political psychology

PSCI 4221.001
SPRING 2018
HELLEMS 211
MWF 1:00 – 1:50 P.M.

DR. JENNIFER WOLAK
242 KETCHUM
wolakj@colorado.edu
OFFICE HOURS: M W 11 A.M. - 12 P.M.
& BY APPOINTMENT

In this class, we will consider how people think and feel about politics, investigating the psychological underpinnings of the political behavior of both citizens and elites. We will start with an overview of the field of political psychology and some of the ways that questions in this field are answered. Next, we will study the psychological roots of political behavior, and the contributions of influences such as socialization, personality, and genes to how citizens and political leaders make decisions. From there, we will consider the mechanisms of how people construct political beliefs and make political choices, investigating topics such as emotion, cognition, partisan bias, and persuasion. Finally, we will study political psychology of groups, considering the reasons why people dislike other groups, the psychological roots of political conflict, and the routes to cooperation and compromise.

D2L is your friend

I will regularly update class information on the website for the class at **learn.colorado.edu**. This syllabus will be posted there, as well as links to assignments and other exciting material.

reading material

There is no textbook for this course. Instead, the readings include a set of journal articles and book chapters, which can be accessed via the course website.

expectations

You are encouraged to be an active participant in class! Please feel free to raise questions at any point during class, including matters of clarification, theoretical points, or topics to address in class discussion. You should also keep in touch by e-mail or by visiting office hours if you have any questions about course expectations or the material covered in class.

You are also expected to maintain proper classroom etiquette. This includes respecting the opinions of others even if you disagree, not talking out of turn, putting away newspapers and crossword puzzles during lecture, turning off cell phones before class, and not disrupting the class if arriving late.

requirements

In addition to the readings, you will be responsible for the following:

PARTICIPATION, SHORT ASSIGNMENTS, AND QUIZZES *(worth 25% of your final grade)*

Because class attendance is an important prerequisite for participating in discussions and in-class activities, attendance will be taken each class session. Absences will lower your participation grade. We will also have several in-class activities that contribute to this portion of your grade, and many weeks we will have short quizzes on the readings. We will have a few short homework assignments as well.

TWO PAPERS *(each worth 15% of your final grade)*

For each of the three units we cover in class, a paper topic will be provided. Over the course of the semester, you need to write papers on two of these three topics. Paper guidelines will be detailed in separate handouts.

THREE EXAMS *(each worth 15% of your final grade)*

There will be two midterm exams and a final exam.

special accommodations

If you qualify for accommodations because of a disability, please submit to me a letter from Disability Services in a timely manner so that your needs may be addressed. You can contact the Disability Services office for more information at disabilityservices.colorado.edu.

some important comments on academic integrity

- Plagiarism and other academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. If you are not familiar with the rules of citing sources in written work or what constitutes plagiarism, you should contact me or refer to the University Honor Code at honorcode.colorado.edu. Additional information about avoiding plagiarism, citation style, and writing in political science is also posted on the course website. Academic dishonesty will result in an F in the course and referral to the Honor Council for additional non-academic sanctions.
- All papers are expected to be original work, not previously or simultaneously handed in for credit in another course (unless prior approval of all instructors involved is obtained).

the psychological roots of political behavior

POLITICAL SOCIALIZATION

Wednesday, January 17 – Friday, January 19

Introduction to the class and the field of political psychology, socialization from parents and schools

- Easton, David, and Jack Dennis. 1965. "The Child's Image of Government." *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 361:40-57.

THE BIOLOGICAL ROOTS OF POLITICAL BEHAVIOR

Monday, January 22 – Friday, January 26

Nature versus nurture, genetic explanations

- Alford, John R., Carolyn L. Funk, and John R. Hibbing. 2005. "Are Political Orientations Genetically Transmitted?" *American Political Science Review* 99:153-167.
- Oxley, Douglas R., Kevin B. Smith, John R. Alford, Matthew V. Hibbing, Jennifer L. Miller, Mario Scalora, Peter K. Hatemi, and John R. Hibbing. 2008. "Political Attitudes Vary with Physiological Traits." *Science* 321: 1667-1670.

CONFORMITY AND SITUATIONAL PRESSURES

Monday, January 29 – Friday, February 2

Social and situational pressures to conform, dispositions versus situations

- Slater, Lauren. 2004. *Opening Skinner's Box: Great Psychological Experiments of the Twentieth Century.* New York: W.W. Norton. Chapter 2.
- Gerber, Alan S., Donald P. Green, and Christopher W. Larimer. 2008. "Social Pressure and Voter Turnout: Evidence from a Large-Scale Field Experiment." *American Political Science Review* 102:33-48.

PERSONALITY

Monday, February 5 – Friday, February 9

Authoritarianism, citizen personality, presidential personality

- Carney, Dana R., John T. Jost, Samuel D. Gosling, and Jeff Potter. 2008. "The Secret Lives of Liberals and Conservatives: Personality Profiles, Interaction Styles, and the Things They Leave Behind." *Political Psychology* 29:807-840.
- Barber, James David. 1985. *The Presidential Character: Predicting Performance in the White House.* Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall. Chapters 1 and 2.

RATIONALITY AND ALTRUISM

Monday, February 12 – Wednesday, February 14

Assumptions of citizen rationality, self-interest, altruism

- Monroe, Kristen Renwick, and Kristen Hill Maher. 1995. "Psychology and Rational Actor Theory." *Political Psychology* 16:1-21.

Friday, February 16: Exam 1

the political psychology of decision-making

EMOTION

Monday, February 19 – Friday, February 23

Feeling versus thinking, emotions, affect

- Marcus, George E., W. Russell Neuman, and Michael B. MacKuen. 2000. *Affective Intelligence and Political Judgment*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Chapter 4 and Chapter 5.

POLITICAL COGNITION

Monday, February 26 – Friday, March 2

Memory, schemas, associative networks, information processing

- Graber, Doris A. 2001. *Processing Politics: Learning from Television in the Internet Age*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Chapter 2.
- Steenbergen, Marco R., and Milton Lodge. 2003. "Process Matters: Cognitive Models of Candidate Evaluation." In Michael B. MacKuen and George Rabinowitz, eds., *Electoral Democracy*. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press.

POLITICAL DECISION-MAKING AND HEURISTICS

Monday, March 5 – Wednesday, March 9

Inference, heuristics, short cuts, civic competence

- Lodge, Milton, and Charles S. Taber. 2013. *The Rationalizing Voter*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Chapter 1.
- Thaler, Richard H., and Cass R. Sunstein. 2008. *Nudge: Improving Decisions about Health, Wealth, and Happiness*. New Haven: Yale University Press. Chapter 1 and Chapter 5.

MOTIVATION AND BIAS

Monday, March 12 – Friday, March 16

Motivated reasoning, bias in decision-making

- Taber, Charles S., and Milton Lodge. 2006. "Motivated Skepticism in the Evaluation of Political Beliefs." *American Journal of Political Science* 50(3):755-769.
- Nyhan, Brendan, and Jason Reifler. 2010. "When Corrections Fail: The Persistence of Political Misperceptions." *Political Behavior* 32:303-330.

PERSUASION

Monday, March 19 – Wednesday, March 21

Political persuasion, attitude change

- Sears, David O., and Richard E. Whitney. 1973. "Political Persuasion." In Ithiel de Sola Pool, Wilbur Schramm, Frederick W. Frey, Nathan Maccoby, and Edwin B. Parker, eds., *Handbook of Communication*. Chicago: Rand McNally. Pages 253-263.

Friday, March 23: Exam 2

Monday, March 26 – Friday, March 30: Spring break – class does not meet.

the political psychology of groups

GROUP IDENTITY

Monday, April 2 – Friday, April 6

Social identities, in-group/out-group sentiments, nationalism, patriotism

- Mlodinow, Leonard. 2012. *Subliminal: How Your Unconscious Mind Rules Your Behavior*. New York: Pantheon Books. Chapter 8.
- Iyengar, Shanto, Gaurav Sood, and Yphtach Lelkes. 2012: "Affect, Not Ideology: A Social Identity Perspective on Polarization." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 76(3):405-431.

STEREOTYPES AND PREJUDICE

Monday, April 9 – Friday, April 13

Political impressions and stereotypes

- Mlodinow, Leonard. 2012. *Subliminal: How Your Unconscious Mind Rules Your Behavior*. New York: Pantheon Books. Chapter 7.
- Devine, Patricia G. 1989. "Stereotypes and Prejudice: Their Automatic and Controlled Components." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 56:5-18.
- Issenberg, Sasha. 2012. "It All Comes Down to Race." *Slate*

CONFLICT

Monday, April 16 – Friday, April 20

Understanding the roots of group conflict

- Green, Donald P., and Janelle S. Wong. 2008. "Tolerance and the Contact Hypothesis: A Field Experiment." In Eugene Borgida, Christopher M. Federico, and John L. Sullivan, eds. *The Political Psychology of Democratic Citizenship*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

COOPERATION AND DELIBERATION

Monday, April 23 – Friday, April 27

Social, political, and evolutionary roots of cooperation, deliberative decision-making

- Petersen, Michael Bang. 2012. "Social Welfare as Small-Scale Help: Evolutionary Psychology and the Deservingness Heuristic." *American Journal of Political Science* 56(1):1-16.
- Sunstein, Cass R. 2008. *Why Groups Go to Extremes*. Washington, DC: AEI Press. Pages 1-25.

GROUP DECISION-MAKING

Monday, April 30 – Wednesday, May 2

Groupthink, quality of group decision-making

- Janis, Irving L. 1982. *Groupthink: Psychological Studies of Policy Decisions and Fiascoes*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company. Chapters 1-2.

Sunday, May 6: Final exam (7:30 p.m. - 10 p.m.)