Introduction:
Whatever one’s theoretical orientation, foreign policy outcomes are the direct result of human choices. Ultimately, it is individuals who act. The governing model of decision making currently deployed in international relations, whether implicit or explicit, comes to us from economics. Here, states, elites, leaders, and domestic pressure groups are assumed to be substantively and procedurally rational, and theories concerning state behavior begin from this premise.

However, across the social sciences we are in the early stages of a profound break with the past. The empirical study of human decision making in the fields of cognitive psychology, behavioral economics and neuroscience are generating profound insights about human decision making. Most importantly, deviations from classical rationality are now understood to be predictable and stable aspects of human choice. Foreign policy decisions should, therefore, be patterned and explainable even when they are not strictly rational.

For the subfield of international relations important questions emerge: Which psychological models of decision making are most appropriate and useful in the study of foreign policy? How to we incorporate cognitive models into our theoretical frameworks? When we use cognitive models what, if anything, do we learn about foreign policy that we didn't already know?

Our goal in this seminar is to examine these questions and attempt to anchor the study of international relations to the reality of human decision making. To do this, we will survey strategies for integrating cognitive insights into foreign policy analysis.

Assignments and Grading:

Review Essays – you will write eight (8) analytical essays on the weekly readings. These essays are to be synthetic and critical. You may choose when to complete these assignments, however they are due by 9am the day prior to the class session. Essays will account for 30% of your grade.

Seminar Presentation – Each student will be responsible for summarizing and evaluating the readings, and for leading the seminar discussion (two sessions per student). 10%

Research Presentations – Near the end of the term each student will present the results of their research to the class 5%. In addition, throughout the course you will be asked twice to update the class on your progress 10%. These updates will serve as a primary source of feedback and constructive criticism on your project (written work submitted in advance).

Participation – Your active participation is necessary for a successful seminar. I will assign a grade based on the quality of your participation that will account for 15% of your grade. The participation grade has two components. The first requires consistent engagement in class discussions regarding the material, the second pertains the quality of your constructive comments about each student’s research.
Research Design – You will craft an original research design. The project must have a clear problem statement derived from the relevant literature, a developed theoretical argument, explicit hypotheses, and include plan for variable construction. The only substantive constraint is that the paper deal with some aspect of foreign policy (broadly defined) and incorporate explicit micro-foundations. Successful projects are those that are ready for empirical testing. The research proposal will account for 30% of your grade.

Course Schedule:
All readings are available on-line, unless otherwise indicated.

(As per class agreement, we will include readings on experiments and experimental methods in IR.)

Jan 5. Introduction to class, and to rationality


Jan 19. Early Cognitive Approaches

Michael Shapiro, Matthew Bonham (1973) “Cognitive Processes and Foreign Policy Decision Making” International Studies Quarterly 17:2 147-174

Suedfeld, Peter, and Philip Tetlock. "Integrative complexity of communications in international


Mintz, Alex, Steven B. Redd, and Arnold Vedlitz. "Can we generalize from student experiments to the real world in political science, military affairs, and international relations?." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 50.5 (2006): 757-776.

Jan 26. Personality/Operational Code


Feb 2. Loss Aversion


Feb 9. Framing and Risk


Week 7. Feb 16. Status


(Easy review for context: Rebecca Saxe, Johannes Haushofer “For Love or Money: A Common Neural Currency for Social and Monetary Reward” *Neuron, Volume 58, Issue 2, 24 April 2008, Pages 164-165*)

Feb 23. Group Identity


Emile Bruneau and Rebecca Saxe “Attitudes Toward the Outgroup are Predicted by Activity in the Precuneus in Arabs and Israelis” *Neuroimage* v.52 n4 2010


Belle Derks and Michael Inzlicht “The Neuroscience of Stigma and Stereotype Threat” *Group Processes and Intergroup Relations* v.11 n.2 2008
Elizabeth Phelps and Laura Thomas. “Race, Behavior and the Brain: The Role of Neuroimaging in Understanding Complex Social Behaviors” Political Psychology v.24 n.4 2003

March 2. Trust

Aaron Hoffman. “A Conceptualization of Trust in International Relations” European Journal of International Relations v.8 n.3 2002


Paul Zak et al “The Neuoeconomics of Distrust: Sex Differences in behavior and Physiology” The American Economic Review v.95 n.2 2005


March 9 Spring Break

March 16. Cooperation/Fairness

Michael Koeings and Daniel Tranel “Irrational Economic Decision Making after Ventromedial Prefrontal Damage: Evidence from the Ultimatum Game” Journal of Neuroscience n.27 n4 2007


Christine Clavien and Rebekka Klien “Eager for Fairness or for Revenge? Psychological Altruism Economics” Economics and Philosophy v.26 n.3 2010

Golnaz Tabibnia “The Sunny Side of Fairness” Psychological Science v.19 n.4 2008


March 23. Persuasion


Vasily Klucharev “Brain mechanisms of persuasion: how ‘expert power’ modulates memory and attitudes” *Social Cognitive and Affective Neuroscience* v.3 n.4 2009

Emily Falk at al “Predicting Persuasion-Induced Behavior Change in the Brain” *The Journal of Neuroscience* v.30 n.25 2010

George Marcus “The Emotional Foundation of Political Cognition” The Impact of Anxiety on the Formation of Political Tolerance Judgments” *Political Psychology* v.26 n.6 2005

March 30. Threat/Fear


April 6. (TBD – class pick)

Week 13: April 13:
Research Presentations (A)
Draft submitted to class by 10 am April 10.
Detailed audience written comments submitted to presenters in class (cc instructor)

Week 14: April 20
Research Presentations (B)
Draft submitted to class by 10 am April 17
Detailed audience written comments submitted to presenters in class (cc instructor)

Final project due April 26. 12pm.