

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

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Class Meeting: TuTh 10-11:30AM, Jefferson Lab 250

1 Topics by Date

1. Introduction to class
 - **January 29:** Introduction to class: *Why is social science research hard?*
2. Theories of behavior
 - (a) situational
 - **January 31:** classical economics, Presidential elections, and the paradox of voting: *How do individuals make decisions?*
 - **February 5:** bounded rationality, incumbency, and health care: *Are people good at making decisions?*
 - (b) social

- **February 7:** symbolic politics: political violence and integrative busing
What caused the Watts riots?
- (c) biological and dispositional
 - **February 12:** personality and genetics: *Why are Republicans and Democrats so different?*
- (d) group behavior
 - **February 14:** evolution and political behavior: *Why do people ever cooperate? And why is most fighting done by men and not women?*
 - **February 19:** psychology of group decision-making: *How did the Bay of Pigs happen and why can groups make better decisions than individuals?*
- 3. Theories of cognition
 - (a) cold cognition
 - **February 21:** information processing, heuristics, and voting: *Are beautiful politicians more likely to win?*
 - **February 26:** dissonance, biases, priming, and the media: *What is the effect of the media on public opinion?*
 - **February 28:** framing, stereotypes, and public policy *Why do Americans hate welfare?*
 - (b) hot cognition
 - **March 5:** emotion: *Will college football affect your vote?*
 - (c) neuroscience
 - **March 7:** brain structure and politics: *Do Republicans and Democrats have different brains?*
 - (d) cognition and elite decision-making
 - **March 12:** attribution, anchoring, and the atomic bomb (or “The Drunkard’s Search” and the politics of defense): *Why are bombs measured in megatons?*
- 4. **March 14:** guest lecture: TBA
- 5. Theories of identity
 - (a) **March 26:** ethnocentrism & bigotry *How to spot a bigot?*
 - (b) **March 28:** Midterm
 - (c) situational identity
 - **April 2:** Contact and conflict: *Are New Yorkers more bigoted than Texans?*
 - (d) dispositional identity
 - **April 4:** Social Identity: *Is group conflict part of Human Nature?*
 - (e) socialized identity
 - **April 9:** Social Dominance and system justification: *Why do we have hierarchies?*
 - **April 11:** Symbolic Politics: *How did Obama win in 2008?*
- 6. Tying it together to try to answer some big questions
 - **April 16:** social identity and partisanship: *Why are people Democrats and Republicans?*
 - **April 18:** The paradox of inequality (guest lecture) *Why, in a world with so much inequality, don't people demand more redistribution?*
 - **April 23:** Research Presentations

- **April 25:** extremism, political violence, and terrorism *Why would somebody kill over politics?*
- **April 30:** the psychology of evil: obedience to authority and the Stanford Prison Experiment *Why do people commit evil acts?*

2 Assignments

There will be four assignments in this class: participation in section meetings, an original piece of political psychology research, a midterm, and a final. Each of these is described in more detail below.

2.1 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. The best research will be presented to the entire class on April 23.
3. **Written Report:** Each individual is responsible for turning in their own, original report on their question, design, and findings.

Detailed instructions for this assignment will be covered in section during the week of February 11.

2.2 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. Attendance in sections is mandatory.

There is an innovation for section participation and grading for 2013. This innovation is intended to give you a choice in how you want to earn your section grade and to maximize your learning.

At the beginning of every section, you will have a two-question (yes, only two), multiple-choice quiz on the reading from that week. It will just take a few minutes. After the answers to this quiz are revealed (so you will know how you did), you have the option of deciding if you want that quiz to count towards your section grade. If you decide “yes”, then your grade that week will be based entirely on the quiz. If you decide “no”, then the quiz will not count, and your grade will be based on participation, as usual.

This is intended to give you control - if you did not have a strong grasp of the reading that week, so you did not do well on the quiz, all you have to do is participate with your classmates.

These quizzes are not intended to be particularly difficult (or anxiety inducing for students), rather they are designed as a learning tool to reinforce the important points of the reading and to give a common point of discussion for the section. *Do not stress about this.*

2.3 Midterm

You will have one midterm test on March 28. It will be designed to test your knowledge of the course readings and lectures. Details will be provided as the time approaches.

2.4 Final

A final, in class, exam during exams period.

3 Due dates for assignments

Assignments are by these dates.

- presentations and reports:
 - **Week of April 15:** research presentations to your section
 - **April 30:** research report
- exams:
 - **March 28:** Midterm
 - **Examination Period:** Final Exam

4 Grades

Grades for this class will be based on the following:

- Midterm test (20%)
- Final (35%)
- section (individual combination of quizzes and participation) (15%)
- research presentation (10%)
- research written report (20%)

Grades will be assigned on a standard scale.

5 Collaboration

Collaboration on in-class tests and quizzes is, obviously, prohibited. Your research paper is a collaborative process and collaboration is necessary to execute the project. However, your written report of your research is an individual effort that should reflect an individual writing process.

6 Students Registered with the Accessible Education Office

Students registered with the Accessible Education Office (AEO) may receive accommodations which alter some exam procedures. Students are responsible for providing Faculty Letters written by AEO to the Head Teaching Fellow at the beginning of the term.

7 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 29:**

none

- **JANUARY 31:**

Downs, Anthony. 1957. *An economic theory of democracy.* New York: Harper-Collins, pp. 37–47.

- **FEBRUARY 5:**

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 7:**

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 12:**

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.

Tierney, John. 2011 “Social Scientist Sees Bias Within”. *New York Times* February 7, 2011.

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.

Chabris, Christopher F., et al 2012, “Most Reported Genetic Associations With General Intelligence Are Probably False Positives”. *Psychological Science* 23 (11), pp. 1314–23.

Inbar, Yoel and Joris Lammers, “Political Diversity in Social and Personality Psychology”. Working Paper: Tilburg University.

● **FEBRUARY 14:**

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

***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.

recommended: Axelrod, chapters 6–7.

● **FEBRUARY 19:**

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 21:**

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

Todorov, Alexander, Anesu N. Mandisodza, Amir Goren, and Crystal C. Hall. 2005. “Inferences of Competence from Faces Predict Election Outcomes”. *Science* 308, 1623–1626.

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 26:**

Iyengar, Shanto and Donald R. Kinder. 1987. *News that matters: television*

and *American opinion*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, Chapters 2, 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.

Iyengar, Shanto and Kyu S. Hahn. 2009. “Red Media, Blue Media: Evidence of Ideological Selectivity in Media Use” *Journal of Communication* 59, 19–39.

Optional for more clarification:

Zaller, John. 1992. *The Nature and Origins of Mass Opinion*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Chapter 3.

● **FEBRUARY 28:**

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

● **MARCH 5:**

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 7:**

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 12:**

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

sity Press.

- **MARCH 14:**
none
- **MARCH 26:**
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.
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 28:**
none
- **APRIL 2:**
Key, V.O. 1949. *Southern politics in state and nation*. New York: Knopf. pp. 509–517.
Enos, Ryan D. “What the demolition of public housing teaches us about the impact of racial threat on political behavior”. Working Paper, Harvard University.
Enos, Ryan D. “The causal effect of intergroup contact on exclusionary attitudes”. Working Paper, Harvard University.
- **APRIL 4:**
Tajfel, Henri. 1970. “Experiments in Intergroup Discrimination”. *Scientific American*, 223: pp. 96–102.
Tajfel, Henri. 1969. “Cognitive aspects of prejudice”. *Journal of Social Issues*, 25: pp. 79–97
- **APRIL 9:**
Sidanius and Pratto, everyone read chapters 2 and 9 (review chapter 10, read earlier) also choose and read two chapters from 5, 6, 7, and 8 that most interest you (perhaps coordinate with a friend to read them all and exchange notes ...) .
- **APRIL 11:**
***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 16:**
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.
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 18:**

- none
- **APRIL 23:**
 - none
- **APRIL 25:**
 - Pape, Robert A. 2005.** *Dying to Win: The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism*. New York: Random House. Chapters 9–11.
 - Sunstein, Cass R. 2002.** “The Law of Group Polarization”. *The Journal of Political Philosophy* 10 (2). 175–195.
- **APRIL 30:**
 - ***Zimbardo, Philip. 2007.** *The Lucifer Effect: Understanding how good people turn evil*. New York: Random House. chapters 1, 10, 12–15
 - read **Zimbardo** chapters 2–9 OR watch **Musen, Ken and Philip Zimbardo. 1991.** *Quiet Rage: the Stanford Prison Experiment*. New York: Insight Video. (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.
 - Milgram, Stanley.** *Obedience* (video: available on the course website)
 - 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.
 - 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.