

The University of Georgia
School of Public and International Affairs
Department of Political Science

POLS 4400: Political Psychology
Fall 2019

Instructor: Dr. Alexa Bankert
Contact: alexa.bankert@uga.edu
Office: Baldwin Hall, 380 F

Office Hours: Tuesday 1pm-3pm or by appointment
Class Meeting Times: Tuesday and Thursday, 11:00 –12:15pm

Course Description and Objective

This course examines what social and cognitive psychology as well as behavioral genetics can tell us about political phenomena. We will go beyond describing what happened in politics and instead identify explanations for why we observe certain political behaviors by studying individual-level psychological processes. For example, why and how do people identify with certain groups such as political parties? How do people form political attitudes and how do they make decisions in the political realm? You will be introduced to various theories as well as their empirical evidence that aim to explain these processes and help us apply their insights to make sense of political behavior in the U.S. and beyond. Throughout the course, you will also be introduced to experimental methods as a tool to conduct and evaluate research in political psychology.

The format of this class will primarily reflect that of a seminar, as we will devote a significant amount of time to discussing and understanding political phenomena in the context of psychological theories. Critical thinking and a vibrant class discussion are essential to the structure of this course.

When this course is over, you should have a general understanding of four things:

1. Individual-level processes that affect political behavior such as cognition, emotions, personality, and general information processing.

2. Intergroup relations and their impact on political behavior such as group identity, prejudice, and discrimination.
3. Different ways to study political psychology empirically.
4. The competency of the American public (or really any public) when it comes to political decision-making, thinking, and behavior.

Course Requirements

Midterm: There will be a midterm exam to make sure that you are familiar with the core concepts of political psychology research we have covered up to that point. The exam will primarily consist of multiple-choice questions with varying levels of difficulty. *As of now, the midterm exam is scheduled for Tuesday, October 8th.*

Final Exam: The final exam will consist of two essay questions. The first essay question tests your breadth of knowledge regarding political psychology –that is, whether you can you bring together various strands of literature and integrate them into a response that reflects the complexity of the field. The second essay question aims to assess your depth of knowledge regarding a specific course topic and its corresponding theoretical and empirical foundations. *As of now, the final exam is scheduled for Thursday, December 12th 12:00 - 3:00 pm*

Quizzes: There will be a number of short quizzes, which will cover material from recent classes and reading assignments. There will be no makeups without a documented, university approved excuse.

Research Paper: You will pick a political phenomenon or current political event of your interest (please discuss your choice with me in advance) and try to analyze it from a psychological perspective drawing on the readings, lectures, and data to support your argument. Research papers can range from 8 to 10 pages (double spaced). *As of now, the paper is due on Tuesday, December 3rd.*

Readings: I expect everyone to finish the readings in preparation for our Tuesday session. I will call on students to answer questions about the readings. Your answers will contribute to your participation grade.

Participation: Do not hesitate to speak up in class! And if you have a question, other people are likely to have questions, too. There will be discussions that should demonstrate your critical reflection on the material covered in class. In addition, there will be in-class activities and assignments that are crucial for your participation grade.

Grade Distribution:

Midterm Exam: 20%

Final Exam: 20%

Quizzes: 20%

Participation: 15%

Research Paper: 25%

Grading Scale for Final Semester Grades

100-94 A	79-77 C+	63-60 D-
93-90 A-	76-74 C	59-0 F
89-87 B+	73-70 C-	
86-84 B	69-67 D+	
83-80 B-	66-64 D	

Please note that there is no standard rounding policy. Rounding decisions will be made on a case-by-case basis.

Grade Appeals, Incompletes, Late Assignments, and Make-Up Policy

Formal grade appeals must be made in writing, and in the case of a paper, I will re-grade your entire paper. Therefore, your grade can go up or down. A final grade of “Incomplete” will only be given in this course under exceptional circumstances and is solely at the discretion of the instructor. If an incomplete is given, it is the student’s responsibility to complete the necessary requirements as early in the following semester as possible. Legitimate excuses for absence from an exam (e.g., religious holiday, medical emergency, or illness) must be presented to the teaching assistant and accepted prior to the exam when feasible. Late assignments will be docked 5 percent per day (half letter grade), for each day that a project is late (including weekends). If you need a (reasonable) extension, talk to your teaching assistant.

Office Hours

Students who are having difficulty with the course materials and/or assignments are encouraged to make an appointment with. Don’t be afraid to come by. However, please note that office hours are for clarification of material, not for recreating a lecture if you skipped class.

Syllabus Policy:

I reserve the right to make changes to the syllabus if necessary. I will give you fair notice (at least a week) if something, such as a reading assignment, is to change.

Culture of Honesty Police

You are responsible for knowing and complying with the policy and procedures relating to academic honesty. To understand what constitutes dishonest work, as defined by the University, please carefully review the policy here: <https://ovpi.uga.edu/academichonesty/academic-honesty-policy>

Course Schedule

First Week (starting August 15th)

Topic: A Brief Overview of Political Psychology and its Research Methods

Readings: Huddy, Sears, and Levy 2016; Morton and Williams 2006: Experimentation in Political Science

Second Week (starting August 20th)

Topic: Personality Approaches to Political Behavior

Readings: Huddy, Sears, and Levy 2016; Bakker, Hopmann, and Persson 2016: Personality traits and party identification over time

Third Week (August 27th)

No class!

Assignment: Interview 10 friends or family members, using the Big 5 measure of personality. Then ask them about their partisanship, partisan strength, and their partisan history. Can you identify a pattern? Please send me your de-identified data in an excel sheet as well as a short report summarizing your results by September 1st.

Fourth Week (starting September 3rd)

Topic: Authoritarianism

Readings: The Rise of American Authoritarianism:

(<http://www.vox.com/2016/3/1/11127424/trump-authoritarianism>)

Hetherington and Suhay 2011: Authoritarianism, threat, and Americans' support for the war on terror; Wronski et al. 2018: How Authoritarianism Divides the Democratic Party

Fifth Week (starting September 10th)

Topic: Childhood and Adult Political Development

Readings: Huddy, Sears, and Levy 2016; Alford, Funk, and Hibbing 2005: Are Political Orientations Genetically Transmitted?

Sixth Week (starting September 17th)

Topic: Behavioral Decision-Making

Readings: Huddy, Sears, and Levy 2016; Lau and Redlawsk 2001: Advantages and Disadvantages in Cognitive Heuristics in Political Decision Making

Seventh Week (starting September 24th)

Topic: Motivated Reasoning

Readings: Taber and Lodge 2006: Motivated Skepticism in the Evaluation of Political Beliefs; Redlawsk, Civettini, and Emmerson 2010: Do Motivated Reasoners Ever "Get It"?

Eighth Week (starting October 1st)

Topic: Implicit Attitudes

Readings: Payne et al. 2010: Implicit and Explicit Prejudice in the 2008 American

Presidential Election; Theodoridis 2017: Me, myself, and (I),(D), or (R)? Partisanship and Political Cognition through the Lens of Implicit Identity

*******Take the Implicit Attitude Test: <https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/demo/> and send me your results before class*******

Ninth Week (starting October 8th)

*******Midterm on Tuesday*******

Topic: Prejudice and Politics

Readings: Hainmueller and Hiscox 2010: Attitudes toward Highly Skilled and Low-Skilled Immigration: Evidence from a Survey Experiment

Tenth Week (starting October 15th)

Topic: Emotions in Political Behavior

Readings: Brader 2005: Striking a Responsive Chord: How Political Ads Motivate and Persuade Voters by Appealing to Emotions; Healy, Malhotra, and Mo. 2010: Irrelevant Events Affect Voters' Evaluation of Government Performance

Eleventh Week (starting October 22nd)

Topic: Political Communication

Readings: Nelson, Clawson, and Oxley 1997: Media Framing of Civil Liberties Conflict
Levendusky 2013: Why Do Partisan Media Polarize Viewers?

Twelfth Week (starting October 29th)

Topic: Ideology and Values

Readings: Jost, Glaser, Kruglanski, and Sulloway 2003: Political Conservatism as Motivated Social Cognition; Janoff-Bulman 2009: To Provide or Protect: Motivational Bases of Political Liberalism and Conservatism

Thirteenth Week (starting November 5th)

Topic: Identity in Political Behavior

Readings: Barreto, M.A. 2007. Si Se Puede! Latino Candidates and the Mobilization of Latino Voters; Schildkraut 2005: The rise and fall of political engagement among Latinos: The role of identity and perceptions of discrimination.

Fourteenth Week (starting November 12th)

Topic: Identity and Partisanship

Readings: Huddy, Mason, and Aaroe 2015: Expressive Partisanship: Campaign involvement, political emotion, and partisan identity; Mason 2015: The differential effects of partisan sorting on social and issue polarization.

Fifteenth Week (starting November 19th)

Topic: Are people sufficiently competent for Democracy?

Readings: Achen and Bartels 2016: Pitfalls of Popular Control

Achen and Bartels 2016: Groups and Power – Toward a Realist Theory of Democracy

Sixteenth Week (November 26th)

S.O.S. session for research paper

Seventeenth Week (December 3rd)

Review session in preparation for final exam