

## **POLS 4790 Special Topics in American Politics:**

### **Political Psychology**

Tuesday/Thursday 9:30-10:45am

Baldwin 311

Instructor: Professor Alexa Bankert

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Office: 110 E Clayton Street, Room 414

Office Hours: Tuesday 2-4 or by appointment

### **Course Description and Objective**

This course examines what social and cognitive psychology as well as behavioral genetics can tell us about political phenomena. We will go beyond describing *what* happened in politics and instead identify explanations for *why* we observe certain political behaviors by studying individual-level psychological processes. For example, why and how do people identify with certain groups such as political parties? How do people form political attitudes and how do they make decisions in the political realm? You will be introduced to various theories as well as their empirical evidence that aim to explain these processes and help us apply their insights to make sense of political behavior in the U.S. and beyond. Throughout the course, you will also be introduced to experimental methods as a tool to conduct and evaluate research in political psychology.

The format of this class will primarily reflect that of a seminar, as we will devote a significant amount of time to discussing and understanding political phenomena in the context of psychological theories. Critical thinking and a vibrant class discussion are essential to the structure of this course.

When this course is over, you should have a general understanding of four things:

1. Individual-level processes that affect political behavior such as cognition, emotions, personality, behavioral genetics, and general information processing.
2. Intergroup relations and their impact on political behavior such as group identity, prejudice, and discrimination.
3. Different ways to study political psychology empirically.
4. The competency of the American public (or really any public) when it comes to political decision-making, thinking, and behavior.

### **Required Text:**

The required book for this class is “The Oxford Handbook of Political Psychology” (Second Edition) by Leonie Huddy, David Sears, and Jack Levy (ISBN-13: 978-0199760107)

ISBN-10: 0199760101). Other readings can be found on Blackboard. Most of the additional readings will be scientific articles from *academic journals*. You should comprehend what the studies did and how they went about their research generally. Readings will be covered on the midterm and the final exam so I strongly recommend reading them on time and writing a short paragraph summary to be prepared for class as well as for the exams.

## Evaluation

**Midterm:** There will be a midterm exam to make sure that you are familiar with the core concepts of political psychology research we have covered up to that point. The exam will primarily consist of multiple choice questions with varying levels of difficulty. *As of now, the midterm is scheduled for Tuesday, October 4<sup>th</sup>.*

**Final Exam:** The final exam will consist of two essay questions. The first essay question tests your breadth of knowledge regarding political psychology – that is, whether you can bring together various strands of literature and integrate them into a response that reflects the complexity of the field. The second essay question aims to assess your depth of knowledge regarding a specific course topic and its corresponding theoretical and empirical foundations. *As of now, the exam is scheduled for Thursday, December 8<sup>th</sup> from 8am-11am.*

**Short Paper:** You will pick a political phenomenon or current political event of your interest (please discuss your choice with me in advance) and try to explain it from a psychological perspective drawing on the readings, and lectures. Short papers can range from 5 to 10 pages (double spaced). *As of now, the assignment is due Thursday, November 17<sup>th</sup>.*

**Readings and Quizzes:** The required readings typically include one chapter of the textbook per class session. If any additional readings are assigned they will be made available electronically on Blackboard. It is important that you stay current with these readings so that you can follow along with lectures and participate in class discussions. Please complete the reading assignments **before** the first class each week. *There will be unannounced short quizzes (3-5 questions) based on the assigned readings for that week. Make sure you are familiar with key terms from the book and results from the articles.*

**In-Class Participation:** If you know something, say something! And if you have a question, other people are likely to have questions, too. So do not hesitate to speak up. In addition, we will have class discussions that should demonstrate your critical reflection on the material covered in class and your reading assignments.

**Attendance:** I am sure you already know this but just to make sure: You are expected to come to class, to be attentive and engaged in the lecture, and to participate in class discussion. You should not be texting, talking, or surfing the internet while class is in session.

### **Grading Scale for Final Semester Grades**

100-94 A	79-77 C+	59-0 F
93-90 A-	76-74 C	
89-87 B+	73-70 C-	
86-84 B	69-67 D+	
83-80 B-	66-60 D	

### **Assignment Percentage Breakdown:**

15% Attendance and Participation

15% Quizzes

20% Midterm

25% Short Paper

25% Final Exam

### **Late Assignments, Incompletes, and Extensions**

Late assignments will be docked 5 percent per day (half letter grade), for each day that a project is late (including weekends). I cannot grant incompletes in the course, except in cases of emergency or where university policy applies. If you need a (reasonable) extension, come talk to me. I am a friendly person.

### **Office Hours**

Students who are having difficulty with the course materials and/or assignments are encouraged to see me during office hours. I am not (always) scary. Don't be afraid to come by. However, please note that office hours are for clarification of material, not for recreating a lecture if you skipped class.

### **Syllabus Policy:**

I reserve the right to make changes to the syllabus if necessary. I will give you fair notice (at least a week) if something, such as a reading assignment, is to change.

### **Disability Resource Center**

If you anticipate needing classroom or exam accommodations due to the impact of a disability or medical condition, you must register for services with the Disability Resource Center. Additional information can be found here: <http://drc.uga.edu/>

### **Withdrawal Policy**

Undergraduate students can only withdraw from four courses and receive a withdrawal-passing (WP) grade while enrolled at the University. Students can drop any class without penalty during the drop/add period at the beginning of every semester. Dropped courses during the drop/add

period do not qualify as withdrawals. Instructors have the ability to withdraw a student from the class due to excessive absences (see course attendance policy). Please review the policy here: <http://www.reg.uga.edu/policies/withdrawals>

### **Culture of Honesty Policy**

You are responsible for knowing and complying with the policy and procedures relating to academic honesty. To understand what constitutes dishonest work, as defined by the University, please carefully review the policy here: <https://ovpi.uga.edu/academichonesty/academic-honesty-policy>.

### **Course Schedule**

#### **August 11th**

*Topic:* General introduction to the class, the syllabus, and the textbook.

#### **First Week: August 16th and 18th**

*Topic:* A Brief Overview of Political Psychology and Its Research Methods

*Readings:* Chapter 1 in Huddy, Sears, and Levy

Morton and Williams. 2006. Experimentation in Political Science (on Blackboard)

#### **Second Week: August 23rd and 25th**

*Topic:* Personality Approaches to Political Behavior

*Readings:* Chapter 2 in Huddy, Sears, and Levy

Mondak, J. J., and K.D. Halperin. 2008. A Framework for the Study of Personality and Political Behaviour (on Blackboard)

#### **Third Week: August 30th**

*Topic:* Authoritarianism and Social Dominance Orientation

*Readings:* Stenner, K. 2005. The Authoritarian Dynamic. pp. 13-25 (on Blackboard)

Heaven, P.C.L. and S. Bucci. 2001. Right-Wing Authoritarianism, Social Dominance Orientation and Personality (on Blackboard)

The Rise of American Authoritarianism

(<http://www.vox.com/2016/3/1/11127424/trump-authoritarianism>).

**Please note there will be no class on September 1<sup>st</sup>.**

#### **Fourth Week: September 6th and 8th**

*Topic:* Childhood and Adult Political Development

Genetic Foundations of Political Behavior

*Readings:* Chapter 3 in Huddy, Sears, and Levy

Chapter 8 in Huddy, Sears, and Levy

Alford, J.R., C.L. Funk, and J.R. Hibbing. 2005. Are Political Orientations Genetically Transmitted? (on Blackboard)

#### **Fifth Week: September 13th and 15th**

*Topic:* Behavioral Decision-Making

*Readings:* Chapter 5 in Huddy, Sears, and Levy

Tversky, A. and D. Kahneman. 1974. Judgment Under Uncertainty: Heuristics and Biases (on Blackboard)

Lau, R.R., and D. P. Redlawsk. 2001. Advantages and Disadvantages in Cognitive Heuristics in Political Decision Making (on Blackboard)

#### **Sixth Week: September 20th and 22nd**

*Topic:* Motivated Reasoning

*Readings:* Chapter 4 in Huddy, Sears, and Levy

Taber, C.S., and M. Lodge. 2006. Motivated Skepticism in the Evaluation of Political Beliefs (on Blackboard)

Redlawsk, D. P., A. J.W. Civettini, and K.M. Emmerson. 2010. Do Motivated Reasoners Ever “Get It”? (on Blackboard)

#### **Seventh Week: September 27th and 29th**

*Topic:* Political Cognition

*Readings:* Chapter 17 in Huddy, Sears, and Levy

Lodge, Steenbergen, and Brau. 1995. The Responsive Voter: Campaign Information and the Dynamics of Candidate Evaluation (on Blackboard)

#### **Eighth Week: October 4th and 6th**

*Topic:* Implicit Attitudes

*Readings:* Devine, Patricia G. 1989. Stereotypes and Prejudice: Their Automatic and Controlled Components (on Blackboard)

Payne, B. Keith, et al. 2010. Implicit and Explicit Prejudice in the 2008 American Presidential Election (on Blackboard)

Take the Implicit Attitude Test: <https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/demo/>

**Please note that the midterm will take place on October 4<sup>th</sup>.**

### **Ninth Week: October 11th and 13th**

*Topic:* Prejudice and Politics

*Readings:* Chapter 25 in Huddy, Sears, and Levy

Hainmueller and Hiscox. 2010. Attitudes toward Highly Skilled and Low-Skilled Immigration: Evidence from a Survey Experiment (on Blackboard)

Hangartner and Hainmueller. 2013. Who gets a Swiss passport? A Natural Experiment in Immigrant Discrimination (on Blackboard)

### **Tenth Week: October 18th and 20th**

*Topic:* Emotions in Political Behavior

*Readings:* Chapter 6 in Huddy, Sears, and Levy

Healy, Malhotra, and Mo. 2010. Irrelevant Events Affect Voters' Evaluation of Government Performance (on Blackboard)

Brader. 2005. Striking a Responsive Chord: How Political Ads Motivate and Persuade Voters by Appealing to Emotions (on Blackboard)

### **Eleventh Week: October 25th and 27th**

*Topic:* Political Communication

*Readings:* Chapter 18 in Huddy, Sears, and Levy

Nelson, Clawson, and Oxley. 1997. Media Framing of Civil Liberties Conflict (on Blackboard)

Levendusky. 2013. Why do Partisan Media Polarize Viewers? (on Blackboard)

### **Twelfth Week: November 1st and 3rd**

*Topic:* Ideology and Values

*Readings:* Chapter 19 in Huddy, Sears, and Levy

Jost, Glaser, Kruglanski, and Sulloway. 2003. Political Conservatism as Motivated Social Cognition (on Blackboard)

Janoff-Bulman. 2009. To Provide or Protect: Motivational Bases of Political Liberalism and Conservatism (on Blackboard)

### **Thirteenth Week: November 8th**

*Topic:* Ideology and Partisanship

*Readings:* Goren, P. 2005. Party Identification and Core Political Values (on Blackboard)

Goren, P. 2001. Core Principles and Policy Reasoning in Mass Publics: A Test of Two Theories (on Blackboard)

**Please note there will be no class on the 10<sup>th</sup>.**

**Fourteenth Week: November 15th and 17th**

*Topic:* Identity in Political Behavior

*Readings:* Chapter 23 in Huddy, Sears, and Levy

Barreto, M.A. 2007. Si Se Puede! Latino Candidates and the Mobilization of Latino Voters (on Blackboard)

Achen and Bartels. 2016. Partisan Hearts and Spleens – Social Identities and Political Change (on Blackboard)

**Fifteenth Week: November 22nd and 24th**

**THANKSGIVING BREAK!**

**Sixteenth Week: November 29th and December 1st**

*Topic:* Are people sufficiently competent for Democracy?

*Readings:* Achen and Bartels. 2016. Pitfalls of Popular Control (on Blackboard)

Achen and Bartels. 2016. Groups and Power: Toward a Realist Theory of Democracy (on Blackboard)

**Please note that we can also use the class time on December 1<sup>st</sup> for a review session if needed.**