POS 4206: Political Psychology

Syllabus

Instructor Contact

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Course Information

Course Name	Political Psychology
Course ID & Section	POS 4206-1
Credit Hours	3
Semester/Year	Spring 2016
Location	PSY 106

Course Description

UCF Catalog Description:

The psychological analysis of political behavior, with emphasis on the individual rather than the political system; includes political attitudes and communication, leadership, and personality influences on politics.

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 the making foreign policy decisions. 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 in 2003 was Saddam Hussein and not someone else? Does not 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. 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: 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.

Required Readings

There are three books required for the course (in addition to current events, noted below). They are as follows:

1. Stoessinger, John G. 2010. *Why Nations Go To War* (11th Edition; but the 9th and 10th editions will work as well). Boston: Wadsworth Publishing.

2. Huddy, Leonie, David O.Sears, and Jack S. Levy (eds). 2013. *Oxford Handbook of Political Psychology*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

3. Doyle, Roddy. 1999. *A Star Called Henry*. New York: Penguin.

4. International news stories, accessed through yahoo.com.

Course Objectives

There are two broad sets of objectives for this class. The first is for you to gain knowledge about political psychology and foreign policy decision-making processes in international relations. The second objective is for you to further develop your academic skills in several areas: reading, writing, speaking, and thinking critically.

Course Requirements

Midterm	30%
Term Paper	35%
Final Exam	35%

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

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. 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 about 10 pages (approximate word count: 3250), double-spaced, normal fonts and margins; include page numbers, final word count, citations, and complete, formal bibliography.

You may also receive an additional bonus to your overall grade, up to 5%, based on your participation in class discussions (see note below).

Class discussion is a central component of this class. Students should come to class prepared to discuss the assigned readings and current international events. Class participation can take several forms such as commenting on a topic or asking or answering a question. Based on participation in class discussions, you may earn up to 5% bonus added to your final score in the course. Here's the system I use to keep track of class participation: any time you contribute to class discussion, write down a brief version of what you said on a piece of paper with your name on it and turn it in to me after class**.** That allows me to keep track of how often everyone participates in class. I may also occasionally give pop quizzes or in-class assignments that will count toward your participation bonus, but the majority of the bonus will come from actually participating in class discussion.

Grading Scale

90% or Higher	A
80% to 89.99%	B
70% to 79.99%	C
60% to 69.99%	D
Below 60%	F

Course Calendar

Week of January 11: Read Preface in *Why Nations Go To War*, and Chapter 1 in *Political Psychology*.

Week of January 20: Read Chapters 1 and 2 in *Why Nations Go To War*, and Part I in *A Star Called Henry*.

Week of January 25: Read Chapters 3 and 4 in *Why Nations Go To War*.

Week of February 1: Read Chapters 5, 7, and 8 in *Why Nations Go To War*.

Week of February 8: Read Chapters 9 and 10 in *Why Nations Go To War*.

Week of February 15: read Part II in *A Star Called Henry*; review and prepare for Midterm exam.

****Midterm: Friday, February 19****

Week of February 22: Read Chapter 3 in *Political Psychology*.

Week of February 29: Read Chapter 14 in *Political Psychology*.

Weeks of March 14 and March 21: Read Chapter 19 in *Political Psychology*. Additional lectures on *personality*.

Week of March 28: Reach Chapter 17 in *Political Psychology*. Additional lectures on *cognition*.

Week of April 4: Read Chapter 10 in *Political Psychology*. Read Part III in *A Star Called Henry*.

Week of April 11 and 18: Read Chapter 16 in *Political Psychology* and finish reading *A Star Called Henry*; review and prepare for Final exam.

****Research Paper Due Friday April 15****

****Final Exam: Friday April 29, 7:00 to 9:00****

Policies

I welcome and encourage questions, comments and discussion 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 me (or, if I am unavailable, the Department of Political Science) prior to the date or as soon as possible if prior notice is impossible.

Late papers are generally not accepted. If I accept a late paper because of circumstances, I will deduct 10% from the paper grade for every day it is late, up to a maximum of 75% deduction.

I cannot respond to grade inquiries by email.

Cell phones, pagers, and other such things that might go off and make noise are not permitted in class.

As reflected in the UCF Creed, integrity and scholarship are core values that should guide our conduct and decisions as members of the UCF community. Plagiarism and cheating contradict these values, and so are very serious academic offenses. Penalties can include a failing grade in an assignment or in the course, or suspension or expulsion from the university. All work you submit must be your own scholarly and creative effort. UCF's Golden Rule defines plagiarism as follows: "**whereby another's work is used or appropriated without any indication of the source, thereby attempting to convey the impression that such work is the student's own.**"

An electronic version of your research paper must be submitted the same day as the hard copy; this is for the purpose 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.

The University of Central Florida is committed to providing reasonable accommodations for all persons with disabilities. This syllabus is available in alternate formats upon request. Students who need accommodations must be registered with Student Disability Services, Ferrell Commons Room 185, phone (407) 823-2371, TTY/TDD only phone (407) 823-2116, before requesting accommodations from the professor.

Third parties may be selling class notes and other materials from this class without my authorization. Please be aware that such class materials may contain errors, which could affect your performance or grade. Use these materials at your own risk.