Political Science 950 | Psychology of Political Attitudes  
(Research Seminar in Biology and Politics)  
University of Nebraska-Lincoln  
Spring Semester 2017  
Tuesdays 2:00-5:00pm | 538 Oldfather Hall

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Office location: 531 Oldfather Hall / C83 East Memorial Stadium  
Office hours: Tuesdays & Thursdays from 11-12 in 531 Oldfather Hall (and by appointment)  
Course website: Accessible through http://blackboard.unl.edu

Course Overview
This graduate-level seminar course will examine classic and contemporary research on political attitudes from an interdisciplinary perspective, drawing primarily on literatures in social psychology, political science, 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.

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

Course Requirements
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 Blackboard at least one week prior to class. Course requirements are intended to facilitate discussion and integration of the reading material.
Weekly readings, reaction papers, and participation (35% of final grade). Each student will be expected to participate in discussion of the readings at the class meeting. Before 11:59pm on the Sunday preceding each class session, each student will submit a 2 page (double spaced) reaction paper related to that week’s readings on Blackboard and email their reaction paper to the discussion leaders for that week. 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. Needless to say you must submit your reaction papers on time in order to receive credit for them. A schedule of whom to send reaction papers to on which days will be distributed after discussion leading assignments have been made.

Discussion leading (25% of grade). 1 or 2 students will be assigned to lead discussion during each class session from Weeks 4-12. 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. Discussion leader assignments will be determined during the first class session. 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.

Final paper (40% of grade). A final paper will be due on Monday, May 1, before 11:59pm and must be submitted electronically through Blackboard. The paper will be a review of some specific topic or research issue, grounded in one of the topics and references in the supplemental bibliography for this course. Following a conceptual review of previous research on the selected topic, the paper will either (a) present a proposal for future research addressing some specific question arising from the literature review (specifying the research question and purpose of the study, followed by design and general method), or (b) present a proposal for an application of the reviewed literature on political attitudes research and theory to some real-world problem or social issue. Some time prior to or during the week of April 11, each student should meet with the course instructor 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.

Academic Misconduct
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, but there may also be consequences for graduate students’ standing in the program. 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.

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.
**UNL Writing Center**
The UNL Writing Center can provide you with meaningful support as you write for this class as well as for every course in which you enroll. Trained peer consultants are available to talk with you about all forms of communication, including lab reports, presentations, research papers, cover letters, and application essays. You can visit at any stage of the process, from brainstorming and organizing ideas through polishing a final draft. The UNL Writing Center is located in 102 Andrews Hall, with evening hours in the Adele Hall Learning Commons and other satellite locations. You can schedule 25- and 50-minute appointments any time by visiting [unl.mywconline.com](http://unl.mywconline.com). For more information about the Writing Center, including hours and other locations, please visit [unl.edu/writing](http://unl.edu/writing).
POLS 950: Political Attitudes
Course Schedule and Reading List

Overview
Week 1 (1/10): Course Introduction
Week 2 (1/17): Conceptualizing Attitudes
Week 3 (1/24): Experimental Design
Week 4 (1/31): Measurement of Attitudes
Week 5 (2/7): Implicit versus Explicit Attitudes
Week 6 (2/14): The Primacy of Affect and the “Hot Cognition” Hypothesis
Week 7 (2/21): Ambivalence and Cognitive Dissonance
Week 8 (2/28): Attitude Formation, Change, and Persuasion
Week 9 (3/7): Impact of Attitudes on Perception and Cognition
Week 10 (3/14): Impact of Attitudes on Behavior
Spring Break (3/21): NO CLASS
Week 11 (3/28): Neuroscience of Attitudes and Evaluation
Week 12 (4/4): Neuroscience of Political Attitudes
Week 13 (4/11): Research Proposal Consultations (mandatory!)
Week 14 (4/18): Research Presentations
Week 15 (4/25): Research Presentations
Final Papers due: Monday, May 1 (11:59pm)

January 17: Conceptualizing Attitudes


Optional, but recommended:

January 24: Experimental Design

Generating Hypotheses
Causality, Statistical Validity, and Internal Validity


Dependent Variables and Construct Validity

Optional:

January 31: Measurement of Attitudes

Optional:

February 7: Implicit versus Explicit Attitudes
February 14: 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:

February 21: Ambivalence and Cognitive Dissonance

Ambivalence

Cognitive Dissonance
Optional:

February 28: Attitude Formation, Change, and Persuasion


Optional:


March 7: Impact of Attitudes on Perception and Cognition


March 14: Impact of Attitudes on Behavior


Optional:

March 28: Neuroscience of Attitudes and Evaluation


Optional:


**April 4: Neuroscience of Political Attitudes**


Optional:

