POLITICAL PSYCHOLOGY

PSCI 4221.001
FALL 2009
ATLS 1B25
MWF 10 – 10:50 A.M.

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OFFICE HOURS: W 1-3 P.M.
& BY APPOINTMENT

In this class, we will consider how politics works at the most micro level – within the minds of both political elites and average citizens. One feature that makes political psychology particularly fabulous to study is that it speaks to so many aspects of political phenomena – such as understanding how religious and ethnic identities contribute to state conflict, when and how voters are affected by the rhetoric of politicians, and the effects of personality on how political leaders make decisions.

COURSE OUTLINE

- We will start with an overview of the field of political psychology and the ways that questions of political psychology are studied.
- Next, we will study the psychological roots of political behavior, and the contributions of influences such as socialization, personality, and genes to how citizens and political leaders make decisions.
- From there, we will consider the mechanisms of how people construct political beliefs and determine political choices, investigating topics such as emotion, cognition, partisan bias, and persuasion.
- Finally, we will study political psychology of groups, considering topics such as why people dislike other groups, the psychological roots of political conflict, and the routes to deliberation and cooperation.

CULEARN IS YOUR FRIEND

I will regularly update class information on the website for the class at culearn.colorado.edu. This syllabus will be posted there, as well as links to assignments and other exciting material.

EXPECTATIONS

You are encouraged to be an active participant in class. Please feel free to raise questions at any point during lectures, including matters of clarification, theoretical points, or topics to address in class discussion. You should also keep in touch by e-mail or by visiting office hours if you have any questions about course expectations or the material covered in class.

You are also expected to maintain proper classroom etiquette. This includes respecting the opinions of others even if you disagree, not talking out of turn, putting away newspapers and crossword puzzles during lecture, turning off cell phones before class, and not disrupting the class if arriving late.
READING MATERIAL

There is no textbook for this course. Instead, the readings include a set of journal articles and book chapters, which can be accessed via the links on CULearn.

- Some are available in the library’s e-reserves: libraries.colorado.edu/search/r
- Some are articles from journals available online through the library’s e-journal archives.
- Note: In some cases, you may be blocked from accessing online journals from off-campus computers. See information on the website of the University Library for instructions on remote access from off-site: ucblibraries.colorado.edu/research/offcampusaccess.htm

REQUIREMENTS

In addition to the readings, you will be responsible for the following:

participation, short assignments, and quizzes (worth 25% of your final grade)
Because class attendance is an important prerequisite for participating in discussions and in-class activities, attendance will be taken each class session. Frequent absences will lower your participation grade. We will have several in-class activities that contribute to this portion of your grade, and many weeks we will have short quizzes on the readings. We will have a few short homework assignments as well.

three papers (each worth 15% of your final grade)
You will write three papers during the semester, one for each of the major three units we cover in class. Paper guidelines are detailed in separate handouts.

two exams (each worth 15% of your final grade)

SPECIAL ACCOMMODATIONS

If you qualify for accommodations because of a disability, please submit to me a letter from Disability Services in a timely manner so that your needs may be addressed. You can contact the Disability Services office for more information at www.colorado.edu/disabilityservices.

SOME IMPORTANT COMMENTS ON ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

- Plagiarism and other academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. If you are not familiar with the rules of citing sources in written work or what constitutes plagiarism, you should contact me or refer to the University Honor Code at www.colorado.edu/academics/honorcode. Additional information about avoiding plagiarism, citation style, and writing in political science is posted on CULearn. Academic dishonesty will result in an F in the course and referral to the Honor Council for additional non-academic sanctions.
- All papers are expected to be original work, not previously or simultaneously handed in for credit in another course (unless prior approval of all instructors involved is obtained).
PSCI 4221: POLITICAL PSYCHOLOGY CLASS SCHEDULE

ABOUT POLITICAL PSYCHOLOGY

1. What is political psychology?
Monday, August 24 – Friday, August 28
Describing the field of political psychology, the methods of studying political psychology

THE PSYCHOLOGICAL ROOTS OF POLITICAL BEHAVIOR

2. The roots of political behavior: biological and social
Monday, August 31 – Friday, September 4
Nature versus nurture, parental socialization, genetic explanations

3. Personality
Wednesday, September 9 – Friday, September 11
Presidential personality, authoritarianism

4. Conformity and obedience
Monday, September 14 – Friday, September 18
Social pressures to conform, obedience, groupthink

5. Belief systems
Monday, September 21 – Friday, September 25
Self interest, core values, belief systems, ideology

Friday, September 25: Paper 1 due
THE POLITICAL PSYCHOLOGY OF DECISION-MAKING

6. Emotion
Monday, September 28 – Friday, October 2
Emotions, affect

7. Political cognition
Monday, October 5 – Friday, October 9
Memory, schemas, associative networks, information processing

8. Stereotypes
Monday, October 12 – Wednesday, October 14
Political impressions, attitude automaticity, stereotypes

Friday, October 16: Midterm exam

9. Heuristics
Monday, October 19 – Friday, October 23
Inference, heuristics, short cuts, civic competence

10. Motivation and bias
Monday, October 26 – Friday, October 30
Motivated reasoning, bias in decision-making

Friday, October 30: Paper 2 due
11. Persuasion  
**Monday, November 2 – Friday, November 6**  
Political persuasion, attitude change  

THE POLITICAL PSYCHOLOGY OF GROUPS

12. Group identity  
**Monday, November 9 – Friday, November 13**  
Social identities, in-group/out-group sentiments, nationalism, patriotism  

13. Conflict  
**Monday, November 16 – Friday, November 20**  
Understanding group conflict, Stanford Prison Experiment, genocide and mass killing  

**Monday, November 23 – Friday, November 27:** Fall break – class does not meet.

14. Cooperation  
**Monday, November 30 – Friday, December 4**  
Social and evolutionary roots of cooperation  

15. Deliberation  
**Monday, December 7 – Friday, December 11**  
Social discussion, exposure to different viewpoints, deliberation and its consequences  

**Friday, December 11:** Paper 3 due

**Tuesday, December 15:** Final exam (4:30 p.m. - 7 p.m.)