In this class, we will consider how people think and feel about politics, investigating the psychological underpinnings of the political behavior of both citizens and elites. We will start with an overview of the field of political psychology and some of the ways that questions in this field are answered. 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 the reasons why people dislike other groups, the psychological roots of political conflict, and the routes to cooperation and compromise.

D2L is your friend

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

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 course website.

expectations

You are encouraged to be an active participant in class! Please feel free to raise questions at any point during class, 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.
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 also 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.

TWO PAPERS (each worth 15% of your final grade)
For each of the three units we cover in class, a paper topic will be provided. Over the course of the semester, you need to write papers on two of these three topics. Paper guidelines will be detailed in separate handouts.

THREE EXAMS (each worth 15% of your final grade)
There will be two midterm exams and a final exam.

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 disabilityservices.colorado.edu.

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 honorcode.colorado.edu. Additional information about avoiding plagiarism, citation style, and writing in political science is also posted on the course website. 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).
the psychological roots of political behavior

POLITICAL SOCIALIZATION
Monday, August 28 – Friday, September 1
Introduction to the class and the field of political psychology, socialization from parents and schools

THE BIOLOGICAL ROOTS OF POLITICAL BEHAVIOR
Wednesday, September 6 – Friday, September 8
Nature versus nurture, genetic explanations

CONFORMITY AND SITUATIONAL PRESSURES
Monday, September 11 – Friday, September 15
Social and situational pressures to conform, dispositions versus situations

PERSONALITY
Monday, September 18 – Friday, September 22
Authoritarianism, citizen personality, presidential personality

RATIONALITY AND ALTRUISM
Monday, September 25 – Wednesday September 27
Assumptions of citizen rationality, self-interest, altruism

Friday, September 29: Exam 1
the political psychology of decision-making

EMOTION
Monday, October 2 – Friday, October 6
Feeling versus thinking, emotions, affect

POLITICAL COGNITION
Monday, October 9 – Friday, October 13
Memory, schemas, associative networks, information processing

POLITICAL DECISION-MAKING AND HEURISTICS
Monday, October 16 – Friday, October 20
Inference, heuristics, short cuts, civic competence

MOTIVATION AND BIAS
Monday, October 23 – Friday, October 27
Motivated reasoning, bias in decision-making

PERSUASION
Monday, October 30 – Wednesday, November 1
Political persuasion, attitude change

Friday, November 3: Exam 2
the political psychology of groups

GROUP IDENTITY
Monday, November 6 – Friday, November 10
Social identities, in-group/out-group sentiments, nationalism, patriotism

STEREOTYPES AND PREJUDICE
Monday, November 13 – Friday, November 17
Political impressions and stereotypes
- Issenberg, Sasha. 2012. “It All Comes Down to Race.” Slate

Monday, November 20 – Friday, November 24: Fall break – class does not meet.

CONFLICT
Monday, November 27 – Friday, December 1
Understanding the roots of group conflict

COOPERATION AND DELIBERATION
Monday, December 4 – Friday, December 8
Social, political, and evolutionary roots of cooperation, deliberative decision-making

GROUP DECISION-MAKING
Monday, December 11 – Wednesday, December 13
Groupthink, quality of group decision-making

Sunday, December 17: Final exam (1:30 p.m. - 4 p.m.)