

Political Science 150 | Introduction to Biology, Psychology, and Politics

University of Nebraska-Lincoln
Fall Semester 2016 | Section 001

Tuesdays & Thursdays 12:30-1:45 | Bessey Hall Room 108

Instructor:	Dr. Ingrid Haas
Email:	ihaas2 (at) unl.edu
Office phone:	402.472.2173
Office location:	531 Oldfather Hall / C83 East Memorial Stadium
Office hours:	Tuesdays and Thursdays from 11-12 in 531 Oldfather Hall (or by appointment)
Course website:	Accessible through http://my.unl.edu

INTRODUCTION

This course provides an introduction to the central theories, methods, and findings in the application of biological and psychological techniques to politics. New approaches to political science have incorporated ideas about human behavior from a variety of other fields, including (but not limited to) psychology, biology, and neuroscience. The goal of this work is to improve our understanding of how people think about politics, make political decisions, and the extent to which they engage in a variety of political behaviors (e.g., voting). To understand these questions, political scientists and psychologists have drawn on research in a variety of domains, including the study of emotion, personality, and group processes, just to name a few. This course will provide an overview of the interdisciplinary study of politics at the intersection of these fields, focusing on how a basic understanding of human psychology, biology, and neuroscience can inform our thinking about politics.

This is the first course in the Biology, Psychology, and Politics area in the Department of Political Science. It is designed to introduce you to a wide array of research topics at the intersection of psychology, biology, neuroscience, and political science. If you enjoy this class and want to learn more about the intersection of biology, psychology, and politics, you might consider taking the other courses in the sequence (POLs 250, 350, 450).

COURSE OBJECTIVES

In completing this course, students should:

1. Gain an understanding of how interdisciplinary research is conducted in the social sciences.
2. Learn to appreciate the link between political behavior and basic human psychology, biology, and neuroscience.
3. Be familiar with social psychological research on obedience, conformity, group processes, personality, social cognition, decision making, attitudes, emotion, social identity, stereotyping, and prejudice, and the implications of this work for understanding political behavior.

ACE (GENERAL EDUCATION) PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

By passing this course, you will fulfill ACE Learning Outcome 6: "Use knowledge, theories, methods, and historical perspectives appropriate to the social sciences to understand and evaluate human behavior." Through this course, you will have several opportunities to acquire the knowledge and skills

necessary to achieve the ACE Learning Outcome(s). Your work will be evaluated by the instructor according to the assignments described in this course syllabus. You may be asked to provide samples of your work for ACE assessment as well.

REQUIRED TEXTBOOKS

Houghton, D. P. (2014). *Political Psychology: Situations, Individuals, and Cases* (2nd ed.). New York, NY: Routledge. [ISBN: 978-0415833820]

Required textbooks are available for purchase or rental from the UNL Bookstore, and (when possible) will be placed on course reserve for use in Love Library.

In addition to the textbook, you are encouraged to read the politics section of at least one major national newspaper (e.g., *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*) on a daily basis.

Any additional readings will be posted on the course website.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Exams (60%). Exams in this course will consist primarily of multiple-choice questions, but will also include some short answer and essay questions. Exams will cover material from the readings and from lecture, and each exam will cover only that section of the course. Exam dates are listed on the course schedule. Make-up exams will not be given unless there are extenuating circumstances -- in that case you must notify me in advance of the exam and provide documentation of the absence.

Journal Assignment (15%). This assignment will be completed throughout the semester, and the final collection of entries will be due right before Thanksgiving Break. You will write (on average) one journal entry per week for a total of ten entries. Each entry should be 0.5-1.0 typed pages (single-spaced) and will focus on relating a course concept to a real-world example or current event. At two points during the semester (see course schedule for deadlines), you should submit one entry to me for a journal check (I'll read these and provide feedback). The complete set of entries will be due at the end of the semester.

Final Research Paper (15%). Your final paper assignment will require you to use what you have learned about interdisciplinary research in biology, psychology, and politics and apply this information to the current political climate. We will go over the details of the assignment in class. The final product will be a paper that is approximately 5 double-spaced pages. Final papers will be due Tuesday, 12/6, by the end of the day (11:59 pm), and should be submitted on Blackboard.

Participation (10%). Your participation will be based on attendance and active participation in discussion. I will focus on both the quantity and the quality of your contributions when determining participation grades. In other words, the goal should be to contribute often, but also to make sure that any contributions are valuable to the class discussion. Completion of in-class assignments, activities, and small group discussions will also count toward your participation grade.

GRADES

Final grades for this course will be calculated based on a possible 500 points and using the distribution and percentages below. I don't round up or assign extra points at the end of the semester, so it is your responsibility to earn your desired grade. If you have any questions or concerns about your grade, you should always feel free to talk to me--the earlier in the semester the better! Final grades will be curved up for everyone in the class *only* if the overall class average is below a B- (< 80%). I will use Blackboard throughout the semester to post grades so that you can keep track of your progress, and you can also calculate your grade using the point distribution below. Incompletes will be given only under extreme circumstances, and at the sole discretion of the instructor.

Exam #1	100	Points	Percent	Grade	Points	Percent	Grade
Exam #2	100	485	97-100%	A+	385	77-79%	C+
Exam #3	100	465	93-96%	A	365	73-76%	C
Journal Assignment	75	450	90-92%	A-	350	70-72%	C-
Final Research Paper	75	435	87-89%	B+	335	67-69%	D+
Participation	50	415	83-86%	B	315	63-66%	D
-----		400	80-82%	B-	300	60-62%	D-
Total	500				< 300	< 59%	F

COURSE POLICIES

Deadlines and Completion of Coursework

Late assignments will not be accepted, and make-up exams will not be given. Should you miss any exam or assignment without an approved excuse, you will receive a zero grade for that exercise. In rare circumstances, an exception may be granted to a student who provides a validated excuse to the instructor *prior to the assignment due date or exam dates*. If you foresee being unable to turn in a paper or take an exam on the assigned dates, contact the instructor *immediately*. Excused absences for University sponsored events (field trips, athletic trips) and medical / personal emergencies *must be documented*.

Attendance, Preparation, and Participation

Regular attendance at lecture is encouraged, and unexcused absences will hurt your participation grade. Absences will be excused only for medical/personal emergencies or university sponsored events, documentation of the absence will be required, and you must notify me in advance. If you do miss class, you are responsible for finding out what you missed and getting notes from someone in class. Reading assignments are to be completed before class meetings. You should be prepared at all times to discuss the readings and concepts scheduled for each class period. This is genuinely necessary for your success in this course. You must carefully read all of the assigned material, take notes while you read, and take good notes in class in order to perform well on the exams. Your participation grade and, more importantly, the quality of class discussions hinges largely upon your preparation and your informed contributions. This class will be more enjoyable and productive for all of us if everyone comes prepared!

Communication

The best way to reach me is through email. I check it often (more often than I check voicemail) and will do my best to respond to your questions within 24 hours. Please include "POLLS 150" in the subject line of your email. You are also welcome and encouraged to stop by my office during office hours, or make an appointment to meet with me at another time. I will send announcements electronically, so please check your email and the course website often. Please make sure that the email address associated with your Blackboard account is one you check frequently.

Academic Misconduct Warning

All work must be your own. Plagiarism and all other forms of cheating outlined by the University's Student Code of Conduct (Section 4.2) will not be tolerated in this class. Cheating or plagiarism will be reported through official university channels, and the consequences will be severe. The minimum punishment is usually failure in the course. No one exam or assignment is ever worth this penalty. To avoid missing out on a good college GPA, or even your degree, keep your eyes on your own test and write your own final paper.

Writing assignments in this course will be submitted electronically to a SafeAssign dropbox in Blackboard. SafeAssign uses plagiarism-checking software to detect text copied from other authors. Further information about SafeAssign can be found at safeassign.com.

Students with Disabilities

Students with disabilities are encouraged to contact the instructor for a confidential discussion of their individual needs for academic accommodation. It is the policy of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln to provide flexible and individualized accommodation to students with documented disabilities that may affect their ability to fully participate in course activities or to meet course requirements. To receive accommodation services, students must be registered with the Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) office, 132 Canfield Administration, 472-3787 voice or TTY.

POLS 150 | COURSE SCHEDULE

Due dates for assignments and exams, as well as required readings, are listed below on the course schedule. All readings should be completed prior to class. Please note that this schedule represents a tentative plan and is subject to change at the instructor’s discretion. Any changes will be announced in class.

Note: All reading assignments for lecture come from the Houghton *Political Psychology* textbook unless otherwise noted. Any additional readings will be posted on Blackboard.

WEEK	DATE	TOPIC	READING	ASSIGNMENTS
1	T 8/23	Syllabus and Course Introduction	Syllabus and Course Schedule (available on Blackboard)	complete student information survey
	R 8/25	Introduction to Research in Psychology, Biology, and Politics	Ch. 1	
2	T 8/30	History of Political Psychology	Ch. 2 McGuire (1993)	
	R 9/1	Research Methods	Marcus (2012) Ch. 2	
SECTION I: THE SITUATION				
3	T 9/6	Behaviorism and Free Will	Ch. 3	
	R 9/8		Cave (2016)	
4	T 9/13	Social Influence: Obedience, Compliance, and Conformity	Ch. 4	
	R 9/15		Kelman & Hamilton (1989) Ch. 1,2,8,9	
5	T 9/20	The Power of the Situation: Social Roles and the Nature of Evil	Ch. 5	Journal Check #1 due by end of day 9/22 (11:59pm)
	R 9/22		Zimbardo (2007) Ch. tbd	
6	T 9/27	Group Decision-Making	Ch. 6 Jervis (1993)	
	R 9/29	Exam I		
SECTION II: THE PERSON				
7	T 10/4	Psychobiography and Personality	Ch. 7 Ch. 8 pp. 113-116	
	R 10/6	Beliefs, Ideology, and Morality	Ch. 8 pp. 117-127 Haidt (2012) Ch. tbd	
8	T 10/11	Cognition, Perception, and Decision Making	Ch. 9	
	R 10/13		Tetlock (2005) Ch. tbd	
9	T 10/18	NO CLASS (Fall Semester Break)		

WEEK	DATE	TOPIC	READING	ASSIGNMENTS
10	R 10/20	Attitudes and Persuasion	tbd	
	T 10/25	Affect and Emotion	Ch. 10 Westen (2007) Ch. tbd	
	R 10/27	Biopolitics and Genetics	Ch. 11 pp. 162-165, 175-184 Hibbing et al. (2014) Ch. tbd	Journal Check #2 due by end of day 10/27 (11:59pm)
11	T 11/1	Political Neuroscience	Ch. 11 pp. 165-175, 184-185 Haas (2016)	
	R 11/3	Exam 2		
PART III: UNDERSTANDING POLITICS AS PEOPLE IN SITUATIONS				
12	T 11/8	ELECTION DAY! Psychology of Voting Behavior	Ch. 12	
	R 11/10	Political Communication, Persuasion, and Mass Media	Ch. 13	
13	T 11/15	Racism and Political Intolerance	Ch. 15 Sidanius & Pratto (1999) Ch. 2	
	R 11/17	Nationalism, Ethnic Conflict, and Genocide	Ch. 14 Tajfel & Turner (1986)	
14	T 11/22	Terrorism	Ch. 16 Crenshaw (1986)	Journal Assignment due by end of day 11/22 (11:59pm)
	R 11/24	NO CLASS (Thanksgiving Break)		
15	T 11/29	Psychology of International Security	Ch. 17	
	R 12/1	Exam 3		
16	T 12/6	Conclusion / Paper Consultations	Ch. 18	Final Research Paper due by end of day 12/6 (11:59pm)
	R 12/8	Course Wrap-up		

References

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- Hibbing, J. R., Smith, K. B., & Alford, J. R. (2014). *Predisposed: Liberals, Conservatives, and the Biology of Political Differences*. Routledge.
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- Kelman, H. C., & Hamilton, V. L. (1989). *Crimes of Obedience: Towards a Social Psychology of Authority And Responsibility*. Yale University Press.
- Marcus, G. (2012). *Political Psychology: Neuroscience, Genetics, and Politics*. Oxford University Press.
- McGuire, W. J. (1993). The poly-psy relationship: Three phases of a long affair. In S. Iyengar & W. J. McGuire (Eds.), *Explorations in Political Psychology* (pp. 9-35). Duke University Press.
- Shenkman, R. (2016). *Political Animals: How our Stone-Age Brain Gets in the Way of Smart Politics*. Basic Books.
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- Tajfel, H., & Turner, J. C. (1986). The social identity theory of intergroup behavior. In S. Worchel & W. Austin (Eds.), *Psychology of Intergroup Relations* (pp. 7-24). Chicago: Nelson.
- Tetlock, P. E. (2005). *Expert Political Judgment: How Good is it? How Can we Know?* Princeton University Press.
- Westen, D. (2007). *The Political Brain: The Role of Emotion in Deciding the Fate of the Nation*. New York: Public Affairs.
- Zimbardo, P. G. (2007). *The Lucifer Effect: Understanding how Good People Turn Evil*. Random House.