Psychology 398
Political Psychology
Spring 2007
Tuesdays 7-9:40pm Stevenson 3095
Instructor: Benjamin Newman
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Office Hours: Tuesdays 4-6pm

Required Texts and Reading

* PSY 398 Course Reader (Available at The College Copy Center)


In addition to the above, several reading assignments for this class have been posted on the WebCT PSY 398 class website. To access these readings, you must use your student username and password to log on to Peoplesoft where you can then access WebCT.

Course Overview

This course is organized as a reading and discussion based upper-division interdisciplinary seminar focusing on the relationships between politics, power, and consciousness. Political Psychology, as a sub-field of Political Science, utilizes various psychological concepts and theories toward the production of new dynamics in understanding and explaining various political behaviors, problems, and phenomena. Due to the difficulty of encapsulating the complexity of the collusion that exists between politics and psychology within a given political order, our attempt will be to synthesize various theoretical and conceptual frameworks to develop a more dynamic and holistic understanding of how cognition, values, attitudes, personality, need satisfaction, behavior, and experience come into alignment with institutionalized political power and processes. While including traditional components from the established sub-field, this course will focus upon expanding the study of the intersection between politics and psychology through utilizing Systems Theory along with Humanistic Psychology.

Course Learning Objectives

* Developing an understanding of the way the Political Environment and Human Psychology interact as intricately connected and interdependent systems.

* Developing an understanding of the psychology underlying various political behaviors while conversely understanding the political functions and implications of various psychological and behavioral phenomena.

* Understanding the role of Political Culture in managing and reflecting the interface between the Political Environment and our Beliefs, Attitudes, and Behaviors.

* Understanding the Humanistic critique of American Politics while exploring the political implications of various concepts from Humanistic Psychology such as: congruence,
empathic listening, unconditional positive regard, and self-actualization.

* Reaffirming the need for interdisciplinary or trans-disciplinary theories and approaches in understanding and creating solutions to the various micro and macro-scale social problems that are under-attended to by the individual disciplines within social science.

**Grading Policy**

This is a credit/no credit seminar course. There will NOT be a mid-term, final examination, or a research paper assignment for this class. The following are required for Credit in the Course:

1.) **Attendance and Seminar Participation**

   Consistent attendance and seminar participation are required for credit in this course. This class is scheduled for 16 meetings; anymore than 3 unexcused absences will result in NO CREDIT. The 22nd of May (Finals Week) will be the last class meeting.

2.) **Weekly Readings and Response Paper**

   The quality and depth of our seminar discussions (and the class) will depend upon whether participants have completed and intellectually engaged the assigned readings. Out of 15 assigned readings, requiring a minimum of 13 completed 2-page reading response papers is my objective way of making a minimum determination of whether the students are holding up their end of the bargain. The Response Papers should consist of the following:

   * A Thoughtful response to the theme or topic of the article(s), including listing any questions, comments, opinions, arguments, or alternative theories. These responses are an opportunity for you to not only wrestle with and analyze the subject matter and its scholarly works, but to begin to develop and explore your own interests pertaining to the study of politics and psychology. Students may choose to structure their response papers as part summary or description of the main themes of the readings and part opinion, analysis, critique, or discussion of the real world implications of the readings. The response papers need not be elegantly written or too elaborate in their analysis; they need only reflect that you have read and thought about what you have read.

   Response Papers should be delivered to the instructor via e-mail no later than noon on the Monday before the scheduled seminar on Tuesday. The purpose of this is for me to gauge student comprehension of the reading material prior to class lectures and discussions. Every effort will be made to turn student response papers back before class on Tuesday.

3.) **Academic Journal Article Presentation**

   Every student will select a class date in which they will present to the class an article from an academic journal which pertains to the study of politics and psychology. Each presentation should be around 15 minutes. The only requirement is that the student presents the class with an overview of the article, its topical theme(s) and research findings, and prepare for facilitating discussion about the article. This will be a CR/NC assignment. I will be available to give journal recommendations as well as any assistance needed in understanding selected articles.

4.) **Student Political Participation: Attending City Council Meetings**
In addition to reading about and discussing political participation, students are required to have their own participatory experience by attending 2 formal city council meetings of their choice and submitting a 2-3 page write-up about:

* What issues were up for deliberation or decision?
* In your opinion, where these issues of public importance or boring everyday little things that citizens need not be aware of.
* Did attendance increase your perception of the relevance of political decision-making processes—i.e., Is the world just the “way it is,” or is it the product of human decisions?
* What was your perception of those in charge? What was their perceived authority to you? How do you relate their perceived authority to other common authority figures, such as police officers, judges, workplace bosses, parents, religious leaders, etc.? Do City Council Members have Power?
* Self-Assessment: Were the meetings interesting or boring for you? Was this your first time attending a city council meeting? What does political democracy mean to you? Did witnessing local government in action add to your sense of what democracy “looks like”? Would you prefer to be aware of and participate in decision-making processes that affect you, your family, or your community, OR would you prefer to leave it up to those in charge?

Class Schedule & Readings

1/30: Introduction to the Course

Section I: Introduction

2/6: Introduction to Political Psychology

Readings:
* “The Psychologies Underlying Political Psychology.” David Sears; Leonie Huddy; Robert Jervis. From The Oxford Handbook of Political Psychology.

2/13: Politics and Human Nature

Readings:
* “What We Mean by Power.” Michael Parenti. From Power and the Powerless.

Section II: Personality and Political Behavior
2/20: Personality and Authoritarianism
Readings: * “Psychological Analysis of Types of Political Actors.” Fred Greenstein. From Personality and Politics.
* “Comprehensive Scores and Summary of Interviews.” Else Frenkel-Brunswik. From The Authoritarian Personality.

2/27: Personality and Political Leadership

Section III: The Psychology of the Political Being
Political Learning and the Formation of the Political Self
* “Social Learning and the Acquisition of Political Norms.” Herbert McClosky and Dennis Chong. From The American Ethos: Public Attitudes Toward Capitalism and Democracy.
* “Symbolic Politics: A Socio-Psychological Theory.” David O. Sears. From Explorations in Political Psychology.

3/6: Political Beliefs, Attitudes, Values, and Ideology
$ What’s the Matter with Kansas? Introduction and Chapter 1.

3/13: Social Influence and Public Opinion
$ What’s the Matter with Kansas? Chapter 2.

3/20: Political Cognition
$ What’s the Matter with Kansas? Chapter 2.

3/27: Political Cognition
**Readings:**  
* “Three Steps toward a Theory of Motivated Political Reasoning.” Milton Lodge and Charles Taber. From *Elements of Reason*  
$ What’s the Matter with Kansas? Chapters 3 and 4.

**4/3:**  
**Media Influence**  
**Readings:**  
@ “Experimental Demonstrations of the ‘Not-So-Minimal’ Consequences of Television News Programs.” Shanto Iyengar, Mark D. Peters and Donald R. Kinder. From *Political Psychology: Classic and Contemporary Readings.*  

**4/10**  
**Spring Break**  

**4/17:**  
**Reproduction of the Political Order**  
**Readings:**  
* “The Myths of Political Quietism,” and “Superpatriotism: The Importance of Being ‘Number One’.” Michael Parenti. From *Land Of Idols: Political Mythology in America.*  
* “The Legitimation of Class Dominance.” Michael Parenti. From *Power and the Powerless.*  
$ What’s the Matter with Kansas? Chapter 5.

**4/24:**  
**Political Participation and Democratic Deliberation**  
**Readings:**  
* “Plain Democratic Theory.” Tom DeLuca. From *The Two Faces of Political Apathy.*  

**5/1:**  
**Section IV: The Psychology of Social Conflict**  
**Social Identity and Group Conflict**  
**Readings:**  
* “Race in American Politics.” David O. Sears, John J. Hetts, Jim Sidanius, and
Lawrence Bobo. From Racialized Politics.

5/8: Ethnic and National Identity in American Politics


5/15: Social Movements and Protest Behavior


5/22: Humanistic Political Psychology

Readings: * Politics and the New Humanism. Walt Anderson