INTL 8205 Spring 2019
Decision Making in International Relations
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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 process of a profound break with the past. The empirical study of human decision making in the fields of cognitive psychology, behavioral economics and neuroscience have produced valuable insights into 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, critical questions emerge: Which psychological models of decision making are most appropriate and useful in the study of foreign policy? How do 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 foreign policy to the reality of human decision making. We will survey explore strategies for integrating cognitive insights into foreign policy analysis.

Assignments and Grading:

Weekly Summaries – Weekly summaries are due at the beginning of each class. These summaries provide a brief (500-word maximum) overview of each of the assigned readings. The model for these assignments is akin to an annotated bibliography. Essays will account for 20% of your grade.

For guidance see: https://sites.umuc.edu/library/libhow/bibliography_tutorial.cfm

Review Essays – You will write (3) analytical essays on the class readings (1,500-2,000 words). These essays are to be synthetic and critical. The model for these assignments is akin to a literature review but will focus on the readings in our seminar. Details for the assignments will be distributed in class. Essays will account for 20% of your grade.

Seminar Presentation – Each student will be responsible for summarizing and evaluating the readings, and for leading the seminar discussion. 5%

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

Participation – Your active participation is necessary for a successful seminar. I will assign a grade based on the quality of your involvement 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 – This project is a typical research design in most respects. It must include a clear problem statement derived from the relevant literature, a concise theoretical argument, testable explicit hypotheses, and a plan for variable operationalization. Substantively, the paper must focus on some aspect of foreign policy (broadly defined) in a way that explicitly incorporates a decision making component, including an explicit theory about decision making anchored to the relevant literature and an explanation of how the decision(s) you examine are connected – even if indirectly – to foreign policy outcomes. Successful projects are those that are ready for empirical testing. The research proposal will account for 35% of your grade.

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

Jan 15. Introduction to class, and to rationality

Jan 22. Foundations: Decisions in IR?


Jan 29. Early Cognitive Approaches

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


Feb 5. Personality/Operational Code


Supplement:

For conceptual foundations see


Feb 12. Evolutionary Psychology
Critical Essay Due: Evaluate the degree to which the previous readings accomplish the aspirations of set out in the behavioral IR approach? Where do they fall short? How can these shortcomings be addressed, if at all?


Supplement: Additional overviews


Feb 19. Loss Aversion


Supplement: Micro Foundations

Feb 26. Prospect Theory, Framing and Risk


Supplements:
For background see:

For an early overview see:

Micro Foundations:

March 5. Status


Supplement: Micro Foundations:
- 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)

**March 12: Spring Break**

Mar. 19 Group Identity
Critical Essay Due:
- Seul, Jeffrey R. "Ours is the way of god': Religion, identity, and intergroup conflict." *Journal of peace research* 36, no. 5 (1999): 553-569.

Supplement: Micro foundations
- 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

Race:
- 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 26. Research Design Workshop
Draft research topic and literature review due. 
Circulate to class by March 24, 6 pm.

April 2: Trust

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

Supplement: Micro Foundations

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

April 9: Class Decides!
Fairness, Threat-Fear, Charisma-Persuasion, or ????

April 16. How Do Experiments Help Us?
Critical Essay Due:


April 23:
Research Presentations (A)
Draft submitted to class by 10 am April 21.
Detailed audience written comments submitted to presenters in class (cc instructor)

April 30
Research Presentations (B)
Draft submitted to class by 10 am April 28.
Detailed audience written comments submitted to presenters in class (cc instructor)

Final project due May 7, 12:00 pm.