Foundations of Political Psychology
214 Coates (9:10-10:30AM)

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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.

It should come as no surprise that literature from this course will come from 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. Because much of the early work on political psychology focused on personality, we will start by considering how enduring traits shape behavior. We will then consider the role of social
context and how context can help explain how some individuals participated in some of the most horrific acts committed in the 21st and 20th centuries.

In the next section of the course, we will shift gears by spending several weeks on the structure of political attitudes, examining when, and under what conditions, 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 influence attitude change. This will be followed with an exploration on the foundations of social identities, how these identities apply to politics, and the role of identities in the domain of group conflict, racial attitudes, and other forms of identification, such as national identification and patriotism. Finally, we will consider work in political psychology showing that genes play a role in the development of political identities and political behaviors.

**Required Text**


Other Required Readings: In addition to the required textbooks for this course, there are multiple required supplemental readings (marked ** in the reading schedule below), which will be made available through moodle.

Finally, students are expected to maintain a regular diet of news consumption throughout the term. Students should keep up-to-date on current affairs and be able to reflect on how psychological concepts established in the course relate to current affairs.

**My Teaching Policy**

First, what I expect from you: This course will help you understand how psychological concepts help us better understand political phenomena. As you may guess, there is a heavy focus on psychology and psychological concepts in this course. Many of the abstract, theoretical topics we will discuss in the course will be much easier to understand if you can relate them to contemporary affairs. A very useful way to study and remember these concepts is to relate them to actual events. Also, since participation is an essential characteristic in this course, I expect that you will be informed and be able to discuss salient political topics.
Now, what you can expect from me: Throughout the semester I will reiterate this, but I am always 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. The concepts in this class may be difficult to grasp. It is your job to work hard this semester. It is my job to facilitate your learning of the material.

Grades

* Grades will be determined according to the following scale:

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<tr>
<th>Percentage Range</th>
<th>Grade</th>
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<tr>
<td>90%-100%</td>
<td>A</td>
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<tr>
<td>80%-89%</td>
<td>B</td>
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<td>70%-79%</td>
<td>C</td>
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<td>60%-69%</td>
<td>D</td>
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<td>59% and below</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Due Date</th>
<th>% of Final Grade</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Paper #1</td>
<td>February 22</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Authoritarianism</td>
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<tr>
<td>Paper #2</td>
<td>March 22</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Critical Essay</td>
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<tr>
<td>Paper #3</td>
<td>May 5</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Race</td>
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<tr>
<td>Midterm Exam</td>
<td>March 15</td>
<td>17.5%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Exam</td>
<td>May 13</td>
<td>17.5%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
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The paper assignments comprise a majority of your grade (60%). There will also be a midterm exam and a final (17.5% each). The midterm exam will cover all material from the first day of class through March 10 (“Tolerance”). You will be responsible for knowing the material covered in the readings as well as lectures. The final exam will be cumulative, covering all material covered in the class (again, both readings and lectures). Both exams will be closed-book, though I will allow students to use one 8.5 x 11 inch page of notes (one side).
An entire period to will be allocated to each exam. The exams will consist of multiple-choice, short answer, and essay responses. Finally, you will be graded on participation. If you come to class regularly and actively participate in class discussions, you should expect a satisfactory grade on this component.

As noted above, there are three essay assignments. Each essay should be between 5 and 8 pages. All essays should be typed (12 point font, 1 inch margins, Times New Roman font). To receive a satisfactory grade, the essays must follow a coherent structure and lack grammatical and typographical errors. Also, students must appropriately cite references. If sources are not given appropriate credit, this will be considered plagiarism.

I have provided guidance for each essay question. To receive a satisfactory grade, the student must answer every part of the question. While it is not necessary to incorporate outside readings for these essays, the student is welcome to do so. However, I will be checking to make sure the material from the course is sufficiently represented.

**Paper #1 (Authoritarianism)**

In the early 20th century, much of the psychological work applied to politics relied on personality and traits to explain mass behavior. For instance, *The Authoritarian Personality* published by Adorno et al (1950) sought to understand the underlying causes of genocide and group-based aggression through a constellation of personality characteristics. Drawing on what you know about authoritarianism, is it useful in explaining contemporary political conflict in the United States and elsewhere? Is the construct relevant to current politics, or is it of little practical significance, given more recent developments in our understanding of psychology and politics. To receive a satisfactory grade, you must thoroughly describe authoritarianism and how it does or does not apply to current politics. Your essay should be no fewer than 5 and no more than 8 typed double-spaced pages (1 inch margins, Times New Roman font). **Due February 22.**

**Paper #2 (Critical Essay)**

Choose the readings from a week (or several weeks) and write an essay describing the literature, weaknesses, and whether the readings are (in)compatible with one another. You should not choose “authoritarianism” as your topic, since that is the focus of Paper #1. For instance, if you were to choose the “social conformity” readings, you could describe the
Milgram Experiments (ME) and the Stanford Prison Study (SPS) as two studies examining obedience, but in different ways. What does the ME contribute to our understanding of obedience that SPS misses (and vice-versa)? What are the weaknesses of these approaches? Are they applicable to events reported in the media? Please note that you are not required to write on social conformity. You are welcome to write on personality characteristics of leaders, attitudes and attitude change, ideology, and so on. To receive full credit, you must thoroughly describe the literature and its applicability. Your essay should be no fewer than 5 and no more than 8 typed double-spaced pages (1 inch margins, Times New Roman font). Due May 5.

Paper #3 (Race)

Scholars have developed multiple theories to explain racial attitudes and conflict in the United States. Many of these theories emerged during or after the Civil Rights movement. Of the approaches we have reviewed in this course, which one is most predictive of contemporary racial attitudes in the United States? Why? Has the nature of racial conflict in the United States changed over the last 50 years, and if so, has the development of these theoretical approaches mirrored these changes? To receive full credit, you must thoroughly describe the relevant theoretical approaches and whether they apply to racial conflict. Your essay should be no fewer than 5 and no more than 8 typed double-spaced pages (1 inch margins, Times New Roman font). Due May 5.

Procedures

1. Students must read all assignments in the text and readings available on moodle and emailed to the course. Students will also be responsible for material covered by guest speakers and videos. Quizzes on readings and notes may be administered at the professor’s discretion.

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

3. All the assignments & projects MUST be submitted in class. NO LATE WORK WILL BE ACCEPTED.

4. 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 class participation grade may be lowered. (*E-mail notification will not be accepted as a valid excuse for an absence.)

5. An in-class quiz may be given when THREE or more students miss a class.
6. **BE ON TIME** to class. Absolutely, no late work will be accepted.

7. There will be a midterm and final exam. A make-up exam will only be given under extraordinary circumstances, which **must** be documented.

8. Students who turn in an assignment on the due date but after the beginning of class will lose a minimum of one letter grade. An additional letter grade will be deducted for each day the assignment is late. Depending on where we are in the class, I may decide to alter a due date. Any changes will be announced in classes. Makeup exams or assignments will be allowed only in the case of university excused absences. **Documentation must be provided.**

9. Students will refrain from behavior in the classroom that intentionally or unintentionally disrupts the learning process and, thus, impedes the mission of the university. This includes disruptive behavior such as arriving late, leaving early, and conversing privately during class. Cellular telephones and pagers must be turned off before the class begins. Students are prohibited from using tobacco products, making offensive remarks, talking at inappropriate times, wearing inappropriate clothing, or engaging in any other form of distraction. Inappropriate behavior in the classroom shall result in a directive to leave class. You may not film or record this class without permission. For your safety, I will bring my phone to every class, which I have subscribed to the LSU emergency text message service.

10. The Americans with Disabilities Act requires that reasonable accommodations be provided for students with physical, cognitive, systemic, learning and psychiatric disabilities. Please contact me at the beginning of the quarter to discuss any such accommodations for this course. In order to have any accommodations met, you must be registered with the LSU Office of Disabilities Services. You can find more information at [http://appl003.lsu.edu/slas/ods.nsf/index](http://appl003.lsu.edu/slas/ods.nsf/index)

11. 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/Content/Code+of+Conduct?OpenDocument#5.1](http://appl003.lsu.edu/slas/dos.nsf/Content/Code+of+Conduct?OpenDocument#5.1) or [https://paws002.lsu.edu](https://paws002.lsu.edu)
12. If a student engages in any form of academic dishonesty this will be reported to the Dean of Students. LSU’s policy on plagiarism is the following: “Plagiarism is defined to include any use of another's work and submitting that work as one's own. This means not only copying passages of writing or direct quotations but also paraphrasing or using structure or ideas without citation.” Most of the work you will do for this class will require you to deal closely with books and articles assigned for this class; some projects may require you to do additional research. In either case, the rule of thumb is this: If you use material from a source (either one assigned from this class or something you’ve retrieved through outside research), you must cite it. I will not require a particular citation style (e.g. MLA vs. another citation style; parenthetical citations vs. footnotes). Instead, I will simply require that whatever style you use, I am able to find the original source, including the page number, based on the information you provide. Please review the University’s excellent guidelines on plagiarism and academic integrity at http://www.lsu.edu/judicialaffairs/ and http://www.lsu.edu/judicialaffairs/Plagiarism.htm.
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.

### Historical and Contemporary Approaches

**January 18:** Welcome

**January 20:** What is Political Psychology?
- Cottam et al. (Chapter 1).

**January 25:** Historical and contemporary perspectives
- Cottam et al. (Chapter 2).

### Personality and Politics

**January 27:** Authoritarianism

**February 1:** Studying Political Leaders
- Cottam et al. (Chapter 5).

**February 3:** Studying Political Leaders
Social Conformity

February 8: Groups, Obedience, and Conformity

- Cottam et al. (Chapter 4).

February 10: Obedience and Conformity


February 15: Conformity and Current Affairs

- *Video: The Human Behavior Experiments*

Models of Attitude and Attitude Change

February 17: The Structure of Attitudes

- Cottam et al. (Chapter 3).

February 22: The Structure of Attitudes

- Cottam et al. (Chapter 6).

PAPER #1 IS DUE.

February 24: Attitudes, Attitude Change, and the Media


March 1: Attitudes, Attitude Change, and the Media

March 3: Values and Ideology


March 8: Mardi Gras. No Class

March 10: Tolerance


March 15: MIDTERM EXAM

*The midterm will cover everything through the March 10 class.*

Intergroup Conflict and Racial Attitudes

March 17: The Political Psychology of Race

Cottam et al. (Chapter 7).

March 22: Realistic Conflict Theory

http://psychclassics.yorku.ca/Sherif/, Chapter 2-3

Paper #2 is due.

March 24: Realistic Conflict Theory

http://psychclassics.yorku.ca/Sherif/, Chapter 4-7

March 29: Implicit Racial Attitudes


Complete an Implicit Association Task (IAT) and be prepared to discuss the results. [https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/](https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/)

March 31: Midwest Political Science Association Conference. No Class.

April 5: Perspectives: Social Identity Theory


April 7: Perspectives: Symbolic Politics


April 12: Group Politics: A Synthesis


April 14: The Political Implications of Race


April 19 and April 21: Spring Break. No Class

April 26: Nationalism

Cottam et al. (Chapter 8).

April 28: Terrorism, Political Extremism and Conflict

Cottam et al. (Chapter 9)

Pyzsynski, Tom, Sheldon Solomon, and Jeff Greenberg. 2003. In the Wake of
Towards an Understanding of Political Behavior

May 3: Biological Theories and Context, Part I


- Charney. 2008. “Genes and Ideologies. ” Perspectives on Politics, 6, 2. 299-319. **

May 5: Biological Theories and Context, Part II


Paper #3 is due

May 13 (7:30-9:30AM): Final Exam