

POL 3766: Political Psychology of Mass Behavior

Summer 2014

Blegen 430

Mondays & Wednesdays, 10:00am – 1:00pm

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Social Sciences 1214a

Office Hours: Tuesdays, 10:00am – 12:00pm

Course Description

This course will introduce you to the interdisciplinary field of political psychology. This field uses research and theory from social psychology and mass communication to understand various aspects of politics. Political psychology is a very broad field, so there are many types of research that we will not be able to cover. This class focuses specifically on the mass public (voters) and upon completing this course, you will better understand the ways ordinary people make political decisions and interact with the political world. Students do not need to have taken classes in psychology or political science to do well in this class. However, prior coursework (especially courses on social psychology, personality, public opinion, or political behavior) in *one* of these two fields is recommended.

This course is organized around four broad themes. After a basic introduction to political psychology, students will learn about voter's beliefs, specifically the content of these beliefs and where they come from. The course then turns to a study of personality and emotions, followed by a section on political communication and the media. We end with a discussion of stereotypes and voting.

Course Requirements

There are no prerequisites for this course. As mentioned, some experience with classes in psychology or political science will go a long way to ensuring your success in this class. You should also be prepared to write a research paper on a topic from this course.

Office Hours and Help

I strive to make this course understandable and accessible for all students. If you have any questions about the content or structure of the course or about specific assignments, please do not hesitate to contact me. I am always happy to help if you come to me before assignments or exams are due. Please do not wait to ask for help until after the due date, come talk to me before if you are struggling.

Required Texts

This class will feature a mix of academic articles and books. The required books are listed below and are available at the university bookstore or from Amazon or other places online. I've deliberately not assigned book reading for the first few weeks in order to give you a chance to buy them. Readings are available on the class Moodle site at: <https://ay14.moodle.umn.edu/course/view.php?id=1462>

Mondak, Jeffery. 2010. *Personality and the Foundations of Political Behavior*. Cambridge University Press.

Tesler, Michael & David O. Sears. 2010. *Obama's Race*. University of Chicago Press.

In the reading list that follows, you will notice that some of the readings appear like this...

Name of the Reading

When you see this, I am letting you know about a particularly difficult reading. These readings tend to have advanced mathematics or statistics involved. You should read these articles for the substance, but you won't be responsible for knowing exactly what the author(s) are doing. Basically, you can skim or skip the sections on data and methods and only read the parts that don't involve lots of math. Read for the concepts, theory, and conclusion, and know what the author was arguing, but don't worry about understanding exactly what evidence they presented.

Course Structure

The class will be a mixture of lecture and class discussion, with some small group work thrown in. I am neither interesting nor witty enough to lecture for an entire class, and I'm more interested in what you thought about the readings than in listening to myself talk. Some days will feature more lecture, others will have more discussion, but always be prepared to offer your thoughts on the readings for the day. Response essays and discussion questions will help guide the class onto topics students found interesting.

Grading

Grades will be based on four different components, described in more detail below. 40% of your grade will come from a research proposal (1) described below. In addition, there will be two exams (2) worth 20% of your grade each, a midterm exam covering the first half of the class material and a second, non-cumulative exam covering the second half of the class. 10% of your grade will be from turning in a response essay

and discussion questions (3) on your assigned day and the final 10% of your grade will come from participation (4).

Research Proposal (40%) – Each student must complete a research proposal that identifies an aspect of political psychology that you would like to study and describes how you would go about studying this subject. Your proposal will propose an original research design that tests your research question. This assignment requires you to conduct research and reading outside of the assigned course readings. This additional research should allow you to narrow your desired topic down to a testable hypothesis or set of hypotheses. The assignment requires you to write a literature review for your question and develop an experiment to test your question. You **will not** be expected to actually conduct the research study for this class.

While the requirements of the assignment are fairly specific, you have great freedom to choose a topic that interests you. Throughout the summer, various portions of the proposal will be due. This allows me to follow your progress and help guide you as you develop your proposals. These due dates are listed in the course schedule. I'll hand out a detailed paper assignment and descriptions of each assignment during the first week of class.

I understand that this may be the first time you are asked to complete an assignment like this, and that may cause you a bit of worry. I suggest that you come to me early with any questions that you have. I'm happy to help you refine a topic or suggest ways to locate additional sources, but I need to know that you'd like help, so please come talk to me early.

Exams (20% each) – The first exam, administered on **7/16**, will cover material from the first half of the class, while the second exam, administered on **8/6**, will cover second half material. Some theories from the first half may come up on the second exam, but the bulk of the material will be from the second part of the class. Each exam is worth 20% of your grade, for a total of 40% of your grade.

These exams will be a mix of multiple choice, short answer, and (shorter) essay questions, with a heavier emphasis on essay questions. The purpose of these exams is not to ensure that you have memorized each theory from the class, but rather that you understand how the psychological theories help us understand politics. I'd much rather have you remember the findings and implications of what we read than remember the author's names and dates of publication without understanding what they are trying to say.

Response Essay and Discussion Questions (10%) – In order to help you understand the course materials and to provide me with feedback on what parts of the readings are unclear, each student will be required to turn in a response essay and

discussion questions **one time**. You will have an opportunity to pick a class session during the first week of class.

Response essays and discussion questions are due to me **24 hours before** the class we are to discuss the readings in. For example, if you signed up to discuss the readings on June 18th, your questions and essay would be due to me by Sunday, June 17th at 10:00 AM.

Each paper should include a brief summary of the arguments in the reading(s) and critique the argument, evidence, and conclusions. Papers should be 3-4 pages long, double spaced. I will distribute a separate handout with more information about this assignment during the first week of class.

Participation (10%) – The participation portion of your grade is based off of your regular attendance in class, completion of in-class activities, participation in class discussions, and asking questions during lectures.

Grades directly pertain to your achievement in this course. University policy defines the meaning of grades and what level of achievement grades reported on your transcript pertain to.

A-F Grade Base:

A: Achievement **outstanding** relative to the level necessary to meet course requirements.

B: Achievement **significantly above** the level necessary to meet course requirements.

C: Achievement **meeting the basic course requirements** in every respect.

D: Achievement **worthy of credit** even though it does not meet the full basic course requirements in every aspect.

F: Performance **failing to meet the basic course requirements**.

A	93-100	C	73-76
A-	90-92	C-	70-72
B+	87-89	D+	67-69
B	83-86	D	63-66
B-	80-82	D-	60-62
C+	77-79	F	<60

Course Schedule and Readings

6/16 – Introduction

Readings: None

6/18 – What is “political psychology” and how do we study it?

Readings: Lavine 2010 (On Moodle)
Druckman et al. 2011 (On Moodle)
McDermott 2002 (On Moodle)

6/23 – Attitudes and Beliefs...

Readings: Converse 2000 (On Moodle)
Goren 2005 (On Moodle)

6/25 – ...and how we use them.

Readings: Taber et al. 2009 (On Moodle)
Sides Blog Post: <http://goo.gl/m4EoRo>
Nyhan Blog Post: <http://goo.gl/YZ3RNJ>

6/30 – Heuristics

Readings: Lau and Redlawsk 2001 (On Moodle)
Dancey and Sheagley 2012 (On Moodle)

7/2 – Personality and Politics - **PAPER ASSIGNMENT #1 DUE**

Readings: Mondak 2010 – Chapters 1 & 2

7/7 – NO CLASS, enjoy a long July 4th break! (Instructor at an academic conference)

Readings: Mondak 2010 – Chapters 4, 5, & 6

7/9 – Emotions in Politics (Guest Instructor: Elizabeth Housholder)

Readings: Marcus et al. 2000 (On Moodle) – Chapter 4
Brader 2006 (On Moodle) – Chapters 4 & 5

7/14 – Campaign Communications and Exam #1 Review

Readings: Hillygus and Shields 2008 (On Moodle) – Chapters 1 & 6

7/16 – Exam #1

Readings: None

7/21 – Media: Then and Now

Readings: Iyengar and Kinder 1987 (On Moodle) – Chapters 3 & 7
Prior 2005 (On Moodle)
Owen 2012 (On Moodle)

7/23 – Stereotypes and Prejudice - **PAPER ASSIGNMENT #2 DUE**

Readings: Schneider and Bos 2013 (On Moodle)
Peffley et al. 1997 (On Moodle)

7/28 – Race and Obama I

Readings: Tesler and Sears 2010 – Chapters 1, 2, & 3

7/30 – Race and Obama II

Readings: Tesler and Sears 2010 – Chapters 4; 7 & 8

8/4 – New Advances in Political Psychology, Exam Review

Readings: ***Alford et al. 2005 (On Moodle)***

Graham et al. 2009 (On Moodle)

8/6 – Exam #2

Readings: None

8/8 – FINAL RESEARCH DESIGN DUE

Course Policies

Workload: The University of Minnesota defines one credit as corresponding to 42 to 45 hours of academic work for a semester, regardless of the length of semester. As this is a three credit course, you should expect to spend between 126 and 135 hours on this course, including time in class. Because this is an eight week class, it means for any given week, you should expect to spend somewhere between 9 and 11 hours OUTSIDE of class working on readings and assignments. Some weeks will involve more than this and others less, but this should be the average. I'll solicit feedback regarding the course workload. If I believe this feedback suggests that I've assigned too much work, I'll adjust the schedule accordingly.

Attendance: Regular attendance is vital for your success in this course. I will take attendance during class and this will be factored into the participation portion of your grade. However, I understand that sometimes circumstances prevent you from coming to class. Missing one class will not destroy your participation grade; missing several will.

Late Work: Assignments are due at the **beginning of class** on the day they are listed as due. Any assignments turned in after this time will be subject to the following late penalty: If you turn an assignment in on the due date but after the beginning of class, you will lose 10% of the grade on that assignment. After this, for each day late, you will lose another 10%. Thus, if you turn an assignment in a day late, your grade will be deducted 20%, and two days late will result in a 30% deduction.

All assignments (except exams) will be submitted using Moodle. This allows me to have an electronic copy of your work and saves you the trouble of printing and bringing a copy to class. Back up your work early and often (I suggest Dropbox or Google Drive). A computer problem is not an acceptable excuse for late work.

Grade Changes: Any appeals of a grade must be made at least **24 hours after** I hand back an assignment or exam. This means if a grade is handed out on Monday, you **MUST** wait until Tuesday to ask for a grade change. If you would like to appeal the grade you got on an assignment, prior to meeting with me you should submit a written statement detailing why you think your grade should be changed. I will then meet with you to discuss your statement and why you think your grade should be changed.

If I make a mistake in totaling your grade for an exam or assignment (e.g. I added the points up incorrectly) then you do not need to write a statement or wait 24 hours. Simply talk to me after class or during office hours and I'll double check and fix the mistake.

Contacting the Instructor: I encourage you to contact me with questions and concerns about the course, readings, and assignments. In general, quick clarification questions can be handled over email. More in-depth questions are best discussed in person during my office hours, where we can have an actual conversation. If my office hours conflict with your class or work schedule, I am available by appointment as well.

Please allow a full 24 hours for an email response. Often, my responses will be quicker than this, but do not send multiple emails about the same request until 24 hours have passed. I cannot guarantee that if you email me right before an assignment or exam that I will be able to answer your question in time, so please make sure and email me early if you have a time-specific question.

Extra Credit and Retakes: There is no scheduled extra credit in this course. You may not retake exams.

Student Conduct Code, Scholastic Dishonesty, Disability Services, Sexual Harassment, and Equal Opportunity Policies

The University seeks an environment that promotes academic achievement and integrity, that is protective of free inquiry, and that serves the educational mission of the University. Similarly, the University seeks a community that is free from violence, threats, and intimidation; that is respectful of the rights, opportunities, and welfare of students, faculty, staff, and guests of the University; and that does not threaten the physical or mental health or safety of members of the University community.

As a student at the University you are expected adhere to Board of Regents Policy: *Student Conduct Code*. To review the Student Conduct Code, please see: http://www1.umn.edu/regents/policies/academic/Student_Conduct_Code.html.

Note that the conduct code specifically addresses disruptive classroom conduct, which means "engaging in behavior that substantially or repeatedly interrupts either the instructor's ability to teach or student learning. The classroom extends to any setting where a student is engaged in work toward academic credit or satisfaction of program-based requirements or related activities."

You are expected to do your own academic work and cite sources as necessary. Failing to do so is scholastic dishonesty. Scholastic dishonesty means plagiarizing; cheating on assignments or examinations; engaging in unauthorized collaboration on academic work; taking, acquiring, or using test materials without faculty permission; submitting false or incomplete records of academic achievement; acting alone or in cooperation with another to falsify records or to obtain dishonestly grades, honors, awards, or professional endorsement; altering, forging, or misusing a University academic record; or fabricating or falsifying data, research procedures, or data analysis. (Student Conduct Code: http://www1.umn.edu/regents/policies/academic/Student_Conduct_Code.html)

If it is determined that a student has cheated, he or she may be given an "F" or an "N" for the course, and may face additional sanctions from the University. For additional information, please see: <http://policy.umn.edu/Policies/Education/Education/INSTRUCTORRESP.html>.

The Office for Student Conduct and Academic Integrity has compiled a useful list of Frequently Asked Questions pertaining to scholastic dishonesty: <http://www1.umn.edu/oscai/integrity/student/index.html>.

If you have additional questions, please clarify with your instructor for the course. Your instructor can respond to your specific questions regarding what would constitute scholastic dishonesty in the context of a particular class-e.g., whether collaboration on assignments is permitted, requirements and methods for citing sources, if electronic aids are permitted or prohibited during an exam.

"Sexual harassment" means unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and/or other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature. Such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's work or academic performance or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive working or academic environment in any University activity or program. Such behavior is not acceptable in the University setting. For additional information, please consult Board of Regents Policy: <http://www1.umn.edu/regents/policies/humanresources/SexHarassment.html>

The University is committed to providing quality education to all students regardless of ability. Determining appropriate disability accommodations is a collaborative process. You as a student must register with Disability Services and provide documentation of your disability. The course instructor must provide information regarding a course's content, methods, and essential components. The combination of this information will be used by Disability Services to determine appropriate accommodations for a particular student in a particular course. For more information, please reference Disability Services: <http://ds.umn.edu/student-services.html>.

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