This course is about ideas in psychology and their applications to politics. It has three parts.

The first part is about obedience, conformity, social pressure, and authoritarianism. These are old and important topics, but they do not often get an airing in political psychology courses. They should.

The second part is about how people interpret new information about politics and use it to update their beliefs. In this vein, we will talk about different ways in which media and savvy politicians can manipulate citizens, whether people can use “information shortcuts” to compensate for their lack of direct information about policies, and related topics.

The third part of the course takes up group influences on political behavior, partisanship and ideology, and prejudice and racial campaigning (e.g., the “race card”). These topics may seem unrelated, but I hope to convince you that they are connected by several common threads.
Exams, Grading, Section Requirements, and Absences

There will not be a final exam.

There will be three in-class exams. They are not cumulative; that is, each exam will cover a distinct set of topics. The first exam will count for 20% of your final grade; the second, for 25%; the third, for 30%. See below for the dates of the exams.

You may handwrite or type your exams. If you know that you want to type but will not have a laptop computer, please notify me as early in the semester as possible.

For the exams, you need to know the last names of all of the authors whose works are assigned in this course. If I ask about Milgram, you need to know what Milgram did. If I describe Milgram’s experiments, you need to know that Milgram is the man who designed them.

Final paper option. You may write a final paper of 6 to 9 pages instead of taking the third exam. If you want to take this option, you must let your TA know by email no later than February 26th. You will be required to write in response to one of at least two (and perhaps only two) prompts. The prompts will be distributed sometime on February 28th, and your paper will be due at 11:59pm on March 7th. Do not send it by email; instead, upload it to Canvas.

Syllabus exam. There will be a special in-class exam during the first ten minutes of class on January 17th. It will not be on the course material per se. Instead, it will be on the rules, guidelines, and ideas in this syllabus. You may refer to this syllabus as you take the exam, but to do well, it will help to have read the entire syllabus in advance.

If you score a 90 or above on the syllabus exam, your final grade for the semester will not be affected. If you score between 75 and 90, I will subtract two points from your final grade. If you score below 75, I will subtract five points from your final grade, and I will ask you to drop the course.

Exam pickup policy. To ensure the confidentiality of your grade, the TAs and I will never leave your exam in a mailbox or give it to a friend.

Exam regrades. If you think that your exam has been graded in error, talk to your TA. If your TA does not change the grade, you are welcome to talk to me.

Whether regrade requests are made of your TAs or of me, they must be made within ten days of the date on which exams were handed back in class.

Historically, the only successful regrade requests have been justified with reference to specific passages in the assigned reading. And if there are particular passages or other points that you want me to consider as I regrade your exam, you should send them to me by email. I will not read handwritten explanatory notes.

If I regrade your exam, your grade may go down.
SECTIONS AND SECTION ABSENCES
Section begins on the second week of class. The teaching assistants are Shawn Dean and Richard Shafranek.

Section attendance is required, and your section discussion grade will count for 25% of your final grade. Students who attend every section but speak rarely or never will receive a 30 (out of 100) for their section discussion grades.

You may be absent from section once without penalty. Your final section grade for the term will be reduced by ten points (out of 100) for each unexcused absence.

You may switch sections through the fourth week of the semester if you get the approval of the TA into whose section you want to move. (Don’t try to clear it with me. I’ll just refer you to the TA.) The TA may refuse your request, e.g., because the section into which you want to switch is already full.

If you switch from one TA’s section to another TA’s section, both TAs will need to know. So send email to both of them.

EXAM ABSENCES
If you are absent from an exam and do not have a a good reason, your absence will not be excused. You’ll get a 0 for the exam. Think ahead. If you know that you are going to miss an exam, do not take the course.

Baptisms, bar mitzvahs, bat mitzvahs, births, job interviews, weddings, and extracurricular activities (athletic or not) are never sufficient reasons for absence from an exam.

Please do not ask a coach to ask me that your absence from an exam be excused because you had to practice, play, or travel for a game. It won’t make a difference to me, and you will be wasting the coach’s time.

If you miss an exam and your absence is excused, you will need to take a make-up exam. There will only be one make-up exam for each regular exam, so make your arrangements as soon as possible. Your TA is in charge of the make-up exams; get in touch with him to set your make-up time.

MOST GRADING WILL BE BLIND
Except for the syllabus exam, all exams will be graded blind. I will not know your exam grades until I calculate your overall grade for the semester. In most cases, neither your TAs nor I will know your exam grades until we calculate your overall grade for the semester.

There is an exception. In the middle of the quarter, the Associate Dean of Undergraduate Academic Affairs is likely to ask me to identify students who have an average grade of C− or worse. If she makes that request this year, I will find out which students have those grades, and I will let her know. She in turn will share the reports with the students’ academic advisors.
MAPPING BETWEEN NUMBERS AND LETTER GRADES
All of the grades that you receive in this course will be letter grades, e.g., A, B+. To compute an average grade for the semester that I can report to the Registrar’s Office, I will translate those letter grades into numbers, average the numbers, and then translate the average back into a letter grade. This is the mapping between letter grades and numbers: below 60 = F, 60 to 63 = D−, 63 to 67 = D, 67 to 70 = D+, 70 to 73 = C−, 73 to 77 = C, 77 to 80 = C+, 80 to 83 = B−, 83 to 87 = B, 87 to 90 = B+, 90 to 93 = A−, 93 and above = A.

GRADES WILL NOT BE ROUNDED UP
Grades will not be rounded up. For example, a final grade of 92.9 will be reported to the Registrar as an A–.

GRADES WILL BE CURVED
At least 35% of students will receive an A- or an A on each exam and for an end-of-semester grade. To make this happen for any particular exam, I will calculate the raw score (out of 100) for the student at the 65th percentile of the grade distribution. Let this score be $s$. I will add $\min(0, 90 - s)$ points to this student’s score, bringing it to 90. I will add the same number of points to every other student’s score. I will use the same procedure to adjust the end-of-semester grades.

I will not use a similar procedure to adjust grades downward. The percentage of students receiving an A– or an A will not be capped; it may be higher than 35%.

Research Participation Requirement
You are required to complete a research assignment that will entail up to four hours of participation in research studies. By participating, you will learn how studies are conducted. And at the end of the quarter, you will receive a description of the study’s goal, result, and relevance to the course.

If you prefer not to participate in research, you may instead read a chapter about political science research and write a five-page reaction paper.

In the beginning of the quarter, you will receive email asking whether you prefer to participate in studies or to write a reaction paper. The email will also include information about how to complete either requirement.

If you do not complete this requirement during the current quarter, I will not report a grade to the registrar. If you do not complete this requirement during the current quarter or the next one, you will fail the course.

There are two exceptions to the requirement. If you are now enrolled in multiple courses that impose this requirement, you need to satisfy the requirement for only one of them. And if you completed the requirement in a previous quarter, you need not complete it for this course.
Office Hours

Office hours will take place on the times specified at https://www.slotted.co/2019winter. They will be held at my office: Scott Hall 304. You do not need to make an appointment in advance, but I prefer that you do. Making an appointment also reduces the probability that you will need to wait while I’m meeting with other students.

You cannot sign up for my office hours through Canvas. Instead, please make appointments through https://www.slotted.co/2019winter. When you make an appointment, please add a comment indicating what you would like to talk about when we meet.

If all office-hours slots are full—you can tell by checking the slotted.co site—I generally will not be able to meet with you during or immediately after office hours.

Questions That You Should Not Ask

I like to take questions, including naive questions. (Naive questions may be excellent questions.) I do not expect that you already know any of the material that we cover in this course. I also expect that you will be confused at times, and clarifying questions about confusing points are always in order. But there are a few questions that you should not ask. See http://johnbullock.org/teaching/badQuestions.pdf for details. Reviewing that document is a requirement of this course.

Readings

Required readings are marked with an asterisk. The other readings in the syllabus are recommended but not required.

There is one required book: Stanley Milgram’s Obedience to Authority, ISBN 978-0-06-176521-6. The assigned chapters will not be online. The book will not be available from the university bookstore. You must obtain a copy—and soon, because it is assigned very early in the semester. There are several excellent online bookstores, and I recommend that you order a copy from one of them immediately. “The stores were out of stock” is not an adequate excuse for not having the book.

I expect to make small changes to the reading list throughout the term. Whenever I make changes especially worth noting, I’ll send an announcement via e-mail.

CAN YOU REPRODUCE THE AUTHORS’ RESULTS?

Most of the readings on the syllabus involve some form of data analysis. The authors are making empirical claims about the world, and they are backing up their claims with analyses of data. Sometimes the data are from the authors’ own studies; sometimes they are from studies that others have conducted.
You should ask: how confident should I be that the authors’ claims are correct? This is a large question, but part of the answer lies with the availability of the data and the code (i.e., the statistical programs) that the authors wrote to analyze the data. Even if you do not understand data and code at all, you should care about whether they are available to the public. Professors often make mistakes, and if the data and code are not available, they cannot be checked for mistakes or otherwise investigated in any way.

In political science, norms of data-sharing and code-sharing are very strong. As a result, it is difficult to publish in respectable political science journals if you are unwilling to put your data and your code online so that others are free to analyze them. But this has been true for less than a decade. Norms for data-sharing and code-sharing were weaker in political science in the past, and they remain weaker in other disciplines. The upshot is that you should be very skeptical of any contemporary political-science research for which the data and code are not available. Temper your skepticism when considering other fields, and especially when considering older work. It would be foolish, for example, to fault Stanley Milgram for not putting his data online.

You will see that entries for some of the readings on this syllabus are preceded by \textbf{CNA} or \textbf{DNA}. These entries stand for “data not available” and “code not available.” They indicate that I have been unable to locate the authors’ code or data. Some readings rely on both public and private datasets; in these cases, I have tended not to apply a \textbf{DNA} tag.

**FINDING THE READINGS**

There is no packet of course readings. You should print or acquire them yourself. Most of them are available online, either from URLs that are given in this syllabus or from the course website. If there is no URL in the syllabus and the course website doesn’t have the article, please search for it online. \textit{You are responsible for locating every one of the assigned readings.}

In every semester, my TAs and I receive messages from students telling us that certain readings cannot be found online. Most of these messages are incorrect. Please do not send a message along these lines unless you have failed to find a reading \textit{and} have conferred with someone else in the course who has also failed to find it.

I find most of the course readings (except those available through Canvas) by searching Google Scholar. I recommend that you start your searches in the same way.

You may need to use an on-campus computer or to connect through the e Northwestern VPN. If you don’t know what a VPN is, see \url{http://www.it.northwestern.edu/oncampus/vpn/}.

**WHAT WE WON’T COVER THIS YEAR**

It’s a big field, and we cannot have units on each important topic. To my mind, five omissions stand out: we will not have units on ideology, Bayesian updating, political knowledge, status quo bias and “system justification,” or “myopic retrospection” in political judgments. If you have questions about these topics, feel free to ask me about them outside of class.
BACKGROUND IN SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY
If you want background reading in psychology that is not explicitly political but that informs much of what we cover in this course, try these texts:


BACKGROUND READINGS IN STATISTICS
There is no statistics prerequisite, but many of the assigned articles use simple statistics. If you want to better understand the statistical methods that you encounter in the articles, I recommend:


Freedman, David A. 2009. *Statistical Models: Theory and Practice*. Revised ed. New York: Cambridge University Press. This is better than *Statistics* but also more advanced. Chapters 1-5 are excellent for self-study if you do the exercises.
January 8 (T): Overview; Obedience

*This syllabus. If you cannot read it before the first class, that’s OK. But please read all of it before class on the 10th. Among other things, reading this syllabus may make you realize that you do not want to take this course.


January 10 (R): Obedience, continued


Readings marked by an asterisk (*) are required; all others are optional. [DNA] indicates that the authors’ data do not seem to be available online, and [CNA] indicates that the code needed to reproduce the authors’ results do not seem to be available online. See page 5 for details.
January 15 (T): Conformity and Social Pressure


DellaVigna, Stefano, John A. List, and Ulrike Malmendier. 2009. “Testing for Altruism and Social Pressure in Charitable Giving.” NBER Working Paper 15629. http://www.nber.org/papers/w15629. The authors use a field and a survey experiment to estimate the parameters of a structural model. This is outside the scope of our course, but it’s a very interesting idea. Note that “social pressure” here consists largely of asking people for money face-to-face.


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January 17 (R): Authoritarianism and Syllabus Exam

Our focus is authoritarianism as a personality trait, not authoritarianism as a system or style of government. These two meanings of “authoritarianism” are related, but as I’ll explain in class, they don’t always go hand in hand.

The exam will be given in the first ten minutes of class. See the “Exams” section of this syllabus for more details.


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January 22 (T): Exam 1

January 24 (R): Attitude Stability and “Nonattitudes”


*CNA* Ansolabehere, Stephen, Jonathan Rodden, and James M. Snyder, Jr. 2008. “The Strength of Issues: Using Multiple Measures to Gauge Preference Stability, Ideological Constraint, and Issue Voting.” *American Political Science Review* 102 (May): 215-32. [http://journals.cambridge.org/abstract_S0003055408080210](http://journals.cambridge.org/abstract_S0003055408080210). This is a difficult article. Most of the math is simple, but there is a lot of it. Try reading the article twice before lecture: read first to get the gist; the second time, try to work through the math.


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February 5 (T): Motivated Reasoning

* [DNA][CNA] Lord, Charles. G., Lee Ross, and Mark R. Lepper. 1979. “Biased Assimilation and Attitude Polarization: The Effects of Prior Theories on Subsequently Considered Evidence.” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 37 (November): 2098-2109. Each of the authors is a superb scholar, and this article is often considered a classic in the motivated reasoning literature. But it is actually quite flawed, and in lecture, I’ll explain its flaws. Understanding them will help you to understand the very deep problems in much (not all) of the motivated reasoning literature.

* [DNA][CNA] Cohen, Geoffrey L., Joshua Aronson, and Claude M. Steele. 2000. “When Beliefs Yield to Evidence: Reducing Biased Evaluation by Affirming the Self.” *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* 26 (9): 1151-1164. [http://psp.sagepub.com/content/26/9/1151](http://psp.sagepub.com/content/26/9/1151). You may skip Study 3. There is one big idea that I want you to get from the article, and you don’t need to read Study 3 to get it.


Gentzkow, Matthew, and Jesse M. Shapiro. 2006. “Media Bias and Reputation.” *Journal of Political Economy* 114 (2). This is not, strictly speaking, a political psychology article. But it does a very nice job of showing why the Lord, Ross, and Lepper (1979) data are not, in fact, evidence of biased assimilation. (See especially page 286, note 8. You can think of this article as expanding on the “herbal remedies for cancer” argument that Lord, Ross, and Lepper give at the end of their article.)


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SELECTIVE EXPOSURE TO INFORMATION

The idea that people selectively expose themselves to information that is likely to confirm their prior beliefs is one aspect of motivated reasoning. It has proved controversial in the past, especially where politics is concerned. But evidence in favor of political selective exposure seems to be mounting.


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February 7 (R): Heuristics and Cues

Most people know very little about politics. An important question in political psychology is whether they can nevertheless make good political decisions. That is a large part of what we’ll discuss today.


especially pages 5-16. The suggestion here is that the anchoring-and-adjustment heuristic helps to explain why there is less demand for redistribution in societies that have higher degrees of income inequality.


Popkin, Samuel L. 1994. *The Reasoning Voter: Communication and Persuasion in Presidential Campaigns*. 2nd ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Some of this is bad—cf. the “tamale heuristic”—but it remains an accessible and influential statement of the view that cues are “information shortcuts” and are, on balance, a good thing.


**February 12 (T): Framing**

“Framing” has two very different meanings. Psychologists chiefly study “equivalence framing.” Political scientists chiefly study “issue framing.” You need to understand the distinction.


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EQUIVALENCE FRAMING


ISSUE FRAMING (AKA “EMPHASIS” FRAMING)


February 14 (R): Prospect Theory


Weaver, Ray, and Shane Frederick. 2012. “A Reference Price Theory of the Endowment Effect.” *Journal of Marketing Research* 49 (October): 696-707. Most people who study prospect theory think that the endowment effect is due to loss aversion. The authors argue that it is instead due to “aversion to bad deals,” where “bad” depends on your frame of reference. See http://goo.gl/yy0qMl for a brief introduction to the paper.

Polman, Evan. 2012. “Self-Other Decision Making and Loss Aversion.” *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes* (November): 141-50. The author’s argument is that we are less loss-averse when making decisions for others than when making decisions for ourselves. The finding holds even in situations of riskless choice.

Anderson, Ashton, and Etan A. Green. 2018. “Personal Bests as Reference Points.” *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*. Interesting analysis of a large database of results of chess games. Note also the simple utility model in the appendix, which can probably be generalized to many different situations.


February 19 (T): Exam 2

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February 21 (R): Interlude on Causal Inference and the Trustworthiness of the Social Sciences

How do we know whether X causes Y? We’ll explore this topic by reviewing the logic of randomized experiments. I’ll also speak about how causal inferences are drawn from nonexperimental data. If you don’t understand the ideas in this class, there are important respects in which you won’t understand the rest of the course.

My aim is not to teach you how to use particular methods but to give you enough information to help you understand what you’ll see in the readings. (What I do here is no substitute for a course in statistics or econometrics, which everyone who wants to be a better social-science student should take.)


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CAN YOU TRUST THE SOCIAL SCIENCES?
When can you trust the social sciences? Not as often as you would like. Most published research findings may be false. Most social scientists are too optimistic about their ability to discover general truths about people.

But don’t surrender. There are guidelines that can help you distinguish good studies from bad ones. Some of these guidelines are easy to follow, and in this class, I’ll describe them.


*Ioannidis, John P.A., Athina Tatsioni, and Fotini B. Karassa. 2011. “Who Is Afraid of Reviewers’ Comments? Or, Why Anything Can Be Published and Anything Can Be Cited.” European Journal of Clinical Investigation 40 (4): 285-87. We’re better off with some form of peer review than without it. But there are major problems. This editorial will give you a sense of how the system works, with heavy emphasis on the problems. Don’t worry if the first paragraph confuses you or if you don’t always understand the aspects of the peer-review process that the authors are describing. Do identify and try to understand their main criticisms of the process.


REPRODUCIBILITY OF RESULTS
*Re-read the “Can You Reproduce the Authors’ Results?” subsection of this syllabus. It starts on page 5.


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OTHER ISSUES


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February 26 (T): Explicit Prejudice, Implicit Prejudice, and Racial “Priming”


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March 5 (T): Reducing Prejudice; Conclusion of the Course

In addition to discussing prejudice-reduction strategies, we'll review major points made throughout the course. We may touch on prominent topics that didn’t make it onto the syllabus.


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**March 7 (R): Exam 3; Papers Due**

Papers are due for those who opt to write a paper instead of taking the third exam.

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