Objective

The purpose of this course is to introduce students to historical and contemporary perspectives in political psychology. As a sub-discipline straddling political science and psychology, a thorough understanding of political psychology necessitates theoretical and methodological diversity. Many of the readings in this course will be drawn from social and cognitive psychology, as well as scholarship in political science. This course serves as a foundation for the study of political psychology, especially as it pertains to mass political behavior.

What is political psychology? Is it an application of psychological theory to political processes? Is it applied social and cognitive psychology? Or, is political psychology an application of political theory to psychology? The answer to all these is, “yes and no!” Political psychology is the interdisciplinary pursuit of psychological and political questions; it brings together psychological understandings to political questions, as well as exploring how political contexts influence the ways people behave politically.

There is a heavy degree of cross-fertilization in political psychology. Psychological theories have been defined and refined after being tested in the political domain. Likewise, how we understand politics and political processes has been influenced by psychological theory. Thus, in order to thoroughly understand the state of political psychology, it is necessary to sample from both historical and contemporary works in both political science and psychology.

In this course we will begin with an overview of the field of political psychology and the ways that questions within political psychology have been studied. We will briefly overview the psychology of political attitudes, especially as it pertains to social groups and values. We will consider factors such as personality, context, and the intersection of context and personality in affecting attitudes. From this, we will segue into a discussion of the structure of political
attitudes, and when, and under what conditions, do individuals adjust their political beliefs. In this section, we will draw heavily on both historical and contemporary perspectives on ideology in both political science and psychology. Then, we will detail the factors that affect attitude change. Finally, we will examine the formation of social identities, how these identities apply to politics, and the role of identities in the domain of group conflict and racial attitudes.

Reading Assignments

The readings in this course include book chapters and journal articles. I will only distribute the book chapters and journal articles not available through our library. You will be able to access and download these through Moodle. You will be responsible for obtaining articles available through the library website. The vast majority of articles can be found on JSTOR and PsychArticles. In some cases, you can also search E-Journals on the library website and link directly to a journal.

We will draw heavily from the following textbook:


Optional readings.


My Teaching Policy

Throughout the semester I will reiterate this, but I am available should you have any comments or concerns about the class. In addition to my office hours, I practice an “open door” policy. If my door is open, feel free to stop by. If I am not in, email me and I will get back to you in a timely manner. Since many of the concepts in this class come from psychology, they may be hard -- at least initially -- for some of you to grasp. It is your job to work hard this semester. It is my job to facilitate your learning of the material.
Procedures

1. Students must read all assignments in the text and readings available on Moodle and the library.

2. Cell phones must be set to silent. For your safety, I will bring my phone to every class, which I have subscribed to the LSU emergency text message service.

3. Students should always come to class fully prepared and ready to learn.

4. All the assignments & projects MUST be submitted at the beginning of the class. NO LATE WORK WILL BE ACCEPTED.

5. Class attendance is critical for this course. You are expected to come to every class. If you miss a class without providing a valid excuse in writing, your grade may be lowered. (*E-mail notification will not be accepted as a valid excuse for an absence.)

6. An in-class quiz may be given when THREE or more students miss a class.

7. Come to class with assignments completed and reading material covered. Textbook reading assignments are listed in the syllabus. I will assume that you have read the assigned materials before the class and expect you to actively participate in class discussion.

8. If you have a disability which may require accommodation, you should immediately contact the Office of Services of Students with Disabilities to officially document the needed accommodation. You should immediately contact the Office of Disability Service to officially document the needed accommodation. You can find more information at http://appl003.lsu.edu/slas/ods.nsf/index

9. It is your responsibility to complete all works assigned in this course (e.g., tests, assignments) in full observation of the Academic Honor Code. Cheating, plagiarism or any form of academic dishonesty will be unacceptable. University policies regarding academic honesty will be strictly enforced. If you have any questions about academic dishonesty, please speak either with me or with someone in the Office of the Dean of Students. You can also learn more about it at http://appl003.lsu.edu/slas/dos.nsf/SContent/Code+of+Conduct?OpenDocument#5.1 or https://paws002.lsu.edu

10. If a student engages in any form of academic dishonesty this will be reported to the Dean of Students. All assignments will be due at the beginning of the class period on
the established due date. Depending on where we are in the class, I may decide to alter a due date. Any changes will be announced in class. Makeup exams or assignments will be allowed only in the case of university excused absences. Documentation must be provided.

Grades

Grades will be determined by the following components:

- Short essays (3 x 50 pts = 150 pts)
- Classroom participation (50 pts)
- Term paper (300 points)
- Take home exam (150 points)

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This course entails a large amount of reading. You should do your best to keep up with the reading and actively participate in class. You are responsible for three essays in this course. Each essay report should summarize the articles for a particular week, detailing the strengths and weaknesses of the author’s research design, and how the design could be improved and or extended. Do NOT simply type annotated bibliographies, rather, you should provide a detailed assessment of each article. Here are some things to think about: Do the articles effectively “speak” to one another? What are common themes linking the articles? Are theoretical or methodological weaknesses in one reading addressed in subsequent articles? How would you improve on a particular research design? How would you extend a particular finding? It is entirely up to you which weeks you want to write about. The only thing I ask is that your essay be handed in before we discuss the material in class.

You are required to complete a term paper for the class. The paper should relate to the theoretical concepts in political psychology. In the paper, you should incorporate readings
from the course, as well as outside readings. The paper should include a thorough literature review and methods section. I will accept reports with analysis or a detailed proposal. If you do the former, your paper should include a literature review, a methods section, a results section, and a conclusion/discussion section. If you do the latter, you also need to include a literature review and methods section, but instead of conducting analyses and writing a conclusion, describe in detail how you would go about testing the hypotheses you establish and what you anticipate to find. Your final report should be roughly 20-30 pages in length and include all the required sections of an American Psychological Association (APA) style or American Journal of Political Science (AJPS) style report: Title page, abstract, introduction, methods, results (or anticipated results), discussion/conclusion, references, tables, figures, and appendix. Please adhere to APA or AJPS style for this report.

Finally, you will complete a take home exam. The exam will be open-book/open-notes and can be completed any time during finals week. The exam will mimic a comprehensive exam. You will be given a three hour period, of which you will write two short essays on a particular topic from the class, which I will provide. You will let me know when you want to take the exam, I will email you the exam, and you will have 3 hours from receipt of my email to write the exam and send it back.
Daily Schedule

Please read all assigned readings prior to the listed meeting times. Please note that the course schedule is subject to change at my discretion. You are responsible for announced changes.

Putting things into perspective: Historical and Theoretical Approaches

January 20: What is Political Psychology?

Political Psychology: Key Readings, Chapters 1 and 2 (pp. 1-39) and the appendix (Appendix: How to Read a Journal Article in Social Psychology) (pp. 467-476).


January 27: Historical and contemporary perspectives


February 3: The Importance of Context


February 10: Conformity and Obedience


Models of Attitudes and Attitude Change

February 17: The Structure of Beliefs in the Mass Public


February 24: The Automatic Activation of Attitudes and Decision-Making


March 3: Values and Ideology


March 10: Attitude Formation and Change


March 17: The Media

Iyengar, Shanto, Mark D. Peters, and Donald Kinder. 1982. “Experimental Consequences of the ‘not-so-minimal’ Consequences of Television News Programs.” American Political Science Review, 76: 848-858. Political Psychology: Key Readings (pp. 139-149).


Jon Krosnick and Donald Kinder. 1990. “Altering the Foundations of Support for the President through Priming.” American Political Science Review; 84 (2), 497-512. Political Psychology: Key Readings (pp. 150-162).

March 24: The Role of Emotion


### Intergroup Conflict and Racial Attitudes

**March 31: Perspectives on Group Conflict**

**Realistic Conflict Theory**


**Social Identity Theory**


**Integrated Theories**
April 7: No Class—Spring Break

April 14: Group Conflict and Racial Attitudes


April 21: The Political Implications of Race


Biological Theories and Context

April 28: The Biological Foundations of Political Attitudes


May 5: The Role of Threat


May 7: TERM PAPER DUE. PLEASE LEAVE A COPY IN MY MAILBOX BY 12PM

May 7-May 14: FINAL EXAM MUST BE TAKEN DURING THIS WEEK