This course is about bringing psychological understandings to political questions, and appreciating how political contexts influence the ways people behave politically. We will begin with an overview of the field of political psychology and the ways that questions of political psychology are studied. Next, we will briefly overview the psychology of elite political behavior, including factors such as personality and decision-making. We will then spend the largest share of the course on the political psychology of individual judgment and choice, from the nature of attitudes to the ways people evaluate information to the mechanisms of political decision-making. Finally, we will consider aspects of collective political behavior, including social identity and group interactions.

reading assignments

Most of the course readings include book chapters and journal articles, available on e-reserves or online journals. Four books have also been assigned and are available at the University Bookstore.


For more background on theories of social psychology, a classic text is the following:


requirements

participation (worth 20% of your final grade)

It is essential that you not only attend class, but also actively engage in class discussions. For two of the weeks, you will also be responsible for leading class discussion.

six short papers (each worth 5% of your final grade)

Throughout the course, you will be responsible for six short papers in response to a week’s readings. These response papers should be two to three pages in length, and turned in before we discuss that week’s set of readings. Papers should not be summaries of the readings, but instead add some novel insights to the points raised in the readings. For instance, you might critique the theory or methods of the research, discussing the implications of these limitations for the authors’ findings. You might extend points raised in the readings, suggesting questions we might ask if we pushed these arguments further. You might also synthesize readings on a topic with other theories covered in this class or other course. Or you could discuss points of conflict between the readings, and discuss how to resolve these disagreements.
experimental design (worth 10% of your final grade)

Early in the semester you will be responsible for developing a short research proposal, in the style of proposals for Time-Sharing Experiments for the Social Sciences (www.experimentcentral.org). Papers should be three to five pages in length. Begin by discussing a question that interests you and its importance, and then suggest how this question might be tested experimentally. (Providing the specific questions and stimuli as in an actual TESS proposal is optional.)

research design (worth 40% of your final grade)

The final project for this class will be to develop a research design to test an interesting question of political psychology. You do not need to conduct the study itself, but you will develop the other parts of a research project, including motivating your question, conducting a review of relevant literature, developing theory, and discussing how to test these questions. The paper should be 15-20 pages in length.

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.
- 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).

class schedule – PSCI 4028

First class session. Monday, August 22.

What is political psychology?

1. About political psychology

Overview of the field. Background on political behavior. Experimental methods.

Monday, August 29

Other resources:


Monday, September 5  Class does not meet – Labor Day. Work on experimental design assignment.

Political psychology of elites

2. Elite decision-making
Political psychology and international relations. Personality. Groupthink. Prospect theory.

Monday, September 12
Experimental design assignment due.


Other resources:


The political psychology of individual citizens

3. Personality determinants of attitudes
The role of genetics. Authoritarianism. Social dominance orientation.

Monday, September 19


Other resources:

### 4. Self-interest versus values as determinants of attitudes


**Monday, September 26**


Other resources:

### 5. Attitudes

Attitudes and opinions. Attitude accessibility. Attitude strength and importance.

**Monday, October 3**


Other resources:

6. Introduction to cognitive approaches, Memory structures

Monday, October 10

Other resources:

7. Impression formation and management
Political impressions. Attitude automaticity. Stereotypes.

Monday, October 17

Other resources:

8. Heuristics

Shortcuts to information processing. Inferences.

Monday, October 24


8. Encoding and evaluation

Memory-based versus online processing. Ambivalence.

Monday, October 31


Other sources:
10. Motivation and bias

Motivated reasoning. Selective exposure.

Monday, November 7


11. Emotion

Affective intelligence. Emotion and mood.

Monday, November 14


Other resources:


12. Persuasion and attitude change

Attitude change. Conditions of persuasion. Elaboration Likelihood Model.

Monday, November 21


Other resources:

Political psychology within groups

13. Social identity and groups
Social identity. Intergroup relations.

Monday, November 28


Other resources:

14. Social forces
Political discussion. Impersonal influence and third person effects.

Monday, December 5


Friday, December 9  Turn in research design by noon.