POLS 4400E: Political Psychology
May Session 2025
May 13 – June 4
Asynchronous Online Instruction

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

Course Description

This class 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 is on members of the mass public in the United States, with the expectation being that completing this course will provide you a better understanding of how everyday people think and reason about many aspects of the political process.

Student Learning Outcomes

After completing this class, you will be able to:

1. Describe how mental systems interact with information to shape political opinions
2. Classify major theories of opinion formation and behavior in politics
3. Critique methodological approaches used to study the sources of political opinions and behavior
4. Develop an original randomized experiment to study an area of political psychology
5. Explain a central concept from our class in an original way

Office Hours and Help

I am available to meet over Zoom. Appointments should be booked in advance by contacting me over email (geoff.sheagley@uga.edu). ***Note: do not send me a message using the eLC message system. Send all communication directly to my UGA email.**

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.

My primary means of communication with the class will be through announcements posted in eLC. Make sure you receive eLC updates for our class automatically via email (eLC > Click on your profile > Notifications > Instant Notifications).

Structure

This is an online course taught using <u>asynchronous</u> delivery. This means that we do not have live meetings. Rather, all of the class content is preloaded into eLC you generally complete the class at your own pace.

The class is divided into six modules, each of which will consists of recorded lectures, some sort of reflection activity, and an open-book/open-note quiz. You have to complete the modules sequentially and you cannot advance to the next module until you have completed all required materials in the current module.

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. **Reading Quizzes (30%)**

   Each module includes a reading quiz. Each quiz is inclusive of all of the material covered in that module. Quizzes are open-book and open-note. They are also timed. Each quiz is worth 6% of your overall grade and your lowest quiz score will not be calculated toward your final grade.

2. **Content Reflection (10%)**

   Each module contains an essay-style prompt for you to reflect on the course content for that section. These reflections do not need to be long (generally 1-2 paragraphs) and are intended to get you to critically reflect on themes from that module. They are graded on a pass-fail basis.

3. **Experiment Paper (20%)**

   This assignment requires you to summarize and redesign an experiment included in an academic research paper. I will provide you with a list of papers to choose from.

Detailed expectations are outlined in an assignment sheet and video overview provided on eLC. The deadline is **5/30 at 5:00pm**.

4. **Concept Explanation (20%)**

   Pick a concept from our class and explain it so that somebody who hasn't taken our class will understand it. You can use any medium you would like to teach the concept, except for a standard written essay. Be creative! More details are available on the relevant assignment sheet. The deadline is **5/30 at 5:00pm**.

5. **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. The exam will open **6/2 at 8am** and is due by **6/5 by 5pm.**

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 Deadlines
- Modules 1-3 – 5/23 by 5pm
- Experiment Paper – 5/30 by 5pm
- Concept Explanation project – 5/30 by 5pm
- Final take-home exam
  - Distributed: 6/2 at 8:00am
  - Due: 6/5 by 5pm

Class Administration

eLearning

The entire class is administered through eLC. I will communicate with you primarily through eLC announcements. This is also where you will do things like watch lectures, submit assignments, and access class readings.

Deadlines

All assignments are due by the date and time listed in the syllabus. If an assignment is turned in after the time & due date, 15% of the total grade will be deducted from your assignment grade. An additional 15% of the total 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 by the deadline 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/

Use of Generative AI Technology for Coursework

The use of Generative AI (GAI) tools is not permitted in this course except for the concept explanation assignment. If you are uncertain about using a particular tool to support your work, please consult with me before using it. I conduct AI checks of every paper and assignment to determine whether it was created using generative AI. If I believe a violation of UGA"s "A Culture of Honesty" may have occurred, I have a responsibility to report to the Office of Academic Honesty. If I do, you will be informed of the report and you will receive an email from the Office of Academic Honesty to schedule a facilitated discussion between us. The goal will be an agreement reached about what occurred, and if it involved dishonesty, an appropriate sanction. To protect your rights, we cannot discuss your case outside of that facilitated meeting.

Whenever an assignment explicitly allows for the use of GAI, please keep the following in mind: You may not represent output generated by a GAI tool as your own work. Any such use of GAI output must be appropriately cited or disclosed, including quotation marks and in-line citations for direct quotes. Including anything you did not write in your assignment without proper citation will be treated as an academic misconduct case. Suspected unauthorized assistance, plagiarism, or other violations of UGA's "A Culture of Honesty," will be reported to the Office of Academic Honesty. For full details on how to properly cite AI-generated work, please see the APA Style article: How to Cite ChatGPT. Finally, GAI is highly vulnerable to inaccuracy and bias. You should assume GAI output is wrong unless you either know the answer or can verify it with another source. It is your responsibility to assess the validity and applicability of any GAI output used.

Accessibility and Testing

If you anticipate needing classroom or exam accommodations due to the impact of a disability or medical condition, you must register for services with Accessibility and Testing. Additional information can be found here: https://accessibility.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 modules (excluding the introduction). Each module will open once you complete the previous module. All of the readings are available at the start of the class.

Class Introduction

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.

<u>Readings</u>: None

<u>Completion Requirements</u>

- Content Reflection: Introduction Post
- Syllabus Quiz (required but ungraded)

Module 1 - Political Psychology Foundations

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.

<u>Readings</u>: Kahneman (Chs. 1, 2, and 7)

<u>Completion Requirements</u>

- Content Refection: Modes of Decision-Making in Everyday Life
- Reading Quiz 1

Module 2 - The Experimental Method

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

Completion Requirements

- Reading Quiz 2
- Experiments Project Paper Selection

Module 3 - Information Processing & Motivation

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

Completion Requirements

- Content Reflection: Motivation in Everyday Life
- Reading Quiz 3

Suggested Completion Milestone

- Experiment Paper (this is roughly a good time in the class to have completed this project)

Deadline for Completion of Modules 1-3: 5/23

Module 4 – Party Identification

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)

Completion Requirements

- Content Reflection: Partisanship and Independents in American Elections
- Reading Quiz #4

Module 5 – Social Identity and Political Tolerance

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)

Completion Requirements

- Content Reflection: Promoting Political Tolerance
- Reading Quiz #5

Suggested Completion Milestone

- Concept Explanation Project

Module 6 - Citizen Competence

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).

Completion Requirements

- Content Reflection: Political Knowledge
- Quiz #6