POLITICAL PSYCHOLOGY
Political Science 823, Fall 2013
1:20-3:15pm Tuesdays
4004 Vilas

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hours: Thursday 1:00 to 2:00 pm or by appointment

PURPOSE OF THE COURSE:
This course is designed to introduce the core concepts and current controversies in the field of political psychology. Although this is a subdiscipline in and of itself, complete with an international association (the International Society of Political Psychology) and journal (Political Psychology), research in political psychology can be found across all areas of political science research. Here is why I find this topic fascinating and important: much of social science and the understanding of human behavior hinges on the belief that people act on the basis of their interests. But interests are not at all a given. Why do people think what they do about politics? How do they make sense of the world around them and how does this matter for politics? Those are the fundamental questions we will ponder this term.

Please be aware that Jonathan Renshon has just joined our faculty. He is an excellent political psychologist whose primary focus is international relations and leadership and experimental methods. I encourage you to take a course from him as well.

REQUIREMENTS:
You will each write a set of one-page reaction papers, a term paper proposal, and a term paper.

The term paper is due Monday, December 16th. This will be either a thorough research design that includes a thorough literature review or a report of original research that takes the form of a journal article. Your choice to pursue either a research paper or a research design should be driven by your familiarity with the literature in the area in which you wish to pursue research. You will all be responsible for a thorough understanding of the literature on the topic of your choosing and for formulating a question that is important. That is, your papers should ask a question that addresses a gap in existing literature and whose answer would contribute to scholarship and the broader public. If you can formulate such a question and collect data within the first month or so of class, I strongly encourage you to write a research paper. Otherwise, invest your time in writing a research design paper. The papers should be a concise and focused 17 to 20 pages. A short 2-3 page proposal is due September 24th.

If you choose to write a research paper, you are responsible for 4 one-page reaction papers. If you choose to write a research design, you are responsible for 6 reaction papers. You may choose which weeks you write these papers, though I encourage you to spread them throughout the term. On the weeks that you write a paper, it is due via email to the class email list (polisci823-1-f10/lists.wisc.edu) by noon on the Monday before class. These papers should be reflections and/or critiques on a selection of the week’s readings. By critique, I mean an analysis of the claims, evidence, or methods, which can include praise as well as criticism. The best papers take the following form: They have a brief introduction that identifies a key argument or claim mentioned or implied in the week’s readings. The body of the paper then gives a careful
and thorough analysis of the evidence the week’s readings have on this point. This is followed by your reading of this evidence in light of other research, and a rigorous analysis of current events. In other words, the papers focus on one point, ransack the week’s readings for all the details and evidence they have to offer on this point, and include your own original insight. Citing specific pages is encouraged. These papers will be graded. Even if you are auditing the class, I strongly encourage you to write six of these papers.

Each week, I would like each of you to email to me (kjcramer@wisc.edu), by noon on the Monday before class, 2 questions that you would like us to pursue as a group. These can be substantive questions such as, “What did Author X mean by statement Y?” or “Compare the claims made in article A to article B.” They can also be methodological questions, such as “I don’t understand what’s going on in Table 1 in Article Z. Let’s interpret it together.” Your questions do NOT have to fit one of these formats—these are just ideas. I will record whether you complete this assignment every week, but the purpose is not to give you another task—it is to give you another opportunity to set the agenda of the topics we cover in seminar.

I will only give an incomplete for this course under rare circumstances. Your grade will depend on your performance on the short papers and completion of weekly questions (25%), your participation in class discussions including the day you lead discussion (quality of participation weighted by volume of participation, to count as another 25%), and the term paper (50%). I will grade on an A, A-, B+, B, B-, C+ etc. basis, even though final grades are assigned on an A, AB, B, BC, C basis.

The following books are required for the course and are available at the University Book Store. These books are also available in the reserve room at College Library. Most of the readings not found in one of the required texts are available through the UW Library system (use the “Find-It” button on the UW Library home page to locate the pdf files. Here’s the web link for the find-it tool: http://www.library.wisc.edu/journals/eilandfindit.html. Entering the journal title, year and start page usually gets you to the pdf right away). The remaining readings will be available through Learn@UW. These are marked with a * in the calendar below.

BOOKS:

Key to Journal Acronyms:
AJPS: American Journal of Political Science
APSR: American Political Science Review
ASR: American Sociological Review
BJSP: British Journal of Social Psychology
JOP: Journal of Politics
POQ: Public Opinion Quarterly
PP: Political Psychology
PoP: Perspectives on Politics

CLASS EMAIL LIST
We have a class email list that I may use occasionally to send course-related announcements and that you will use to post your one-page papers. I encourage you to also use this address to discuss course-related matters with others in the seminar. Also, you will be sending your one-page reaction papers to this address. Our class address is polisci823-1-f13@lists.wisc.edu.

SPECIAL ACCOMMODATIONS
I wish to fully include persons with special challenges in this course. Please let me know if you need any special accommodations in the curriculum, instruction, or assessments for this course to enable you to fully participate. Every effort will be made to maintain the confidentiality of the information you share with me. You may also contact the McBurney Disability Resource Center, 1305 Linden Drive, (608) 263-2741, if you have questions about campus policies and services.
CALENDAR
(*=Readings not available on line, but available in coursepack. Readings other than “recommended” are required.)

I. INTRODUCTION TO THE FIELD
9/3
1. OVERVIEW AND HISTORY OF THE FIELD
Recommended:

9/10
2. ORIGINS OF POLITICAL PREFERENCES AND PERSPECTIVES

Recommended:
3. PUBLIC OPINION AND POLITICAL EVALUATION
Zaller. Chapters 1-6.

Recommended:

9/24
4. PERSUASION
DUE: Short (2-3 pages) term paper proposal. Include question you are addressing; whether you are doing a lit review/research design or original research; if original research, then possible data you have located or are in the process of locating that you will use to research this; brief sketch of previous research you are familiar with to date that addresses your question, and a justification of the importance of this project to the research literature and its implications for the broader public.

Zaller. Chapter 9 (see also 7 and 8 for background and model).

Recommended:
10/1

5. IDEOLOGICAL REASONING


Recommended:

Exchange on Genes an Ideologies in Perspectives on Politics 6 (02), 2008.

10/8

6. LIMITS OF COGNITION


Recommended:
10/15

7. VALUES


Recommended:

10/22

8. RATIONALITY


Recommended:

11/29

9. SOCIAL GROUPS, SOCIAL IDENTITY AND GROUP CONSCIOUSNESS


Recommended:
11/5

10. RACIAL ATTITUDES


Exchange on Racial Priming

Recommended:

11/12

11. MAKING SENSE OF POLITICS: POLITICAL UNDERSTANDING

Recommended:


11/19
12. APPROACHES TO PAYING ATTENTION TO CONTEXT

Recommended:

11/26
13. SOCIAL CLASS AND POLITICAL INEQUALITY

Recommended:

12/3

14. CITIZENS’ CAPACITY FOR DELIBERATIVE DEMOCRACY


Recommended:


12/10

15. RESEARCH PRESENTATIONS

******FINAL PAPERS DUE by 5pm, Monday, December 16th, by email as Word documents (please no .pdf)******