

# Political Psychology and International Relations

University of Georgia  
Department of International Affairs  
Spring 2026

## Instructor

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Office hours: **Mon & Wed 10:00am - 1:00pm by appointment.** Please use the following link to sign up: (<https://calendar.app.google/EtZU5DCppiAeRQ5E7>) Whenever you sign up, please INDICATE in the memo whether you'd like to meet in person or via Zoom. If you are not available during these time slots, email me so that we can set up a separate meeting.

## Course Information

Course: INTL 4770

Time: MW 2:55-4:15 p.m.

Location: Journalism 512

## 1. Course description and objectives

Political psychology in international relations examines how individual perceptions, emotions, personality traits, and group dynamics shape foreign policy decision-making and influence conflict, cooperation, and their outcomes. Bridging psychology and international relations, the field challenges purely rationalist approaches by emphasizing how leaders perceive threats, process information, manage risk, respond to stress, and construct ideology and identity. This course introduces students to core concepts ranging from cognitive biases and emotion to leadership analysis and group processes, providing tools to better understand crises, war, deterrence, and political violence. By foregrounding individual-level and psychological processes in international affairs, students gain analytical frameworks that complement and critically extend traditional theories of international relations.

## 2. Books

**You don't have to buy any book or material. All are uploaded at ELC.**

McDermott, R. (2004). *Political psychology in international relations*. University of Michigan Press.

Jervis, Robert (1976). *Perception and Misperception in International Politics*. Princeton University Press.

Larson, D. W. (2000). *Anatomy of mistrust: US-Soviet relations during the cold war*. Cornell University Press.

Hutchison, E. *Affective Communities in World Politics. Collective Emotions after Trauma*, Cambridge 2016.

### **3. Evaluation**

**Full marks: 100 points.**

**Do NOT plagiarize, if so, you will get yourself in trouble. Always use citations!**

**1) Active participation (30 points):** I will grade your participation in two ways.

- **15 points:** Please make sure you have read and reflected on the assigned materials before coming to class. At the beginning of most class sessions with assigned readings, I will give a short quiz that should be easy to complete if you have done the readings. These quizzes will count only minimally toward your final grade, and I am not overly concerned about individual quiz scores; however, consistently poor performance will indicate a lack of preparation.

- **15 points:** By taking quizzes, attendance will be checked automatically, and you are allowed three waiver tickets. This means no points will be deducted for your three absences over a semester. However, after those three absences, one point will be deducted from the total of 15 points for each additional absence. I strongly encourage you to use your waiver tickets wisely, as unforeseen circumstances like illness or family emergencies may arise over the next three months. Please note that there's NO NEED to email me with reasons for your absences. Any absence will count after the three waivers, REGARDLESS of the reason.

**2) Political Leadership: Report (20 points) & Presentation (10 points): 30 points**

The course requires a 4–5 page political leadership study (single-spaced, font size 12). In this assignment, students will apply the concepts and frameworks learned in class to analyze a national leader (current or past). Each student should identify and systematically examine a salient aspect of the leader's political decision-making style such as personality traits, belief systems, core motivations, risk propensity, or characteristic cognitive or motivational biases. The assignment is not merely descriptive; it should demonstrate analytical engagement with course material. In addition to the written paper, each student will present a summary of their study in a 15-minute presentation, which includes time for Q&A.

**3) Two write-ups (20 points)**

Throughout this semester, you will complete two short write-ups (1,000–1,500 words each) in response to assigned questions. These assignments will require you to demonstrate your understanding of the concepts covered in class and the readings, while also incorporating your own thoughts and interpretations. Each write-up is worth 10 points.

**4) Midterm & Final Quiz (20 points)**

- **Midterm quiz (10 points):** You'll be tested on what you learned during Week 04, 05 and 06. A mix of multiple choices and short answers.

- **Final quiz (10 points):** You'll be tested on what you learned during Week 9 and 10. A mix of multiple choices and short answers.

### **4. Grading Scale**

A        94 to 100

A-      90 to 93.9

B+	87 to 89.9
B	84 to 86.9
B-	80 to 83.9
C+	77 to 79.9
C	74 to 76.9
C-	70 to 73.9
D	60 to 69.9
F	59 and below

## **5. Administrative Policy**

### **5.1. Academic Honesty**

The course syllabus is a rough outline for the course; instructors need to inform changes to the class. The University of Georgia's "Culture of Honesty" ([http://www.uga.edu/honesty/ahpd/culture\\_honesty.htm](http://www.uga.edu/honesty/ahpd/culture_honesty.htm)) has requirements that must be met by all academic work. It is your responsibility to familiarize yourself with these requirements before beginning any academic work. Our academic dishonesty policy is straightforward: Avoid plagiarism. You will receive a failing grade in the course if you turn in a written assignment that is (in part) not your own. Disciplinary actions that could result in your dismissal from the university could be taken.

### **5.2 Prohibition on Recording Lectures**

In the absence of written authorization from the UGA Disability Resource Center, students may not make a visual or audio recording of any aspect of this course.

### **5.3 Students with Disabilities**

If you plan to request 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>

### **5.4 Resources for Mental Health and Wellness**

Contact Student Care and Outreach in the Division of Student Affairs at 706-542-7774 or go to <https://sco.uga.edu> if you or someone you know needs help. By putting you in touch with the proper resources or services, they will assist you in navigating any challenging situations you might be dealing with. For students looking for crisis help or mental health services, UGA has a number of resources available at <https://www.uhs.uga.edu/bewelluga/bewelluga>. Please visit BeWellUGA (<https://www.uhs.uga.edu/bewelluga/bewelluga>) for a list of FREE programs, classes, mentoring, and health coaching given by certified clinicians and health educators in the University Health Center if you need assistance managing stress, anxiety, relationships, etc. The UGA App gives users access to more resources.

### **5.5 Diversity and Inclusion**

The University of Georgia is dedicated to upholding a just and courteous atmosphere for

employment, residence, and education. To that end, the University forbids harassment of or discrimination against any person on campus due to race, color, sex (including sexual harassment and pregnancy), sexual orientation, gender identity, ethnicity or national origin, religion, age, genetic information, disability, or veteran status by any member of the University Community in accordance with federal and state law, University System of Georgia policy, and University policy.

## **6. Course Schedule**

This schedule is a suggestion for the class and is open to modification at my discretion.

### **Week 1: Introduction**

Jan 12 (Mon)

- Course introduction

Jan 14 (Wed)

- A short quiz
- Mercer, J. (2005). Rationality and psychology in international politics. *International organization*, 59(1), 77-106.

### **Week 2 & 3: Intro to Political Psychology**

Jan 19 (Mon)

- No class, Martin Luther King Jr. day

Jan 21 (Wed)

- A short quiz
- McDermott, Chapter 3

Jan 26 (Mon)

- A short quiz
- Larson, Chapter 1

Jan 28 (Wed)

- A short quiz
- Jervis, Chapter 1

### **Week 4 & 5: Cognitions and Attitudes**

Feb 2 (Mon)

- A short quiz
- McDermott, Chapter 4

Feb 4 (Wed)

- A short quiz
- Jervis, Chapter 2

Feb 9 (Mon)

- A short quiz
- Jervis, Chapter 3

### **Week 5 & 6: Emotions**

**# First Write-up: Due Feb 15, 11:59 p.m.**

Feb 11 (Wed)

- A short quiz
- Hutchison, Introduction

Feb 16 (Mon)

- A short quiz
- Hutchison, Chapter 1

Feb 18 (Wed)

- A short quiz
- Hutchison, Chapter 3

### **Week 7-9: Leadership & Group**

**# Midterm quiz: Mar 2<sup>nd</sup>**

Feb 23 (Mon)

- A short quiz
- McDermott, Chapter 8

Feb 25 (Wed)

- A short quiz
- McDermott, Chapter 9

Mar 2 (Mon)

- Midterm quiz

Mar 4 (Wed)

- A short quiz

- Schwartz, Joshua A, and Christopher W Blair. 2020. “Do Women Make More Credible Threats? Gender Stereotypes, Audience Costs, and Crisis Bargaining.” *International Organization* 74 (4): 872–895.

Mar 9 (Mon)

- Spring break

Mar 11 (Wed)

- Spring break

Mar 16 (Mon)

- A short quiz
- Jervis, Chapter 4

Mar 18 (Wed)

- A short quiz
- Duelfer, C. A., & Dyson, S. B. (2011). Chronic misperception and international conflict: The US-Iraq experience. *International Security*, 36(1), 73-100.

### **Week 10-12: Trust**

**# Second Write-up: Due Mar 29, 11:59 p.m.**

Mar 23 (Mon)

- No class, as I will be attending the ISA conference.

Mar 25 (Wed)

- No class, as I will be attending the ISA conference.

Mar 30 (Mon)

- A short quiz
- Larson, Chapter 4

Apr 1 (Wed)

- A short quiz
- Larson, Chapter 5

Apr 6 (Mon)

- A short quiz
- Larson, Chapter 6

Apr 8 (Wed)

- A short quiz
- Larson, Chapter 7

### **Week13-15: Project Days & Presentations**

**# Political Leadership Report: Due May 3, 11:59 p.m.**

**# Final quiz: Apr 27<sup>th</sup>**

Apr 13 (Mon)

- Project Day 01

Apr 15 (Wed)

- Project Day 02

Apr 20 (Mon)

- Presentation Day 01

Apr 22 (Wed)

- Presentation Day 01

Apr 27 (Mon)

- Final quiz