POLS 4400: Political Psychology
Spring 2026
Monday and Wednesday 2:55-4:35
Baldwin Hall 0307

Instructor: Tabitha Lamberth
Office: 303A
Email: tabitha.lamberth25@uga.edu
Office Hours: Wednesday 11-1pm, or by appointment

Course Description and Objectives
This course serves as an introduction to the intersection of psychology and political science, examining how psychological theories and methods can be applied to understand political behavior, attitudes, and events. Topics include personality, socialization, political knowledge, emotions, prejudice, identity, and political communication. Students will critically analyze the biological and cognitive bases of political decision-making, biases, ideology, and trust in democratic systems. This course emphasizes creativity, critical thinking and the application of psychological principles to contemporary political issues, preparing students for scholarly and practical endeavors in political psychology and the real world.

After completing this class, you will be able to:
1. Differentiate between the different psychological processes that impact political behavior.
2. Identify and critique cognitive biases and their influence on political knowledge and awareness.
3. Articulate complex psychological and political concepts through creative and innovate mediums beyond traditional essays.
4. Use insights from political psychology to critically evaluate current political events and develop informed perspectives.

Required Prerequisites
POLS 1101 or POLS 1101E or POLS 1101H or POLS 1101S

Required Text:
There is only one required book for this class:
"The Oxford Handbook of Political Psychology" (Second Edition) by Leonie Huddy, David Sears, and Jack Levy (ISBN-13: 978-0199760107, ISBN-10: 0199760101)

Assessments:
Short Essays
You will complete two 5-7 page papers (double-spaced) during the semester:
Paper 1: Research Proposal
Identify and describe a problem or question in political psychology, then propose an original research study to investigate it. Your proposal should incorporate research methods discussed in class readings and lectures, along with additional peer reviewed resources. This paper should include:

- A clear research question
- Background on why this question matters
- Your proposed methodology
- Expected contributions to the field

Paper 2: Psychological Analysis of a Political Phenomenon
Select a political phenomenon or current even that interests you and analyze it through a psychological lens. *You must discuss your topic choice with me before proceeding.* Your analysis should:

- Apply theories and concepts from course readings and lectures
- Support your argument with relevant data and evidence
- Demonstrate how psychological factors help explain the phenomenon

Both papers should be well-researched using empirical peer-reviewed sources, clearly written, and demonstrate your understanding of political psychology principles covered in the course. I will provide handouts with more information and grading rubrics in class.
Paper #1 is due on March 18th at 11:59 pm and Paper #2 is due on April 27th at 11:59 pm.

Concept Explanations
At two different points during the semester, you will choose a concept you learned in this course and create a project designed to teach it to someone who has not taken this class. Your project can use any medium (such as a video, infographic, podcast, artwork, or interactive activity), but it cannot be a standard written essay. Be as creative as possible and ensure that your project effectively explains the concept in an engaging and accessible way.
Concept explanation #1 is due on February 11th at 11:59 pm and Concept explanation #2 is due on April 15th at 11:59 pm.

Exams
There will be two exams in this class: a midterm exam and a final exam. Exams will be completed in-person with pen and paper. Both exams will primarily consist of multiple-choice questions; however, they will also include a mix of a few short answer questions meant to test the breadth of your knowledge on important aspects in political psychology and how well you can apply the material.
Tentative midterm date falls on Week 8.

Participation

Questions are encouraged! Discussions will take place, so please read! There will be random in-class activities and assignments that make up your participation grade. There may also be *unannounced quizzes* based on lectures and readings for that week. To be prepared for class a good rule of thumb is to have some questions/comments planned such as:

- Something you found interesting
- Something you disagreed with
- Something you did not understand (substantive or methodological)
- Did it make you reconsider a pre-existing view that you had on a particular subject?
- Any other comments or questions that you would like to discuss in class.

If it becomes obvious that people are not reading and preparing to discuss in class, I reserve the right to require 3-5 questions or comments be submitted via eLC Sunday nights by 11:59pm.

Readings: You are expected to have completed the readings before class on Mondays. Any articles or other readings not from the textbook will be provided to you on eLC.

Missed Exams, Late Assignments, & Re-Grading Requests

Make-up exams will be given only for documented reasons of illness, family emergency, religious holiday, or participation in approved University activities (such as field trips and athletic events). Exams will be closed book, and no references will be allowed. Final exams will be re-scheduled in accordance with UGA's policy for final exam conflicts. 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 an extension, please speak with me.

Extra Credit Opportunities

Throughout the semester, small extra credit opportunities may arise. When an extra credit opportunity becomes available, I will let you know in-class and on eLC.

Final Grades

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

There is no standard rounding policy. Rounding decisions will be made on a case-by-case basis.

Assignment Percentage Breakdown

15% Participation
5% Quizzes
20% Short Essays (10% each)
20% Concept Explanations (10% each)
20% Midterm Exam
20% Final Exam

UGA 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 honesty.uga.edu.

Many students have questions to what constitutes too much "help" on essays or other assignments. Of course, you may ask a friend if a certain phrase or sentence is correct. You may consult an online dictionary or translator for a word or phrase. BUT, the line between legitimate help and cheating is this: **Are you able to reproduce the same information on a test or on your own?** If the answer is yes - i.e., you learned something from getting the help and won't make the same mistake again - that's okay. If the answer is no – i.e., you can't identify the parts of speech in the phrase or you can't tell me what the word(s) mean on the spot) then you shouldn't turn in the assignment as your own work. You should, at the very least, indicate those parts of the assignment that are not your own work.

In line with this, I am obligated to uphold the university's policy on academic honesty, and I take this responsibility very seriously. If you are unsure about your particular situation, please ask me for clarification **BEFORE** you turn in an assignment as your own work. I am more than happy to help you out.

Accommodation for disabilities

If you plan to request accommodations for a disability, please register with the Disability Resource Center. They can be reached by visiting Clark Howell Hall, calling 706-542-8719 (voice) or 706-542-8778 (TTY), or by visiting http://drc.uga.edu.

Attendance & Participation Policy

Class presence and participation points are given to encourage your active participation and discussion. The QUALITY of your contributions and insights weighs more heavily than the quantity. Quality comments possess one or more of the following properties:

- Offers a different and unique, but relevant, perspective;
- Contributes to moving the discussion and analysis forward;
- Builds on other comments;
- Transcends the "I feel" syndrome. That is, it includes some evidence, argumentation, or recognition of inherent tradeoffs. In other words, the comment demonstrates some reflective thinking.

Class Recordings

I require that you seek my permission if you want to make audio and/or video recordings of any portion of our class. If you do not have this permission (or an accommodation from DRC), do not take photographs, audio recordings, or video recordings of any person in this class without their expressed permission. Further, do not take or share audio or video recordings of course lectures or discussions. Violation of this policy will result in you receiving 0% for class participation, and, depending on the severity of the violation, may result in you receiving a grade of "F" in the class.

Use of AI in this Course

In this course, thoughtful and creative engagement with AI is encouraged. Therefore, you will not be penalized for using Generative AI tools (GAI) in this course.

However, remember that AI tools are best used to augment, not replace, our skills. It is important to be aware of the limitations of GAI tools. For example,

- GAI may exhibit bias and inaccuracies. You are responsible for assessing the validity and applicability of any GAI output incorporated into your work.
- If you provide minimum effort prompts, you will receive low quality results. Practice careful prompt engineering.
- Be cautious with data privacy. Refrain from entering information of a highly personal or confidential nature into a GAI tool.

To gain a deeper understanding of GAI tools and enhance your interaction with GAI output, you can explore the following resources:

- Introduction to Generative AI
- UGA LibGuide on Generative AI

Note also that any work not created by yourself should include a proper source citation. For Generative AI, that may include prompts, specific AI used, and date. For full details on how to properly cite AI-generated work, please see the APA Style article, How to Cite ChatGPT. Keep in mind that this AI-permissive policy applies only to this course. Using AI tools in courses without permission is a violation of UGA's Academic Honesty policies and is considered unauthorized assistance. Be sure to consult the specific guidelines for each course.

Well-being Resources

UGA Well-being Resources promote student success by cultivating a culture that supports a more active, healthy, and engaged student community.

Anyone needing assistance is encouraged to contact Student Care & Outreach (SCO) in the Division of Student Affairs at 706-542-8479 or visit sco.uga.edu. Student Care & Outreach helps students navigate difficult circumstances by connecting them with the most appropriate resources or services. They also administer the Embark@UGA program which supports students experiencing, or who have experienced, homelessness, foster care, or housing insecurity.

UGA provides both clinical and non-clinical options to support student well-being and mental health, any time, any place. Whether on campus, or studying from home or abroad, UGA Well-being Resources are here to help.

Well-being Resources: well-being.uga.edu

Student Care and Outreach: sco.uga.edu

University Health Center: healthcenter.uga.edu

Counseling and Psychiatric Services: caps.uga.edu or CAPS 24/7 crisis support at 706-542-2273

Health Promotion/ Fontaine Center: healthpromotion.uga.edu

Disability Resource Center and Testing Services: drc.uga.edu

Additional information, including free digital well-being resources, can be accessed through the UGA app or by visiting https://well-being.uga.edu.

Disclaimer
This course syllabus is a general plan for the course; deviations announced to the class by the instructor may be necessary.

Course Schedule:

First Week – January 12th & 14th
Topic: Course Introduction - What is Political Psychology?
Readings: Chapter 1 in Huddy, Sears, and Levy
Morton and Williams 2006. Experimentation in Political Science (on eLC)

Second Week - January 19th (No Class on Monday, MLK Day) & 21st
Topic: Research Methods continued; Personality
Readings: Chapter 2 in Huddy, Sears, and Levy
Mondak, J. J., and K.D. Halperin 2008. A Framework for the Study of Personality and Political Behaviour (on eLC)

Third Week – January 26th & 28th
Topic: Childhood and Adult Political Development & Genetic Foundations of Political Behavior
Readings: Chapter 3 in Huddy, Sears, and Levy
Chapter 8 in Huddy, Sears, and Levy
Alford, J.R., C.L. Funk, and J.R. Hibbing 2005. Are Political Orientations Genetically Transmitted? (on eLC)

Fourth Week – February 2nd & 4th
Topic: Behavioral Decision-Making
Readings: Chapter 5 in Huddy, Sears, and Levy
Tversky, A. and D. Kahneman 1974. Judgment Under Uncertainty: Heuristics and Biases (on eLC)
Lau, R.R., and D. P. Redlawsk 2001. Advantages and Disadvantages in Cognitive Heuristics in Political Decision Making (on eLC)

Fifth Week – February 9th & 11th
Topic: Motivated Reasoning
Readings: Chapter 4 in Huddy, Sears, and Levy
Taber, C.S., and M. Lodge 2006. Motivated Skepticism in the Evaluation of Political Beliefs (on eLC)
Redlawsk, D. P., A. J.W. Civettini, and K.M. Emmerson 2010. Do Motivated Reasoners Ever "Get It"? (on eLC)

Sixth Week – February 16th & 18th
Topic: Information Processing and Bias
Readings: Chapter 17 in Huddy, Sears, and Levy
Lodge, Steenbergen, and Brau 1995. The Responsive Voter: Campaign Information and the Dynamics of Candidate Evaluation (on eLC)

Seventh Week – February 23rd & 25th
Topic: Emotions
Readings: Chapter 6 in Huddy, Sears, and Levy
Healy, Malhotra, and Mo. 2010. Irrelevant Events Affect Voters' Evaluation of Government Performance (on eLC)
Brader 2005. Striking a Responsive Chord: How Political Ads Motivate and Persuade Voters by Appealing to Emotions (on eLC)

Eighth Week – March 2nd & 4th (tentative midterm date)
Topic: Political Communication
Readings: Chapter 18 in Huddy, Sears, and Levy
Nelson, Clawson, and Oxley 1997. Media Framing of Civil Liberties Conflict
(on eLC)
Levendusky 2013. Why do Partisan Media Polarize Viewers? (on eLC)

Nineth Week SPRING BREAK

Tenth Week – March 16th & 18th
Topic: Prejudice and Bias
Readings: Chapter 25 in Huddy, Sears, and Levy
Hainmueller and Hiscox 2010. Attitudes toward Highly Skilled and Low-Skilled Immigration: Evidence from a Survey Experiment (on eLC)
Hangartner and Hainmueller 2013. Who gets a Swiss passport? A Natural Experiment in Immigrant Discrimination (on eLC)

Eleventh Week – March 23rd & 25th
Topic: Ideology and Values
Readings: Chapter 19 in Huddy, Sears, and Levy
Jost, Glaser, Kruglanski, and Sulloway 2003. Political Conservatism as Motivated Social Cognition (on eLC)
Janoff-Bulman 2009. To Provide or Protect: Motivational Bases of Political Liberalism and Conservatism (on eLC)

Twelfth Week – March 30th & April 1st
Topic: Ideology and Partisanship
Goren. 2005. Party Identification and Core Political Values (on eLC)

Goren. 2001. Core Principles and Policy Reasoning in Mass Publics: A Test of Two Theories (on eLC)

Thirteenth Week – April 6th & 8th
Topic: Identity
Readings: Chapter 23 in Huddy, Sears, and Levy
Barreto, M.A. 2007. Si Se Puede! Latino Candidates and the Mobilization of Latino Voters (on eLC)
Achen and Bartels.2016. Partisan Hearts and Spleens –Social Identities and Political Change (on eLC

Fourteenth Week – April 13th & 15th
Topic: Political Distrust and Conspiracy Theories
Readings: Miller, J. M., Saunders, K. L., & Farhart, C.E. (2016). Conspiracy endorsement as motivated reasoning: The moderating roles of political knowledge and trust. (on eLC)
Enders, A. M., Smallpage, S.M., & Lupton, R. N. (2020). Are all "birthers" conspiracy theorists? On the relationship between conspiratorial thinking and political orientations. (on eLC)

Fifteenth Week – April 20th & 22nd
Topic: Can We Democracy?
Readings: Achen and Bartels 2016. Pitfalls of Popular Control (on eLC)
Achen and Bartels 2016. Groups and Power: Toward a Realist Theory of Democracy (on eLC)

Sixteenth Week – April 27th - Last Day of Class
Topic: Exam Review

Final Exam TBD