I Course Overview

Description
This course examines the psychological origins of people's political beliefs and actions. We will go beyond describing what happens in politics (e.g., who won an election) or how it happened (e.g., who voted for whom) and instead identify explanations for why we observe certain political behavior by looking at the psychology of individuals. For example, what causes people to make decisions and form attitudes? Or, why do individuals identify with certain political groups and not others? You will be introduced to various theories that aim to explain these processes and help us apply their insights to make sense of political behavior in the U.S. and beyond. We will cover a range of topics, including attitude measurement, information processing, emotions in politics, and political communication.

Learning Objectives
By the end of this course, you will have an understanding of how psychological theories help explain what goes on in the political world, at the level of both the ordinary citizen and political leaders. You also will be exposed to original research conducted by political scientists and psychologists. Thus another goal of this course is to develop your appreciation for scientific thought and the research process more generally.

II Readings

Required Readings
There is no required textbook to purchase for this course. All required readings (academic articles and additional material) will be available through Canvas.

Additional Readings (optional)
In addition to the required readings, the syllabus provides supplementary articles on select topics. Furthermore, you may consult the following recommended textbooks.

III Course Requirements

Online Course

This is an online course and therefore there will not be any face-to-face class sessions. All assignments and course interactions will utilize internet technologies. Preparation for class means reading the assigned readings & reviewing all information required for each week. Attendance in an online course means logging into Canvas on a regular basis and participating in the activities that are posted in the course.

Work Load

This is a full-credit course (3 credits) that is condensed into 6 weeks, which implies that the class meets in an accelerated time frame online. As such, you should expect a very quick pace and you have to be careful not to fall behind. A three-credit course typically requires 144 hours of student work, which amounts to approximately 24 hours per week. Most of your time should be spent preparing the course readings, but you should set aside plenty of time to complete each assignment. Keep in mind that you are also expected to actively participate in the discussions on Canvas.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Estimated Time Commitment</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Readings</td>
<td>65 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preparing for and taking quizzes</td>
<td>14 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussion board participation</td>
<td>20 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing essays</td>
<td>45 hours</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Computer Requirements

This course requires that you have access to a computer that can access the internet. You will need to have access to, and be able to use, the following software packages:
- A web browser (Google Chrome, Mozilla Firefox, Safari, etc.)
- Adobe Acrobat Reader (free)
- Adobe Flash Player (free)
- Microsoft Word, Open Office, etc.

You are responsible for having a reliable computer and internet connection throughout the course.

Email and Internet

You must have an active UWM e-mail account and access to the Internet. All instructor correspondence will be sent to your UWM e-mail account. Please plan on checking your UWM email account regularly for course related messages. This course uses Canvas for the facilitation of communications between faculty and students, submission of assignments, and posting of grades. The Canvas course page can be accessed at https://uwm.edu/canvas/.

Campus Network or Canvas Outage

When access to Canvas is not available for an extended period of time (greater than one entire evening, i.e., 6pm – 11pm) you can reasonably expect that the due date for assignments will be changed to the next day (due by midnight).
IV Course Policies and Evaluation

Basic Structure

This online course is divided into six weeks that cover different topics in the field of political psychology. Each week consists of the following components: academic readings, quizzes, additional material, and discussion board questions. Each component is described below.

Academic Readings: The academic readings are the main focus of the course. They consist of original research published in political science and psychology journals. Please read the articles carefully. If you have any questions or comments about the readings, you are encouraged to post them on the discussion board on Canvas.

Quizzes: There will be short quizzes (5-10 questions) on the academic readings for each week available on Canvas. They consist of multiple choice and short open-ended questions and have to be completed by the end of each week (see specific due dates below).

Additional Material: In addition to the academic readings, there will be required journalistic articles and other media sources for each week. The purpose of these additional sources is to connect the theoretical concepts of the academic readings to real-world issues and current politics. They consist of newspaper articles, blog posts, or videos and documentaries on topics of interest. There will also be interactive media sources, such as a political knowledge quiz or a psychological test on implicit attitudes (the results of these quizzes and tests are anonymous and will not be available to the instructor).

Discussion Board Participation: For each week, there will be discussion questions connecting the additional material with the broader theoretical concepts covered in the academic readings. You are required to provide at least one response to each discussion question (see specific due dates below). However, you are encouraged to respond to other contributions and engage in the discussion as I will grant extra credit for active participation (additional contributions to the discussion can be added after the due date). Please keep in mind to always be respectful to your peers in the discussions!

Bi-Weekly Essay Assignments: Every two weeks, there will be a short essay assignment (3-5 pages) on the academic readings of the preceding topics. The essay assignment has to be submitted by the end of the week (see specific due dates below). Note that the essays will determine the largest portion of your grade since there will not be a final exam at the end of the course.

Optional readings: There is a lot of exciting new research in political psychology that is being published every year! For each topic, I selected five related articles that were published in the last five years. You don’t have to read them, but check them out if they sound interesting! For the last essay assignment you will have to choose one of the optional readings from any of the weeks and discuss it in more detail.

Make-up Policy: As a general rule, I do not allow students to make up missed assignments, quizzes, or contributions to the online discussion. I will make exceptions to this policy only in the most severe and rare circumstances (severe illness, etc.). This means that it is better to turn in a partially completed assignment and receive partial credit than to turn it in late and receive no credit.
Grading Breakdown by Percentage

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Quizzes</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussion Board Participation</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Essay 1</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Essay 2</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Essay 3</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Grading Scale for Final Grades

Your course grade will be determined according to the following system:

- 93-100 A
- 90-92 A-
- 87-89 B+
- 83-86 B
- 80-82 B-
- 77-79 C+
- 73-76 C
- 70-72 C-
- 67-69 D+
- 63-66 D
- 60-62 D-
- 0-59 F

Final grade percentages ending in a decimal of .5 or greater will be rounded up to the next wholenumber.

Communicating With the Instructor

This course uses a “three before me” policy in regards to student to faculty communications. When questions arise during the course of this class, please remember to check these three sources for an answer before asking me to reply to your individual questions:

1. Course syllabus
2. Announcements on Canvas
3. Canvas discussion board

This policy will help you in potentially identifying answers before I can get back to you and it also helps your instructor from answering similar questions or concerns multiple times.

If you cannot find an answer to your question, please first post your question to the discussion board. Here your question can be answered to the benefit of all students by either your fellow students who know the answer to your question or the instructor. You are encouraged to answer questions from other students in the discussion forum when you know the answer to a question in order to help provide timely assistance.

If you have questions of a personal nature such as relating a personal emergency, questioning a grade on an assignment, or something else that needs to be communicated privately, you are welcome to contact me via email. I will usually respond to messages from 8am to 5pm on weekdays, please allow 24 hours for me to respond.

If you have a question about the technology being used in the course, please contact the UWM Help Desk (https://uwm.edu/technology/help/) or the UWM Canvas support (https://uwm.edu/canvas/students/) for assistance.

Summary: How to Succeed in this Course

- Check your UWM email regularly
- Log in to the course web site daily
- Communicate with your instructor and participate on the Canvas discussion board
- Complete all assigned readings before taking the quizzes and prepare by compiling notes.
- Create a study schedule so that you don’t fall behind on assignments
## V Course Overview

### Readings and Media Contents

#### Week 1: Introduction - Political Psychology and Research Designs (Feb 3-9)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Additional material</td>
<td>Vox article: <em>The rise of American authoritarianism</em> (+ YouTube clip); Washington Post article: <em>Trump voters aren’t authoritarians</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Week 2: Political Belief Systems and the Nature of Attitudes (Feb 10-16)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Additional material     | Implicit Association Tests: Project Implicit  
                          NPR Segment: How the concept of implicit bias came into being  
                          Vox article: Why the Implicit Association Test might not work after all |

**Essay assignment (due Feb 16):** Describe the differences between the memory-based model of attitudes proposed by Zaller and Feldman (1992) and the on-line model described by Lodge, Steenbergen, and Brau (1995). What problem is each model trying to address? Which model do you think is more useful in explaining political attitudes and why? How could they be improved?
### Week 3: Where does ideology come from? (Feb 17-23)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Additional material** | TED talk: [The moral roots of liberals and conservatives](#)  
YouTube clip: [Genetic and Environmental Transmission of Political Orientation](#)  
New York Times article: [Are our political beliefs encoded in our DNA?](#)  
Washington Post article: [Your genes influence your political views. So what?](#) |
Dawes, Christopher T, Jaime E Settle, Peter John Loewen, Matt McGue, and William G Iacono. 2015. “Genes, psychological traits and civic engagement.” *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society B: Biological Sciences* 370 (1683): 20150015  
### Week 4: What do people know about politics? (Feb 24 - Mar 1)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
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</table>
| Additional material| Political knowledge quiz: What do you know about the US government?  
Politico article: Americans bomb Pew test of basic political knowledge  
Vox article: A political theorists case for letting only the informed vote |

**Essay assignment (due Mar 1):** Discuss the main points of the articles by Carney et al. (2008), Graham, Haidt, and Nosek (2009), and Smith et al. (2017). Do you think they are compatible or do they represent competing perspectives? Are ideologies shaped by our (moral) values or could it be the other way around? What role could political sophistication play in this context?
### Week 5: How do people think about politics? (Mar 2-8)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Description</th>
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</thead>
</table>
| Additional material        | YouTube clip: *Are your political opinions as rational as you think?*  
TED talk: *Why you think you’re right – even if you’re wrong*  
The Atlantic article: *Insider the political brain*  
Mother Jones article: *The science of why we don’t believe science* |
Kam, Cindy D. 2019. “Infectious Disease, Disgust, and Imagining the Other.” *The Journal of Politics* 81 (4)  
### Component Description

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Additional material** | NPR segment: How to spot misinformation  
The New Yorker podcast: How Facebook continues to spread fake news  
Vox article: YouTube has a big climate misinformation problem it can’t solve |

### Essay assignment (due Mar 15): Choose a recent research article from the optional academic readings that is most interesting to you (the article can be from any week). What are the main points discussed by the authors? What question are they trying to answer and do they succeed? Given the results presented in the paper, what are new or open questions related to the issue? State a clear hypothesis for a follow-up research project and describe how you could you test it empirically.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Due</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1) Intro</td>
<td>Discussion</td>
<td>Compare the perspectives described in the Vox article and the Washington Post article on Authoritarianism and Trump support. Do you think the argument in the Washington Post article is convincing? Why or why not? Questions on Huddy, Sears, and Levy (2013a), Jordan and Zanna (2004), and McDermott (2019)</td>
<td>Feb 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Quiz</td>
<td>Quiz</td>
<td>Feb 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2) Attitudes</td>
<td>Discussion</td>
<td>Complete two implicit association tests on Project Implicit and describe the task. What is being measured and how? Do you think it is a useful approach? Why or why not? How could such a method help us study political attitudes? Questions on Converse (1964), Zaller and Feldman (1992), and Lodge, Steenbergen, and Brau (1995)</td>
<td>Feb 14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Quiz</td>
<td>Quiz</td>
<td>Feb 16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3) Ideology</td>
<td>Discussion</td>
<td>Compare the arguments on genes and politics in the New York Times and the Washington Post. Do you agree with Larry Bartels’ critique? Should we focus on genetic determinants of political attitudes or are environmental factors more important? Questions on Carney et al. (2008), Graham, Haidt, and Nosek (2009), and Smith et al. (2017)</td>
<td>Feb 21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Quiz</td>
<td>Quiz</td>
<td>Feb 23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4) Knowledge</td>
<td>Discussion</td>
<td>Complete the political knowledge quiz and read the articles on Politico and Vox. What do citizens need to know to participate effectively in politics? Do our measures capture the most important aspects? If not, what are they missing? How can democracy work if people are not fully informed? Questions on Barabas et al. (2014), Mondak and Anderson (2004), and Kuklinski et al. (2000)</td>
<td>Feb 28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Quiz</td>
<td>Quiz</td>
<td>Mar 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5) Cognition</td>
<td>Discussion</td>
<td>Does motivated reasoning provide a sufficient explanation for the level of polarization in today’s politics? How can we achieve compromise instead of growing disagreement? Questions on Taber and Lodge (2006), Valentino et al. (2008), and Jost et al. (2014)</td>
<td>Mar 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Quiz</td>
<td>Quiz</td>
<td>Mar 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6) Environment</td>
<td>Discussion</td>
<td>Find a recent fake news article and post a link on the discussion board. Describe how the article may affect people’s attitudes from different theoretical perspectives. How could social networks and political discussion mitigate or exacerbate the effects of fake news? Questions on Lenz (2009), Stroud (2010), and Klar (2014)</td>
<td>Mar 13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Quiz</td>
<td>Quiz</td>
<td>Mar 15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
VI University Policies

Drop and Add dates

Please see the following website for full details on the types of withdrawals that are available: https://uwm.edu/onestop/dates-and-deadlines/interactive-adddrop-calendar/

Academic Integrity

No form of academic dishonesty will be tolerated. The University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee has detailed its policies on academic integrity (http://uwm.edu/academicaffairs/facultystaff/policies/academic-misconduct/). You should acquaint yourself with policies concerning cheating, fabrication, plagiarism, and academic interference. Any submission of work in this course constitutes a certificate that the work complies with university policies on academic integrity.

Student Disabilities

The University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee supports the right of all enrolled students to a full and equal educational opportunity. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), Wisconsin State Statute (36.12) require that students with disabilities be reasonably accommodated in instruction and campus life. Reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities is a shared faculty and student responsibility. Students are expected to inform me of their need for instructional accommodations by the end of the third week of the semester, or as soon as possible after a disability has been incurred or recognized. I, will work either directly with you or in coordination with the Accessibility Resource Center to identify and provide reasonable instructional accommodations. Disability information, including instructional accommodations as part of a student’s educational record, is confidential and protected under FERPA. Please also see http://uwm.edu/arc/ for further information.

Other Policies

The University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee has several additional policies concerning issues such as accommodations for religious observances, students called to active military duty, discriminatory conduct, or sexual harassment available for you here: https://uwm.edu/secu/syllabus-links/. I strongly encourage you to access this link and familiarize yourself with these policies and procedures.
References


