2:**

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 7:**

*Sidanius, Jim and Felecia Pratto. 1999. *Social Dominance*. New York: Cambridge University Press., pp. 33–37 ("The Trimorphic Structure of Group-Based Social Hierarchy") and chapter 10.

Fowler, James H. and Darren Schreiber. 2008. "Biology, politics, and the emerging science of Human Nature". *Science* 322: pp. 912–914.

Beckwith, Jon and Corey A. Morris. 2008. "Twin Studies of Political Behavior: Untenable Assumptions?". *Perspectives on Politics* 6 (4): pp. 785–791.

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.

Optional readings for more background or clarification of the topics:

Schaffner, Kenneth F. 2006 "Behavior: Its Nature and Nurture" in Parens, Erik, Audrey R. Chapman, and Nancy Perss. 2006. *Wrestling with Behavioral Genetics*. Annapolis: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Alford, John, Carolyn Funk, and John R. Hibbing. 2005. "Are Political Orientations Genetically Transmitted?". *American Political Science Review* 99 (2). pp. 153–167.

Alford, John, Carolyn Funk, and John R. Hibbing. 2008. "Twin Studies, Molecular Genetics, Politics, and Tolerance: A Response to Beckwith and Morris". *Perspectives on Politics* 6 (4): pp. 793–797.

McCrae, Robert R. and Oliver P. John. 1991, "An Introduction to the Five-Factor Model and Its Applications". *Journal of Personality* 60 (2), pp. 1775–216.

● **FEBRUARY 9:**

*Axelrod, Robert. 1984. *The Evolution of cooperation*. New York: Penguin., chapters 1–5

recommended: Axelrod, chapters 6–7.

● **Section readings for the week of FEBRUARY 7:**

These readings will be discussed in your section during the third week of class.

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.

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 14:**
 - 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.
 - **FEBRUARY 16:**
 - Todorov, Alexander, Anesu N. Mandisodza, Amir Goren, and Crystal C. Hall. 2005.** “Inferences of Competence from Faces Predict Election Outcomes”. *Science* 308, 1623–1626.
 - Kahneman, Daniel. 2003.** “A perspective on judgement and choice: mapping bounded rationality. *American Psychologist* 58, (9), pp. 697–720. **read pp. 706–720 only.**
 - 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 21:**
 - 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.

Optional for more clarification:

 - Zaller, John. 1992.** *The Nature and Origins of Mass Opinion*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Chapter 3.
 - **FEBRUARY 23:**
 - *Gilens, Martin. 2000.** *Why Americans hate welfare*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Chapters 1–3 & 5–7.
 - **FEBRUARY 28:**
 - 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.

Optional for more background:

 - Marcus, George E., W. Russell Neuman, and Michael MacKuen. 2000** “Dual affective subsystems: disposition and surveillance” in *Affective Intelligence and Political Judgment*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
 - **MARCH 1:**
 - 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.

Kanai, Ryota, Tom Feilden, Colin Firth, and Geraint Rees. 2011. “Political Orientations Are Correlated with Brain Structure in Young Adults”. *Current Biology* 21: pp. 677-680

Iacoboni, Marco, Joshua Freedman, Jonas Kaplan, Kathleen Hall Jamieson, Tom Freedman, Bill Knapp and Kathryn Fitzgerald. 2007. “This is your brain on politics”. *The New York Times*. November 11, 2007.

Aron, Adam, et al. 2007. “Politics and the brain”. *New York Times*. November 14, 2007.

Optional readings if you really like this topic:

Amodio, David M., John T. Jost, Sarah L. Master and Cindy M Yee. 2007. “Neurocognitive correlates of liberalism and conservatism”. *Nature Neuroscience* 10 (10): pp. 1246–1247 and supplemental material.

• **MARCH 6:**

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

• **MARCH 8:**

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

• **MARCH 20:**

***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)

Milgram, Stanley. 1977 “Subject reaction: the neglected factor in the ethics of experimentation” in *Stanley Milgram: The Individual in a Social World*, Thomas Blass, ed. London: Printer and Martin.

• **MARCH 22:**

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.

Optional:

Arkes, Hal R. and Philip E. Tetlock. 2004. “Attributions of Implicit Prejudice, or ‘Would Jesse Jackson ‘Fail’ the Implicit Association Test””. *Psychological Inquiry* 15 (4): pp. 257–278.

• **MARCH 27:**

Tajfel, Henri. 1970. “Experiments in Intergroup Discrimination”. *Scientific American*, 223: pp. 96–102.

• **MARCH 29:**

Sidanius and Pratto, chapters 2, 8, and 9 (review chapter 10, read earlier)

- **APRIL 3:**
 - Cohen, Geoffrey. 2003.** “Party over policy: The dominating impact of group influence on political beliefs,” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 85 (5), 808–822.
 - Converse, Philip. 1963.** “The Nature of Belief Systems in Mass Publics” in *Ideology and Discontent*, David E. Apter (ed), New York: Free Press of Glencoe.
 - Bartels, Larry. 2008.** “The Irrational Electorate”. *The Wilson Quarterly*. Autumn.
 - Sidanius, Jim, Shana Levin, Colette van Laar, and David O. Sears. 2008.** “The overall effects of college on students’ sociopolitical attitudes” in *The Diversity Challenge: Social Identity and intergroup relations on the college campus*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.
- **APRIL 5:**
 - ***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 10:**
 - Pape, Robert A. 2005.** *Dying to Win: The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism*. New York: Random House. Chapters 9–11.
- **APRIL 12:**
 - TBA
- **APRIL 17:**
 - none
- **APRIL 19:**
 - Frank, Thomas. 2004.** *What’s the Matter with Kansas? How Conservatives Won the Heart of America*. New York: Metropolitan Books. introduction and chapter 6.
 - ***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 24:**
 - Paluck, Elizabeth Levy 2009.** “Reducing intergroup prejudice and conflict using the media: A field experiment in Rwanda”. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 96. pp: 574–587.
 - Zimbardo**, chapters 14–15.
 - Darley, John M. and Bibb Latané. 1968.** “Bystander intervention in emergencies: diffusion of responsibility”. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 8 (4): pp. 377-383.