PS111: Political Psychology  
**Last updated 12/5/13**

Spring 2014

**Professor:**  
Debbie Schildkraut  
210 Packard Hall, 7-3492  
deborah.schildkraut@tufts.edu

**Teaching assistant:**  
Jean-Louis Romanet  
jl.romanet@tufts.edu

CLASS MEETS:  
J+ Block: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 3:00 – 4:15pm, 212 Anderson Hall  
Wednesdays, 10:30 – 11:30am, Thursdays, 1:30 – 2:30pm, and by appointment.

---

**Course Description:**  
Political psychology is an interdisciplinary field that employs social and cognitive psychological theories to examine the world of politics. It is concerned with the role of human thought, emotion, and behavior in politics, and in the linkages between these elements. In this course, we will explore several key approaches to understanding the psychology of political behavior and will examine the psychological origins of citizens’ political beliefs and actions from a variety of perspectives. Topics covered include: information processing, inter-group conflict, attribution, personality, stereotyping, and prejudice.

The field of political psychology is vast, and there are several rich research traditions in the discipline that will not be covered in this course. Instead, the course focuses on a broad range of issues that deal with how ordinary citizens make sense of their political surroundings and how their understandings of the political world are linked to their political beliefs and behaviors. We will study the roles of political leaders, the media, race, ethnicity, gender, norms, and emotions in shaping how individual citizens experience politics. Most of the readings emphasize politics in the United States, though the field itself speaks to every aspect of political science.

We will also focus on methodological concerns in this course, spending time critiquing how scholars in political psychology test their arguments and designing our own approaches. The works we read use surveys, interviews, and/or experiments to collect data and investigate the dynamics of political attitudes and behaviors. Critiquing and designing such research techniques will help you to become critical consumers of social science information and provide an opportunity for your own creativity to be brought to bear on empirical investigations of the relationships between citizens and politics. This course fulfills the Political Science Department’s methodology requirement.

You are expected to come to class prepared to discuss issues raised in the readings. I expect you to have read the assignments before class on the date they are listed and to have something to say about them.
For weeks in which there is more than one reading listed, please read the items in the order in which they appear on the syllabus.

I strongly encourage you to follow current events and to read a national newspaper, such as The New York Times, or watch The PBS News Hour several times per week. I will be relying on current political issues and events for illustration, and I welcome your examples and observations in this regard.

Course Readings:
The following books are required reading for the course. They are on sale at the bookstore and on reserve in the library:


There are additional required readings posted on TRUNK (T) under “Resources” → “Readings”.

Course website:
If you are already registered for PS111, you should have access to the course website on TRUNK (http://trunk.tufts.edu). After you log in, select the link to our course across the top of the screen or under “My Sites.” There, you will find the syllabus, course readings, and links to websites that you may find useful as you work on assignments. The main “Course Tool” to use for our course is “Resources.” In it, you will find folders for readings, examples of past successful assignments, external links, citation guides, and more. I will use TRUNK to send emails to the class (using “Mailtool”) regarding announcements and possible syllabus changes or updates, and you will be required to use TRUNK to complete assignments. TRUNK automatically uses your “tufts.edu” email address; if this is not your preferred email address, then you must make sure that emails sent to you through TRUNK are forwarded to the appropriate location. It is your responsibility to make sure that you receive and read class emails.

Assignments and Grading:
Class participation: 5%
Reaction paper: 10%
Experiment design: 15%
Exam 1: 20%
Exam 2: 20%
Final paper prospectus: 5%
Final paper: 25%
All assignments are graded out of 100 points. I take off 5 points for every day that an assignment is late. I use the chart below to convert numbers to letters:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number Range</th>
<th>Letter Grade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>97 – 100</td>
<td>A+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>94 – 96</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>90 – 93</td>
<td>A-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>87 – 89</td>
<td>B+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>84 – 86</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80 – 83</td>
<td>B-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>77 – 79</td>
<td>C+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>74 – 76</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70 – 73</td>
<td>C-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65 – 70</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Below 65</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Important Dates:**

- Tues, 2/4: Experiment workshop
- Thurs, 2/6: Experiment design due
- Tues, 2/11: Emotions workshop
- Thurs, 2/20: NO CLASS, Monday schedule
- Tues, 3/4: Exam 1
- Tues, 3/18: NO CLASS, Spring Break
- Thurs, 3/20: NO CLASS, Spring Break
- Thurs, 3/27: One paragraph description of final paper topic due
- Thurs, 4/17: Paper prospectus due
- Tues, 4/22: Exam 2
- Mon, 5/5: Research paper due in Packard 210 by 11am (hardcopies only!)

**Reaction paper:**

You are to write one reaction paper to the readings for a class of your choosing (4 - 5 numbered pages; double-spaced, 1-inch margins). Your paper should include a brief summary of the arguments and evidence/methods used and a critical evaluation of either the method of analysis or the argument itself. If more than one reading is assigned for a given week, you may respond to any or all of the readings— you are not required to write about every reading/chapter assigned. Pick an argument or section that is most thought provoking to you. For these papers, DEPTH is better than BREADTH. Try to have the paper be about ONE main thought or argument that you develop throughout the paper. Do not provide a laundry list of reactions to the reading.

The reaction paper is worth 10% of your grade. You will select the week for your paper during the 2nd course session. Papers must be handed in at the start of class on the day for which you signed up. You may not hand in a reaction paper for a week that has already passed. Remember that proper grammar, correct spelling, and appropriate citation of sources are minimum requirements for acceptable papers.
Examples of successful reaction papers are available for you to see on TRUNK (“Resources” → “Examples of successful papers”). Citation guides are available under “Resources.”

Note that the last day to drop the class or opt to take it pass/fail is **February 19th**. If you would like graded feedback before that date, be sure to sign up for an early reaction paper.

**Experiment design:**
This assignment asks you to design an experiment that can be used to test a hypothesis related to theories in political psychology. The write-up for the experiment should be about 5 pages long and is worth 15% of your course grade. You will receive more instructions soon (including specific guidance regarding aspects of experimental design, such as control groups, random assignment, etc.). The assignment is due in class on **Feb. 6**. You must come to class on **Feb. 4** prepared to talk about your design. An example of a successful experiment design assignment is available for you to see on TRUNK (“Resources” → “Examples of successful papers”).

**Research Paper:**
Thirty percent of your course grade is based on your work for a research paper. The paper itself should be about 18 pages (numbered, double-spaced, 1-inch margins) and is worth 25% of your course grade. The prospectus for the paper is worth 5% of your course grade. You will have a lot of freedom in choosing the topic for your paper, though I provide suggestions, guidelines, and expectations to help you arrive at a workable idea. The main requirement is that your project be a research proposal on any political psychology topic.

First, you need to select a broad topic in political psychology that interests you. Then you need to narrow your topic to a specific, testable research question. Designing your proposal will require you to:
- review relevant scholarly literature
- identify remaining controversies, problems, or unresolved issues
- design a study that would allow scholars to investigate a specific, testable question that derives from the remaining controversies and unresolved issues you’ve identified.

Examples of appropriate topics students have successfully written about in the past include:
- An experiment designed to investigate the conditions under which people would be more or less likely to vote for a woman president.
- An experiment designed to investigate the role of humor in voter choice and memory.
- Studies designed to capture the role of perceived candidate traits on voter choice, such as intelligence, physical attractiveness, and skin color.

This assignment will require you to find, read, and incorporate scholarly academic readings not included on our syllabus. **I do not** expect you to collect your own data or to conduct your own experiments or surveys. You **are** allowed to use your experiment design as a starting point for this research proposal.
More information about this assignment will be distributed in class in early October. A one-paragraph description of your paper topic is due in class on **Thursday, March 27**. **TWO copies** of a 5-page (minimum) prospectus are due in class on **Thurs, April 17**. The prospectus should include:

- A detailed description of your paper topic and research strategy
- An outline of the paper
- A list of the sources you have consulted to date

One copy is for me, one is for the ps111 TA. On **April 17**, you are also expected to email copies of your prospectus to the students in your peer review group. On our last class session, students will meet in assigned groups to critique each other’s ideas.

Each student is expected to meet with me or with our TA at least once to discuss the research papers. The paper itself is due at 11am on **Monday, May 5**.

An example of a successful research paper for this class is available for you to see on TRUNK (“Resources” → “Examples of successful papers”).

**Academic integrity:**
Assignments you submit for this course will be reported to the Office of the Dean of Student Affairs if any evidence of academic dishonesty is detected. When in doubt, cite! The Office of the Dean of Students publishes a thorough pamphlet on academic integrity and plagiarism. You can find it at: [http://uss.tufts.edu/studentaffairs/judicialaffairs/Academic%20Integrity%2010-11.pdf](http://uss.tufts.edu/studentaffairs/judicialaffairs/Academic%20Integrity%2010-11.pdf).

**Disability Services:**
If you are requesting an accommodation or modification of assignments due to a documented disability, you must register with the Disability Services Office at the beginning of the semester and let me know as soon as possible so that I am able to reserve appropriate spaces as needed: [http://uss.tufts.edu/arc/disability/](http://uss.tufts.edu/arc/disability/)

---

**Topics and Readings:**

**Week 1:**
Th, Jan. 16: **Introduction: What is political psychology?**
Reading:
- None

**Week 2:**
Tu, Jan. 21: **Opinion formation: Converse and his legacy**
Reading:
- PS111 syllabus

**sign up for reaction papers today**

Th, Jan. 23: Information processing: Rationality
Reading:
  o Pp. 293-298; 301-303.

Week 3:
Tu, Jan. 28: Information processing: Motivated Reasoning
Reading:

**Experiment assignment handed out today**

Th, Jan. 30: Using Experiments in Political Psychology
Reading:

Week 4:
Tu, Feb. 4: Experiment workshop
Reading:
No additional reading
• Come to class prepared to talk about your experiment design
Th, Feb. 6: Affective Intelligence and Emotions in Politics
Reading:

**Experiment design due in class today.**

Week 5:
Tu, Feb. 11: Emotions, continued
Reading:
  - Come to class prepared to discuss in small groups the methods and findings in this reading.

Th, Feb. 13: Political knowledge and (mis)information
Reading:

Week 6:
Tu, Feb. 18: Personality
Reading:
- Mondak, Jeffery. Personality and the Foundations of Political Behavior:
  - Ch 1 (pp. 1 – 8); Ch 2 (pp. 24 – 26; 36 – 65); Ch 3 (pp. 66 – 77).

Th, Feb. 20: NO CLASS, Monday Schedule

Week 7:
Tu, Feb. 25: Personality
Reading:
- Mondak, Jeffery. Personality and the Foundations of Political Behavior:
  - Ch 4 (pp. 92 – 104); Ch 5 (entire); Ch 6 (pp. 150 – 169).
Th, Feb. 27: Make up day/Review session
Reading:
• No additional reading. Come to class prepared with questions to help you study for the exam.

Week 8:
Tu, March 4: Exam 1

Th, March 6: Stereotypes
Reading:
  o Read pp. 377-381, 383-388.

**Research paper guide handed out today**

Week 9:
Tu, March 11: Stereotypes and Identity in the Age of Obama
Reading:
  • Optional: take an Implicit Association Test at: https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/demo/ (can also find link in TRUNK: “Resources” → “External Links” → “Miscellaneous”)

Th, March 13: Group Conflict
Readings:
Week 10:
Tu, March 18 – Th, March 20: NO CLASS: spring break

Week 11:
Tu, March 25: **Group conflict continued**
• No additional reading

Th, March 27: **Group conflict workshop and finding sources in Political Psychology**
• No additional reading
**1 paragraph description of paper topic due in class today**

Week 12:
Tu, April 1: **Group violence**
Reading:

Th, April 3: **Group violence**: Discuss “Obedience” and watch “Basic Instincts” in class.
**BEFORE CLASS**, watch:
• (T) Streaming video of “Obedience.” Write down answers to accompanying questions. You will not hand in your answers, but will use them during today’s discussion.
Reading:

Week 13:
Tu, April 8: **Group violence: Bystanders and altruists**
Reading:

Th, April 10: **Psychological Operations: Public opinion in Wartime**
Reading:

**Week 14:**
Tu, April 15: Attribution
Reading:
- (T) OPTIONAL: news accounts of some examples we’ll be discussing in class:

Th, April 17: Attribution; exam 2 review
- No additional reading

**Paper prospectus due in class today. Bring 2 copies! Send copies to your group via email**

**Week 15:**
Tu, April 22: Exam 2

Th, April 24: Last day of class: Small group critiques of paper prospectus
Reading:
- Prospectuses from students in your peer review group.

***remember to fill out course evaluations***

Mon, May 5: Research paper due in Packard 210 by 11am (hardcopies only!)