

**PSC 32-444/PSY 33-344/PAI 05-444**  
**Political Psychology**  
Tuesday/Thursday 10-11:15 am  
Olin 209

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Mood-Bridwell 212  
Office Hours:  
Wed. 1-4 pm,  
and by appointment

#### COURSE DESCRIPTION

Do you inherit your political ideology from your parents or is it something you learn as you grow up? What is the connection between your personality and your political beliefs? Do our emotions help us make informed political decisions or prevent us from considering all the facts? In this course, we will apply theories from psychology to political phenomena in order to understand how psychological processes influence political thoughts and actions. However, we will also consider this relationship from the other direction: how do political events play into cognitive and emotional biases to persuade, motivate, or discourage people? Here, we will explore the impact of everything from campaign advertisements to the threat of terrorism. Throughout each element of this investigation we will also consider how the knowledge was acquired—what type of research was conducted? How could it be improved? How valid are the conclusions? In answering each of these questions in the context of the political psychology framework, we can evaluate the role of “the political brain” in shaping American democracy.

#### COURSE OBJECTIVES

1. *Recognize* the ways in which psychological theories apply in the political world.
2. *Evaluate* social scientific arguments and evidence and *design* research that builds on these arguments.
3. *Synthesize* and *communicate* technical, interdisciplinary research to a broader audience.
4. *Critically reflect* on our own political knowledge and biases and their role in our own decision-making.
5. *Conduct* your own political psychological study and draw meaningful conclusions.
6. *Apply* the tools of reading, writing and research in the discipline to deconstruct arguments and engage in critical analysis.

This course is part of the Investigating Identity Paideia cluster. As such, you will also investigate how individual and group identities of various types inform who we are or who we believe ourselves to be. Specifically, we will focus on the questions of:

7. Where does identity come from? How is identity created? What are the sources of identity? How do we recognize identity?
8. How do multiple identities intersect and coexist?

#### MATERIALS

Albertson, Bethany and Shana Kushner Gadarian. 2015. *Anxious Politics*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Hibbing, John R., Kevin B. Smith and John R. Alford. 2015. *Predisposed: Liberals, Conservatives, and the Biology of Political Differences*. New York: Routledge.

- Benforado, Adam. 2015. *Unfair: The New Science of Criminal Injustice*. New York: Crown Publishing.
- Theiss-Morse, Elizabeth. 2009. *Who Counts as an American? The Boundaries of National Identity*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

## ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION

### 1. Course Preparation Assignments (10%)

In the schedule below, you'll see an assignment listed with each day's reading. These assignments are designed to get you thinking about the class topics before you come to class and will help us get the discussion started each week. **You should post your responses to these assignments on Moodle**; an assignment tab will be created for each day's prompt. Most assignments will require a minimum of 1-3 paragraphs. Each week I will randomly choose student assignments to assess, evaluating a total of 10 course preparation assignments for each student over the course of the semester. These assignments will be graded on a 5-point scale:

*Score of 5:* Meets or exceeds required length; strongly engaged, high-quality exploration of the question or topic at hand.

*Score of 4:* Meets or exceeds required length; meets my expectations for engagement with material.

*Score of 3:* High-quality exploration but too short, or meets required length but is too superficial

*Score of 2:* Too short and too superficial

*Score of 1:* Missing or unacceptable assignment.

### 2. Investigating Identity (15%)

More and more, academics, journalists and other experts are writing news articles, editorials and blog posts that connect findings from social science to current social and political events. Their goal is to take analytical research and use it to persuasively advocate for a particular outcome or change. For this assignment, you will write an op-ed of no more than 500 words that presents an argument about the importance of national identity in American politics today. We will discuss op-ed conventions and expectations in class in advance of the assignment.

### 3. Writing Science for the Public (15%)

This assignment reinforces our emphasis on writing for a broad, nonacademic audience. Your task is to take the questions, methods, and findings from Albert and Gadaian's *Anxious Politics* and make them relevant to contemporary political controversies. In 4-5 pages, you will briefly describe a public policy or political controversy that you have chosen and why you think it can be understood as an anxiety-inducing political event. To get a better sense of audience and format, check out this Vox article entitled "[The Science Behind Why People Fear Refugees](#)" or "[The Science of Why Cops Shoot Young Black Men](#)" on Mother Jones.

### 4. Research Project (50%)

*All components of the research project should be turned in on Moodle.*

In order to get first-hand experience collecting and analyzing political psychology data, you will write a 10-15 page paper that reports on original empirical research. For this project you will plan a study on a topic of your choice and come up with a set of questions that can be incorporated into an "omnibus" survey—one that incorporates questions from a larger group of 3-5 students.

### *Proposal (10%)*

In order to get you going and make sure we have ample time to conduct our research, you will complete a two-page research proposal. This proposal will outline your question of interest and the questions you would like to include on our class survey, along with an explanation of how these specific survey questions will help you answer your broader research question.

### *Summary of Preliminary Findings (15%)*

After we collect responses to the class survey, you must turn in a 4-6 page exploratory essay. This is a first-person, chronologically organized account of your thinking as you've gone through the research process. Begin by describing the question you've been focusing on this semester, how and why you became interested in it, and why it is problematic for you (that is, why you can't answer it). Then narrate the process you took to collect data and the evolution of your thinking about your research question. This narrative should include three kinds of information: 1) external details of your search (conversations with peers, trips to the library, methods for finding sources—the narrative “story” of your research); 2) summaries of the new arguments and information you recovered along the way; and 3) your own internal mental wrestling to make sense of new material (what you were thinking about, how your ideas were evolving or the question was reformulated, your confusion or “aha!” moments). As part of (2), summarize the basic information you have learned from analyzing your survey questions, and make preliminary connections with the broader themes of the course.

### *Final Research Paper (25%)*

Your final essay should be no more than 15 pages, including tables and figures. In addition to the essay, please include a one-page (single-spaced) personal assessment of your essay and reflection on the research experience.

**IMPORTANT:** Because this project is for a course and will not be presented or published anywhere else, it is exempted from the traditional review process with the university's Institutional Review Board, which protects human subjects. **If you want to use this project or the data you collect for anything else—the Research and Creative Works Symposium, a Capstone presentation, etc.—you must talk with me and submit the project for IRB review.**

## **5. Attendance & Participation (10%)**

Part of being a good colleague and good democratic citizen is engaging in thoughtful and civil discussion and actively listening to your peers. I expect you to participate in class activities and discussions, thereby improving your verbal communication skills and practicing how to analyze, critique, and respond respectfully in discussion. In order to participate, you must be present! Much of the work we do in class will reinforce the assignments you complete for a grade; therefore it is to your benefit to be in class every day. You are allowed **two unexcused absences** throughout the course of the semester. Each unexcused absence exceeding two will result in a five-point deduction from your final participation grade. In other words, if you earn an 80% on participation but are absent 4 times, you will receive a 70. Doctor's notes do not exempt absences from this policy (but please let me know in the event of any prolonged, severe illnesses or other extenuating circumstances).

## IMPORTANT DEADLINES

Unless otherwise specified, assignments are due by the beginning of class.

Course Preparation Assignment	Posted on Moodle before each class session
Op-ed due	February 9
Research Proposal Due	February 16
Writing Science for the Public	March 21
Summary of Findings	April 13
Final paper and self-assessment	May 2

**Per university policy, students expecting to graduate in May or August 2016 graduation should turn their final essay and self-assessment in by Friday, April 29 at 5 pm.**

## COURSE POLICIES

*Pre-requisites:* Students must have completed PSC 32-114 (American Politics) or have permission of the instructor to enroll in this course.

*Late assignments:* You may turn in an assignment late for a 1/3-letter grade deduction per day (so an A paper receives an A- if it is turned in within the first 24 hours after the deadline, B+ when two days late, etc.). If a document uploaded to Moodle is blank, filled with jibberish, or cannot be opened, it will be considered incomplete or late until a new document is added.

*Citations:* The political science department has decided that students in every course will use the same method of citation in all their writing assignments: the Chicago Style. For the sake of uniformity, we ask you all to consult the same text, Kate Turabian's guide to the Chicago style, titled *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*, for information on how to employ this method of citation in your writing. Therefore, I will not accept work that is not cited properly according to Turabian.

*Academic Integrity:* Please read the honor pledge and learn what constitutes an honor code violation, especially as regards cheating and plagiarism. People usually are aware of what constitutes cheating, but many might be unsure of what exactly plagiarism is all about. The academic honor code can help clarify. Plagiarism is intellectual theft and you must know what constitutes it to avoid it. Using the words and ideas of others without acknowledgement is the essence of plagiarism. **You can unintentionally plagiarize by failing to cite sources or incorrectly citing your sources.** To avoid honor code violations, read the section below and cite your sources properly. In addition, on all your written work for this class, you must affirm the Honor Code by writing the pledge and signing your name beneath it: "I have acted with honesty and integrity in producing this work and am unaware of anyone who has not." Questions about the Honor Code may be directed to: Jaime Woody, Dean of Students ([woodyj@southwestern.edu](mailto:woodyj@southwestern.edu)). Phone 863-1624.

*Grading:* Your grades will be calculated on the following scale:

A+	97-100	B+	87-89	C+	77-79	D+	67-69
A	93-97	B	84-86	C	74-76	D	64-66
A-	90-92	B-	80-83	C-	70-73	D-	60-63

The University Honor Code applies to all graded assignments. The work should be yours alone and no

one else's.

*Accommodating Disabilities:* Southwestern University will make reasonable accommodations for persons with documented disabilities. Students should contact the Center for Academic Success to determine their eligibility to receive accommodations. To arrange accommodations, students should contact Maria Pena, the Access and Academic Resource Coordinator, ([penam@southwestern.edu](mailto:penam@southwestern.edu)) within the Center for Academic Success (in the Prothro Center): call 512-863-1286 or email [success@southwestern.edu](mailto:success@southwestern.edu). Students seeking accommodations should notify the Access and Academic Resource coordinator at least two weeks before services are needed. It is the student's responsibility to discuss any necessary accommodations with the appropriate faculty member.

More information can also be found here:

<http://www.southwestern.edu/offices/success/forstudents/services.php>.

*Technology:* You are welcome to use your laptop or tablet to take notes for class, and at times we may use multiple laptops to look up information and watch or listen to course material. However, I expect these items to only be used for class-related purposes and not for your amusement or distraction. On the first day of class, we will come to an agreement as a class as to the penalty for inappropriate use of technology.

## HOW TO SUCCEED IN THIS COURSE

This course emphasizes active learning, using a range of interactive assignments to investigate the relationship between media and politics. Here are a few tips that will help you be successful in this course.

1. **Plan ahead.** Keep due dates for both the weekly assignments and the larger projects in mind and plan your work accordingly. Part of surviving college and the professional world beyond is knowing how to budget your time, and I will not be forgiving of late assignments that are the result of poor planning.
2. **Use your resources.** I am your most valuable resource, and I want to help you! If something isn't clear after our class discussion or an assignment, don't hesitate to visit my office hours, talk to me after class, or send me an email. I aim to be responsive and timely in my feedback and email replies. That being said, see number 1 above—don't email me at midnight the night before an assignment is due and expect a response. Instead, think about your schedule and come see me in advance if you think there will be any problems.

Beyond myself, there are dozens of great resources for political psychology. [The Monkey Cage](#) and [Mischiefs of Faction](#) are two blogs written by political scientists on a range of topics, including political psychology. [FiveThirtyEight](#) offers data-drive analysis of myriad topics, including politics. The Pew Research Center's [U.S. Politics and Policy](#) wing and the [National Election Studies](#) offer a wealth of polling and survey data on a range of issues. And if there's another type of information you're looking for, just ask me or one of Southwestern's librarians—we'll help you track it down.

## SCHEDEULE

### What is political psychology? How do we measure it?

Jan. 10      Introductions

**To read:**

Hermann, Margaret G. 2002. "Political Psychology as a Perspective in the Study of Politics." In *Political Psychology*, Kristen Renwick Monroe, ed. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

*Predisposed*, ch. 1

**Assignment:**

Before starting the reading for this week, take a few moments to jot down your own conception of political psychology. What does the term mean? What expectations does it set for you'll learn this semester? After completing the reading, how do you think the different authors would define political psychology? How can we use it as a framework for understanding each discipline individually?

Jan. 17      **To read:**

Druckman, James N., Donald P. Green, James H. Kuklinski, and Arthur Lupia. 2011. "Experiments: an introduction to core concepts." in the *Cambridge Handbook of Experimental Political Science*, James N. Druckman, Donald P. Green, James H. Kuklinski, and Arthur Lupia, eds. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Clawson, Rosalee A. and Zoe M. Oxley. *Public Opinion: Democratic Ideals, Democratic Practice*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Los Angeles: Sage. Pgs. 27-35.

**Assignment:**

Generate at least 3 research questions that relate to political psychology and that you might be interested in exploring as part of your research project. Which methodological approach would be better for each question? Why?

### How do we organize and define ourselves in political groups?

Jan. 24      **To read:**

Tajfel, Henri and John C. Turner (2004). "The social identity theory of intergroup behaviour." In *Political Psychology: Key Readings*, John T. Jost & Jim Sidanius (Eds). New York: Psychology Press, 276-293.

Conover, Pamela J. (1988). "The Role of Social Groups in Political Thinking." *British Journal of Political Science* 18(1): 51-76.

**Assignment:**

What is the problem or question that these each of authors are trying to address? Why is it problematic? What's at stake in addressing or understanding the problem? Why is it significant? To whom does it matter?

Jan. 26	<b>To read:</b> Theiss-Morse ch. 1
	<b>Assignment:</b> What are the components of social identity, and how do they apply to national identity? What are other identities you as an individual carry? Do they have the same components? Discuss their presence or absence for a different identity you hold.
Jan. 31	<b>To read:</b> Theiss-Morse ch. 2-3
	<b>Assignment:</b> Look back at the list of identities you made in the last course preparation assignment. How would the identity you chose affect your political behavior? Generate at least 2 hypotheses. How could you assess this identity in other people and measure its effects?
Feb. 2	<b>To read:</b> Theiss-Morse ch. 4-5
	<b>Assignment:</b> In these chapters, Theiss-Morse analyzes raw data from surveys and focus groups to draw conclusions about the importance of national identity in the United States. Pick one set of findings from the book and translate it into your own words. Does the data support her argument? How?
Feb. 7	<b>To read:</b> Theiss-Morse, ch. 6
	<b>Assignment:</b> Theiss-Morse concludes her book by arguing the negative effects of national identity overwhelm the positive ones. Do you agree with her conclusion? Reflect on your own experience with American identity. How do her findings affect your values, beliefs, or way of looking at the world?
Feb. 9	<b>To read:</b> Cramer, Katherine J. (2016). <i>The Politics of Resentment</i> . Chicago: University of Chicago Press, ch. 1.  Listen to Cramer discuss the implications of her book in <a href="#">episode 58 of the No Jargon podcast</a> .
	<b>Assignment:</b> How do different identities intersect in Cramer's argument about rural resentment? How are the experiences of rural Americans that Cramer describes similar or different to your own? How can we facilitate the listening across difference that she suggests can build bridges between people with different identities?
	<b>Op-ed assignment due</b>

Feb. 14	Research workshop
	<b>Assignment:</b> Before coming to class, post your potential research question on Moodle. Identify whether it is an existence, measurement, comparison, correlation, or experimental question and explain why.
	<b>Are Americans stupid and irrational when it comes to politics?</b>
Feb. 16	<b>To read:</b> Delli Carpini, Michael X. and Scott Keeter. 1996. <i>What Americans Know about Politics and Why it Matters</i> . Chapters 2-3.  Prior, Markus and Arthur Lupia. 2008. "Money, Time and Political Knowledge: Distinguishing Quick Recall and Political Learning Skills." <i>American Journal of Political Science</i> . 52(1): 169-183.
	<b>Assignment:</b> Do you think the type of information typically asked in surveys like those used in the readings is an accurate representation of an individual's political knowledge? What kinds of political knowledge are important for being a good citizen?
	<b>Research Proposal Due</b>
Feb. 21	<b>To read:</b> Kahneman, Daniel. 2011. <i>Thinking, Fast and Slow</i> . New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux. Chapter 1  <i>You will also select one chapter from Thinking, Fast and Slow, Part II (Heuristics and Biases) and be prepared to discuss it in class.</i>  Sharot, Tali. (2011). "The Optimism Bias" <i>Time</i> , May 28. <a href="http://www.theoptimismbias.com/">http://www.theoptimismbias.com/</a>
	<b>Assignment:</b> Some frameworks for understanding political science assume that actors (Congress people, citizens, voters, etc.) are rational. What would the authors of today's readings have to say about rational actors? Come up with at least two scenarios in which a rational political actor would behave differently than one with the cognitive biases presented in the readings.
Feb. 23	<b>To read:</b> Lord, Charles G., Lee Ross, and Mark R. Lepper. (1979). "Biased Assimilation and Attitude Polarization: The Effects of Prior Theories on Subsequently Considered Evidence." <i>Journal of Personality and Social Psychology</i> 37(11): 2098-2109.  Taber and Lodge (2006). "Motivated Skepticism in the Evaluation of Political Beliefs" <i>American Journal of Political Science</i> 50(3): 755-769.
	<b>Assignment:</b> The modern media environment makes it very easy for us to choose what news we read, watch, or listen to, or even if we want to consume political news at all. Given

what you know about biased information processing, what are the risks and benefits of this selective media environment? What can we do (or should we do) to overcome these biases?

Feb. 28

**To read:**

Westen, Drew. *The Political Brain: The Role of Emotion in Deciding the Fate of a Nation.* Chapter 3.

Albertson and Gadarian, *Anxious Politics* chs. 1-2

**Assignment:**

Imagine that when you go home for spring break in a few weeks, your parents ask you about the role emotions play in politics. Briefly explain to them the current thinking about the effects of emotions on politics, based on your readings for today.

## **How do emotions influence political behavior?**

March 2

**To read:**

Albertson and Gadarian, *Anxious Politics* chs. 3-5

**Assignment:**

Summarize in 1-2 sentences the major findings from Albertson and Gadarian's empirical chapters. Given these findings, how would you expect anxiety to play out during riots, natural disasters, and economic crises? Why?

March 7

**To read:**

Albertson and Gadarian, *Anxious Politics*, ch. 6.

Gelfand, Michele J. et al. (2011). "Differences Between Tight and Loose Cultures: A 33-Nation Study" *Science* 332: 1100-11-04.

Gelfand, Michele, Joshua Conrad Jackson, and Jesse R. Harrington. (2016). "[Trump Culture: Threat, Fear, and the Tightening of the American Mind.](#)" *Scientific American*, April 27.

**Assignment:**

How do Albertson and Gadarian's conclusions, coupled with Gelfand's argument about tight and loose cultures, help us explain Trump's success in the 2016 election?

March 9

**To read:**

No reading.

**Assignment:**

Come to class with your survey instrument ready to program into our online software. You will want to have exact question wording, answer options, and pictures, videos or experimental treatments ready to go by the beginning of class.

**NO CLASS MARCH 14 OR 16 FOR SPRING BREAK**

**How do we organize groups of ideas and values?  
Are our political ideologies predisposed by genetics and biology?**

March 21      Manheim, Jarol B., Richard C. Rich, Lars Willnat, and Craig Leonard Brians. 2006. *Empirical Political Analysis: Research Methods in Political Science*. New York: Pearson. Chs 14 and 15.

**Assignment:**

Even before you get your survey data, you can decide what sorts of analyses you will want to do based on the questions you want to answer and the hypotheses you want to test. Make a list of at least three different tables, figures, or analyses you will want to run in order to write your final paper.

**Writing Science for the Public assignment due**

March 23      **To read:**  
*Predisposed*, ch. 1-3.

**Assignment:**

Explain ideology to someone who isn't interested in or knowledgeable about politics. How is it different from a political party? Where does it come from and why do we use it to talk about politics?

March 28      **To read:**  
*Predisposed*, ch. 4-5

**Assignment:**

For many people, the argument that our political ideologies and beliefs come from psychological and biological predispositions is a new one. What claims and findings from this book stood out to you as particularly interesting, confusing, or uncomfortable?

March 30      **To read:**  
*Predisposed*, ch. 6-9

**Assignment:**

"A range of ideological perspectives is an evolutionary advantage for humans." Generate a list of arguments in favor of this statement, then make a list of arguments against the statement.

**NO CLASS APRIL 4 (SOUTHWESTERN STUDENT RESEARCH AND CREATIVE WORKS SYMPOSIUM)**

**How does psychology help us understand political institutions (and vice versa)?**

April 6      **To read:**  
Unfair, introduction and Part I

**Assignment:**

Before you begin the reading, take a few moments to jot down your expectations for some of the ideas we've discussed in class—emotions, groups, knowledge and

cognition, predispositions—might influence the criminal justice system. Once you’re read Part I, return to your list. How has your thinking changed?

April 11

**To read:**  
Unfair, Part II

Benforado draws on several areas of psychological research that we’ve discussed over the course of the semester in order to make his argument. Go back and look at one of these pieces (for ex., Tajfel and Turner on group dynamics). How are its findings represented in Benforado’s argument? Do you agree with his interpretation of the research? Of his application of that research beyond the original context?

April 13

**To read:**  
Unfair, Part III

**Assignment:**

Imagine you are Benforado and the state of Texas has come to you for help in prioritizing areas of reform. Where would you start, with approaches to investigation, adjudication, or punishment? What recommendations or problems that he outlined do you find particularly important, effective, or logically possible?

**Exploratory Essay Due**

April 18

**To read:**  
Unfair, Part IV

**Assignment:**

How has your understanding of the criminal justice system changed as a result of reading this book? How does thinking about specific environment of the criminal justice system shape your perspective on psychological phenomena?

April 20

Wrap-up

**NO CLASS APRIL 25, Dr. Sydnor out of town**

**Final paper and self-assessment are due May 2 at 5 pm, as a hard copy in my office. If you are planning to graduate in May-August 2017, your final paper and self-assessment are due by April 28 at 11:59 pm.**