Government 2749: Political Psychology and International Relations

Spring 2018
Thurs 2 PM - 4 PM
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Classroom: CGIS K450
Harvard University
Office Hours: Thurs 4-5:30 PM, or by appointment

Preliminary syllabus – contents may change (January 18, 2018)

Course description

This graduate seminar explores the intersection of political psychology and international politics. Despite the proliferation of research at this intersection, many (most?) seminars on political psychology cover hardly any IR; many (most?) seminars in IR feature barely any political psychology. This class is an effort to bridge that divide.

Because of the “big tent” nature of IR, the interdisciplinary nature of the topic (spanning political science, various fields of psychology, and behavioral economics), and the ambiguity about what falls under its purview (can you have a theory of politics without a theory of mind? If not, what doesn’t count as psychological? As Stanley Hoffmann argued in his presidential address to the International Society of Political Psychology in June 1985, “The term political psychology is a pleonasm: not all psychology is about politics, thank goodness, but politics is wholly psychological.”), it is impossible to cover the entire field in a twelve week seminar. The course is thus designed as a curated overview, in the hopes that it will familiarize you with some of the debates in the field and introduce you to material you might have not encountered elsewhere, opening up new lines of inquiry, and providing inspiration for future research.

The reading list for the class is deliberately eclectic, drawing on a wide array of research traditions, and employing a diverse set of methodologies. It includes:

• Foundational works in social psychology and behavioral economics (which I’ll group together here as “behavioral approaches”), which much of the psychological work in IR continues to draw from (with varying degrees of fidelity).

• Classic works in IR that draw on behavioral approaches, because it’s important to know where the field has been.

• New works in IR that draw on behavioral approaches, which give a sense of where the field is going.

• Cutting edge research in social psychology and behavioral economics, which may give a sense of where the field will be going in the future.

We begin the semester by exploring the relationship between psychology and rationality, which we use as a launching pad from which to investigate the landscape of political
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*Class this week conflicts with ISA 2018, and will be rescheduled to another date.

psychology in international relations. (Note that we’ll jump straight into discussing the readings in the first class).

We spend the following two weeks on what loosely might be thought of as “cold,” cognitive models of information processing: heuristics and biases, prospect theory, learning and updating from the past, predicting the future, and communicating through the use of signals. In contrast, the following two weeks focus on what generally might be though of as “hot,” motivated models of decision-making: motivated reasoning, images and stereotypes, infrahumanization and dehumanization, perception, as well as emotions, morality, taboos, and indivisible issues. The divisions here are somewhat arbitrary — signaling and perception are mirror images of one another, and a number of the topics covered in subsequent weeks could easily be inserted here instead — but a broader level, what unites these latter two weeks is the way in which political judgments are often affect-laden.

The next two weeks focus on different dispositional theories and individual differences: personality, operational codes, integrative complexity, values, ideology, and culture. Historically, much of the work on personality and operational codes in IR has focused on the leader-level, while much of the work on values and ideology has focused on the mass public, but as the gap between the study of elite and mass political behavior has begun to dissipate, these two weeks might be better thought of as exploring the ways that different types of actors systematically differ from one another more generally.

The next three weeks all explore interaction and intergroup behavior: the psychology of small groups (how do these individual-level differences aggregate?), social categorization, social identity, and social dominance (how do individuals identify with and act as a part of groups in the first place?), honor, reputation and status, reciprocity and revenge, and thinking about collective identity at both the national, subnational, and supranational levels. If weeks 6–7 are dispositional, the penultimate week turns to the power of the situation, looking at the effects of violence, threat and political repression, and in turn, terrorism and radicalization. Finally, we conclude with genetic, biological, and evolutionary theories, which portray many of the
above mechanisms in a new light.

Course requirements and grading

20% Class participation
15% In-class presentations/facilitation
15% Paper proposal and peer review exercise: March 5-10, 2018
50% Final paper due: May 3, 2018

This is a seminar-style class that revolves around class discussion; students should come to class having done the readings and ready to talk about them. Enrollment is normally limited to graduate students and others with permission of the professor, and auditing is not normally permitted. After the first week, each week will be led in collaboration with graduate student facilitators, who will introduce the week's topic, place the course readings in a broader perspective, before opening the floor for broader class discussion.

Because the class is designed to be helpful for your research, the main assignment in the class is to write an original research paper. The paper should either propose or test a psychological theory on a topic related to international politics, with the goal of producing something that, after some revision, could eventually be published in a top journal. A number of the works on this syllabus began as papers written in graduate seminars (including here in the Harvard Government department!); think of this assignment as a chance to write something that will make it on this syllabus in the future.

Since so much of what we do as scholars is a collective enterprise, mid-way through the semester, the class also has a peer review exercise. You'll work up a short (3-5 page) proposal for your research paper, and submit it to me electronically. I'll then send each proposal to 2-3 other students in the class, who will provide written feedback on each proposal, so that you'll begin the second half of the semester with helpful advice about how to move forward with the project. I'll provide more information about the paper and review requirements early in the semester.

Collaboration and academic integrity policy

Discussion and the exchange of ideas are essential to academic work. For assignments in this course, you are encouraged to discuss the material presented in the course with your classmates. However, you should ensure that any written work you submit for evaluation is the result of your own research and writing and reflects your own approach to the topic. You must also adhere to standard citation practices in political science and properly cite any books, articles, websites, etc. that have helped you with your work.
Special accommodations

Students requiring academic accommodations are requested to present their letter from the Accessible Education Office (AEO) and speak with me by the end of the second week of the term. Failure to make these arrangements by this date may negatively affect my ability to implement the arrangements on time.

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Introduction: Psychology and rationality


Recommended

Rationality and its discontents


The landscape of political psychology (inside and outside of IR)


Kertzer, Joshua D., and Dustin Tingley. 2018. “Political Psychology in International Relations: Beyond the Paradigms.” Annual Review of Political Science Forthcoming.
Cold cognition I: Heuristics, biases, and prospect theory


Recommended

Heuristics and biases


Prospect theory


Cold cognition II: Updating, learning, signaling, and predicting


Recommended

*Learning, analogical reasoning, and updating*


**Problem representation and poliheuristic theory**


**Signaling and communicating**


**Predicting and forecasting**


Hot cognition I: Motivated reasoning, images, stereotypes, and perceptions


Recommended

**Motivated reasoning**


**Images and stereotypes**


Infrahumanization and dehumanization


Perception and misperception


Yarhi-Milo, Keren. 2014. *Knowing the Adversary: Leaders, Intelligence, and Assessment of Intentions in International Relations*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.


Hot cognition II: Emotions, morality, taboos, and indivisible issues


Recommended

**Emotions**


Morality


**Fairness and social preferences**


**Trust**


**Taboos and indivisible issues**


**Habit and practice**


Dispositions I: Personality, operational codes, integrative complexity


Recommended

*Cognitive maps and operational codes*


**Personality, motives, and leadership style**


Integrative complexity


Dispositions II: Values, ideology, and culture


Recommended

Values and ideology


Culture


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Intergroup I: Small groups, social categorization, and social identity


Recommended

Small groups


Baumeister, Roy F., Sarah E Ainsworth, and Kathleen D Vohs. 2016. “Are groups more or less than the sum of their members? The moderating role of individual identification.” *Behavioral and Brain Sciences* 39: 1-14.


*Social categorization, social identity, and social dominance*


**Intergroup II: Honor, reputation, status, reciprocity, revenge**


**Recommended**

*Honor, reputation, status, and the struggle for recognition*


Reciprocity and revenge


Intergroup III: National, subnational, and supranational identities


Recommended

National and transnational identities


Davidov, Eldad. 2009. “Measurement equivalence of nationalism and constructive patriotism in the
ISSP: 34 countries in a comparative perspective.” Political Analysis 17 (1): 64–82.

"Us".” Annual Review of Political Science 17: 441-460.

Dragojlovic, Nick. 2015. “Listening to Outsiders: The Impact of Messenger Nationality on

look at the “authoritarian triad” and right-wing ideology.” European Journal of Social Psychology
46: 224-236.


Political Psychology 38 (3): 391–408.

Constructing nations and ethnic groups


University Press.


Sniderman, Paul M., Louk Hagendoorn, and Markus Prior. 2004. “Predisposing Factors and
Situational Triggers: Exclusionary Reactions to Immigrant Minorities.” American Political Science

Hainmueller, Jens, and Michael J. Hiscox. 2007. “Educated Preferences: Explaining Attitudes

Chapman, Thomas, and Philip G Roeder. 2007. “Partition as a solution to wars of nationalism: The
importance of institutions.” American Political Science Review 101 (4): 677-691.


cross-cultural investigation into a reconceptualization of ethnocentrism.” European Journal of

Kinder, Donald R, and Cindy D Kam. 2010. Us against them: Ethnocentric foundations of American
opinion. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.


Violence as cause and effect: Political violence and exposure to threat and repression


Recommended

Exposure to threat, violence, and repression


**Terrorism and radicalization**


Genetic, neurobiological and evolutionary


Recommended

Genetic and neurobiological


Evolutionary


