

Psychological Perspectives on Politics
Political Science #344

{sample syllabus only – this may not reflect the details of the current course}

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Course description and requirements:

This course will cover a variety of topics in the field of political psychology. This sub-discipline draws on the insights of political scientists studying political attitudes and behavior, social and cognitive psychologists, and behavioral economists. Topics addressed include: the roles of affect and cognition in opinion formation, the use (and misuse) of heuristics, persuasion, framing effects in survey questions and political rhetoric, altruism, rationality, judgments under uncertainty and risk, the formation of judgements regarding fairness and justice, race, and jury behavior.

Students' grades will be based on 2 exams, one short paper, and class participation. Each exam is worth 30% of the final course grade. The short paper is worth 20% of the course grade. Participation in class discussions and activities comprises the remaining 20% (10% for participation in the class project described below; 10% for participation generally in class discussions). About one week before each exam I will distribute a list of questions resembling, but not identical to, the questions you will face on the up-coming exam. These questions should be taken as a rough indicator of the level of difficulty and style of the questions that will appear on the exams. Taking an exam at any time other than in class on the designated exam date requires advance approval from me. Quizzes will occur at random throughout the semester. You will need to keep up on the assigned reading in order to do well on them.

During the term the class will write and field a telephone survey of local residents. This project will require a significant time commitment from everyone in the class. I'll expect you to work with your peers to write questions and to dedicate yourself to a few evenings in the lab to conduct the interviews. To facilitate hypothesis formation and question development, the class will divide into small teams, each of which will meet on its own as well as with me. You will need to accommodate these out-of-class meetings into your schedule. Once these teams have their hypotheses and tests developed, they will share them with the larger class for critique. We will analyze the survey's results in the week following its fielding. We will discuss the survey much more as the semester progresses. Your peers and I will evaluate your contributions to this project, and that evaluation will be worth 10% of your overall course grade.

About mid-way through the term you will turn in a paper reflecting on a selection of readings you believe speak to an important theme that you identify. This paper will synthesize theoretical perspectives and empirical findings from various readings on the syllabus. You should use this opportunity to critique some of the literature we've read and to come to your own conclusions. I'm asking you to reflect on the readings rather than to go do any further research among materials not on the syllabus. This paper should be between 8 and 10 pages long (double-spaced, 12-point Times New Roman, standard margins). This paper should represent your best work. I will say more about this assignment as the semester goes along. If you are the least bit uncertain about your writing skills, visit

the IWU writing center for help. Please also feel free to visit with me during office hours to discuss ideas.

Final course grades will be assigned on the following basis: 90-100% = A/A-; 80-89% = B+/B/B-; 70-79% = C+/C/C-; 60-69% = D; below 60% = F. Taking a grade of incomplete in this course is very strongly discouraged. Under no circumstances will a student be granted a grade of incomplete without discussing the matter with me well in advance of the end of the semester. All other university policies apply.

The following course texts are available at the university bookstore:

Introduction to Political Psychology, Martha Cottam, Beth Dietz-Uhler, Elena Mastors, and Thomas Preston, Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2004

Attitudes and Persuasion: Classic and Contemporary Approaches, Richard Petty and John Cacioppo, Westview Press, 1996

The Illusion of Public Opinion: Fact and Artifact in American Public Opinion Polls, George Bishop, Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2005

Excerpts from the following sources are on electronic reserve. These items are marked below with an asterisk:

Navigating Public Opinion, edited by Manza, Cook, and Page, 2002

Citizens and Politics: Perspectives from Political Psychology, edited by Kuklinski, Cambridge University Press, 2001

Phil Converse, "The Nature of Belief Systems in Mass Publics" in *Ideology and Discontent*, Free Press, 1964

Delli Carpini and Keeter, *What Americans Know about Politics and Why it Matters*, Yale University Press, 1996

George Marcus et al., *With Malice Toward Some: How People Make Civil Liberties Judgments*, Cambridge University Press, 1995

Richard Thaler, *Quasi Rational Economics*, Russell Sage Foundation, 1991

Tourangeau, Rips, and Rasinski, *The Psychology of Survey Response*, Cambridge University Press, 2000

Elements of Reason, edited by Lupia, McCubbins, and Popkin, Cambridge University Press, 2000

Beyond Self-Interest, edited by Jane Mansbridge, Univ. of Chicago Press, 1990

James Druckman, "Political Preference Formation: Competition, Deliberation, and the (Ir)relevance of Framing Effects," *American Political Science Review*, vol. 98 #4 (November 2004)

Robert Cross and Susan Brodt, "How Assumptions of Consensus Undermine Decision Making," *MIT Sloan Management Review*, winter 2001

Inside the Juror: The Psychology of Juror Decision Making, edited by Hastie, Cambridge University Press, 1993

Political Psychology, ed. by Jost and Sidanius, Psychology Press, 2004

Robert Cialdini, *Influence: The Psychology of Persuasion, revised edition*, Quill, 1992

Philip Myers' summary of Milgram experiment in *Down to Earth Sociology, 11th ed*, Henslin (editor)

Topics & Weeks	Readings
Defining the field of political psychology Is it political science, or psychology, or both? What do we know about how people think? What don't we know?	Cottam et al. chapt. 1&2 Petty & Cacioppo, chapt. 1&2
Citizen competence with information A summary of important insights Some anomalies in reasoning Affect versus reasoning Problems with opinion measurement	Converse article* <i>Illusion of Public Opinion</i> , chapt. 1, 2 & 4 chapter 1 from <i>Rational Choice in an Uncertain World</i> * Cross and Brodt essay (handout)
Political knowledge What do citizens know? Low-information rationality A brief introduction to heuristics	Delli Carpini & Keeter, chapt. 2 & 7* Popkin & Dimock essay*
Political learning: affect and cognition 'Memory-based' versus 'on-line processing'	<i>Citizens & Politics</i> , chapt. 1 & 2* Petty & Cacioppo, chapt. 3 Cottam et al. chapt. 3
Issue framing and survey question wording effects Framing effects Other question wording effects	<i>Illusion of Public Opinion</i> , chapt. 3, 5 (skim chapt. 5) & 6 Druckman article* Gilens, "An Anatomy of Survey Based Experiments" *
Persuasion Elaboration likelihood model	Petty & Cacioppo, chapt. 4-9 Cottam et al., chapt. 4 (skim)

Tolerance of ambiguity &
openness to counter-arguments
Conformity

Cialdini, chapt. 1

Designing surveys and survey-based experiments

Illusion of Public Opinion, chapt. 9

1st meeting: brainstorming ideas; form committees to develop questions; review for exam

2nd meeting: mid-term exam (covering all material to date)

Decisions under Uncertainty

Lau and Redlawsk article*

Some common heuristics

Quasi Rational Economics,
chaps. 2 & 3*

Mental accounting

Stability of preferences

Phil Tetlock essay from *Elements of Reason**

Prospect theory

Trade-off reasoning

Jack Levy article on prospect theory*

Small groups will meet with Shaw outside class to refine projects

Work on survey

Small groups will present their projects to the larger group; each will present and justify its hypotheses and proposed tests

Work on survey

- 1st meeting: meet in CLA lab to discuss interviewing protocols and walk through the script; begin piloting of questionnaire; final discussion of procedures
- Tuesday evening through Saturday afternoon: conduct interviews
- Data will be e-mailed to class by Sunday evening

Analyzing the results of the survey

Cottam et al. chapt. 5

- 1st meeting: Shaw to present some findings
- 2nd meeting: Small groups present findings from their projects

Rationality and altruism

Beyond Self-Interest, chapt. 6*

Disentangling altruism and instrumentalism

The prisoner's dilemma and other collective action problems

Make time in your schedule this week to view "Quiet Rage: The Stanford Prison Experiment" (Phil Zimbardo), on traditional reserve at the library

Authoritarianism, tolerance and
conformity

Citizens & Politics, chapt. 13*

With Malice Toward Some, chaps. 4&8*
Altemeyer, "The other authoritarian
personality"*

Cottam et al. chaps. 6&7

Ellsworth article*

Myers summary of Milgram experiment

Reflection papers due this week

Race
Jury behavior

Hastie readings
view “Twelve Angry Men” video

Political extremism & unconventional
political violence
Summing up

Cottam et al. chaps. 9 & 10

Final exam: cumulative w/ emphasis on 2nd half of course