Issues in Political Psychology
Sep 26, 2016 – Jan 5, 2017
Prof. Daphna Canetti
TA: TBA

Course Number: 702.2193
Semester: Fall 2016
Class Time: Wednesday, 12:15-15:15
Class Location: Terrace, 2001

Office Hours: Wed 11:00-12:00 by appointment
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Course Description:

What is political psychology? The name is new, with its inception as a separate discipline sometime in the twentieth century, and the formation of an official society only in 1978. Yet scholars discussed the relationship between psychology and political processes as early as ancient Greece. The primary purpose of this upper level course is to provide an overview of political psychological research with an emphasis on the psychological mechanisms underlying political behavior. By focusing on a list of selected topics that represent merely a portion of those covered in political psychology, this course is planned to give you a taste of what political psychology is. When one hears the term political psychology, one might envision the study of elections and campaigns. While not inaccurate, this perception excludes a broad range of topics that fall within the purview of political psychology. For example, the following questions address political psychology topics: What is the impact of prejudice and identity on intergroup relations? How does threat affect individuals’ political choices? What is the psychological and physiological impact of war and terrorism on individuals' political worldviews?

Greek fables discuss both the sour grapes phenomenon, in which desires are adjusted in accordance with what we cannot have, and an alternative phenomenon in which we want what we cannot have. Machiavelli presents a complex and sophisticated manual for how the Prince should use psychology to gain political power. DeTocqueville makes the revolution of rising expectations and the concept of relative deprivation key to the fall of the old regime in France. Finally, the founding fathers built the American system of government on critical assumptions about human nature, setting up checks and balances to counter human tendencies toward domination. The practical political world is similarly filled with assumptions about how relations among people might be said to be inevitably linked with human psychology; appeals to character are a longstanding staple in democratic politics and every precinct committeeman understands the electoral importance of the bandwagon and the underdog effect.
This course has a lecture format: we meet once a week to learn, critically reflect, and digest assigned materials. As you probably know, with these types of issues, consensual facts are often nowhere to be found. The course will therefore encourage a free and respectful discussion of differing opinions and worldviews, and will try to offer students some tools for informed and effective participation in related debates. While I will frequently lecture and at times guide conversation, I expect that all students come prepared to discuss our readings in an informed and thoughtful manner. As the political Middle Eastern context is a "lively" conflict that breeds turning points and crucial events on a daily basis, I expect that all of you follow the news and use this knowledge to contribute to our group discussions.

**Course Requirements:**

- Weekly Reading Responses (10%)
- Mid-Term Exam (30%)
- Oral Presentation (20%)
- Term Paper (40%)
- Class Participation

**Final Grade:**

1. Weekly Reading Responses 10%

   Students are expected to come to class prepared. This means they must read the material, as indicated on the accompanying syllabus, and participate in class discussions.

   For each article read, students will be required to hand in reading responses. This means you are to choose and write out in their entirety two (2) sentences or paragraphs or verses from each article which you consider especially significant to understanding the work being discussed that week in class.

   After each quote, free-write about what is important and/or significant about the passage. Do these select passages act as a key to unlocking the meaning of the text? Do they cause a personal reaction, emotionally, intellectually?

   These reading responses will not be corrected (for grammar, spelling, etc.) nor will they be individually graded. Points will be deducted for responses handed in late or not at all. Please
submit weekly reading responses on Moodle by Tuesday at 12pm each week (24 hours before class).

2. Mid-Term Exam 30%

The mid-term exam covers material from part I, “Basic Concepts and Theories in Political Psychology”. The mid-term exam will consist of four questions.

3. Oral Presentation 20%

The students (either on their own, or in couples) will choose one additional reading, marked with an asterisk (*), from the syllabus, and will present it in class (20-30 minutes). Students will choose their readings by our first class meeting. Students will email me a summary of their presentation by midnight on the Sunday prior to the class when they present.

The presentation should give a brief overview of the article chosen, focusing primarily on the argument presented. Consider the following questions to help you approach the paper: What is the main question or topic the author explores? Why is this topic important? What is the author’s argument? What methods and evidence did the author use? Do you agree/disagree with the argument presented? Why? What alternative hypotheses/arguments could be applicable? How does this paper relate to the class material? Etc. These questions do not need to be specifically answered in the presentation, but are ways to get you thinking about how to approach the presentation on the selected paper.

3. Term Paper 40%

The term paper provides you with the opportunity to more fully explore your class discussion topic, as well as examine it from a more empirical perspective. The term paper from the beginning of the course through week 12, and it will consist of twelve research questions.

*** Changes may occur, but they will be notified in advance***
Course Outline and Reading List

Part I- Basic Concepts and Theories in Political Psychology

Week 1: Introducing Political Psychology (28.9)

Week 2: Intergroup Relations (xx)

Week 3: Threat Perceptions (xx)

Week 4: Political Participation in Democratic Politics (xx)

Week 5: Political Leadership & Decision-Making (xx)

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Ariely, Dan. 2008. *Predictably Irrational: The Hidden Forces That Shape Our Decisions*. Chapters 1 & 9. **Chapter 1 is summarized in this below TEDTalk**

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wfcro5iM5vw

**Week 6: Religion and Ideology (xx)**


**Week 7: Genetics and Neurobiological Revolution (xx)**


**Week 8: Midterm Exam (xx)**

*Part II – the Psychology of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict*

**Week 9: Intractable Conflict: Basic Concepts and Case Studies (xx)**


**Week 10: Exposure to Political Violence and Terrorism (xx)**

**Week 11: Emotions and Political Behavior (xx)**

**Week 12: Peace Psychology (xx)**

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