PSC616: Political Psychology

Term: Fall 2022

Instructor: Dr. Nicholas T. Davis

Meeting times: Wednesdays, 1-330 pm

Location: 348 ten Hoor

Contact: [ntdavis2@ua.edu](mailto:ntdavis2@ua.edu)

Office hours: By appointment

**Course overview**

PSC616 involves a wide-ranging exploration of the political psychology subfield. Because of its diverse nature, it is nearly impossible to put together an “authoritative” syllabus on political psychology. There are simply too many dimensions to cover fully within the span of a one-semester course. The approach taken in PSC616 is to supply you with a high level overview of two important dimensions within political psychology: the mechanics of (1) thinking and feeling, and (2) group belonging. Because experiments form the backbone of psychological methods, you will also develop your own experimental research design this term that combines both a literature review and a proposal involving an experimental design.

**Course materials**

*Books.* You will need to obtain copies of the following books this semester.

* Oliver, J. Eric, and Thomas J. Wood. *Enchanted America: How intuition and reason divide our politics*. University of Chicago Press, 2018.
* Sinclair, Betsy. 2012. *The social citizen: Peer networks and political behavior*. University of Chicago Press.
* Davis, Darren W., and David C. Wilson. 2021. *Racial Resentment in the Political Mind*. University of Chicago Press.

I recommend you also find a used copy of *The Oxford Handbook of Political Psychology*, *2nd Edition*. It is not required for this semester, but it contains beneficial background reading about many of the core topics covered in this course.

*Journal articles.* Papers that are unavailable on Google Scholar or only available as hard-to-find book chapters will be posted to our Blackboard course site.

**Student learning outcomes**

By the end of this course, students will…

* Understand several essential areas of research in the Political Psychology subfield
* Develop and refine their analytical reading and writing skills
* Construct a viable experimental design of their own

**Course grading**

Your grades fall into three categories this term: (1) participation, (2) a semester-long research project, and (3) an end-of-term presentation on your research project, styled after a 5 to 7 minute conference presentation.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Assignment | Weight |
| Participation | 30.0% |
| Facilitator | 10.0% |
| Recorder | 10.0% |
| Participant | 10.0% |
| Experimental research design | 60.0% |
| Paper proposal | 10.0% |
| Final paper | 50.0% |
| Presentation | 10.0% |
| Total | 100.0% |

Participation

Graduate coursework involves a substantial amount of reading. Each week you will be responsible for reading four (4) research articles or 4-5 chapters of a book. You will be expected to be conversational about each of these pieces of research. You are not expected to be able to memorize and recite methodological minutiae, but you should be familiar enough with the research to have a conversational discussion about it. The whole point of this course is to familiarize yourself with political psychology research. You cannot do that unless you do the readings. Read, take notes, and highlight relevant text.

Each week, we will discuss each piece of assigned research, beginning first by summarizing the material and then offering (1) something positive about the reading, and (2) a topic of discussion involving the research. A **recorder** will notate these details.The **facilitator(s)** will then lead a collaborative discussion about the research according to these terms. The rest of the class will act as **participants** in this conversation.

This method will require some trial and error, but it should encourage you to be prepared each week **because I will assign these roles on the day of class**. Everyone will serve as recorder and facilitator once this term, and you will be graded on your performance in those roles. Participation grades will reflect the quality of the collective class discussion each period. **Thus, as participants, you are responsible for yourself and others’ grades**. Do the readings and come to class prepared and these will be “easy” points.

Paper proposal

Your main research task this term involves putting together an experimental research design (more on this below). A formal three-to-four page proposal is due on 10/05 that includes a brief introduction to your topic, some theoretical expectations and hypotheses, and a short sketch of your experimental design.

This assignment is due roughly half-way through the term, and the due date falls after our experimental workshop (week 5). This short paper is designed to encourage you to make progress on your research project so that you do not leave it until the end of the term. I will supply feedback on your proposal that should guide your larger research project.

Experimental design

All students will develop an experimental research design this semester consisting of roughly 5,000 words. The “front-end” of the paper should be approximately 3,000 words. That includes an introduction, a literature review, and a theoretical expectations section that lists hypotheses with the logic for why you would expect certain outcomes. The remainder of the paper should detail your proposed experimental design, including (1) the treatments you plan to use (and any pertinent information about randomization you deem important), and (2) the questions that you will include on a post-test survey questionnaire that match back to your hypotheses. In outlining these “dependent variables” you should supply a description of how responses to them will explicitly answer your research question. Finally, you will complete your paper by writing a brief conclusion contextualizing how you think this proposed research design contributes to an area of political psychology research.

Presentation

You will present your research design during the final week of the term using a brief, five to seven slide PowerPoint presentation. Your talk should last no longer than seven minutes, and we will have a brief question and answer period after each presentation.

**Quick Semester overview**

08/17 Week 0: Introduction   
08/24 Week 1: Political psychology, experimental designs, and research ethics  
08/31 Week 2: Intuition and reason  
09/07 Week 3: Motivated reasoning  
09/14 Week 4: Misinformation and conspiracy theories  
09/21 Week 5: Experimental workshop  
09/28 Week 6: Social pressure  
10/05 Week 7: Emotions

Paper proposal due @ 11:59 pm  
10/12 Week 8: Authoritarianism  
10/19 Week 9: Writing break  
10/26 Week 10: Intergroup paradigm   
11/02 Week 11: Gender  
11/09 Week 12: Racial identity   
11/16 Week 13: Racial prejudice  
11/23 Week 14: Thanksgiving  
11/30 Week 15: Presentations  
12/07 Week 16: Finals week

Final paper due @ 11:59 pm

**Nuts and bolts**

**08/17 Week 0 – Introduction, syllabus review**

* Soranno, Patricia A. 2010. “[Improving Student Discussions in Graduate and Undergraduate Courses: Transforming the Discussion Leader.](https://bigdatalimno.files.wordpress.com/2017/07/soranno_2010_jnrlse.pdf)” *Journal of Natural Resources and Life Sciences Education*, 39, 84-91.

**08/24 Week 1 – Political psychology, experimental designs, and research ethics**

* Krosnick, Jon A. and Kathleen M. McGraw. 2002. “[Psychological Political Science Versus Political Psychology True to Its Name: A Plea for Balance](https://www.taylorfrancis.com/chapters/edit/10.4324/9781410606099-9/psychological-political-science-versus-political-psychology-true-name-plea-balance),” in Kristen Renwick Monroe (Ed.) Political Psychology.
* Morton, Rebecca B. and Kenneth C. Williams. 2010. “Chapter 12: Ethical decision making and political science experiments” in *Experimental Political Science and the Study of Causality.* Cambridge University Press.
* Lewis, Jr. Neil. 2020. “[How many (and whose) lives would you bet on your theory?](https://thehardestscience.com/2020/05/01/how-many-and-whose-lives-would-you-bet-on-your-theory/)” *The Hardest Science*.
* Briggs, Ryan. 2022. “[The abject failure of IRBs](https://www.chronicle.com/article/the-abject-failure-of-irbs).” *The Chronicle.*
* Berinsky, Adam J., James N. Druckman, and Teppei Yamamoto. N.d. “[Why Replications do not fix the reproducibility crisis: A model and evidence from a large-scale vignette experiment](https://www.ipr.northwestern.edu/documents/working-papers/2019/wp-19-04.pdf).”

**Thinking and feeling**

**08/31 Week 2 – Intuition and reason**

* Oliver, J. Eric, and Thomas J. Wood. *Enchanted America: How intuition and reason divide our politics*. University of Chicago Press, 2018.

**09/07 Week 3 – Motivated reasoning**

* Groenendyk, Eric, and Yanna Krupnikov. 2021. “What Motivates Reasoning? A Theory of Goal-Dependent Political Evaluation.” American Journal of Political Science.
* Guess, Andrew, and Alexander Coppock. 2020. “Does Counter-Attitudinal Information Cause Backlash? Results from Three Large Survey Experiments.” British Journal of Political Science 50(4): 1497-1515.
* Bisgaard, Martin. 2015. “Bias Will Find a Way: Economic Perceptions, Attributions of Blame, and Partisan-Motivated Reasoning during Crisis.” *The Journal of Politics* 77(3): 849–60.
* Pennycook, Gordon, and David G. Rand. 2019. "Lazy, not biased: Susceptibility to partisan fake news is better explained by lack of reasoning than by motivated reasoning." *Cognition* 188, 39-50.

Helpful, recommended review article: Kahan, Dan M. 2016. “The Politically Motivated Reasoning Paradigm, Part 1: What Politically Motivated Reasoning Is and How to Measure It.” In *Emerging Trends in the Social and Behavioral Sciences*, Hoboken, NJ, USA: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1–16.

**09/14 Week 4 – Misinformation and conspiratorial thinking**

* Douglas, Karen M., Joseph E. Uscinski, Robbie M. Sutton, Aleksandra Cichocka, Turkay Nefes, Chee Siang Ang, and Farzin Deravi. 2019. “Understanding Conspiracy Theories.” *Political Psychology* 40(S1): 3–35.
* Enders, Adam, Christina Farhart, Joanne Miller, Joseph Uscinski, Kyle Saunders, and Hugo Drochon. "Are Republicans and Conservatives More Likely to Believe Conspiracy Theories?" *Political Behavior* (2022): 1-24.
* Nyhan, Brendan, Ethan Porter, Jason Reifler, and Thomas J. Wood. "Taking fact-checks literally but not seriously? The effects of journalistic fact-checking on factual beliefs and candidate favorability." *Political Behavior* 42, no. 3 (2020): 939-960.
* Swire‐Thompson, Briony, Ullrich KH Ecker, Stephan Lewandowsky, and Adam J. Berinsky. 2020. "They might be a liar but they’re my liar: Source evaluation and the prevalence of misinformation." *Political Psychology* 41(1), 21-34.

Helpful, recommended review article: Flynn, D.J., Brendan Nyhan, and Jason Reifler. 2017. “The Nature and Origins of Misperceptions: Understanding False and Unsubstantiated Beliefs about Politics.” *Advances in Political Psychology*.

**09/21 Week 5 – Experimental workshop**

For this week, I will briefly lecture on principles of “good” experimental design. Students should attend class with a research question and a vague (or solid) idea for an experimental design that supplies a method of answering their research question. The remainder of the class period will be devoted to workshopping your ideas.

* Morton, Rebecca B. and Kenneth C. Williams. 2010. “Chapter 7: Validity and experimental manipulations” in *Experimental Political Science and the Study of Causality.* Cambridge University Press.
* Blair, Graeme, Jasper Cooper, Alexander Coppock, and Macartan Humphreys. 2019. “Declaring and Diagnosing Research Designs.” American Political Science Review 113(3): 838-859

**09/28 Week 6 – Social pressure**

* Sinclair, Betsy. 2012. *The social citizen: Peer networks and political behavior*. University of Chicago Press.

**10/05 Week 7 – Emotions**

* Brader, Ted, and Valentino, Nicholas A., and Elizabeth Suhay. 2008. “What Triggers Public Opposition to Immigration? Anxiety, Group Cues, and Immigration Threat." American Journal of Political Science 49 (2): 388-405.
* Suhay, Elizabeth, and Cengiz Erisen. 2018. “The Role of Anger in the Biased Assimilation of Political Information." Political Psychology 39 (4): 793-810
* Small, Deborah A., and Jennifer S. Lerner. 2008. “Emotional Policy: Personal Sadness and Anger Shape Judgments about a Welfare Case.” *Political Psychology* 29(2): 149–68.
* Clifford, Scott, and Spencer Piston. 2016. “Explaining Public Support for Counterproductive Homelessness Policy: The Role of Disgust.” *Political Behavior*: 1–23.

Helpful, recommended review article: Brader, Ted and George E. Marcus. 2013. “Emotion and Political Psychology” in Sears, David O., Leonie Huddy, and Jack S. Levy (eds.) *Oxford Handbook of Political Psychology*. Oxford University Press.

**Groups and belonging**

**10/12 Week 8 – Authoritarianism**

* Duckitt, John. 1989. “Authoritarianism and Group Identification: A New View of an Old Construct.” *Political Psychology* 10(1): 63.
* Engelhardt, Andrew M., Stanley Feldman, and Marc J. Hetherington. 2021. "Advancing the measurement of authoritarianism." *Political Behavior*: 1-24.
* Feldman, Stanley, and Karen Stenner. 1997. "Perceived threat and authoritarianism." *Political Psychology* 18(4), 741-770.
* Passini, Stefano, and Davide Morselli. 2010. "Disobeying an illegitimate request in a democratic or authoritarian system." *Political Psychology* 31(3), 341-355.

Helpful, recommended review articles:

* Feldman, Stanley, Vittorio Mérola, and Justin Dollman. 2021. "The Psychology of Authoritarianism and Support for Illiberal Policies and Parties." In *Routledge Handbook of Illiberalism*, 635-654. Routledge.
* Parker, Christopher Sebastian, and Christopher C. Towler. 2019. "Race and authoritarianism in American politics." Annual Review of Political Science, 22, 503-519.

**10/19 Week 9 – Writing break**

No Class

You should use the break to commit to writing and working on your experimental design paper.

**10/26 Week 10 – Intergroup paradigm**

* Brewer, Marilynn B. "Social identity, distinctiveness, and in-group homogeneity." Social cognition 11, no. 1 (1993): 150-164.
* Greene, Steven. "Understanding party identification: A social identity approach." Political Psychology 20, no. 2 (1999): 393-403.
* Brewer, Marilynn B. "The psychology of prejudice: Ingroup love and outgroup hate?." Journal of social issues 55, no. 3 (1999): 429-444
* Bond, Robert M., Hillary C. Shulman, and Michael Gilbert. 2018. "Does having a political discussion help or hurt intergroup perceptions? Drawing guidance from social identity theory and the contact hypothesis." *International Journal of Communication* 12, 4332-4352.

Helpful, recommended review articles:

* Kinder, Donald R. 2013. “Prejudice and Politics.” In Sears, David O., Leonie Huddy, and Jack S. Levy (eds.) *Oxford Handbook of Political Psychology*. Oxford University Press.
* Huddy, Leonie. 2013. “From Group Identity to Political Cohesion and Commitment.” In Sears, David O., Leonie Huddy, and Jack S. Levy (eds.) *Oxford Handbook of Political Psychology*. Oxford University Press.

**11/02 Week 11 – Gender**

* Sidanius, Jim, Felicia Pratto, and Diana Brief. "Group dominance and the political psychology of gender: A cross-cultural comparison." *Political Psychology* (1995): 381-396.
* Pratto, Felicia, and Peter Hegarty. "The political psychology of reproductive strategies." *Psychological Science* 11, no. 1 (2000): 57-62.
* Bauer, Nichole M. "The effects of counterstereotypic gender strategies on candidate evaluations." *Political Psychology* 38, no. 2 (2017): 279-295.
* Winter, Nicholas JG. "Hostile sexism, benevolent sexism, and American elections." *Politics & Gender* (2022): 1-30.

Helpful, recommended review article: Sapiro, Virginia. 2003. "Theorizing gender in political psychology research.” In Sears, David O., Leonie Huddy, and Robert Jervis, “*Oxford Handbook of Political Psychology.”* Oxford University Press.

**11/09 Week 12 – Racial identity**

* McClain, P. D., Johnson Carew, J. D., Walton Jr, E., & Watts, C. S. (2009). “Group Membership, Group Identity, and Group Consciousness: Measures of Racial Identity in American Politics?” Annual Review of Political Science, 12: 471-485
* Lien, P. T., Margaret Conway, M., & Wong, J. (2003). “The contours and sources of ethnic identity choices among Asian Americans.” Social Science Quarterly, 84(2), 461-481.
* Jackson, Melinda S. "Priming the sleeping giant: The dynamics of Latino political identity and vote choice." *Political Psychology* 32, no. 4 (2011): 691-716.
* Parham, T. A., & Williams, P. T. (1993). The Relationship of Demographic and Background Factors to Racial Identity Attitudes. Journal of Black Psychology, 19(1), 7–24.

Helpful, recommended review article: Sen, Maya, and Omar Wasow. 2016. "Race as a bundle of sticks: Designs that estimate effects of seemingly immutable characteristics." *Annual Review of Political Science* 19(1), 499-522.

**11/16 Week 13 – Racial prejudice**

* Davis, Darren W., and David C. Wilson. 2021. *Racial Resentment in the Political Mind*. University of Chicago Press.

Helpful, recommended review article: Kinder, Donald R. 2013. “Prejudice and Politics.” In Sears, David O., Leonie Huddy, and Jack S. Levy (eds.) *Oxford Handbook of Political Psychology*. Oxford University Press.

**11/23 Week 14 – Thanksgiving**

No Class

**11/30 Week 15 – Presentations**

Student presentations of experimental designs

**12/07 Week 16 – Finals week**

Final papers due at 11:59 p.m.

**Additional policies and information**

**Office hours and general communication advice**

*Email.* I am happy to trouble-shoot issues that you may have throughout the course. To make sure that I do not lose email correspondence, **please begin all email subject lines with “PSC616”** so that I can search periodically to see if I have lost any emails – my email inbox is a hellscape, and I don’t want your correspondence to get buried.

*Office hours.* You are welcome to drop by my office to chat during the week, but, if you have specific needs, then I encourage you to send me an email to set up a meeting.

**Grading and expectations**

Grading for graduate-level coursework is fairly straightforward, as the matrix below illustrates. On a more general note, this class involves a substantial amount of reading. Please take this seriously. Everyone has different research interests and professional aspirations, but, for the purpose of this class, I expect you to demonstrate a certain level of care in completing the requirements laid out for each week. If you fall behind or need help, then reach out and ask for it. I am happy to strategize how to help you, but, I don’t know you’re struggling, then I cannot help.

UA Alpha-numeric Grading

Grade Numeric GPA Points

A 90 > 4.00

B 80 > 89 3.00

C 70 > 79 2.00

D 60 > 69 1.00

**Technology policy**

The academic research is mixed to negative about whether computers or tablets help or hinder your learning experience because they can easily be a distraction. That said, some of you will prefer to read / take notes digitally, so I will permit the use of these tools in class. Please be strategic, however. Our time together is short and valuable to your graduate training. Respect our time together by avoiding distractions in class.

**Statement on the Academic Honor Code and Academic Misconduct**

All students in attendance at The University of Alabama are expected to be honorable and to observe standards of conduct appropriate to a community of scholars. The University of Alabama expects from its students a higher standard of conduct than the minimum required to avoid discipline. Academic misconduct includes all acts of dishonesty in any academic or related matter and any knowing or intentional help, attempt to help, or conspiracy to help another student commit an act of academic dishonesty. Academic dishonestly includes, but is not limited to, the following acts, when performed in any type of academic or academically related matter, exercise or activity.

* *Cheating*: Using or attempting to use unauthorized materials, information, study aids, or computer-related information.
* *Plagiarism*: Representing the words, data, works, ideas, computer programs or output, or anything not generated in an authorized fashion, as one’s own.
* *Fabrication*: Presenting as genuine, any invented or falsified citation or material.
* *Misrepresentation*: Falsifying, altering, or misstating the contents of documents or other materials related to academic matters, including schedules, prerequisites, and transcripts.

**Statement on Disability Accommodations**

If you are registered with the Office of Disability Services and have an accommodation, then please let me know as soon as possible. If you have a disability, but have not contacted the Office of Disability Services, then you can [visit the Disability Services website to make arrangements](http://ods.ua.edu/).

The Office of Disability Services (ODS) is the central contact point for UA students with academic disabilities. ODS works with faculty and other members of the University community to provide individualized academic accommodations and support services while promoting student responsibility and self-advocacy. It is the student’s responsibility to make known a need for academic accommodations and services by (1) providing appropriate documentation of the disability to ODS, (2) formally requesting accommodations by meeting with an ODS accommodations specialist, and (3) meeting with each of his / her / their professors to present a formal ODS accommodation letter to discuss the implementation of accommodations.

**Changes to the syllabus**

Finally, some changes may occur to this syllabus, probably for reasons outside of our control. If that happens, then you’ll receive advance and fair warning of any changes to the best of my ability.