

Political Science N164A: Introduction to Political Psychology

Professor Sean Freeder (sean.freeder@berkeley.edu)

UC Berkeley, Summer 2018

Class Meetings: 4PM – 6PM, MTWTh

Office Hours: Wednesdays, 1:30 – 3:30PM in 135 Moses

Graduate Student Instructor: Brad Kent, tbkent@berkeley.edu

COURSE DESCRIPTION

The purpose of this course is to provide students with a basic framework for understanding how psychological processes impact citizens' political decision-making, attitudes, behaviors, and identities. Over six weeks, we will look at theories and evidence from social, cognitive, behavioral, and developmental psychology, which we will then apply to modern and historical political conflicts and dilemmas. Throughout the course, we will also consider how well psychology explains various political phenomena, relative to approaches from economics and other fields. Finally, in the last week, we will apply the lessons we have learned thus far to contemporary issues in American politics.

COURSE READINGS

We will not use a textbook for this class; all readings will be available online through bCourses. Diligent attendance of lecture will not be a substitute for reading all assigned materials, as some content from your readings may not be discussed in lecture, but will be fair game for exams. Though this is a reading intensive course, I have tried to cultivate a mixture of articles from both academic and journalistic sources. The former will push you to develop your skills in parsing and analyzing scholarly work, while the latter will connect class concepts to real world examples. You should complete reading assignments by the day they are listed on the syllabus, so plan ahead and come to class prepared. You will be discussing these readings in greater depth in section, but they will assist greatly in your understanding of lecture material.

ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING

This course will have an in-class midterm, final exam, and one term paper (assignments to be provided on bCourses and in class). The components of your grade are distributed as follows:

Midterm Exam	25%
Final Exam	30%
Term Paper	25%
Participation	15%
Reading Responses	5%

It is critically important that you attend all *lectures* and *discussion section*. Attendance will always be taken in the latter, and will *periodically* and *randomly* be taken in lecture. Because of the very short nature of the summer session, any unexcused absence will be counted against your participation grade. Excused absences (and extensions on assignments) will only be granted in the case of a documented illness, death in the family, or other tragic circumstances.

Reading responses will be due at the beginning of the lecture period on Monday for Weeks 2-5. In these responses, you will 1) summarize one or more of the readings assigned the previous week, and 2) provide a brief personal reaction. Summaries should be 4-6 sentences long. Responses that make a fair attempt will receive full credit; those with highly inaccurate summaries or missing personal reactions will receive a zero. Please submit all responses to your GSI, Brad Kent, via the bCourses website's "Assignments" section. Late responses will not be accepted.

The **Term Paper** will be formally assigned during the second week of class, and will be due Monday, June 25, at the beginning of the lecture period. This paper will have you apply the lessons you have learned in this class to your choice of several real world political situations. All papers will be submitted via bCourses. Any papers submitted late will lose 5% for each day it is late; papers not turned in by Friday, June 29 will receive a zero.

The **Midterm and Final** will both be taken in lecture hall during the normal lecture time. The material on the final will be cumulative, but focus heavily on material covered after the midterm.

Students with DSP accommodations should contact their GSI immediately, so that we may make the appropriate proctoring arrangements.

ACADEMIC DISHONESTY

Academic dishonesty will result in a failing grade for the course. Academic dishonesty is defined as cheating, plagiarism, and/or unauthorized collaboration. Academic dishonesty also includes, but is not limited to, providing false or misleading information to receive an extension on a test or assignment, or the submission of the same written assignment for two different courses.

TECHNOLOGY IN THE CLASS

Students should feel free to use their laptops or tablets to take notes and follow the lecture slides, but should not otherwise use them for extracurricular purposes. The use of cell phones during lecture or discussion is not permitted at any time, for any reason. Your GSI will periodically monitor the room for violations of these standards, and violators will have receive a penalty to their participation grade.

COURSE SCHEDULE AND READING ASSIGNMENTS

INTRODUCTION

May 21: Welcome (course themes; psychological versus rational choice approaches to politics)

UNIT 1: TYPES, TRAITS, AND PERSONALITY

May 22: Ideology in Theory and Practice (defining “liberal” and “conservative”; international vs. American ideological conceptions; moderation and extremism; self-identification)

- Roberts, David. [“Tech nerds are smart. But they can't seem to get their heads around politics.”](#) Vox.
- Claassen, Christopher, Patrick Tucker, and Steven S. Smith. "Ideological labels in America." *Political Behavior* 37, no. 2 (2015): 253-278.

May 23: Traits and Personality (Big Five; nature versus nurture; the Authoritarian Personality; criticisms of TAP; biological and neurological bases for ideology)

- Jackson, J.W. & Poulson, J.R.. 2005. “Contact Experiences Mediate the Relationship Between Five-Factor Model Personality Traits and Ethnic Prejudice.” *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, 35: 667-685.
- Anesi, Chuck. [“The F scale”](#).

May 24: Moral Foundations (foundations and types; evidence and applications; criticisms)

- Haidt, Jonathan. 2012. “The Righteous Mind.” Chapters 1, 2 and 7.

May 28: Memorial Day (no class)

UNIT 2: LEARNING, ATTITUDES, AND EMOTION

May 29: Learning and Socialization (types of learning; pre-adult socialization; the impressionable years; changes over the lifetime; cohort/period/cycle effects)

- Sears, D. O., & Funk, C. L. (1999). “Evidence of the long-term persistence of adults' political predispositions.” *The Journal of Politics*, 61(1), 1-28.
- Zinshteyn, M. [“College freshmen are more politically engaged than they have been in decades.”](#)

May 30: Attitudes 1 (the Zaller model; why/how attitudes differ and change; attitudinal stability; online processing)

- Matthews, Dylan. [“A massive new study reviews the evidence on whether campaigning works. The answer's bleak.”](#) Vox.

May 31: Attitudes 2 (the role of the media; inference free sources of attitudes; implicit attitudes)

- Todorov, Alexander, et al. "Inferences of competence from faces predict election outcomes." *Science* 308.5728 (2005): 1623-1626.

- [Project Implicit](#).

June 4: *Emotions* (Affective Intelligence Theory; Cognitive Appraisal Theory; role of emotions for political behaviors)

- Iyengar, S., & Westwood, S. J. (2015). Fear and loathing across party lines: New evidence on group polarization. *American Journal of Political Science*, 59(3), 690-707.
- Valentino, Nicholas A., Ted Brader, Eric W. Groenendyk, Krysha Gregorowicz, and Vincent L. Hutchings. "Election night's alright for fighting: The role of emotions in political participation." *The Journal of Politics* 73, no. 1 (2011): 156-170.

UNIT 3: COGNITIVE PSYCHOLOGY

June 5: *Thinking Fast and Slow* (System 1 and System 2; examples from real life; applications to politics; political attentiveness and lack thereof)

- Selections from Kahneman, D. (2011). *Thinking, fast and slow*. Macmillan.

June 6: *MIDTERM*

June 7: *Heuristics and Errors* (cognitive misers; advantages and disadvantages of heuristic reliance in politics; assorted biases and errors of memory, judgment, and perception)

- Lupia, A. (1994). Shortcuts versus encyclopedias: Information and voting behavior in California insurance reform elections. *American Political Science Review*, 88(1)
- Giang, V. ["12 ways that people behave irrationally."](#)

June 11: *Schemas* (introduction to schemas; piecemeal vs. schematic processing; advantages and disadvantages of schemas; stereotyping; correcting errors)

- Lodge, M., & Hamill, R. (1986). A partisan schema for political information processing. *American Political Science Review*, 80(2), 505-519.

June 12: *Motivated Reasoning* (principle of least effort; types of denials and rationalizations; backfire effect; methods for overcoming motivated reasoning; practical examples in politics)

- Lord, C. G., Ross, L., & Lepper, M. R. (1979). Biased assimilation and attitude polarization: The effects of prior theories on subsequently considered evidence. *Journal of personality and social psychology*, 37(11), 2098.
- Nyhan, B., & Reifler, J. (2010). When corrections fail: The persistence of political misperceptions. *Political Behavior*, 32(2), 303-330.

June 13: *Attribution* (dispositional versus situational attribution; attribution errors; availability and representativeness heuristics)

- Ross, Lee. 1977. "The Intuitive Psychologist and his Shortcomings: Distortions in the Attribution Process." In *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology*, ed. Leonard Berkowitz. Vol. 10.

UNIT 4: SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY

June 14: *Group Identification* (ascribed vs. achieved groups; primary vs. reference groups; minimal groups theory and examples; partisan affiliation as a social identity)

- Green, D. P., Palmquist, B., & Schickler, E. (2004). *Partisan hearts and minds: Political parties and the social identities of voters*. Chapters 1-2.

June 18: *Group Conflict* (Realistic Group Conflict; Social Identity Theory; Robber's Cave; minimizing group conflict; coping with subordinate group status; group consciousness)

- Tajfel, H. (1970). Experiments in intergroup discrimination. *Scientific American*, 223(5)
- Walsh, Katherine Cramer. "Putting Inequality in its Place: Rural Consciousness and the Power of Perspective," *American Political Science Review*, 2012 pp. 517-32.
- Konnikova, Maria. *Scientific American*. "[Revisiting Robber's Cave: the easy spontaneity of intergroup conflict.](#)"

June 19: *Obedience* (the Milgram experiment; deference to authority; effects of following)

- Konnikova, Maria. "[The real lesson of the Stanford Prison Experiment.](#)"

June 20: *Conformity* (Asch/Sherif experiments; causes of conformity; moderating forces; bystander effect; conformity in American politics)

- Aronson, Elliot. 2011. Chapter 2: "Conformity." In *The Social Animal*. 11th ed. New York: Worth Publishers

UNIT 5: APPLIED POLITICAL PSYCHOLOGY

June 21: *Voter Behavior and the 2016 Election* (voter turnout; determinants of vote choice; approaches to explaining Trump's victory)

June 25: *Race, Gender, and Class* (vignettes from present-day politics for each group; applying lessons of group conflict and membership to modern identity politics)

June 26: *Modern Political Challenges* (the "post-truth" world; social media and politics; understanding mass reactions to the Trump Administration thus far)

June 27: REVIEW SESSION

June 28: FINAL