POL 339: Special Topics: Political Psychology
Prerequisites required: POL 101 or Permission from Instructor
M/W/F 1pm, Maybank Hall Room 316
Professor: Karyn Amira
Office: Political Science Department Office 301, Office Hours: M/W 2-4
Contact: amiraka@cofc.edu

Course Description and Student Learning Outcomes: This course is designed to offer you a lens through which to view human nature and why it functions the way that it does. That lens is the psychological underpinnings of political life. The course objectives and student learning outcomes are as follows: A) Be able to understand micro-level processes that affect politics such as cognition, emotions and political attitudes as well as macro-level processes such as group behavior and societal influence. B) Have a general understanding of different ways to study political psychology empirically. C) Be able to analyze the competency and rationality of the American public when it comes to political decision-making, thinking and behavior. D) Understand the nuances of this field of study and how to have a healthy skepticism of social science. These learning outcomes will be assessed in a series of response papers that relate to the readings and a take-home exam that relates to the larger themes of the course.

Attendance/Participation Policy: Attendance and participation counts towards 15% of your grade (combined). This is NOT an insignificant amount and could affect what grade you receive. Attendance will be taken in the beginning of the semester to make sure that students are showing up, per the school’s attendance verification policy.

Readings: Readings can be found in OAKS including chapters from the book Thinking Fast and Slow by Daniel Kahneman. Even though this book is a best-seller and easy to digest, most of the work in political psych comes from academic journals. I have tried to minimize these readings but some are unavoidable. I do not expect you to understand the statistics in these journal articles. However, you should comprehend what the studies did and how they went about their research generally. You can’t write response papers without doing the readings.

Short Response Papers: Response papers are ways to ensure that you are doing the readings, attending class, and thinking critically about the topics we cover. Each paper must be 3-4 pages long, double spaced. Make sure you check the dates they are due. There are 11 listed and you must do 10 of them. I will always give you one week to finish a response paper after we’ve covered the topic it generally relates to.

Take Home Exam: There is no scary in-class final exam. You will instead get an essay based take-home exam with a few questions about larger themes of the course. You must turn it in on OAKS on Wed. Dec 11th by 1pm which is the day our “final” is scheduled for. It happens to be the last day of finals.

Hands On Research experiences: You must do 3 “hands on” research tasks in order to see what some of the political psych process is like. See separate instruction sheet.
Grading Scale for Final Semester Grades

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<th>Grade</th>
<th>Score Range</th>
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<tr>
<td>A</td>
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Grading Breakdown

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<tr>
<th>Component</th>
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<tr>
<td>5% Attendance</td>
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<td>10% Hands-on Research Experience</td>
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<td>10% Participation</td>
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<td>50% Response papers (10 total, 5% for each one)</td>
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<tr>
<td>25% Take Home Exam</td>
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Late Assignments, Incompletes, Extensions and Make-Up Exams: Late assignments will be docked 5 percent per day (half letter grade), for each day that a project is late (including weekends). I will not grant incompletes in the course, except in cases of emergency or where university policy applies. Doctor’s notes are expected for medical excuses.

Office Hours: Having trouble? Have questions? Come on by. I promise it will be helpful.

Laptop Policy: No laptops in class. Trust me, you will learn more.

Syllabus Policy: I reserve the right to make changes to the syllabus if necessary.

Course Evaluation Statement: You will have the opportunity to evaluate the course towards the end of the semester through an online evaluation system.
COURSE AGENDA AND ASSIGNMENTS

INTRO
Wednesday Aug 21 Introduction/What is Political Psych?
  • No reading

Friday Aug 23 Research Methods for Political Psych I
  • No reading

Monday Aug 26 Monday Research Methods for Political Psych II
  • The Coddling of the American Mind: [Link]
  • Campus Inquisitions Must Stop: [Link]

Response paper 1 (Due by Monday Sept 2): What are your thoughts about Haidt’s argument in The Coddling of the American Mind, which was written a few years ago? Are students and young people “coddled” like he’s describing? If so, is the problem as big as he’s claiming or has it been overblown? Are we becoming too sensitive or are these reactions justified and even necessary? Finally, why do you think I’m assigning you these articles at the beginning of this particular course? It might help to read through the syllabus topics to get some inspiration for why I’m assigning them.

COGNITION
Wednesday Aug 28 Rationality, Dual Process Models
  • No reading

Friday Aug 30 Rationality, Dual Process Models
  • Thinking Fast and Slow Chapters 1-4

Monday Sept 2 Affect and Motivated Reasoning (Response 1 is due by class time)
  • The Rationalizing Voter Chapter 1

Wednesday Sept 4 Affect and Motivated Reasoning II
  • Thinking Fast and Slow Chapters 5-9
  • Rationalizing Voter Chapter 2 (up until page 59)

Response paper 2 (Due by Wednesday Sept 11): Write a short story (1-2 solid paragraphs) about a person named Joey Politics (yes, we’re going there) who is engaging in some political activity of your choice (ex: reading a political news story or attending a political rally). In this story, you need to explain how the Taber and Lodge Dual Process Model is working in Joey’s brain- step by step- as he engages in this activity. Then, for the rest of the response, discuss what the Taber and Lodge model has to do with “free will” and whether Joey Politics has any.

Friday Sept 6 Heuristics I
  • Thinking Fast and Slow Chapters 10-16
  • What I was Wrong About this Year: [Link]
Monday Sept 9 **Heuristics II**
- “Can Your Face Win You Votes?” (read up to the middle of page 10)

**Response paper 3 (Due by Monday Sept 16):** You’ve now read about lots of different biases and heuristics (ex: the availability heuristic). Choose 3 of these cognitive biases that Thinking Fast and Slow discusses, explain what each of them means in plain English (your own words….a few sentences for each), and then come up with your OWN examples- one example for each of the three biases- that relate to government/politics. You should spell it out in unambiguous terms why each example maps onto the bias/heuristic you are talking about- I should not have to guess how it relates.

**PARTISANSHIP**
Wednesday Sept 11 **Origins of Partisanship (Response 2 is due by class time)**
- No reading

Friday Sept 13 **Partisanship as a Social Identity**
- Reading TBD

Monday Sept 16 **Effects of Partisanship (Response 3 is due by class time)**

Wednesday Sept 18 **Partisanship and Information Processing**
- No reading

**Response paper 4 (Due by Wednesday Sept 25):** First, explain what partisanship is in your own words. Then, tell me how partisanship relates to any of the work on cognition that we discussed in the beginning of the course. You can tie it to any of the processes we read about (affect, motivate reasoning, rationality, heuristics etc). Finally, discuss whether partisanship is harmful or beneficial to politics today. This last question has no “correct” answer but you should relate it to what we’ve covered and read, generally.

**IDEOLOGY**
Friday Sept 20 **What is Ideology?**
- No reading

Monday Sept 23 **Ideological Differences: Moral Foundations Theory**
- Take the Moral Foundations Questionnaire: http://www.yourmorals.org
- Liberals and Conservatives Rely on Different Sets of Moral Values

Wednesday Sept 25 **Ideological Differences: Motivated Social Cognition (Response 4 is due by class time)**
- No reading

Friday Sept 27 **NO CLASS TODAY- PROFESSOR OUT OF TOWN**
Monday Sept 30  **Ideological Differences: Personality**
-  **Secret Lives of Liberals and Conservatives**

**Response Paper 5 (Due by Monday Oct 7):** First: Explain the difference between partisanship and ideology using your own words. Are there any ways in which they are similar? Consider all the facets we discussed when making these comparisons. Then, discuss whether it’s important to study how liberals and conservatives differ psychologically. Does this serve a useful purpose or does it do the opposite? Explain why or why not. Note: I will not lower your grade if you say this research isn’t worthwhile and can cause problems. I am grading you on whether you answer the question and present a compelling argument. You are also not obligated to discuss your own political views in this response.

**AUTHORITARIANISM**
**Wednesday Oct 2 Authoritarianism I: Development of the Construct**
-  **Altemeyer, Enemies of Freedom Chapters 1 and 3**

**Friday Oct 4 Authoritarianism II: Development of the Construct Part 2**
-  **Stenner, The Authoritarian Dynamic pages 13-25**

**Monday Oct 7 Authoritarianism III: Responses to Terrorism (Response 5 due by class time)**
-  **Hetherington and Suhay, Authoritarianism, Threat and Americans’ Support for the War on Terror**

**Wednesday Oct 9 Authoritarianism IV: 2016 Election**

**Response Paper 6 (Due by Wed. Oct 16):** Authoritarianism sounds like a scary word to most people. Given what you’ve read and learned about it, do the following: First- in a couple paragraphs- explain the evolution (3 eras) of how psychologists and political scientists have defined, measured and studied authoritarianism. Use your own words. Given its current definition/conceptualization, is authoritarianism negative for American society, positive for American society, or both? Why? Explain your response and rationale.

**EMOTIONS**
**Friday Oct 11 Affective Intelligence I**
-  **Affective Intelligence- Disposition vs. Surveillance (read from pg 44-64)**

**Monday Oct 14- FALL BREAK NO CLASS.**

**Wednesday Oct 16 Affective Intelligence II (Response 6 due by class time)**
-  **Brader, Striking a Responsive Chord: How Political Ads Motivate and Persuade Voters by Appealing to Emotions**

**Friday Oct 18 Emotions III**
-  **Threat, Anxiety and Support for Anti-Terrorism Policies**

**Monday Oct 21 Emotions IV: Irrelevant Events**
-  **No reading**
Response Paper 7 (Due by Monday Oct 28): You now know a bit about the different emotions that get a lot of attention in political psychology. In 1-2 paragraphs discuss how political psychologists understand enthusiasm, anxiety and anger. Then, tell me how these emotions relate to the current political climate, Trump’s presidency etc. Come up with some interesting research questions about emotions in the current political climate based on the theories we discussed in class. Be sure to make it clear what theory you are talking about and how the research questions relate.

PERCEPTIONS
Wednesday Oct 22 Candidate Issue Perception I
• No reading

Friday Oct 25 Candidate Issue Perception II
• Abramowitz, The Impact of a Presidential Debate on Voter Rationality

SOCIAL CONFORMITY
Monday Oct 28 Groupthink (Response 7 due by class time)
• Janis, The Groupthink Syndrome
• Janis, The Perfect Failure: The Bay of Pigs

Wednesday 30 Pluralistic Ignorance
• Prentice and Miller, “Pluralistic Ignorance and Alcohol Use on Campus: Some Consequences of Misperceiving the Social Norm”

SOCIAL NORMS
Friday Nov 1 Norms Introduction
• Cialdini and Trost, “Social Influence: Norms, Conformity and Compliance” (pages 151 until the “Summary” section of page 162)
• Cialdini, “A Focus Theory of Normative Conduct: Recycling the Concept of Norms to Reduce Littering in Public Places

Monday Nov 4 Norms and Voter Turnout
• No reading

Wednesday Nov 6 Norms and Current American Politics
• TBD- We may end up using this as a catch up day if there’s a storm

Response Paper 8 (Due by Wed Nov 13): Testing behavior with social norms can be hard and often requires a field experiment, as we discussed. First, explain what a field experiment is in your own words and why it’s such an important research method. This means you must explain the benefits a researcher gets from using this method. Pretend like you’re explaining it to a 10 year old…feel free to dumb down the language to do this. Then, discuss some of the ethical considerations that researchers must consider when conducting field experiments. Make up an example of a field experiment that would NOT be ethical and explain why it would not be. In this example you must explain what’s being “manipulated” in the study’s set up and who the subjects are.

PRIMING AND ENVIRONMENTAL INFLUENCE WEEK
Friday Nov 8 Priming Introduction
Monday Nov 11 Priming in the Voting Environment
- Then, read the actual research behind the study: [http://www.pnas.org/content/105/26/8846.full.pdf](http://www.pnas.org/content/105/26/8846.full.pdf)

Wednesday Nov 13 Visceral Fit (Response 8 due by class time)

Response Paper 9 (Due by Wed. Nov 20): Read the 2 articles below about the “Replication Crisis”. Then, in a paragraph using your own words, explain what the replication crisis is. You do not need to use overly-technical language to do this, but it does require you understand some basics of the scientific process that we've talked about. How does the replication crisis relate to PRIMING? Then, tell me which body of literature (ex: partisanship, heuristics, ideology, priming, authoritarianism etc.) you think is the MOST important to test with replication. Explain why. There is no “correct” choice here (since everything needs replication), so I'm more interested in your reasoning than your simple topic selection.


Article 2: Priming, Replication and the Hardest Science: [https://www3.nd.edu/~ghaeffel/HardestScience.pdf](https://www3.nd.edu/~ghaeffel/HardestScience.pdf)

RACISM
Friday Nov 15 Racism Introduction
- No Reading

Monday Nov 18 Implicit vs. Explicit Measures of Racism
- Take the “Race LAT” and 1 other LAT of your choice at the following website: [https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/research/](https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/research/)

Wednesday Nov 20 Implicit Racism in Elections (Response 9 due by class time)
- Mendelberg, The Race Card Chapters 5 and 6

Friday Nov 22 Racism at the Elite Level
- Butler and Brookman, Do Politicians Discriminate Against their Constituents?

Response Paper 10 (Due by Monday Dec 2…I am giving you extra time because of the break): First, in 1-2 paragraphs, explain the difference between explicit and implicit racism- both conceptually and how they are measured. Given what you know, do you think we should continue studying implicit racism or should we focus on explicit? Why?

GROUP CONFLICT
Monday Nov 25 Group Conflict I
• Sherif, M. Super Ordinate Goals in the Reduction of Intergroup Conflict.

Wednesday Nov 27 THANKSGIVING BREAK. NO CLASS.
Friday Nov 29 THANKSGIVING BREAK. NO CLASS.

Monday Dec. 2 Group Conflict II & Class Wrap Up (Response 10 due by class time)
  • Bartels, “The Irrational Electorate”
  • We Aren’t the World: https://psmag.com/social-justice/joe-henrich-weird-ultimatum-game-shaking-up-psychology-economics-53135

Response Paper 11 (Due Monday Dec 9) : How do the last two readings (Irrational Electorate and We Aren’t the World) affect your thinking about everything we’ve learned so far? You don’t have to rehash the entire class to write this. Think about the larger themes of the course such as “healthy science skepticism” and “rationality” and how these fit in.

Your final exam is a take home test which is due on the date/time the school has scheduled our “exam”: Wed. Dec 11th by 1pm. YOU MUST UPLOAD YOUR EXAM TO OAKS BY THIS TIME OR ELSE IT WILL BE 5% OFF FOR EACH 24 HOURS ITS LATE BEGINNING DIRECTLY AT 1PM.