Political Psychology

POSC 226 – Spring 2017
Carleton College
(MW 11:10-12:20 a.m. & F 12:00-1:00)
Willis 211

Instructor: Melanie Freeze
Phone: 507-222-5850
Email: mfreeze@carleton.edu
Office: 415 Willis Hall
Office Hours: Tues and Thurs 1-3 pm or by appt.

Course Description

In this class, we turn to psychology to understand how citizens make political choices and judgements. While elite political behavior, collective political behavior (mass psychology), and international relations all have ties to political psychology, this course limits itself to the exploration of the political psychology of individual judgement and choice. We will examine the role of cognition and emotions, values, personality, predispositions, and social identities on judgement and choice. From this approach, we will address the larger debate regarding the quality of democratic citizenship.

Course Objectives

This course is about both learning substantive theories and developing specific skills. As a class we will select and investigate a research topic that is related to political psychology. Together we will produce knowledge, not just consume it. As we do this, you will develop additional skills and knowledge including:

• **Analytical skills**: Thinking critically about existing research is difficult, but it is important for the goal of producing good research. In this course, you should further your ability to identify broad research agendas, compare and contrast existing theories and concepts, recognize the limitations of prior research, and identify the implications of prior research for future research, and develop interesting questions and hypotheses from the patterns you see in the world around you.

• **Writing skills**: Communication is also a fundamental component of good research. Through clear and concise delivery, research can be verified, applied, and expanded upon. You should further develop professional writing skills including the ability to construct a persuasive argument using logic, relevant evidence, and good mechanics. You should learn how to present data verbally as well as in writing.
• *Research skills:* You will learn about the process required to set up and carry out a sophisticated research project that explains a political phenomena using the theories and tools of political psychology. For the class project, you will clearly identify and operationalize a set of variables, develop a theory explaining how you hypothesize these variables are related to each other, and support your expectations with systematic evidence. As a class, we will test our hypotheses and analyze the experimental data.

• *Substantive knowledge:* You will come to understand the key theories, concepts, and literatures of political psychology. You will also become familiar with the unique modes of thinking, theorizing, and inquiry within the subfield of political psychology. Finally, you will be able to identify the psychological facets of other major subfields of political science including racial politics, public opinion, voting behavior, and mass political behavior.

**Required Readings**

There is no formal text for this class. All readings will be actual political psychology research and relevant excerpts from important books in the field.

**Course Requirements and Expectations**

The majority of assigned readings draw on pertinent academic articles. I would recommend you be strategic in your reading. First, do not try to understand every minor point an author makes; instead, find (and note) the most important themes. Second, pay special attention to summary sections when they are available. The literature reviews are particularly useful in providing a more general survey of the topic. Finally, do not try to understand the details of complicated statistics and research designs, just be sure you understand the main results and implications of the author’s research. I also encourage, but do not require, you to pay attention to a quality daily newspaper (recommended papers include *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *The Los Angeles Times*, and *The Wall Street Journal*).

**Grading**

Your grade will be based on the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Requirement</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Class Participation and Attendance</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading Analysis Paper</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Group Presentation Assignment (Due May 26)</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Course Research Project</td>
<td>70%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Annotated Bibliography, Hypothesis, and Proposed Research Design (Due Apr. 3)</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>IRB Worksheet (Due Apr. 10)</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Theory and Literature Review (Due Apr. 17)</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Methods and Data Paper (Due May 8)</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Discussion and Conclusion Paper (Due May 15)</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Paper (Due May 29)</td>
<td>20%</td>
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**Total** 100%
Class Participation and Attendance - 5%

In order for this class to be productive, regular attendance is required, and you should come to class ready to discuss the weaknesses, implications, and any questions you may have regarding the week’s assigned readings. I will record attendance throughout the term. Those who have submitted an analysis paper for a particular lecture will be specifically called on during that class period to provide insights and questions to help improve the quality of discussion.

Reading Analysis Paper - 15%

DUE: Before class on the day for which you have signed up
SUBMISSION FORMAT: Submit to Moodle (if you are using .pages, please convert to .pdf before submitting)

At the beginning of the term, you will sign up for one of the lectures. Drawing on the assigned reading and other research related to the topic, you will write a brief (1-2 pages single spaced) analysis paper due before class that day. These papers may summarize some key points from the reading, but they must ANALYZE the reading in some way. The format of the response papers is flexible. Some ideas on how to structure it include:

- Discuss how the reading applies to current events.
- Extend the reading by developing an idea which picks up on a point made by the author.
- Suggest alternative explanations that were not addressed by authors.
- Connect this reading to concepts discussed in earlier weeks.
- Suggest political science related research inspired by the theories in these readings.
- Are there any underlying assumptions or logic in the theory that may be faulty?
- Is there anything in the research method or data used that might undermine the validity (internal or external) of the research results? (e.g., biased sampled, possible spurious relationships, omitted variables, model misspecifications, failure to consider important subgroups, etc.)
- What contributions does the selected research make to its field? What is the paper’s “So What” answer? Does the paper address an empirical puzzle seen in the real world? Does the paper apply an abstract theory to real data? Does the paper defy convention wisdom? Does it bring anything new to the table? (Note: While you can add your own perspective to this question, you can also draw on the author’s claims. Authors’ justifications of their research question and findings is often most easily found in the introduction, literature review, discussion, or conclusion sections).
- Has there been any response or research that complements, critiques, or contradicts the paper’s findings? Are there any conflicting research findings conducted by other scholars? (Note: You can often find this by using the Cited Reference Search in Web of Science or clicking on the “cited by” link in the Google Scholar search results).

Remember to properly attribute and cite all ideas that are not your own in these papers. Provide a complete reference for any citations that are not on the list of required readings for that week.
Grading

1. Content (60%) Does the paper provide adequate and insightful analysis of the article that pushes or expands the reading in some manner? Are ideas clearly explained? Is the summary adequate, concise, and well connected to the analytical aspect of the paper?

2. Style (30%) Is the paper generally free of spelling, typographical, and grammatical errors? Are sentences well formed and appropriately varied in length and style. Are citations correct and consistent (APA format preferred; in-text parenthetical citations)?

3. Structure (10%) Is the structure apparent and easy to follow? Is there a logical flow to the structure and adequate transitions to help connect ideas? Do paragraphs hold together?

Group Presentation Project 10%

DUE: Friday May 26 8:30 a.m.
SUBMISSION FORMAT: Submit to Moodle (if you are using .pages, please convert to .pdf before submitting)

In groups, pick a U.S. House or Senate campaign that lost during the 2016 election. Drawing on political psychology research and particulars related to that race, what recommendations would you make for a future bid? The race background information, psychological research, and recommendations will be presented by your group to the class during a 10 minute presentation (5 minute transition and/or Q&A) during the last three class periods of the term. Your group will submit a one page MEMO and presentation SLIDES. All groups must submit slides and memo before the first class on the first day of presentations.

Grading

1. Case Study (15%) - Draws on a range of sources to present an interesting and relevant description of the election case study. What are some factors that lead to the campaign’s loss? Which of these factors are exogenous (outside of the campaign’s control) and which were endogenous (within the campaign’s control)?

2. Academic sources (15%)- Main point accurately and succinctly described. Logically connected to case and recommendation.

3. Slides and Memo (15%)- Informative, visually pleasing, not too crowded with text (put detailed notes in slides’ note section if needed). Cite sources.

4. Presentation (25%) - Engaging, included a good hook. Each group member is involved in the presentation. Does not exceed time limit.

5. Content (30%)- Recommendation realistic, based on academic research, grounded in research of the local situation/problems.

Research Project - 70%

Good research is produced through a long process of trial, error, and revision. To mimic this process, several smaller assignments will be completed throughout the semester. While we will be
conducting the research project as a class, you will all produce paper results individually. That is, you will independently produce your own research design proposal, literature review and theory development paper, interpretation of the data analysis that I will conduct, and production of a final paper. Separate assignment sheets will be distributed with more details for each of the individual components of the research project.

Course Policies

Grading Policies

I will assign grades using the following scale: A (93.33), A- (90), B+ (86.67), B (83.33), B- (80), C+ (76.67), C (73.33), C- (70), D+ (66.67), D (63.33) D- (60) F (Below 60). I do not round your final grade up or down (so if you receive a 93.327, you will receive an A- for a final grade).

Additional Grading Policies:

1. I will not receive grade complaints if more than one week has passed after the assignment has been returned to you. Before I review your grade you must first:

   - Wait 24 hours.
   - Schedule a time to meet with me to discuss your grade.
   - Submit a formal appeal in writing (email is sufficient—but be clear that it is the appeal in the subject heading) that clearly identifies content in the assignment and the reasons why you think your grade should be changed. These appeals should refer to specific things in the assignment, and not to vague reasons like “I worked really hard.”

The second grade, whether higher or lower, will become your grade on the assignment.

2. Late assignments are not tolerated. Your grade will be lowered 5 percentage points for each day it is late. That is if the assignment is due on Tuesday at 8:20 am and you turn it in sometime between 8:20 am and Wednesday 8:20 am, the highest grade you can achieve is 95.

3. The ONLY acceptable (not penalized) excuses for not completing an assignment on time are family emergencies or illnesses. However, in these cases, I will arrange to give you extra time ONLY if you communicate with me BEFORE the assignment is due and you provide DOCUMENTATION of the circumstance.

Electronics in Class Policy

If possible, I would like you to bring your own laptop (or mobile device) to class as we will often need to access the Internet for in-class activities. However, I expect you to be responsible in your use of electronic equipment: please avoid visiting social networking sites, or otherwise browsing the internet on sites unrelated to the course. I would also recommend you read through the discussion (including comments), Computers in the Classroom, to think about the possible pros and cons of using computers in a classroom setting. Individuals who abuse this privilege will find their participation grade reduced. Please turn off all cell phones during class.
Academic Honesty

You are expected to abide by fundamental standards of academic honesty. A discussion of plagiarism can be found at: https://apps.carleton.edu/campus/doc/integrity/. All work is expected to be your own. Cheating, plagiarism (using someone else’s words or ideas without properly citing them), and all forms of academic misconduct will not be tolerated and will be strictly handled according to university policy. If you are uncertain, cite your sources!

Disability-Related Accommodations

Carleton College is committed to providing equitable access to learning opportunities for all students. The Disability Services office (Burton Hall 03) is the campus office that collaborates with students who have disabilities to provide and/or arrange reasonable accommodations. If you have, or think you may have, a disability (e.g., mental health, attentional, learning, autism spectrum disorders, chronic health, traumatic brain injury and concussions, sensory, or physical), please contact Chris Dallager, Director of Disability Services, by calling 507-222-5250 or sending an email to cdallager@carleton.edu to arrange a confidential discussion regarding equitable access and reasonable accommodations.

Course Schedule

Readings should be completed BEFORE the lecture.

WEEK 1

Lecture 1 (Mon., March 27): Introduction and Logistics

Today, I will introduce the syllabus and myself. We will talk about what political psychology is and how it contributes to our understanding of political phenomena. We will identify the broad themes and concepts that structure the field and talk about how this course fits in the larger field of political psychology. Finally, we will begin discussing our class research project.

Required Readings:

• NO READINGS REQUIRED TODAY

Recommended Readings:


Lecture 2 (Wed., March 29): Causal Inference & Experimental Design

READINGS


Lecture 3 (Fri., March 31): Causal Inference & Experimental Design

READINGS


WEEK 2

Lecture 4 (Mon., April 3): Candidate Impressions and Memory Models

READINGS


Lecture 5 (Wed., April 5): Cognition and Information Processing

READINGS


Lecture 6 (Fri., April 6): Political Knowledge

READINGS


WEEK 3

Lecture 7 (Mon., April 10): Heuristics and Cues

READINGS


Lecture 8 (Wed., April 12): Affect, Attitudes, and Ambivalence

READINGS

Lecture 9 (Fri., April 14): Experimental Research and Online Labor Markets

READINGS


WEEK 4

Lecture 10 (Mon., April 17): Motivated Reasoning

READINGS

- Resnick, Brian. There may be an antidote to politically motivated reasoning. And it’s wonderfully simple. Vox Feb. 7, 2017 At: https://goo.gl/xZcZZp

Lecture 11 (Wed., April 19): Misinformation

READINGS


Lecture 12 (Fri., April 21): Conspiracies

READINGS


WEEK 5

Lecture 13 (Mon., April 24): Automaticity and Implicit Attitudes

READINGS


Lecture 14 (Wed., April 26): Priming

READINGS

Lecture 15 (Fri., April 28): DATA LAB

READINGS

• NO READINGS

WEEK 6

MIDTERM BREAK (Mon., May 1)

Lecture 16 (Wed., May 3): Framing

READINGS


Lecture 17 (Fri., May 5): Values and Ideology

READINGS


WEEK 7

Lecture 18 (Mon., May 8): Personality and Politics

READINGS


Lecture 19 (Wed., May 10): Authoritarianism

READINGS


Lecture 20 (Fri., May 12): NO CLASS

READINGS

• TBA
WEEK 8

Lecture 21 (Mon., May 15): The Self and Social Identities

READINGS


Lecture 22 (Wed., May 24): Party Identification

READINGS


Lecture 23 (Fri., May 19): Context and Social Networks

READINGS


WEEK 9

Lecture 24 (Mon., May 22): Prejudice, Stereotyping, and Discrimination Part I

READINGS


Lecture 25 (Wed., May 24): Prejudice, Stereotyping, and Discrimination Part II

READINGS

• Lopez, German. Research says there are ways to reduce racial bias. Calling people racist isn’t one of them. Vox, Nov. 15, 2016 At: https://goo.gl/ZXWB7P

Lecture 26 (Fri., May 26): Group Presentations

ALL PRESENTATIONS SLIDES/MEMO due today before class
WEEK 10

Lecture 27 (Mon., May 29): Group Presentations

Lecture 28 (Wed., May 31): Group Presentation