

political psychology

PSCI 4221.001

SPRING 2021

ONLINE

MWF 11:30 A.M. - 12:20 P.M.

DR. JENNIFER WOLAK

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ONLINE OFFICE HOURS: M 1 P.M. - 3 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 origins of racism, the psychological roots of political conflict, and routes to cooperation and compromise.

about the structure of the course

This course meets entirely online.

The format is synchronous – lectures and exams will take place online during our scheduled class time.

Class sessions will be hosted on Zoom. Recordings will be saved for those who must miss a session due to illness or other reasons. Participation in in-class activities contribute toward your final grade in the course.

Canvas is your friend

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

reading material

There is no textbook assigned 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 online office hours if you have any questions about course expectations or the material covered in class.

You are expected to maintain proper classroom etiquette. This includes respecting the opinions of others even if you disagree, not talking out of turn, and not distracting others in class.

requirements

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

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

Throughout the semester, you can accumulate points toward this portion of your grade through attending class lectures, participating in in-class activities, taking short quizzes on the readings, and completing homework assignments. Links to quizzes and homework assignments will be posted on Canvas. Details about how participation/homework grades are calculated are described on Canvas.

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

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

If you would like, you can write a third paper tied to the paper assignments described above – to either take the place of an exam or replace your lowest exam score.

being flexible

It's a challenging time. I understand. The assignments for this course have been designed to allow for some flexibility in case you or others important to you become ill or things otherwise go awry in your life. Please keep in touch through the semester if you need additional help or accommodations.

special accommodations

If you qualify for accommodations because of a disability, please submit to me your accommodation 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

Friday, January 15 – Friday, January 22 (Monday, January 18 – class does not meet)

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.
- Fox, Richard L., and Jennifer L. Lawless. 2014. "Uncovering the Origins of the Gender Gap in Political Ambition." *American Political Science Review* 108:499-519.

THE BIOLOGICAL ROOTS OF POLITICAL BEHAVIOR

Monday, January 25 – Friday, January 29

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, February 1 – Friday, February 5

Social and situational pressures to conform, dispositions versus situations, self-interest

- 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 AND CITIZEN BEHAVIOR

Monday, February 8 – Friday, February 12

Authoritarianism, the Big Five personality traits

- Taub, Amanda. 2016. "The Rise of American Authoritarianism." *Vox* March 1, 2016. www.vox.com/2016/3/1/11127424/trump-authoritarianism
- 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.

PERSONALITY AND POLITICAL ELITES

Monday, February 15 (Wednesday, February 17 – class does not meet)

Presidential personality

- Barber, James David. 1985. *The Presidential Character: Predicting Performance in the White House*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall. Chapters 1 and 2.

Friday, February 19: Exam 1

the political psychology of decision-making

EMOTION

Monday, February 22 – Friday, February 26

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, March 1 – Friday, March 5

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 8 – Friday, March 12

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 15 – Friday, March 19

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 22 – Friday, March 26

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. p. 253-263.

Monday, March 29: Exam 2

the political psychology of groups

GROUP IDENTITY

Wednesday, March 31 – Friday, April 2

Social identities, in-group/out-group sentiments, partisanship as a social identity

- Tajfel, Henri. 1970. "Experiments in Intergroup Discrimination." *Scientific American* 223:96-102.
- *alternative to Tajfel article: "Henri Tajfel's Minimal Groups." Mind Changers podcast.*
www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b00yw6km
- Mason, Lilliana. 2018. *Uncivil Agreement: How Politics Became Our Identity*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Chapter 1.

STEREOTYPES AND PREJUDICE

Monday, April 5 – Friday, April 9

Stereotypes, prejudice, discrimination

- Devine, Patricia G. 1989. "Stereotypes and Prejudice: Their Automatic and Controlled Components." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 56:5-18.
- Tesler, Michael. 2020. "Racial Attitudes and American Politics." In Adam J. Berinsky, ed. *New Directions in Public Opinion*. New York: Routledge.
- Jardina, Ashley. 2019. "White Consciousness and White Prejudice: Two Compounding Forces in Contemporary American Politics." *The Forum* 17(3):447-456.

CONFLICT

Monday, April 12 – Friday, April 16

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.
- Paluck, Elizabeth Levy. 2009. "Reducing Intergroup Prejudice and Conflict Using the Media: A Field Experiment in Rwanda." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 96(3):574-87.
- *alternative to Paluck article: "Romeo & Juliet In Kigali." Hidden Brain podcast.*
www.npr.org/2018/04/16/602872309/

COOPERATION AND DELIBERATION

Monday, April 19 – Friday, April 23

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

- Tyler, Tom R. 2008. "The Psychology of Cooperation." In Brandon A. Sullivan, Mark Snyder, and John L. Sullivan, eds., *Cooperation: The Political Psychology of Effective Human Interaction*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing.
- Schkade, David, Cass R. Sunstein, and Reid Hastie. 2010. "When Deliberation Produces Extremism." *Critical Review* 22:227-252.

GROUP DECISION-MAKING

Monday, April 26 – Wednesday, April 28

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.

Tuesday, May 4: Final exam (1:30 p.m.)