Syllabus

This course is designed to give students a sampling of the vast research into the connection between psychology and politics. When political scientists find themselves studying the attitudes and behavior of individual political actors, they often find themselves relying on theories adopted from psychology, especially social psychology. In this course, we will look at several areas where the study of politics is greatly enhanced by a psychological understanding. We will, however, focus on the political science aspect of the intersection, rather than the psychological side. Even so, in order to understand the political we must, to some degree, understand the psychological.

Political psychology is a broad and varied field of study. It touches on nearly every sub-field of political science, from mass behavior, to international relations, to comparative politics. We will look at research in four primary areas – personality, cognition, emotions, and prejudice/bias.

Throughout the class, our focus will be on the political applications of various psychological research. This is not a course in psychology so we will not get into the real nitty-gritty details of each theory that we apply. The ultimate purpose of this course is to provide an overview of the field, perhaps to stimulate your interest in this field for future study.

Course Requirements

Reading

This course will include a great deal of reading; there are two required books and a number of other readings of current research in the field. Some of the readings presuppose some knowledge of statistics and methods that many of you may not yet have. In those cases, I will try to give an overview of the methods, and ask you to focus on the substantive conclusions in the work. While this may make some of the readings quite difficult, it will allow you to develop an understanding of the kind of research done in political psychology and will introduce you to many of the major journals used in our profession.

Participation

For this course to work well, all students must come to class prepared, having completed all assigned readings prior to class. Your course participation grade will depend upon evidence of your completion of the readings through participation in class discussions. While not everyone must participate every day, you should be prepared to contribute on a regular basis. Regular attendance is expected. More than 3 unexcused absences will result in a lower grade.

Discussion Leader

Each student will take the lead in class discussion during at least one period to as by the instructor. I will generally assign two people for each class with discussion leaders. You MUST coordinate your presentation of the material; I expect both students to be actively involved each day.

Leading in this case means providing the class with a 10-minute summary of the reading for the day. This summary MUST identifying at least three questions intended to stimulate our discussion. These are NOT questions such as “What did the author say?” Instead, I expect questions about the theory or empirical work in the
readings. Often, a good idea is to try to tie the readings to something specifically going on in the news or daily life as a UD student. Your summary and key questions are to be posted on Sakai at least one day ahead of your assigned class. In class, you will present your summary and lead the overall discussion for the day with my help. Consider using active processes in class, rather than just standing at the front of the room. Perhaps there is some activity, or way to engage everyone, that could be part of your discussion leadership. Think broadly about this.

Homework

There will be 4 homework assignments as specified on the schedule. The details for each homework will be available on Sakai when assigned. Late homework will not be accepted and a zero will be assigned for it.

Exams

All students will take a midterm exam (in class) and a take home final exam.

Grading

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Class Participation</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussion Leader</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Homework (4 total)</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Midterm Exam</td>
<td>25%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Take Home Final Exam</td>
<td>30%</td>
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Required Book

You MUST use the edition listed. Other editions will not have the correct readings! While we will not read everything in this book, we will spend a lot of time with it.


Additional readings are available on our Sakai. Anything not in the Handbook will be available through Sakai. You are responsible for all of these readings as well.

Academic Integrity

Plagiarism, cheating, and other academic misconduct are serious violations of your contract as a student. Plagiarism is using someone else’s language without quotations and attribution or using someone else’s idea (even in different language) without attribution. I expect that you will know and follow the University's policies on cheating and plagiarism. If you are unsure about the standards of academic integrity, it is your responsibility to ask me. Any suspected cases of academic misconduct will be handled according to University regulations.

Schedule

Feb 6          What is political psychology?  
Read: Handbook, Ch 1

Feb 8          How do we learn about politics? Socialization  
Read: Handbook Ch 3

Homework #1, Due Feb 15: Measuring psychological concepts

Feb 13         Special Post-Inauguration Panel – Where do we go now? Daugherty Hall, 4:00-6:00  
Read: http://www.npr.org/2017/01/31/512439121/trumps-executive-order-on-immigration-annotated

Personality and Politics

Feb 15   Why and how we study personality and politics
         Read:   Handbook, Ch 2

Feb 20   Personality and Politics: Studying political leaders
         Read:   Handbook, Ch 14

Feb 22   Personality and Politics: The Psychobiography
         Read:   Handbook, Ch 15

Feb 27  Going beyond Freud and Psychodynamics: The Big 5 Personality Inventory (BFPI)
         Homework #2, Due Mar 6. Is it Personality or Situation?
         The Mind of Donald Trump, from The Atlantic

Mar 1   Conformance and Obedience  MOVIE – OBEDIENCE: MILGRAM EXPERIMENT
         http://www.gina-perry.com/2015/05/09/screentest-for-obedience-milgrams-film/

Attitudes and Political Cognition

Mar 6   The psychology of attitudes
         Read:   Houghton, Political Psychology: Situations, Individuals and Cases, Ch 9
         LaPiere, Attitudes versus Actions, Social Forces, 1934.

Mar 8   Political ideology
         Read:   Handbook, Ch 19

Mar 13  Belief systems

Mar 15  Political Information Processing
         Read:   Handbook Ch 17
Mar 20  Rational models of political behavior: how *should* we decide?  
Read:  Handbook Ch 4

Mar 22  Behavioral Decision Theory: How *do* we decide?  
Read:  Handbook Ch 5

Mar 27/29  *Spring Break*

Apr 3  Heuristics and Biases  
Homework #3, Due April 10: Are we rational? Should we be rational?  


Apr 5  *Midterm Exam (in class)*

**Emotions**

Apr 10  Thinking about Affect and Emotions  
Read:  Handbook, Ch 6  
Houghton, *Political Psychology: Situations, Individuals and Cases*, Ch 10

Apr 12  The Importance of Emotions  
Read:  Damasio, Antonio, *Descartes’ Error*, Chs 2, 3, 4

Apr 17  Emotions and Decision Making  


Apr 19  Emotions: Good guys or bad guys?  
Read:  Gadarian, Shana Kushner and Bethany Albertson. 2013. Anxiety, Immigration and the Search for Information. *Political Psychology*.


Apr 24  Motivated Reasoning and Facts  

Kahan, Daniel. 2017. Science Curiosity and Political Information Processing (Sakai)
Group Identity and Prejudice

Apr 26 MOVIE: Quite Rage: The Stanford Prison Experiment

Homework #4, Due May 3: Take the Implicit Attitudes Test (IAT).


May 1 What do we mean by group identity?
Read: Handbook Ch 23

May 3 Prejudice and Politics
Read: Handbook Ch 25

Can we really measure implicit bias? http://www.chronicle.com/article/Can-We-Really-Measure-Implicit/238807

May 8 Race and Gender in Elections

Brian Schaffner analysis of 2016 – race/gender/economic anxiety


May 10 Social Dominance

Sidanius, James and Felicia Pratto. 2012. Social Dominance Theory

May 15 Authoritarianism


Take Home Final Exam

Important University Links:
Sakai: https://sakai.udel.edu/portal
Academic Calendar: http://www.udel.edu/registrar/cal/main.html
Student Guide (including Code of Conduct): http://www1.udel.edu/stuguide/16-17/index.html

Important Class Links:
The International Society for Political Psychology: http://ispp.org/
The Center for the Study of Political Psychology: http://www.polisci.umn.edu/cspp/