POL 608 – Foundations, Political Psychology
Fall 2017
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Course Description: POL 608 provides a broad introduction to the field of political psychology. It is designed to prepare you for further study in this area. We will survey many of the major areas of political psychology, although the syllabus focuses on recent empirical research.

Course Objectives: In this course, you will become familiar with the major areas of political psychology. You will learn how to synthesize and critically analyze existing research in the field. In our class meetings, you will gain experience leading class discussions and learn how to dissect research articles.

Assignments and Grading: Course grades will be based on three components: (1) written papers (60%); (2) the quality of your participation in weekly seminars (20%); and (3) your role as discussion leader during one of the weeks of the class (20%).

Participation. The quality of the seminar discussion depends in large part on the effort that you put toward the class. Your participation grade will be based on the quality (not quantity) of your contribution throughout the entire semester. This means that you need to read the assigned readings closely and give yourself enough time to reflect upon the material.

Discussion Leader. Every student will lead the discussion for a class, which will give you experience integrating and talking about a body of work before your peers. Discussion leaders are expected to come to class with a 15-minute power point presentation in which you give a summary of one the recommended readings (see articles denoted with an * on the syllabus) and provide 2-3 questions that we will discuss in class. Your summary should include a brief description of the author’s theory and hypotheses. You should then discuss how the author tests his or her theory and describe whether or not the empirical results support the argument. Your discussion questions should draw out the connections between the readings for that week (including the article you summarized) and should be emailed to the entire class, including me, by 5 pm on Monday. I expect the presentation to be polished but it should not exceed 15 minutes (so practice if you are worried about running over 15 minutes!).

Written Papers. There will be four papers (approximately 6 pages in length), on topics of your choice related to the readings. In these papers, you will reflect critically upon the readings from a particular section, synthesizing and criticizing the readings from the previous week(s). Your paper can focus on methodological or theoretical issues that the readings raise. The key, however, is that you do more than summarize what previous scholars have found. These papers may take a variety of approaches, including: a discussion and attempted resolution of what you see as conflicting ideas and/or findings; a critical reaction to some theoretical proposition or program of research; or a synthesis of perspectives that have been presented as competing or unrelated. Whichever approach you adopt, your paper should consider the development of key concepts and the progression of knowledge in a particular area of the literature.
**Required Readings:**


Most of the readings can be obtained electronically. For readings that are not available online, I will place a pdf on Blackboard.

**Schedule of Readings**

**August 29: Introduction to the Course & Overviews of the Field**


**September 5: Labor Day Holiday (no class)**

In preparation for the week of September 13, you might want to skim Fiske and Taylor (1991) *Social Cognition*, Ch. 11 (“Cognitive Approaches to Attitudes”).

**September 12: Attitudes and Belief Systems** [Discussion Leader Week]

Recommended Readings


September 19 Values, Value Conflict, and Ambivalence

**PAPER 1 DUE: COVERS MATERIAL FROM AUG 30 THROUGH SEPT 19.**


Recommended Readings


September 26: Knowledge and Political Sophistication [Discussion Leader Week]


**Recommended Readings**

**October 3: Political Cognition I**  [Discussion Leader Week]


**Recommended Readings**


October 10: Political Cognition II

PAPER 2 DUE: COVERS MATERIAL FROM SEPT 27 THROUGH OCT 10.


Recommended Readings


October 17: Automaticity, Implicit Attitudes, and Motivated Reasoning [Discussion Leader Week]


Recommended Readings
Critical Review’s 2012 Special Issue on Political Dogmatism (Symposium on Charles S. Taber and Milton Lodge’s “Motivated Skepticism in the Evaluation of Political Beliefs”)

October 24: Emotion [Discussion Leader Week]


Recommended Readings
October 31: Political Communication and the Effect of the Mass Media

PAPER 3 DUE: COVERS MATERIAL FROM OCT 18 THROUGH OCT 31.


Recommended Readings

Dennis Chong and James Druckman. 2007. “Framing Theory.” Annual Review of Political Science 10: 103-26. (There are about a dozen important articles by Druckman on framing. Read all of these before you take your qualifying exams.)

November 7: Social Identity [Discussion Leader Week]

**Recommended Readings**


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**November 14: Race and Prejudice** [Discussion Leader Week]


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**Recommended Readings**


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**November 21: No class (Thanksgiving Break)**

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**November 28: Personality, Bio-politics, and Neurophysiology** [Discussion Leader Week]


**Recommended Readings**


**December 5: Critical Perspectives on the Field**

PAPER 4 DUE: COVERS MATERIAL FROM NOV 8-DEC 5.


Come prepared to discuss your reactions to the critiques raised by this week’s articles. I would also like you to consider the following two questions, which will orient our discussion for this week: Where have scholars made most important advances in the field of political psychology? What big questions remain unanswered?