

POLS 4400E: Political Psychology
Short Session 1 2024
June 6 – July 3
Asynchronous Online Instruction

Professor: Geoffrey Sheagley

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Office Hours: By appointment via Zoom. Schedule via email.

Course Description

This course is an introduction to the interdisciplinary field of political psychology. The content of this course draws on theories and research from political science, psychology, and mass communication to understand different aspects of politics. Our focus in this class is on members of the mass public, with the expectation being that completing this course will provide you a better understanding of how politics and political processes operate from the perspective of ordinary people.

Office Hours and Help

I will strive to make sure that the course is understandable and that you do not feel lost. If you have any questions about the course content, structure, or assignments please do not hesitate to contact me. This is especially important because of how quickly we will cover material during the May session and due to the online delivery of our material.

Structure

The course will be taught using asynchronous delivery. This means that we will not have live meetings, but rather I will post materials and you will have some control over when you engage with them. There will still be regular deadlines, however you will have some control over when you complete them.

The class is divided into five short units, each of which will consist of readings, some form of individual or group reflection, and an open-book/open-note quiz. There is also a writing assignment focused on experimental design.

Required Books

There are no required books for this class. All of the assigned readings are available on eLC.

Grading

Your letter grade in the class reflects the percentage of the total number of available points you obtain in the class. The distribution I use is:

Grade	Percent
A	94-100
A-	90-93
B+	87-89
B	84-86
B-	80-83
C+	77-79
C	74-76
C-	70-73
D	60-69
F	<60

The following are each of the areas in which points are assigned in the class.

1. Experiment Project (30%)

You are required to write an experiment project as a final paper for this class. Detailed assignment sheets with deadlines is available on eLC. I will also post a video going over expectations for the assignments.

2. Reading Quizzes (30%)

There are five reading quizzes due throughout the class. They will cover all of the material assigned in a given week of class material. Quizzes are open-book and open-note. They are also timed. Each quiz is worth 7.5% of your grade. Quizzes are available on eLC. Your lowest quiz score will not be calculated toward your final grade.

3. Final Exam (20%)

A written final exam is a required portion of this class. The exam will be a response to a broad essay prompt. You will have roughly 36 hours to write your final essay. The exam is open-note and open-book.

4. Participation (20%)

There are regular discussion posts that you will need to complete during the term. The nature of the post/activity will depend on the topic. These activities are graded on a pass/fail basis.

Grade Change

Any appeals of a grade must be made at least **24-hours after** I hand back the assignment or test. If you would like to appeal a grade, prior to meeting with me you must submit a written statement detailing why you think that your grade should be changed. I will then meet with you to discuss your statement.

If I have made a mistake in totaling your grade in the class (e.g., I did not add up all of the points correctly) then you do not need to write the statement. Talk to me after class or during office hours and I will fix the mistake.

Class Administration

eLearning

You will submit assignments and obtain additional reading assignments from the eLearning site associated with our class (www.elc.uga.edu). Check the site periodically for any updates to the course readings.

Deadlines

All assignments are due *at the beginning of class* on the due date. If an assignment is turned in after the beginning of class on the due date 15% will be deducted from your assignment grade. An additional 15% will be deducted for each day the assignment is late. For example, if you turn in an assignment one full day after it was due, it will be deducted 30% (15% for not being turned in at the start of class on the day it was due and another 15% for being turned in one day later). Assignments turned in more than 3 days late will receive an F.

Academic Honesty

The University of Georgia has an academic honesty policy. Academic integrity is required for a positive learning environment. All students enrolled in University courses are expected to complete coursework responsibilities with fairness and honesty. Failure to do so by seeking unfair advantage over others or misrepresenting someone else's work as your own, can result in disciplinary action. Students caught cheating or plagiarizing will receive an F in the course. Additionally, I will forward your name to the University. You can read the policies in their entirety here: [https://honesty.uga.edu/Academic-Honesty-Policy/Definitions for Purposes of this Policy/](https://honesty.uga.edu/Academic-Honesty-Policy/Definitions%20for%20Purposes%20of%20this%20Policy/)

Disability Resource Center

If you anticipate needing classroom or exam accommodations due to the impact of a disability or medical condition, you must register for services with the Disability Resource Center. Additional information can be found here: <http://drc.uga.edu/>

Withdrawal Policy

Undergraduate students can only withdraw from four courses and receive a withdrawal- passing (WP) grade while enrolled at the University. Students can drop any class without penalty during the drop/add period at the beginning of every semester. Dropped courses during the drop/add period do not qualify as withdrawals. Instructors have the ability to withdraw a student from the class due to excessive absences. Please carefully review the policy in its entirety here:
<http://www.reg.uga.edu/policies/withdrawals>

Class Schedule & Structure

The class is divided into 6 topics (excluding the introduction). Each topic will open and close on set dates, however, within those dates you have the freedom to watch the lectures, read, and complete assignments when you want to. In addition, all of the readings are available at the start of the class.

Week 1

Class Introduction (6/6 & 6/7)

This section is about familiarizing yourself with the class. Start by looking through the syllabus and watching the course introduction video. Review class assignments and the general setup of the class. You are also required to complete an ungraded syllabus quiz.

- **Readings:** None
- **Discussion Post:** Introduction Post
- **Deadlines:** Syllabus Quiz (6/7 by midnight)
 - Note, this is a required quiz but it is not graded

Week 2

Topic 1: Political Psychology Foundations (6/10 & 6/11)

We examine how people approach judgment & decision-making, including their levels of motivation and engagement. The Kahneman chapters provide an overview of the balance between passive & active judgement.

- **Readings:** Kahneman (Chs. 1 & 2. Ch. 7)
- **Discussion Post:** Post 1 (6/11 by 11pm)
- **Deadlines:** None

Topic 2: The Experimental Method (6/12-6/14)

This topic focuses on the experimental method, which is the common scientific approach used in political psychology. McDermott and Druckman et al. discuss the specifics of experiments, including key terms.

- **Readings:** McDermott 2002 (pgs. 31-41; 50-57); Druckman et al. 2011
- **Discussion Post:** None
- **Deadlines:**
 - Reading Quiz 1 (6/14 by 11pm)

Week 3

Topic 3: Information Processing & Motivation (6/17 & 6/18)

The readings this week discuss the psychological motivations that shape how people approach, process, and integrate political information. The first Taber reading describes information processing while the second outlines the theory behind “motivated reasoning.” The Bolsen and Druckman piece applies the theory of “motivated reasoning” to understand how people form opinions about new & complicated technologies. The final reading covers conspiracy theories.

- **Readings:** Taber 2003 (pgs. 433-446); Taber 2001; Bolsen & Druckman 2016; Miller et al. 2014
- **Discussion Post:** Post 2 (6/18 by 11pm)
- **Deadlines:**
 - Reading Quiz 2 (6/18 by 11 pm)

Topic 4 – Party Identification (6/20 & 6/21)

This topic is on party identification – the tendency for people to socially identify with one of the two major parties in the United States. The first reading is about the psychological definition of party identification. The Klar and Krupnikov chapters extend these themes and examine why people identify as “independents.”

- **Readings:** Green, Palmquist, and Schickler 2002; Klar and Krupnikov (assorted chapters)
- **Discussion Post:** Post #3 (6/21 by 11pm)
- **Deadlines:**
 - Experiment Paper 1 (6/21 by 11pm)
 - Reading Quiz #3 (6/21 by 11pm)

Week 4

Topic 5 – Social Identity and Political Tolerance (6/24-6/26)

These readings focus on social identity and prejudice. We begin with the core theory developed in psychology to understand these processes: social identity theory (SIT). The final two readings examine prejudice and political tolerance in light of group identities.

- **Readings:** Huddy 2013 (selected portions); Green and Wong 2002; Mousa (2020)
- **Discussion Post:** Post #4 (6/26 by 11pm)
- **Deadlines:**
 - Reading Quiz #4 (6/26 by 11pm)

Topic 6 - Citizen Competence (6/27 & 6/28)

The readings in this final session examine what the public knows (and more often doesn't know) about the political world. We also explore the efficiency of "heuristics" – tools that voters can use to overcome lack of knowledge about the political world. And we conclude with a larger piece focused on the link between identity and representation.

- **Readings:** Dancey & Sheagley 2013; Achen and Bartels (Ch. 11).
- **Discussion Post:** Post #5 (6/28 by 11pm)
- **Due:**
 - Quiz #5 (6/28 by 11pm)
 - Final Experimental Design (6/28 by 5pm)

Week 5

Final Project Deadlines (7/1-7/3)

- Experiment Paper 2 (due 7/1 at 8:00am)
- Final take-home exam
 - Distributed: 7/1 at 8:00am
 - Due: 7/3 by noon.