POS 4206 - POLITICAL PSYCHOLOGY

Section: 0001

College of Sciences

School of Politics, Security, and Intl Affairs

Course Information

Term: Fall 2025
Class Meeting Days: TR
Class Meeting Time: 12:00PM - 01:15PM
Class Meeting Location: CB1 O320
Modality: P
Credit Hours: 3.00

Instructor Information

Name: Kelsey Larsen
Title: Assistant Professor
Office Location: HPH305F
Office Hours
1:30pm-3:00pm Tuesday and Thursday (and if needed, by appointment)
Email: Kelsey.Larsen@ucf.edu

Teaching Assistants

Name: Shivani Persaud
Email: Shivani.Persaud@ucf.edu

Course Description

POS 4206 COS-POLS 3(3,0)Political Psychology: PR: ENC 1102 or POS 2041 or C.I. 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. Occasional.

The purpose of this course is to train learners to identify and evaluate the multiple psychological inputs that inform political decision-making. It uses psychology, behavioral economics, and neuroscience to explore the sometimes complimentary, sometimes at-odds nature of cognitive and affective inputs to choices, and explores how those inputs can differ among various political stakeholders and environments. The course material begins with a consideration of traditional and emerging theories of psychological behavior, considering how things like heuristic biases, utility calculations, and stress might impact political decision-making processes. It then has students consider the lessons of those theories in a variety of contemporary political issues, including foreign and domestic policies. Finally, the course concludes by considering the influence of morality on political decision-making—helping students learn not just how actors make decisions and what decisions they make, but also what decisions they should make. By the end of this course, learners will be able to more appropriately identify and interact with the many decision-making inputs of others and themselves, and in doing so, better evaluate and implement political decisions.

Student Learning Outcomes

When you successfully complete this course, you will be able to:

- Identify and explain the major theories of psychological decision-making in political science.
- Apply lessons of psychological decision-making theories to historical and contemporary
  policy cases, as well as your own personal experiences.
- Clearly communicate the inputs to political choices for diverse audiences.

Required Course Materials and Resources

None - see Modules for free linked materials

Course Assessment and Grading Procedure

Graded Assignments:

- Class Participation (20%)
- Reflections (15%)
- Exam 1 (20%)
- Exam 2 (20%)
- Final Exam (25%)

Class Participation (200 points):
Students are expected to attend every class session, to have read any required readings for a class section before attending that class, and to actively listen to and participate in class discussions. Class participation will be evaluated based on items such as your active engagement with in-class discussions, your completion of assigned readings, and your timely submittal of assignments. Students can access the Participation Rubric in the 'Assignments' section of the course site to see more information about how participation is graded.

Reflections (150 points):
Students will use their original thinking and writing to complete a series of ten short Reflections throughout the semester, in which they offer responses to instructor-provided prompts relevant to the most recent class Modules.

Exams 1 and 2 (400 points total):
Students will take two in-class exams surveying the material from the preceding weeks of instruction. The instructor will provide information on the specific format and expectations in the weeks prior to the Exams.

Final Written Exam (250 points):

Students will complete a Final Written Exam on Thursday December 4, 2025
from 10:00am – 12:50pm. The instructor will provide information on the specific format

and expectations in the weeks prior to the Exam.

Grading Scale

Letter Grade	Percentage	Total points
A	93%-100%	925- 1000
A-	90-93%	895 - 924
B+	87-89%	865 - 894
B	84-86%	835 - 864
B-	80-83%	795 - 834
C+	77-79%	765 - 794
C	74-76%	735 - 764
C-	70-73%	695 - 734
D+	67-69%	665 - 694
D	64-66%	635 - 664
D-	60-63%	595 - 634
F	0-59%	0-594

Policies for Course Grade

Policy on Late Reflections

Students are expected to submit all Reflections by the assigned due dates. But, we all know that sometimes work/life/otherwise gets in the way—our work schedules get moved, or our car breaks down, or we catch a cold, and just can't quite meet the deadline set. In those cases, **late reflections are accepted with a half-grade deduction** (e.g., A to A-) for every 24 hour period the response is late. Be smart, and use that policy to your strategic benefit—noting that you can still technically earn Bs on assignments that are 2-3 days late, but also that anything more than 10 days late is a failing assignment. However, keep in mind that this policy applies only to reflections, and not to other categories of assignments/exams.

Policy on Absences

As noted in the Class Participation grade section, it is expected that any student enrolling in the course is committed to attending every class session, completing course tasks, and engaging in course discussions. Excused absences only apply to when a student experiences an emergency (e.g., hospitalization, family death, religious observance, military service, emergency medical provider visit)—any students in this category should contact the instructor as soon as possible to talk about opportunities to catch up on material. However, if a student chooses to miss class for a work obligation, a previously scheduled appointment, non-University affiliated travel, or other reasons, that absence is not considered excused. It will affect the students' participation grade, and the student should subsequently borrow notes from classmates or book an Office Hours appointment to ensure they do not fall behind.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) Use Policy

All ideas, analysis, and conceptual work you submit must be entirely your own. You may use AI tools only for basic spelling and grammar checks. To be sure that you're effectively learning the material enough to succeed thoroughly on the exams, using AI to generate, outline, or substantially revise ideas, arguments, or text is prohibited.

Disability Access & Accommodations

The University of Central Florida is committed to providing equal access to all students with disabilities (ADHD, learning disabilities, Autism, chronic medical conditions, physical disabilities, etc.). To receive consideration for reasonable disability-related course accommodations, disabled students must contact Student Accessibility Services (SAS) and complete the steps required for SAS to review accommodation requests. More information can be found on the UCF Student Accessibility Services website under the Start Here tab or by contacting SAS directly (Ferrell Commons 185; sas@ucf.edu; Phone - 407-823-2371).

Approved accommodations are shared with course instructors via the SAS Course Accessibility Letter. Implementing certain accommodations may require discussion about specific considerations of the course design, course learning objectives, and the individual academic and course challenges experienced by the student. While students with disabilities or chronic health needs are also encouraged to discuss any course concerns with professors in addition to contacting SAS, professors are not required to facilitate disability-related adjustments to the course unless the professor has received a Course Accessibility Letter from SAS that outlines approved accommodations.

Academic Integrity

Students should familiarize themselves with UCF's Code of Conduct at Student Conduct and Integrity Office. According to Section 1, "Academic Misconduct," students are prohibited from engaging in:

a. Academic misconduct is defined as any submitted work or behavior that obstructs the instructor of record's ability to accurately assess the student's understanding or completion of the course materials or degree requirements (e.g., assignment, quiz, and/or exam). Examples of academic misconduct include but are not limited to: plagiarism, unauthorized assistance to complete an academic exercise; unauthorized communication with others during an examination, course assignment, or project; falsifying or misrepresenting academic work; providing misleading information to create a personal advantage to complete course/degree requirements; or multiple submission(s) of academic work without permission of the instructor of record.

b. Any student who knowingly helps another violate academic behavior standards is also in violation of the standards.

c. Commercial Use of Academic Material. Selling of course material to another person and/or uploading course material to a third-party vendor without authorization or without the express written permission of the University and the instructor of record. Course materials include but are not limited to class notes, the instructor of record's slide deck, tests, quizzes, labs, instruction sheets, homework, study guides, and handouts.

d. Soliciting assistance with academic coursework and/or degree requirements. The solicitation of assistance with an assignment, lab, quiz, test, paper, etc., without authorization of the instructor of record or designee is prohibited. This includes but is not limited to asking for answers to a quiz, trading answers, or offering to pay another to complete an assignment. It is considered Academic Misconduct to solicit assistance with academic coursework and/or degree requirements, even if the solicitation did not yield actual assistance (for example, if there was no response to the solicitation).

Responses to Academic Dishonesty, Plagiarism, or Cheating

Students should also familiarize themselves with the procedures for academic misconduct in UCF's student handbook, *The Golden Rule*. UCF faculty members have a responsibility for students' education and the value of a UCF degree, and so seek to prevent unethical behavior and respond to academic misconduct when necessary. Penalties for violating rules, policies, and instructions within this course can range from a zero on the exercise to an "F" letter grade in the course. In addition, an Academic Misconduct report could be filed with the Office of Student Conduct and Academic Integrity, which could lead to disciplinary warning, disciplinary probation, or deferred suspension or separation from the University through suspension, dismissal, or expulsion with the addition of a "Z" designation on one's transcript.

Being found in violation of academic conduct standards could result in a student having to disclose such behavior on a graduate school application, being removed from a leadership position within a student organization, the recipient of scholarships, participation in University activities such as study abroad, internships, etc.

Let's avoid all of this by demonstrating values of honesty, trust, and integrity. No grade is worth compromising your integrity and moving your moral compass. Stay true to doing the right thing: take the zero, not a shortcut.

Title IX

Title IX prohibits sex discrimination, including sexual misconduct, sexual violence, sexual harassment, and retaliation. If you or someone you know has been harassed or assaulted, you can find resources available to support the victim, including confidential resources and information concerning reporting options at Let's Be Clear and UCF Cares.

For more information on access and community engagement, Title IX, accessibility, or UCF's complaint processes contact:

- Title IX – ONAC – Office of Nondiscrimination & Accommodations Compliance & askanadvocate@ucf.edu

- Disability Accommodation – Student Accessibility Services – Student Accessibility Services & sas@ucf.edu
- Access and Community Engagement (including the Ginsberg Center for Inclusion and Community Engagement, Military and Veteran Student Success, and HSI Initiatives)
- UCF Compliance and Ethics Office – Compliance, Ethics, and Risk Office & complianceandethics@ucf.edu
- The Ombuds Office is a safe place to discuss concerns.

Reporting an Incident or Issue

If you believe you have experienced discrimination by any faculty or staff member, contact the Office of Nondiscrimination & Accommodations Compliance via the ONAC website or at 407-823-1336. You can also choose to report using the UCF Integrity Line either anonymously or as yourself at 1-855-877-6049 or by using the online form. UCF cares about you and takes every report seriously. For more information see the Reporting an Incident or Issue Webpage.

Deployed Active-Duty Military Students

Students who are deployed active duty military and/or National Guard personnel and require accommodation should contact their instructors as soon as possible after the semester begins and/or after they receive notification of deployment to make related arrangements.

Campus Safety

At UCF Public Safety and Police, safety is the top priority. Emergencies on campus are rare, but if one should arise, it's important to be familiar with some basic safety and security concepts.

- In an emergency, always dial 911.
- Every UCF classroom has an **Emergency Procedure Guide** posted on a wall near the door, which will show you how to respond to a variety of situations. This guide can also be found online here.
- In the event of an active threat, remember **AVOID, DENY, DEFEND**. Choose the best course of action and act immediately. Watch the video here to learn more.
    - **AVOID**. Pay attention to your surroundings and have an exit plan. Get as much distance and as many barriers between you and the threat as quickly as possible.

    - **DENY.** When avoiding is difficult or impossible, deny the threat access to you and your space. Lockdown by creating barriers, turning the lights off and remaining quiet and out of sight. Make sure your cell phone is silenced, but do not turn it off.
    - **DEFEND.** When you are unable to put distance between yourself and the threat, be prepared to protect yourself. Commit to your actions, be aggressive and do not fight fairly. Do whatever it takes to survive.
- For emergencies on campus, UCF will utilize the UCF Alert system. All UCF students, faculty and staff are automatically enrolled to receive these email and text alerts, however, it's a good idea to frequently ensure your contact information is up to date.

Financial Aid Accountability

All instructors/faculty are required to document students' academic activity at the beginning of each course. In order to document that you began this course, please complete this activity by the end of the first week of classes or as soon as possible after adding the course. Failure to do so may result in a delay in the disbursement of your financial aid.

Class Schedule

Note: Class schedule is subject to change; any modifications will be announced by the instructor.

Week	Topic
1	Course Introduction
2	Rational Decision-makers
3	Biases
4	Personality
5	Morality
6	Emotions
7	Stress
8	Exam I
9	Social Identities
10	Immigration
11	Education
12	Peace/War

Week	Topic
13	Environment
14	Exam II
15	Final Review
16	Final Written Exam