

POLS 4400: Political Psychology

University of Georgia
Spring 2025
CRN 64841

Instructor:

Mackenzie Vaughn
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Office meeting times:

Before/after class in classroom
By appointment (Zoom or in person)
During class time when specified

Office Location

Baldwin 109

Class time and location:

Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays 12:40pm – 1:30pm
Baldwin 301

Course description

This is a college level introduction to political psychology. This is a subfield which centers on the study of facets of both individual and social/mass psychology to explain political phenomena. Political psychologists adapt and merge concepts and methodologies from political science, psychology, sociology, and various other social and biological sciences in order to accomplish the monumental task of understanding human political behavior. This course will introduce students to the foundations of personality, cognition, emotion, identity, and social/group theory that political psychologists apply in analysis of phenomena. Students will also learn about research design methodologies, and particularly how scholars use experimental designs to cut through the noise of factors in politics, allowing them to evaluate specific substrates of political behavior. With these tools, we will endeavor to disentangle the chaotic web of factors behind the politics of voting, media influence, race/ethnic relations, immigration, nationalism, and social movements.

Course objectives

- Understand individual-level factors in political phenomena, including attitudes and other decision-making substrates.
- Understand factors in intergroup relations that contribute to political positioning and outcomes, including image theory, threat, competition, social identity, stereotypes/prejudice, and allyship.
- Apply theory and concepts to discussion of real-world political events.
- Evaluate research designs, identifying the individual moving parts and the merits of each design, as well as critiques and potential alternatives.
- Engage in both one-on-one and group peer review, exercising skills in constructive and efficient feedback.
- Construct an experimental or observational research design to test an original theory and hypotheses.
- Enhance skills for evaluating current political issues and sources of information.

Course Structure & Associated Expectations

This is a hybrid lecture-discussion format course. This means you will not spend most sessions sitting through a lecture. Much of this class will be spent in small-group and some full-class discussion and/or assignments with your classmates. This hybrid short-lecture/discussion class design is intended to buff your understanding of literature and phenomena regarding political thought and behavior by allowing you insight into how your classmates think about said political thought and behavior. **For this format to work, however, you must complete the assigned readings for each class.** It is difficult to learn via engagement in discourse if you spend much of the discussion skimming the readings you failed to complete, trying to figure out what everyone is talking about.

Course texts

Required:

Cottam, Mastors, Preston, and Dietz-Uhler. 2016. *Introduction to Political Psychology* (3rd ed.). ISBN: 9781848726727

All other assigned readings are provided and organized by week via eLC or linked below in the course schedule for non-publication websites. Suggested materials for further reading are similarly provided on eLC, and may be used to aid in research inspiration and literature reviews for the assignments in this course.

Content Warning & Discourse Expectations

This course will address topics that are controversial or otherwise unpleasant for some people to contend with, like racism, sexism, terrorism, xenophobia, torture, violent crime, etc. Unfortunately, these are realities of our world that must be studied, discussed, and their underlying factors explained in order to combat them. As part of this class, you will be expected to discuss these and other topics with people who may have different perspectives from yours. These discussions **will be** civil, mature, and respectful. If you are not able to meet this expectation, then this class is not for you. **If you try to pull cringe debate-lord provocation or resort to insulting your classmates, you will immediately be told to leave without a second chance.** Remember that tolerance is best conceptualized as a social contract: if you violate the contract, then you are no longer protected by its provisions.

Graded Evaluation

Assignments (65% total)

There are 4 assignments total over the course of the semester. General descriptions are provided here, with further details available on the eLC assignment pages.

The first 3 assignments are all part of the main, overarching research design project for the course. This project will occur in stages that build off each other. The first assignment involves reviewing a publication in a political psychology or adjacent research area of interest to you,

including any critiques, then proposing and defending alterations to the design to make it more suitable to answer a research question of interest to you. This first assignment is due by end of day on February 14th and is worth 15% of your final grade.

The second assignment involves constructing and drafting up your own original experimental or observational research design, then engaging in a two-stage peer review process with your peers. The first stage is partner peer review, which involves writing a formal peer review of your partner's design outside of class, then going over your designs and points together in class. The subsequent stage will be small group peer review, where you share your papers with partner comments with another set of partners, then discuss each design in class. This should be more reminiscent of the type of feedback process occurring at academic conferences. Altogether, there are three due dates for assignment 2: *your partner* submits *your* design on eLC before midnight on March 14th as proof of delivery; you submit your peer review of your partner's paper on eLC by class time on March 19th; and on March 21st, you submit your own design on eLC by midnight, complete with all notes about your design from your group. Overall, assignment 2 is worth 15% of your final grade. Attendance is mandatory on peer review days, with proof of valid excuse required to avoid losing all points associated with that stage of assignment 2. Given extenuating circumstances, alternative review procedures will be arranged.

The third assignment is your final draft of your research design, complete with any alterations made following peer review and further brainstorming on your part. This is due by end of day on April 25th, and accounts for 20% of your final grade.

The fourth and final assignment, due by end of day on April 30th, is worth 15% of your final grade. This will be an exercise in finding some way to teach a concept from this course to somebody unfamiliar with the material, while tying it back into your own research/academic interests. This can be via presentation slides, a short paper, a digital poster, or whatever your creativity can produce while being sufficiently informative.

Participation & Attendance (20%)

This class format absolutely does not work without your engagement. If you are absent or silent during discussion, it directly detracts from the pool of perspectives and ideas that everyone can learn from. Therefore, both attendance and active participation in this class are mandatory, and account for 20% of your final grade.

Attendance will not necessarily be taken every class session. Attendance may be taken via something turned in from class activities, sign-in sheet distributed at the beginning of class, or some other means. Lest you be tempted by that little voice in your head to start gambling on whether attendance will be taken on a given day, I caution you that reducing the number of times attendance is taken necessarily inflates the weight of each attendance day by that much more.

Further, I have built in more limited tolerances for unexcused absences to account for the fewer attendance days. You are permitted **2 free unexcused absences** without penalty. Do not notify me if you are using one, as they will be automatically accounted for at the end of the semester. Please only email me if you have an excused absence.

More than four (4) unexcused absences will result in a 0 for your final participation & attendance grade, meaning the maximum final grade you can receive is an 80.

As part of monitoring active participation, I will at times wander around the classroom observing and interacting with your small discussion groups (though the primary purpose of this is to sate my interest in and engage with your thinking about the material, so please don't treat me like Big Brother when I draw near).

For the sake of helping me keep up with participation, it is a requirement that you upload a headshot of yourself to your eLC profile. Otherwise, you will receive a 0 for your participation grade at the end of the course. This should be completed by the 2nd week of class.

Midterm (15%)

As of right now, the midterm exam is set for February 28th. It accounts for 15% of your final grade. The midterm will be on eLC and can be taken at any time of day as long as it is submitted by 11:59pm. We will not meet for class that day. It must be completed individually, but you are permitted to use your notes and readings. That said, there will be a time limit, with penalties associated with exceeding the limit at my discretion, making preparation and familiarity with material important for success. Further details will be available as time approaches.

Grading Breakdown and Schedule

Assignments – 65%

- Research Design Assignment 1 (15%): February 14th @ 11:59pm
- Research Design Assignment 2 (15%):
 - Partner submitted paper: March 14th @ 11:59pm
 - Partner peer review: March 19th @ 12:40pm
 - With group comments: March 21st @ 11:59pm
- Research Design Assignment 3 (20%): April 25th @ 11:59pm
- Concept Teaching Assignment (15%): April 30th @ 11:59pm

Midterm – 15%: February 28th @ 11:59pm

Participation & Attendance – 20%

Grading Scale

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

Class Policies and Administrative Items

Deadlines/Late Penalties

Unexcused late submissions of assignments will be deducted 15% if submitted within the first 12 hours after the deadline, an additional 10% after the 12-hour mark, and 10% for every 24 hours after that. If you hit 3 days, it is an automatic F.

Make-up Policy

Make-up work will only be available to students who deal with extenuating circumstances preventing them from meeting due dates. Whether a circumstance qualifies under this policy, and whether proof will be required for verification, will be up to my discretion. If able, students should notify me ahead of time of possible conflicts or delaying circumstances.

Communication with Me

Please use your UGA email address to email me, rather than contacting me through eLC. Throughout the course, I will be sending emails to the class through eLC for the sake of convenience. Do not reply to these emails if you have a question or concern, but instead send me an email through your UGA email. I typically respond to emails within a day.

ELC

This course relies heavily on eLC, so students should get acquainted with using it, if they are not already (<https://uga.view.usg.edu/>). Quizzes and assignments will both be facilitated on the course eLC page, and it will be the only place where students can keep track of their grades as the course progresses.

Disability Accommodations

Neither physical nor cognitive abled-ness should factor into your success in this course. If you plan to request classroom or assignment/quiz accommodations for a disability, please register with the Disability Resource Center (DRC). The DRC can be reached by visiting Clark Howell Hall, by calling 706-542-8719 (voice) or 706-542-8778 (TTY), or by visiting <http://drc.uga.edu>.

Academic Honesty

UGA Student Honor Code: "I will be academically honest in all of my academic work and will not tolerate academic dishonesty of others." A Culture of Honesty, the University's policy and procedures for handling cases of suspected dishonesty, can be found at www.uga.edu/ovpi. You are responsible for knowing these policies and what constitutes academic dishonesty. The consequences for cheating, plagiarism, etc. are severe, and I am obligated to report any incidents of violations. Failing the class would be the least of your worries.

AI

Use of artificial intelligence (e.g., ChatGPT) or word mixing software on assignments or quizzes is considered unauthorized assistance (cheating) in this course. Suspected unauthorized assistance, or other violations of UGA's "A Culture of Honesty," will be reported to the Office of Academic Honesty. *Don't use AI as a crutch.* It does not constitute legitimate learning in this course environment.

Students will be expected to provide timely responses to emails from me requesting explanations for answers or parts of assignments that are suspicious for AI utilization.

Syllabus Policy

The course syllabus is a general plan for the course; deviations may be necessary. Notice will be provided in advance if changes become necessary.

Drop/Add and Withdrawal Policy

Students can drop the class without penalty anytime during the drop/add period at the start of semester. After that, students may withdraw from class through the withdrawal process prior to the withdrawal deadline. Instructors also can withdraw a student for excessive absences. The full policy for withdrawal can be found at <https://reg.uga.edu/general-information/policies/withdrawals/>

Mental Health and Wellness Resources:

If you or someone you know needs assistance, you are encouraged to contact Student Care and Outreach in the Division of Student Affairs at 706-542-7774 or visit <https://sco.uga.edu>. They will help you navigate any difficult circumstances you may be facing by connecting you with the appropriate resources or services.

UGA has several resources for a student seeking mental health services

(<https://www.uhs.uga.edu/bewelluga/bewelluga>) or crisis support

(<https://www.uhs.uga.edu/info/emergencies>).

If you need help managing stress anxiety, relationships, etc., please visit BeWellUGA (<https://www.uhs.uga.edu/bewelluga/bewelluga>) for a list of FREE workshops, classes, mentoring, and health coaching led by licensed clinicians and health educators in the University Health Center.

Additional resources can be accessed through the UGA App.

Peer Tutoring

The Division of Academic Enhancement (DAE) offers free peer tutoring in over 200 of UGA's most rigorous courses, including writing tutoring. To engage with a Peer Tutor, download the Penji app, available on iOS and Android, and sign in through SSO using your MyID. Need help? Visit [our website](#) for more information on how to engage with a Peer Tutor or email us at tutor@uga.edu. In addition to peer tutoring, the DAE also provides Academic Coaching, Student Success Workshops and more. The DAE is committed to the success of all students at the University of Georgia. For more on these and other resources, please visit www.dae.uga.edu.

Tentative Course Schedule

Week 1: January 5 – 11

Monday, January 6th: Introduction/syllabus

Wednesday, January 8th: Political Psychology?

- Cottam chapter 1

Friday, January 10th: Research Design & Ethics

- Kellstedt & Whitten chapter 1
- Sherman & Berk 1984
- **Drop/add ends**

Week 2: January 12 – 18

Upload a profile picture (a headshot of yourself) to your eLC profile by the end of this week.

Monday, January 13th: Theory Formation & Hypotheses

- Kellstedt & Whitten chapter 2
- Skim: Cassese & Barnes 2018 [Solid example with clear hypotheses & variables]

Wednesday, January 15th: Operationalization & Measurement

- Kellstedt & Whitten chapter 5 pg. 92-114
- Pieterse et al 2016
- Skim: King, Keohane, and Verba ch. 4 pg. 128-138

Friday, January 17th: Causality & Research Design

- Kellstedt & Whitten chapter 3 & 4
- Butler & Broockman 2011

Week 3: January 19 – 25

Monday, January 20th – MLK Day: **No class**

Wednesday, January 22nd: Personality 1: Theories, Freud, & Traits

- Cottam ch 2
- Suggested/further reading:
 - Huddy, Sears, and Levy ch 2

Friday, January 24th: Big 5 Personality Traits & The Big 3 Motives

- Mondak & Halperin 2008

Week 4: January 26 – February 1

Monday, January 27th: The Genetics and Biology of Politics

- Alford, Funk, & Hibbing 2005
- Suggested/further readings:
 - Mondak et al 2010.
 - Gerber et al. 2010.
 - Huddy, Sears, and Levy ch 8
 - Oxley et al. 2008.

Wednesday, January 29th: The Authoritarian Personality

- Wronski et al. 2018
- Skim: Hetherington and Suhay 2011

Friday, January 31st: Cognition etc. 1: Cognition & Information Processing

- Cottam ch. 3 (through heuristics)
- Lau & Redlawsk 2001
- Suggested/further reading:
 - Huddy, Sears, and Levy chapters 5 & 15.

Week 5: February 2 - 8

Monday, February 3rd: Cognition etc. 2: Motivated Reasoning & Categorization

- Cottam ch. 3, continued
- Taber & Lodge 2006

Wednesday, February 5th: Cognition etc. 3: Social Identity Theory

- Cottam ch. 3, continued
- Iyengar, Shanto, Sood, & Leikes 2012

Friday, February 7th: Cognition etc. 4: Affect & Emotions

- Cottam ch. 3, continued
- Brader 2005
- Suggested/further reading:
 - Huddy, Sears, & Levy ch. 6

Week 6: February 9 - 15

Monday, February 10th: Cognition etc. 5: Attitudes

- Cottam ch. 3, continued
- Payne et al. 2010
- ASSIGNMENT BEFORE CLASS: Complete any one of the Implicit Attitude Tests for Social Attitudes at <https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/demo/>, and submit your results on eLC by class time. We will discuss the tests in class.
 - Keep in mind it can only work if your inputs are quick enough to prevent your brain from thinking at any length about your responses. Take it seriously and don't stress if your results indicate socially undesirable bias – that is perfectly normal, and the tests are not infallible.

Wednesday, February 12th: Groups 1

- Cottam ch. 4

Friday, February 14th: Groups 2

ASSIGNMENT 1 DUE on eLC by 11:59pm

- Dai et al 2021
- Suggested/further reading:
 - Brewer 2007

Week 7: February 16 - 22

Monday, February 17th: Mass Politics 1: Political Sophistication & Minimalists vs. Maximalists

- Cottam ch. 6 (through these topics)

Wednesday, February 19th: Mass Politics 2: Ideology

- Malka and Lelkes 2010
- Suggested/further reading:
 - Huddy, Sears, and Levy ch. 17
 - Jost et al 2003

Friday, February 21st: Mass Politics 3: Partisanship & Polarization

- Mason 2015
- Bankert 2020

Week 8: February 23 - March 1

Monday, February 24th: Mass Politics 4: Knowledge Structures, Zaller, Socialization, & Conspiracy Beliefs

- Cottam ch. 6, continued
- Miller, Saunders, & Farhart 2016

Wednesday, February 26th: TBD/Review Day

Friday, February 28th: No class. **Midterm due on eLC by 11:59pm**

Week 9: March 2 – 8 -> Spring Break, no classes

Week 10: March 9 – 15

Monday, March 10th: Media 1: Agenda Setting, Framing, & Priming

- Cottam ch. 7
- Nelson, Clawson, & Oxley 1997
- Suggested/further readings:
 - Iyengar et al. 1984
 - Valentino, Hutchings, & White 2002

Wednesday, March 12th: Media 2: Media Bias?

- Levendusky 2013
- Bennett “Four Information Biases that Matter”

Friday, March 14th: No class, in person or Zoom office hours (TBD) during regular class time.
YOUR PARTNER must submit YOUR unreviewed Assignment 2 paper on eLC by 11:59pm to prove they have received it in time to peer review it for Wednesday.

Week 11: March 16 - 22

Monday, March 17th: No class, Zoom office hours during regular class time.

Wednesday, March 19th: Partner peer review day

Your peer review of your partner’s paper is due on eLC by the start of class.

Decide small review groups in class. Distribute your paper with your partner’s comments to your small group **DURING CLASS** (via group Google doc, group email, or whatever works best).

Friday, March 21st: Group conference peer review day

FINAL ASSIGNMENT 2 (your paper with all feedback from your partner & group) due by 11:59pm on eLC.

Week 12: March 23 - 29

Monday, March 24th: Race 1: Intro & Symbolic Racism

- Cottam ch. 8
- Suggested/further readings:
 - Maxwell 2018
 - Glick 2005

Wednesday, March 26th: Race 2: Cognition: Colorblindness vs. Privilege Awareness

- Neville et al. 2000
- Pinterits, Poteat, & Spanierman 2009

Friday, March 28th: Race 3: Negative Affect

- Banks & Valentino 2012

Week 13: March 30 – April 5

Monday, March 31st: Race 4: Positive Affect: Ethnocultural Empathy and Racial Sympathy

- Chudy 2021
- Wang et al 2003

Wednesday, April 2nd: Race 5: It's... Complicated Affect: White Guilt, White Shame

- Grzanka, Frantell, & Fassinger 2020

Thursday, April 3rd – Withdrawal deadline

Friday, April 4th: Ethnicity/Immigration 1: Latino Identity and Politics

- Barreto 2007
- Skim: Pérez 2015

Week 14: April 6 – April 12

Monday, April 7th: Ethnicity/Immigration 2: Immigration & Enforcement

- Brader, Valentino, & Suhay 2008
- Skim: Rocha, Knoll, & Wrinkle 2015

Wednesday, April 9th: Nationalism 1

- Cottam ch. 10
- Suggested/further reading:
 - Shayo 2009

Friday, April 11th: Terrorism, Torture, and Algerian Nationalism – The Algerian Revolution

- Prior to class, you are tasked with achieving some familiarity with the Algerian Revolution and Algerian Nationalism. Resources I am providing and suggesting are below. You may look beyond these, of course.
- Note that the Fanon reading comprises most of a book. My suggestion is that you at least skim the foreword, preface, and the third chapter, before you inevitably and understandably resort to online summaries of *The Wretched of the Earth*. Together, *The Question* and *The Wretched* were two of the most influential works produced by

members/allies of the revolution at the time, which have remained relevant and popular even beyond the frame of that conflict.

- Excerpt from Henri Alleg's *The Question*
- Excerpts from Frantz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth*
- <https://www.britannica.com/place/Algeria/Cultural-institutions#ref220551> This is a decent guide to the history of the Algerian conflict. Includes a whole section on Algerian nationalism.
- https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Algerian_nationalism You can rarely go wrong with Wikipedia.

Week 15: April 13 – April 19

Monday, April 14th: Social Movements 1: Introduction

- Cottam ch. 11

Wednesday, April 16th: Social Movements 2: Social Networks and Mobilization

- Passy & Giugni 2001
- Hong & Peoples 2021

Wednesday, April 18th: Social Movements 3: Modern Digital Movements & Allyship

- Clark 2019
- Skim: Brown & Ostrove 2013

Week 16: April 20 – April 26

Monday, April 21st: Social Movements 4: Protest and its Effects

- Wallace, Zepeda-Millán, and Jones-Correa 2014

Wednesday, April 23rd: No class. In person or Zoom office hours (TBD) during class time.

Friday, April 25th: No class

ASSIGNMENT 3 DUE BY 11:59PM ON ELC

Week 17: April 27 – May 3

Monday, April 28th: Last day TBD

Wednesday, April 30th:

FINAL CONCEPT ASSIGNMENT DUE eLC by 11:59pm

Good luck with finals and have a great summer break!