Course Overview

It seems that whenever we talk about international relations (IR) and global politics we include intuitive applications of political psychology. We talk about such things as Hitler’s madness, Stalin’s paranoia, Hussein’s control orientation, the hatred between Israelis and Palestinians, the single-mindedness of President Bush’s decision-making group. All of these are examples of times when we think psychology mattered in international affairs. And yet the field of political psychology, as an academic discipline, is fairly young. Only for the last 30 years or so has the field developed and taken on the markings of a young science. Why is that the case? Applying psychological concepts to international politics faces many theoretical and empirical challenges that have made progress in the field difficult. How do we define “madness”? How does one measure an enemy image and its effects on policy? How can we study the group decision making process that takes place behind closed doors in an administration?

In fact, some of the main fields in IR, such as realism, neorealism and rational-actor models, have largely ignored psychological variables altogether and have focused instead on the more parsimonious explanations that look at such things as power and interests. But these models seem shortsighted because they leave out the effects of individuals, small groups, and the beliefs and feelings of the masses. Can we really believe a model of WWII that does not talk about Hitler’s leadership and personality? Is it irrelevant that the leader of Iraq ten years ago was Saddam Hussein and not someone else? Doesn’t the mass fear in Israel have a causal effect on their hard-line policies? It is indeed the case that the simpler models in IR are more parsimonious, but that does not mean they are more accurate and powerful with their explanations.

So, we are left with some difficulties. We think intuitively that psychology matters, yet our progress in studying it has been slow. In many ways, that makes the field of political psychology extremely exciting. Because the field is young and wide open, there are many different things to study, many different contributions to make in terms of theory and empirical research, many different methods that can be developed and used. Up until now there has been about one generation of scholars who have worked in the field of political psychology. Their work has been groundbreaking as they were the first ones to posit clear psychological theories in IR, establish new methodological approaches, and provide initial -- if limited -- empirical evidence. In this class we will learn about some of those first-generation approaches -- and we’ll have to appreciate their contributions as giving us critical groundwork for new research. But we’ll also see the shortcomings in their work and see the limitations. That is in part what makes this field interesting to study today. The work that exists is important but limited. It is not enough for us to simply critique that work -- in some ways that would be too easy. Instead, we must take those contributions for what they are -- the start of a critical new field -- and think beyond them. Given the wide-open nature of political psychology, we will spend part of our time talking about the future, new concepts, new approaches, new methods and new opportunities for inquiry. The class will be discussion-oriented and, as with all my classes, I expect, original, critical thinking from my students. The topic is a great one, because it matters so much, and the discussions should be dynamic, because the field is so open.
We will cover psychological concepts at several different levels of IR: individuals and their cognitive and personality characteristics; small decision-making groups; and the psychology of masses in intergroup conflicts. In each of these areas there will be theory, lectures, readings, class discussions and empirical evidence.

Prerequisite

There is no formal prerequisite for this class. However, students should have a basic understanding of key theories in IR and at least general knowledge about current global politics. POLI 2057 is very good preparation for this class. If you have not had POLI 2057 or if you feel deficient in some of these basic areas, you should discuss this with me very early in the semester. I can recommend some basic readings and make some other suggestions for you.

Required Readings

There are three books required for the course. They are as follows:


In addition, you are *required* to read Associated Press (“AP”) world news stories. These can be accessed for free by way of yahoo.com, which I’ll show you in class early in the semester. Pay particular attention to international and global happenings such as events in Iraq, Afghanistan, Russia, the European Union, Africa, the Middle East, global trade and economic issues, and others as they emerge. Note that you must read these stories before class each day. We will spend a portion of class time each week discussing current international topics and how those topics fit into the theories we have studied and discussed in class. In addition to reading AP stores, you can get supplemental international news from the following sources (but remember that the AP stories are required):

1. Listen to National public Radio (NPR) news programs (particularly “All Things Considered” in the late afternoon and “Morning Edition” in the morning). NPR can be found on the FM dial at 89.3 and is an excellent source of interesting and in-depth international news.

2. Read the international news stories in major magazines such as *Time*, the *Economist* or *Newsweek*.

3. Watch national news on television and pay particular attention to the international news stories.
Course Objectives

There are two broad sets of objectives for this class. The first is that students develop a better understanding of international relations in general and political psychology in particular. The second set of objectives deals with academic skills. In this class students should develop skills in terms of reading, writing, speaking and -- most importantly from my perspective -- critical, analytical thinking. It is important to gain knowledge about the world around us and it is equally important to develop skills for thinking about and dealing with that same world.

Course Requirements

1. Miscellaneous paper assignments, quizzes, etc. ...........................................10%
2. Midterm ........................................................................................................20%
3. Final ...............................................................................................................30%
4. Research paper ..............................................................................................30%
5. Class participation ..........................................................................................10%

The two exams will be a mixture of essay and multiple choice.

The research paper will be a political psychology topic of your own choosing with my approval. The most common topic will be a psycho biography of a prominent global leader, or a psychological case study of a particular event from history. I am certainly open to other ideas (and am particularly impressed if someone undertakes a quantitative/statistical project). The length of the paper should be 10 pages (approximate word count: 3250), double-spaced, normal fonts and margins; include page numbers, final word count, citations, and complete, formal bibliography.

Class participation is a very important part of this class. Students are expected to come to class prepared to discuss the assigned readings from the books as well as current international events. Class participation can take several forms; there is no right or wrong way to participate in discussions. But students must participate to successfully complete the requirements of this class.

Course Calendar

Week of August 23: Read the Preface in Political Psychology, and the Preface and Chapter 1 in Why Nations Go To War.

Week of August 30: Read Chapters 2 and 3 in Why Nations Go To War, and Part I in A Star Called Henry.

Week of September 8: Read Chapters 4 and 5 in Why Nations Go To War.

Week of September 13: Read Chapters 8 and 9 in Why Nations Go To War.
Week of September 20: Read Chapter 10 and Epilogue in Why Nations Go To War; read Part II in A Star Called Henry. Review and prepare for Midterm.
**Midterm: Friday, September 24**

Week of September 27: Read Chapters 1 and 2 in *Political Psychology*.

Week of October 4: Read Chapters 7 and 8 in *Political Psychology*.

Week of October 11: Read Chapters 9 and 10 in *Political Psychology*.

Week of October 18: Read Chapter 11 in *Political Psychology*.

Week of October 25: Additional lectures on personality and cognition. Read Part III in *A Star Called Henry*.

Week of November 1: Read Chapters 3, 4, and 5 in *Political Psychology*.

Week of November 8: Read Chapter 6 in *Political Psychology*.

Week of November 15: Read Chapters 13 and 14 in *Political Psychology*.

Week of November 22: Read Chapters 15 and 16 in *Political Psychology*.

Week of November 29: Read Chapter 17 in Political Psychology. Finish reading *A Star Called Henry*.

**Research Paper Due Wednesday December 1 at start of class**

**Final Exam: Monday December 6, 7:30 am to 9:30 am**

**Instructor’s Policies**

I welcome and encourage questions, comments and discussion on course subjects either in or out of the classroom. I love teaching and I love what I teach, so remember my door is open!

Any papers or assignments must be turned in on or before the due date. Emailed papers will not be accepted unless previously arranged with me due to dire circumstances. Exams and quizzes may not be rescheduled or postponed. Exceptions will be allowed only under extreme, documented circumstances; under such circumstances, you are required to notify Professor Schafer (or, if he is unavailable, the Department of Political Science) prior to the date or as soon as possible if prior notice is impossible.

Electronic versions of research papers must be submitted the same day as the hard copy for purposes of a plagiarism check. Also, to check for authorship and originality, all students must be prepared to orally defend their research papers, including their research strategies and all source material.

According to the Dean of Students, cell phones, pagers and other such things going off in class are a violation of PS29 (the University policy that regulates conduct in the classroom), and therefore are not permitted in class.