

PROVISIONAL SYLLABUS
V53.XXXX: Introduction to Political Psychology
Fall 2008, New York University
Mondays & Wednesdays, 11:00am-12:15pm

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Course Description: How do campaign advertisements influence voters' perceptions and behavior? What roles are played by emotion in politics? What features of the political environment influence the way in which different ethnic, religious, or other social groups interact with and view one another, and what role do stereotypes play in political behavior? How and why do ideologies form, and how does partisanship influence the way that voters understand the political world?

These questions, and many others, are the province of *political psychology*, a field that uses experimental methods and theoretical ideas from psychology as tools to help understand political processes. This course offers a broad overview of political psychology at the undergraduate level. The basic objectives of the course are threefold. First, it introduces important concepts from psychology, offering new ways of thinking about subjects as varied as personality, the dynamics of social groups, and the ways in which emotion affects decision making. Second, it applies these concepts to various topics within political science, including the media and political advertising, race relations, the legitimacy of government institutions, and the formation of opinions and ideologies, as a means of providing a new perspective on how to understand the political world around us. And third, by describing political psychology experimentation in detail, the course teaches about how the scientific method can be applied to the study of politics.

Course Prerequisites: There are no formal prerequisites for this course. No mathematical knowledge beyond what is typically taught in high school (such as algebra) is required; additional concepts that may be used in class will be introduced and discussed at length as we go along, particularly in section.

Course Requirements: Your course grade will be determined by a combination of the following factors: (1) Homework Assignments (25%), of which there will be approximately five or six over the course of the semester; (2) two in-class mid-term exams (15% each); (3) a (comprehensive) final exam (30%); and (4) participation in section (15%).

The course homework assignments will offer opportunities to engage the course material creatively. As mentioned above, this class teaches political psychology in part through describing various kinds of experiments that researchers have undertaken as a way of learning about political processes. The homework assignments will give you the opportunity to think about how you would design experiments of your own, how you would interpret the results of existing

experiments, and so on. The class sections will offer further opportunity for engagement of this kind, interacting with fellow students and with the TA.

We do not formally take attendance, either in lecture or in section; however, you cannot reasonably expect to do well in the course without attending both. Some of the material in lectures will not be in either book, and some of the material in the books will not come up in lecture; you will be responsible for everything covered in class and in lecture for the purposes of the exams. Further, as noted above, participation in section will count for 15% of your grade in the class; sharing ideas with others is an integral part of scientific progress, and the sections are meant to be both educational and highly interactive. While we do not take attendance formally, obviously a precondition for a good grade in section is showing up most (or all) of the time.

Course Books & Readings: There are two required textbooks for the course, both of which are available in the NYU Bookstore:

(ITPP) Cottam, Dietz-Uhler, Mastors, and Preston. 2004. Introduction to Political Psychology. Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Publishers.

(PP) Jost and Sidanius, editors. 2004. Political Psychology: Key Readings. Psychology Press.

The first book (ITPP) is an introductory textbook that provides a broad survey of political psychology. The second book (PP) is a collection of key readings from research articles in political psychology. We will make extensive use of both during the semester. In addition, we will distribute a number of supplementary research articles that will be discussed in class and which appear in neither book.

Course Outline

Week 1: Introduction to Political Psychology

ITPP Chapter 1

PP: "Political Psychology: An Introduction"

PP (Appendix): "How to Read a Journal Article in Social Psychology"

Week 2: Personality and Politics

ITPP Chapter 2

PP Reading #2: "The authoritarian personality and the organization of attitudes."

Weeks 3-4: Cognition, Emotions, and Attitudes in Political Psychology

ITPP Chapter 3

PP Reading #9: "Anxiety, enthusiasm, and the vote: The emotional underpinnings of learning and involvement during presidential campaigns."

PP Reading #10: "The nature of belief systems in mass publics."

Jost, J. T. 2006. The end of the end of ideology. *American Psychologist*, 61, 1-20.

Druckman, J. and Chong, D. 2007. Framing Public Opinion in Competitive Democracies. *American Political Science Review* 101: 637-655.

Weeks 5-6: Social Identities and the Political Psychology of Groups

ITPP Chapter 4

PP Reading #16: "The social identity theory of intergroup behavior."

PP Reading #18: "Social dominance theory: A new synthesis."

Chen and Li. 2006. "Group Identity and Social Preferences." U. of Michigan Working Paper.

Weeks 7-8: Voting, Role of the Media, and Tolerance

ITPP Chapter 6

PP Reading #7: "Experimental demonstrations of the "not-so-minimal" consequences of television news programs."

Brader, T. 2005. Striking a Responsive Chord: How Political Ads Motivate and Persuade Voters by Appealing to Emotions. *American Journal of Political Science* 49(2):388-405.

Weeks 9-10: Political Psychology of Race and Ethnicity

ITPP Chapter 7

Phelps, E. and Thomas. 2003. Race, behavior and the brain: The role of neuroimaging in understanding complex human behaviors. *Political Psychology* 24:747-758.

Weeks 11-12: Political Psychology of Nationalism, Social Justice, and Legitimacy

ITPP Chapter 8

Tyler, T.R. 2006. Psychological perspectives on legitimacy and legitimation. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 57, 1-26

Jost, J.T., Banaji, M.R., & Nosek, B.A. 2004. A decade of system justification theory: Accumulated evidence of conscious and unconscious bolstering of the status quo. *Political Psychology*, 25, 881-919.

Weeks 13-14: Political Psychology of Political Extremists, International Security, and Conflict

ITPP Chapters 9-10

PP Reading #21: "Social organization for the production of evil."

PP Reading #24: "Politicized collective identity."