

Political Psychology
PSYC GU4673
Spring 2020
4 points

Professor: **Rob Brotherton**

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Office Location: **415M Milbank**

Office Hours: **TBD**

Class venue & time: **Thursdays 10:10-12 in Schermerhorn 200C**

Bulletin Description

This seminar will explore what psychology (mostly social and cognitive) can tell us about politics. The class aims to provide a broad introduction to ideas and methods in the field of political psychology, as well as a deep understanding of a few specific topics.

Prerequisites

An introductory psychology course and a course in research methods and/or statistics, along with the instructor's permission.

Course Overview

This seminar will explore what psychology (mostly social and cognitive) can tell us about politics. The class aims to provide a broad introduction to ideas and methods in the field of political psychology, as well as a deep understanding of a few specific topics. The class should be useful for those who may wish to study the topic at higher levels in the future. More generally, the class should provide students with tangible, relevant insights into everyday contemporary political phenomena. With that in mind, the focus will mainly be on citizens as consumers of political information. Rather than examining *what* happened in politics (e.g., who won an election, or who voted for whom), we'll be looking at *why* things happen in politics by looking at the psychology of individuals and groups, encompassing such psychological phenomena as ideology and partisanship, attitude formation and change, motivated reasoning, metacognition, persuasion, rationality, intergroup processes, conflict, distrust and conspiracism.

Learning Outcomes

By the end of the semester, students will be able to:

- Demonstrate, orally and in writing, understanding of major theories and research in political psychology and how political psychology ties into and extends upon insights from other subfields of psychology.
- Formulate critical insights, in writing and in discussion with others, into the strengths and weaknesses of particular studies and theories, as well as the socio-political forces that shape the field of (political) psychology and the culture around it.
- Produce a paper, formatted according to the conventions of the field, conveying a novel empirical analysis of existing public opinion data relating to political attitudes and/or behavior.

- Incorporate feedback on written work to refine ideas and improve clarity and precision through a multi-step drafting process.
- Lead and contribute to a discussion of psychological research and theory.

Role in the Psychology Department Curriculum

PSYC GU4xxx is a seminar open to graduate students and advanced undergraduate students. Senior Psychology and Neuroscience & Behavior majors and students pursuing the Post-Baccalaureate Certificate in Psychology program will have priority in registration, followed by juniors, and then non-majors.

- For Psychology majors and concentrators and for students in the Post-baccalaureate Certificate Program in Psychology, this course can be used to meet the Group 3 (Social, Personality, & Abnormal Psychology) distribution requirements.
- For Psychology majors and for students in the Post-baccalaureate Certificate Program in Psychology, this course can be used to meet the seminar requirement.

Assessment

15%	Class Participation
10%	Leading the discussion
15%	Project Presentation
20%	Project Proposal
10%	Project Paper first draft
30%	Project Paper final draft

Class participation (15%)

Your contribution in class is worth 15% of your grade; therefore, you should come to class prepared to participate in the discussion. (Please note that it is not possible to contribute effectively if you haven't done the reading or if you're not in class.)

As part of your preparation, you will generate 3-5 discussion questions prior to each class. The purpose of these questions is to ensure that you've read the required papers, and to help raise issues for discussion in class. **You will post your questions in the relevant discussion thread on Canvas by noon the day before we meet**, so that everyone's questions will be available to that week's discussion leader(s) in advance (see *Leading the discussion* below). You should submit questions whether or not you will be able to attend the class session to which they apply; failing to submit questions will result in a 1 percent point deduction from your final class participation grade (as will unexcused absences).

Leading the discussion (10%)

Students will each take responsibility for leading the discussion (individually or with a partner, depending on class size) for one class period during the semester. Leading the discussion will entail (1) briefly summarizing the gist of the articles for that class period; (2) adding some additional insight, for example by linking the reading to other psychological research you are previously familiar with, or by linking the findings to something from history, the news, or your own experience; and (3) the discussion leaders will have access to everyone's discussion questions as soon as they're posted to the discussion forum—discussion leaders will use them to orient the discussion. (Note that everyone is responsible for keeping the conversation going, but having someone throw new balls in the air once the old ones have fallen to the ground is very

helpful—this will be the discussion leader’s job). The discussion leaders do not need to submit discussion questions for that class period, since they will be aggregating everyone else’s questions. Topics will be determined near the beginning of the semester.

**Individual project: 60% total
(20% for the proposal; 10% for the first draft; 30% for the final paper)**

You will complete a project on a topic of your choice. The project will take the form of a research paper conveying empirical analysis of existing public opinion data pertaining to a question relevant to political psychology. This will require first coming up with an interesting question and finding relevant data, then performing some kind of statistical analysis and writing it up as a research paper (complete with literature review and discussion).

There are many large datasets available online that contain data relevant to political preferences, demographics, trust, knowledge, media use, engagement, and other related variables. Some datasets along these lines (this is by no means an exhaustive list) are the [American National Election Studies](#); or, if you’re interested in making cross-national comparisons, the [Comparative Study of Electoral Systems](#); various datasets from the [Pew Research Center](#); the [General Social Survey](#); or [Gallup](#). [The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research](#) collects many smaller datasets together in one place. For some of those databases, you can register a free account to download data; for some, access is provided by Columbia using your institutional login.

You may use several variables from a single dataset to investigate a question about differences between groups, correlations between variables, or predicting attitudes/behavior. Or you may analyze changes in variables over time—perhaps even incorporating data from more than one dataset into your analysis, e.g., something like comparing the [Global Terrorism Database](#) with data from elsewhere on public perceptions of terrorism to see how perceptions align with reality.

There will be no specific word minimum/maximum, but final papers will probably be between 15–20 pages of text (double-spaced). They should be written in APA format. The purpose of the assignment is for you to demonstrate the ability to think quantitatively as well as interpreting and conveying existing research in a broad and integrative way. You should draw upon as much background research as you can, and you should write a paper that is thought-provoking and logically sound.

You will submit three pieces of work: First a project proposal (due in Week 6); then a first draft of your paper (due in Week 10); finally, your finished paper (due in Week 13). Deadlines are 11.59pm on the dates listed in the Class Schedule.

The purpose of dividing the work up like this is 1) to spread the workload across the semester and 2) to give you feedback that you can use to refine your work along the way. For the project proposal, you will write a 6-8-page (double-spaced) paper describing your thinking about the project you hope to complete. This should include a preliminary literature review, identify the data you will be examining, and make a case for why this is an important project.

You will receive feedback and a grade from me on each assignment. I'll be looking for evidence of (a) comprehension of the kind of empirical and conceptual material that we cover in class; (b) effective and thoughtful use of empirical data in an effort to answer a question about political psychology; and (c) careful, integrative, and creative thought. More specific guidelines on style and content will be provided in due course.

Presentation (15%)

Near the end of the semester you will give a presentation on your project to the class. Your presentation will be no more than 10 minutes, including some time for class discussion.

Final grades

At the end of the semester, cumulative numeric scores will be rounded up or down to the nearest whole number, and letter grades will be determined according to the boundaries:

Letter grade:	A+	A	A-	B+	B	B-	C+	C	C-	D	F
Numeric score:	97	93	90	87	83	80	77	73	70	60	<60

Class schedule & readings

Week (date)	Topic & Readings
1	<p>Introductions & course overview</p> <p>There is no specific reading for this first class, but I'd like you to think about something you've read or heard about recently—maybe a news story, magazine article, study, or just a conversation with a friend—which raises interesting political psychological questions.</p>
2	<p>Political Ideology and Partisanship</p> <p>Harman, J. C. (2017). Ideology as Motivated Cultural Cognition. 1–33. https://www.psa.ac.uk/sites/default/files/conference/papers/2017/Ideology%20as%20Motivated%20Cultural%20Cognition.pdf</p> <p>Cohen, G. L. (2003). Party Over Policy: The Dominating Impact of Group Influence on Political Beliefs. <i>Journal of Personality and Social Psychology</i>, 85(5), 808–822. https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.85.5.808</p> <p>Gries, P. H. (2017). Does Ideology Matter? <i>Social Science Quarterly</i>, 98(1), 132–143. https://doi.org/10.1111/ssqu.12276</p>
3	<p>Moral Foundations Theory</p> <p>Graham, J., Haidt, J., & Nosek, B. A. (2009). Liberals and conservatives rely on different sets of moral foundations. <i>Journal of Personality and Social Psychology</i>, 96(5), 1029–1046. https://doi.org/10.1037/a0015141</p> <p>Fessler, D. M. T., Pisor, A. C., & Holbrook, C. (2017). Political Orientation Predicts Credulity Regarding Putative Hazards. <i>Psychological Science</i>, 28(5), 651–660. https://doi.org/10.1177/0956797617692108</p> <p>Sinn, J. S., & Hayes, M. W. (2016). Replacing the Moral Foundations: An Evolutionary-Coalitional Theory of Liberal-Conservative Differences. <i>Political Psychology</i>, n/a-n/a. https://doi.org/10.1111/pops.12361</p>
4	<p>Politicizing Psychology</p> <p>Tetlock, P. E. (1994). Political psychology or politicized psychology: Is the road to scientific hell paved with good moral intentions? <i>Political Psychology</i>, 15, 509-529. https://doi.org/10.2307/3791569</p> <p>Duarte, J. L., Crawford, J. T., Stern, C., Haidt, J., Jussim, L., & Tetlock, P. E. (2015). Political diversity will improve social psychological science. <i>Behavioral and Brain Sciences</i>, 38. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0140525X14000430</p> <p>Eitan, O., Viganola, D., Inbar, Y., Dreber, A., Johannesson, M., Pfeiffer, T., ... & Uhlmann, E. L. (2018). Is research in social psychology politically biased? Systematic empirical tests and a forecasting survey to address the</p>

	<p>controversy. <i>Journal of Experimental Social Psychology</i>, 79, 188-199. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jesp.2018.06.004</p>
5	<p>Political Knowledge and Understanding</p> <p>Bishop, G. F., Oldendick, R. W., Tuchfarber, A. J., & Bennett, S. E. (1980). Pseudo-opinions on public affairs. <i>Public Opinion Quarterly</i>, 44(2), 198–209. https://doi.org/10.1086/268584</p> <p>Caplan, B., Crampton, E., Grove, W. A., & Somin, I. (2013). Systematically Biased Beliefs about Political Influence: Evidence from the Perceptions of Political Influence on Policy Outcomes Survey. <i>PS: Political Science and Politics</i>, 46(4), 760–767. https://doi.org/10.1017/S1049096513001030</p> <p>Fernbach, P. M., Rogers, T., Fox, C. R., & Sloman, S. A. (2013). Political Extremism Is Supported by an Illusion of Understanding. <i>Psychological Science</i>, 24(6), 939–946. https://doi.org/10.1177/0956797612464058</p>
6	<p>Selective Exposure: Filter Bubbles and Echo Chambers</p> <p>Flaxman, S., Goel, S., & Rao, J. M. (2016). Filter Bubbles, Echo Chambers, and Online News Consumption. <i>Public Opinion Quarterly</i>, 80(S1), 298–320. https://doi.org/10.1093/poq/nfw006</p> <p>Barberá, P., Jost, J. T., Nagler, J., Tucker, J. A., & Bonneau, R. (2015). Tweeting from left to right: Is online political communication more than an echo chamber? <i>Psychological Science</i>, 26(10), 1531–1542. https://doi.org/10.1177/0956797615594620</p> <p>Garrett, R. K., & Stroud, N. J. (2014). Partisan Paths to Exposure Diversity: Differences in Pro- and Counterattitudinal News Consumption. <i>Journal of Communication</i>, 64(4), 680–701. https://doi.org/10.1111/jcom.12105</p> <p>***PROJECT PROPOSAL DUE***</p>
7	<p>(Fake) News and Political Persuasion</p> <p>Arendt, F. (2010). Cultivation Effects of a Newspaper on Reality Estimates and Explicit and Implicit Attitudes. <i>Journal of Media Psychology</i>, 22(4), 147–159. https://doi.org/10.1027/1864-1105/a000020</p> <p>King, G., Schneer, B., & White, A. (2017). How the news media activate public expression and influence national agendas. <i>Science</i>, 358(6364), 776–780. https://doi.org/10.1126/science.aao1100</p> <p>Diehl, T., Weeks, B. E., & Zúñiga, H. G. de. (2016). Political persuasion on social media: Tracing direct and indirect effects of news use and social interaction. <i>New Media & Society</i>, 18(9), 1875–1895. https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444815616224</p>
(3/18)	SPRING BREAK

8	<p>Motivated Reasoning and Correcting Misinformation</p> <p>Zollo, F., Bessi, A., Vicario, M. D., Scala, A., Caldarelli, G., Shekhtman, L., ... Quattrociochi, W. (2017). Debunking in a world of tribes. <i>PLOS ONE</i>, 12(7), e0181821. https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0181821</p> <p>Ståhl, T., & van Prooijen, J.-W. (2018). Epistemic rationality: Skepticism toward unfounded beliefs requires sufficient cognitive ability and motivation to be rational. <i>Personality and Individual Differences</i>, 122(Supplement C), 155–163. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2017.10.026</p> <p>Swire, B., Berinsky, A. J., Lewandowsky, S., & Ecker, U. K. H. (2017). Processing political misinformation: comprehending the Trump phenomenon. <i>Royal Society Open Science</i>, 4(3), 160802. https://doi.org/10.1098/rsos.160802</p>
9	<p>Politics and Social Emotions</p> <p>Iyengar, S., & Westwood, S. J. (2015). Fear and Loathing across Party Lines: New Evidence on Group Polarization. <i>American Journal of Political Science</i>, 59(3), 690–707. https://doi.org/10.1111/ajps.12152</p> <p>Combs, D. J. Y., Powell, C. A. J., Schurtz, D. R., & Smith, R. H. (2009). Politics, schadenfreude, and ingroup identification: The sometimes happy thing about a poor economy and death. <i>Journal of Experimental Social Psychology</i>, 45(4), 635–646. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jesp.2009.02.009</p> <p>Rosz, K., Stahel, L., & Frey, B. S. (2016). Digital social norm enforcement: Online firestorms in social media. <i>PLoS ONE</i>, 11(6). https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0155923</p>
10	<p>Political Losers</p> <p>Stricker, G. (1964). The operation of cognitive dissonance on pre- and postelection attitudes. <i>Journal of Social Psychology</i>, 63(1), 111–119. https://doi.org/10.1080/00224545.1964.9922218</p> <p>Craig, S. C., Martinez, M. D., Gainous, J., & Kane, J. G. (2006). Winners, Losers, and Election Context: Voter Responses to the 2000 Presidential Election. <i>Political Research Quarterly</i>, 59(4), 579–592. https://doi.org/10.1177/106591290605900407</p> <p>Curini, L., Jou, W., & Memoli, V. (2012). Satisfaction with Democracy and the Winner/Loser Debate: The Role of Policy Preferences and Past Experience. <i>British Journal of Political Science</i>, 42(2), 241–261. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0007123411000275</p> <p>***FIRST DRAFT OF PAPER DUE***</p>
11	<p>Political Distrust, Paranoia, and Conspiracy Theories</p> <p>Hofstadter, R. (1964). The paranoid style in American politics. <i>Harper's Magazine</i>, 229(1374), 77-86.</p>

	<p>Smallpage, S. M., Enders, A. M., & Uscinski, J. E. (2017). The partisan contours of conspiracy theory beliefs. <i>Research & Politics</i>, 4(4), 2053168017746554. https://doi.org/10.1177/2053168017746554</p> <p>Krouwel, A., Kutiyski, Y., van Prooijen, J.-W., Martinsson, J., & Markstedt, E. (2017). Does Extreme Political Ideology Predict Conspiracy Beliefs, Economic Evaluations and Political Trust? Evidence From Sweden. <i>Journal of Social and Political Psychology</i>, 5(2), 435–462. https://doi.org/10.5964/jspp.v5i2.745</p> <p>Jack Edelson, Alexander Alduncin, Christopher Krewson, James A. Sieja, & Joseph E. Uscinski. (2017). The Effect of Conspiratorial Thinking and Motivated Reasoning on Belief in Election Fraud. <i>Political Research Quarterly</i>, 70(4), 933–946. https://doi.org/10.1177/1065912917721061</p>
12	Presentations 1
13	<p>Presentations 2</p> <p>***FINAL PAPER DUE***</p>

Note: All required readings are available free to you online, most via your Barnard/Columbia institutional subscription. You will NOT have to pay for access to any of the papers listed above. If you are on campus, clicking the links in the digital syllabus should take you directly to full-text access. If you find yourself unable to access the full-text of any required reading after trying all the usual avenues (Google Scholar, the library databases, etc), let me know and I will help.

Additional Information

Workload

Seminars require much more work outside of class than do lectures. As a general rule for the amount of time students should expect to commit to classes, the college suggests three hours per week in and/or outside of class *per point*. For a 4-credit seminar, that means 12 hours total. Since we'll meet for two hours a week, you should spend around 10 hours outside of class doing readings, preparing your questions and ideas for class, and working on your individual project.

Late submission of work

Weekly discussion questions, posted to the Canvas discussion areas, are due at noon the day before we meet, so that Discussion Leaders have time to collect and organize them. Failure to submit your questions by this time will result in a 1 percent point deduction from your final class participation grade, as will unexcused absences. You should submit discussion questions whether or not you will be attending class.

The Prospectus, Draft paper, and Final paper should be uploaded to Canvas by 11:59pm on the date listed in the class schedule. This should allow you to ask me any last-minute questions in class that day, and it means that people presenting on the last day of class will have a chance to incorporate feedback from the class into their paper if they wish. For each day (or part thereof) an assignment is overdue, I will reduce the grade by one interval. For example, if a paper is A+ quality but is submitted 2 days late, it will receive a grade of A-.

Empirical Reasoning Center

If you are doing empirical data analysis for your paper, I will be happy to meet with you and give you help and guidance about statistical software. Another useful resource will be Barnard's Empirical Reasoning Center, where you can meet with ERC fellows who offer help using various software programs: <https://erc.barnard.edu/visit>

Academic Accommodations

If you are a student with a documented disability and require academic accommodations, you must visit the Office of Disability Services (ODS) for assistance. Students requesting eligible accommodations in their courses will need to first meet with an ODS staff member for an intake meeting. The procedures for registering with ODS can be found [here](https://health.columbia.edu/content/disability-services): (<https://health.columbia.edu/content/disability-services>). Once registered, students are required to visit ODS each semester to set up new accommodations and learn how to notify faculty. Accommodations are not retroactive, so it is best to register with ODS early each semester to access your accommodations. If you are registered with ODS, please see me to schedule a meeting outside of class in which you can bring me your faculty notification letter and we can discuss your accommodations for this course.

Academic Integrity

As members of this academic community, we are responsible for maintaining the highest level of personal and academic integrity: “[E]ach one of us bears the responsibility to participate in scholarly discourse and research in a manner characterized by intellectual honesty and scholarly integrity.... The exchange of ideas relies upon a mutual trust that sources, opinions, facts, and

insights will be properly noted and carefully credited. In practical terms, this means that, as students, you must be responsible for the full citations of others' ideas in all of your research papers and projects... [and] you must always submit your own work and not that of another student, scholar, or internet agent" (from the [Columbia University Faculty Statement on Academic Integrity](#)).

Wellness

It is important for undergraduates to recognize and identify the different pressures, burdens, and stressors you may be facing, whether personal, emotional, physical, financial, mental, or academic. We as a community urge you to make yourself--your own health, sanity, and wellness--your priority throughout this term and your career here. Sleep, exercise, and eating well can all be a part of a healthy regimen to cope with stress. Resources exist to support you in several sectors of your life, and we encourage you to make use of them. Should you have any questions about navigating these resources, please visit these sites:

<https://health.columbia.edu/content/counseling-and-psychological-services>

<http://blogs.cuit.columbia.edu/nightline/>

<https://universitylife.columbia.edu/student-resources-directory#health>

<http://barnard.edu/primarycare>

<http://barnard.edu/counseling>

<http://barnard.edu/wellwoman/about>