COURSE DESCRIPTION AND GOALS

Course Description

This graduate-level seminar course will examine classic and contemporary research on political attitudes from an interdisciplinary perspective, drawing primarily on literatures in political science, social psychology, and cognitive neuroscience. We will examine issues related to attitude structure, function, and change, and consider how factors like motivation, emotion, and social identity influence attitude expression. There will also be a methodological component to the course—we will talk about issues related to experimental design and different strategies or techniques for attitude measurement (e.g., direct versus indirect measurement, implicit versus explicit measures).

While much of our focus will be on politics, specifically, this is also a course on the social psychology of attitudes and attitude measurement. Graduate students from outside the department (e.g., psychology, sociology) with an interest in attitudes and experimental design may find this course relevant to their interests and are welcome to enroll.

Course Format

The format of the course will be weekly discussion sessions of assigned readings. Readings are assigned for each class meeting, and are to be read prior to the class with which they are associated. All readings will be made available on Canvas at least one week prior to class. Course requirements are intended to facilitate discussion and integration of the reading material. This includes weekly reaction papers (due the Thursday before class), peer reviews of reaction papers (due Sunday), and discussion leading (planned for weeks 5-11).

REQUIRED MATERIALS

General Background Reading

There are no required textbooks for the course, but you may find the following to be helpful background reading:


Assigned readings will be available on Canvas.

Technical Requirements

UNL email account (@huskers.unl.edu)
Canvas (recommended browsers are Firefox or Google Chrome)
Word processor (e.g., Microsoft Word, Pages)
PDF reader (e.g., Adobe, Preview)
Personal computer (desktop or laptop)

For more information on technology resources available to UNL students, check out UNL IT resources: https://its.unl.edu/. You can also contact them at support@nebraska.edu with problems/questions regarding any UNL-supported software (this includes UNL email, Canvas, Microsoft Office, Adobe).

ASSESSMENT AND GRADING

Assessments

**Weekly Reaction Papers and Peer Review (33%).** Weekly reaction papers will be due before 11:59pm CST on the Thursday preceding each class session. These papers should be ~2 pages (double spaced), focus on the readings for the upcoming class meeting, and be submitted through Canvas Discussions (so they are visible to your classmates). These papers should provide a brief summary of the readings, some attempt to connect them together, and your detailed response to the work. Reaction papers should include at least two questions for class discussion. These questions should not be superficial, but genuinely thoughtful and intriguing questions about ideas, methods, results, or implications of the findings presented in the readings. Students will also complete peer reviews of 2 reaction papers each week, due the Sunday before class. These peer reviews can be brief (1-2 paragraphs) and should comment on anything you found interesting in the response, as well as suggestions for improvement. There are 10 opportunities to submit reaction papers and 8 will be graded, so it’s fine to miss 2 submissions (or submit 9-10 and Canvas will drop the lowest scores).

**Attendance and Participation (17%).** Each student will be expected to attend class sessions in person and participate in discussion of the readings each week.

**Discussion Leading (8%).** One or two students will be randomly assigned to lead discussion during each class session from Weeks 5-11. Discussion leaders will be responsible for facilitating discussion of the assigned readings, based in part on reaction papers submitted by other members of the class. As discussion leaders you may structure the class meeting in any way you think will best facilitate the goals of the course, described above. Please be sure, however, that the discussion meeting includes a brief summary of each paper and findings (may be given by leaders or elicited from class members).
You will likely also want to pick out key themes or ideas that go beyond each individual paper for us to focus our discussion on. You might choose to compile a handout or outline for the class, but that is optional. Use of PowerPoint (or other presentation software) for this assignment is discouraged.

**Final Presentation (8%)**. At the end of the semester (weeks 15 and 16), students will give final presentations focused on the contents of their final research papers. These presentations will be ~15-20 minutes in length, using visual aids (e.g., PowerPoint), and delivered during our class meetings during those weeks.

**Final Research Paper (33%)**. A final research paper will be due on Wednesday, December 13, before 11:59pm CST and must be submitted electronically through Canvas. The paper will be a review of some specific topic or research issue, grounded in and directly tied to (at least) one of the topics and associated references in the supplemental bibliography for this course. Following a conceptual review of previous research on the selected topic, the paper should present a proposal for future research addressing some specific research question and hypothesis arising from the literature review (specifying the research question and purpose of the study, followed by research design and general method). The final paper must be unique to this course (e.g., you cannot re-use a paper submitted in a previous course, either at UNL or a different institution). During week 14 (11/20), each student should meet with me to present and discuss their proposed paper topic. The papers should be approximately 12-15 pages in length (excluding references) and should be 12-point font, double-spaced, with 1 inch margins, in APA format. Additional guidelines for the paper will be available on Canvas.

**Grades**

Final grades for this course will be calculated based on a possible 600 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 Canvas 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, when a student has completed most of the course requirements, and at the sole discretion of the instructor.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Weekly Reaction Papers</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attendance and Participation</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussion Leading</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Presentation</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Research Paper</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>600</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
C = 73-76.9%
C- = 70-72.9%
D+ = 67-69.9%
D = 63-66.9%
D- = 60-62.9%
F = < 59.9%

COURSE POLICIES

Instructional Continuity

If in-person classes are canceled, you will be notified of the instructional continuity plan for this class through Canvas.

Attendance and Engagement

Students are expected to attend all classes and engage with the course on a regular basis. Absences will be excused for illness, injury, hospitalization, military orders, university-sponsored activities, religious observation, and/or personal tragedy. Students should notify the instructor in advance of the absence (when possible), and students are responsible for material and content covered in the missed class(es).

Deadlines and Completion of Coursework

Regular engagement in the course through in-person class meetings and completion of course assignments is expected. In general, I do not accept late assignments without a valid excuse. Should you miss any assignment without approval from me, you will receive a zero grade for that exercise. That said, an exception may be granted to a student who contacts the instructor prior to the assignment due date to request an extension. If you foresee being unable to turn in a paper or complete an assignment on the assigned dates, please contact me through Canvas or email and I will work with you.

Communication

I will communicate with students through Canvas, so please make sure that you check Canvas on a regular basis and set up your Canvas notifications to receive emails about any course announcements or updates. You should plan to use your official @huskers.unl.edu email address for class. In general, I will plan to send any weekly announcements on Monday mornings, so as not to flood your inbox with updates. But, you should feel free to contact me anytime with questions. The best way to contact me is by sending a message through Canvas, or email me directly with “POLS 950” in the subject line. I will do my best to respond to emails within 24 hours Monday-Friday during normal business hours. You are also welcome to set up a meeting during office hours (make an appointment at https://calendly.com/ingridjhaas/pols-950-office-hours) or email me with your availability to meet if my regular meeting times don’t work for you.
Artificial Intelligence (A.I.)

Intellectual honesty is vital to an academic community and for my fair evaluation of your work. All work submitted in this course must be your own, completed in accordance with the University’s academic regulations. Use of A.I. tools, including ChatGPT, is permitted in this course, but only to help brainstorm assignments or to revise existing work you have written. Using A.I. to complete assignments on your behalf is considered plagiarism. Also, be aware that the accuracy or quality of A.I. generated content may not meet the standards of this course, even if you only incorporate such content partially and after substantial paraphrasing, modification and/or editing.

Plagiarism-Checking Software

Writing assignments in this course will be submitted online through Canvas and run through plagiarism-checking software (Turnitin). This software compares your work against previous papers and Internet sources to detect text copied from other authors. Further information about Turnitin can be found at https://its.unl.edu/services/turnitin/ or www.turnitin.com.

UNIVERSITY POLICIES AND RESOURCES

All students at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln should be aware of the following university-wide course policies and resources (see https://go.unl.edu/coursepolicies):

- Attendance Policy
- Academic Honesty Policy
- Services for Students with Disabilities
- Mental Health and Well-Being Resources
- Final Exam Schedule (15th Week Policy)
- Emergency Procedures (On Campus)
- Diversity & Inclusiveness
- Sexual Misconduct Policy

Academic Integrity Statement

Academic integrity is a fundamental value of the University community. UNL students are expected to approach and complete their academic work with academic integrity. Students must read this syllabus and all other instructions carefully so that they know what is expected in terms of academic integrity. Students are expected to do their own work, to be honest in the statements they make, to refrain from harming others, to refrain from improperly helping others, and to follow the rules. The unauthorized use of artificial intelligence to complete coursework is a violation of the University of Nebraska Student Code of Conduct Standards of Academic Integrity. Students who are unsure whether or not particular conduct is appropriate should ask the instructor.

Failing to act with academic integrity violates the University of Nebraska Student Code of Conduct and will be reported to the Office of Student Conduct & Community Standards. Students who violate academic integrity may receive academic sanctions, up to and including receiving a grade of “F” in the course.
Writing Center (https://www.unl.edu/writing)

The Writing Center can provide you with meaningful support as you write for this class as well as every course in which you enroll. Trained undergraduate and graduate peer consultants are available to talk with you about all forms of communication. You are welcome to bring in everything from lab reports, presentations, and research papers to cover letters, application essays, and graduate theses and dissertations. Writing Center Consultants can work with you at any stage of the writing process, from brainstorming and organizing your ideas through polishing a final draft.

There are three ways you can connect with a Consultant: Online (a real-time, video conversation), eTutoring (email feedback), and in person. To learn more about online options and view video tutorials, visit https://www.unl.edu/writing/online-writing-center-services. In Fall 2023, in-person Writing Center appointments will take place in the Love Library Link, on the second floor.

Sign up for an appointment any time by visiting unl.mywconline.com. For other information about the Writing Center, please visit unl.edu/writing.

Recording of Class-Related Activity

I invite all of you to join me in actively creating and contributing to a positive, productive, and respectful classroom culture. Each student contributes to an environment that shapes the learning process. Any work and/or communication that you are privy to as a member of this course should be treated as the intellectual property of the speaker/creator, and is not to be shared outside the context of this course.

Students may not make or distribute screen captures, audio/video recordings of, or livestream, any class-related activity, including lectures and presentations, without express prior written consent from me or an approved accommodation from Services for Students with Disabilities. If you have (or think you may have) a disability such that you need to record or tape class-related activities, you should contact Services for Students with Disabilities. If you have an accommodation to record class-related activities, those recordings may not be shared with any other student, whether in this course or not, or with any other person or on any other platform. Failure to follow this policy on recording or distributing class-related activities may subject you to discipline under the Student Code of Conduct.

Trespass Policy (Regents' Policy 6.4.7)

The areas of University academic, research, public service, and administrative buildings of the University used for classrooms, laboratories, faculty and staff offices, and the areas of University student residence buildings used for student living quarters are not open to the general public. Any person not authorized to be or remain in any such building area will be deemed to be trespassing on University property and may be cited and subject to prosecution for criminal trespass in violation of Neb. Rev. Stat., § 28-520 or § 28-521.
POLS 950: Political Attitudes
(Tentative) Course Schedule and Reading List

Overview

Week 1 (8/21): Course Introduction
Week 2 (8/28): Conceptualizing Attitudes

Week 3 (9/4): NO CLASS (Labor Day)
Week 4 (9/11): Experimental Design
Week 5 (9/18): Attitude Measurement; Implicit versus Explicit Attitudes
Week 6 (9/25): The Primacy of Affect and the “Hot Cognition” Hypothesis
Week 7 (10/2): Ambivalence
Week 8 (10/9): Attitude Formation, Change, and Persuasion

Week 9 (10/16): NO CLASS (Fall Break)
Week 10 (10/23): Impact of Attitudes on Perception and Cognition
Week 11 (10/30): Impact of Attitudes on Behavior
Week 12 (11/6): Cognitive Neuroscience of Attitudes and Evaluation
Week 13 (11/13): Neuroscience of Political Attitudes
Week 14 (11/20): Research Proposal Consultations (no class meeting)
Week 15 (11/27): Research Presentations
Week 16 (12/4): Research Presentations

Final Papers due: Wednesday, December 13, 11:59pm CST

Week 1 (8/21): Course Introduction

Introduction to Political Psychology (please read if you have not yet taken POLS 850)

Oxford Handbook of Political Psychology Ch. 1: Theoretical Foundations of Political Psychology (Huddy, Sears, & Levy)


Week 2 (8/28): Conceptualizing Attitudes


**Optional, but recommended:**


**(Optional) Additional Reading:**


---

**Week 3 (9/4): NO CLASS (Labor Day)**

**Week 4 (9/11): Experimental Design**

**Generating Hypotheses**


**Causality, Statistical Validity, and Internal Validity**


**Dependent Variables, Construct Validity, and External Validity**


(Optional) Additional Reading:

Week 5 (9/18): Attitude Measurement; Implicit versus Explicit Attitudes

Attitude Measurement

Implicit versus Explicit Attitudes

(Optional) Additional Reading:

**Week 6 (9/25): The Primacy of Affect and the “Hot Cognition” Hypothesis**

**Emotion versus Cognition: The Zajonc-Lazarus Debate**


**The “Hot Cognition” Hypothesis**

Lodge, M., & Taber, C. S. (2005). The automaticity of affect for political leaders, groups, and issues: An experimental test of the hot cognition hypothesis. Political Psychology, 26, 455-482.


(Optional) Additional Reading:


**Week 7 (10/2): Ambivalence**

**Ambivalence**


(Optional) Additional Reading:

**Week 8 (10/9): Attitude Formation, Change, and Persuasion**


(Optional) Additional Reading:


**Week 9 (10/16): NO CLASS (Fall Break)**

**Week 10 (10/23): Impact of Attitudes on Perception and Cognition**


(Optional) Additional Reading:


**Week 11 (10/30): Impact of Attitudes on Behavior**


**(Optional) Additional Reading:**


**Week 12 (11/6): Cognitive Neuroscience of Attitudes and Evaluation**


(Optional) Additional Reading:


Week 13 (11/13): Neuroscience of Political Attitudes


(Optional) Additional Reading:


---

**Week 14 (11/20): Research Proposal Consultations (no class meeting)**

Sign up for an appointment during class time (2:30-5:30pm) on 11/20 via Calendly: [https://calendly.com/ingridjhaas/pols-950-office-hours](https://calendly.com/ingridjhaas/pols-950-office-hours)

---

**Week 15 (11/27): Research Presentations**

---

**Week 16 (12/4): Research Presentations**

---

**Final Papers due: Wednesday, December 13, 11:59pm CST**