Political Science 950 | Psychology of Political Attitudes
(Research Seminar in Biology and Politics)
University of Nebraska-Lincoln
Spring Semester 2021
Tuesdays 2-5pm CST | Web Conferencing

Instructor: Dr. Ingrid Haas (Dr. Haas or Professor Haas; she/her/hers)
Email: ihaas2@unl.edu
Website: http://polisci.unl.edu/ingrid-haas
Virtual office hours: Monday & Wednesday 9-11am CST (schedule at https://calendly.com/ingridjhaas/pols-950-virtual-office-hours)

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 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.

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 Sunday before class), peer reviews of reaction papers (due Monday), and discussion leading (planned for weeks 5-10).

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)
- VidGrid ([https://its.unl.edu/services/unl-academic-video/](https://its.unl.edu/services/unl-academic-video/))
- Zoom ([http://unl.zoom.us](http://unl.zoom.us))
- Word processor (e.g., Microsoft Word, Pages)
- PDF reader (e.g., Adobe, Preview)
- Personal computer (desktop or laptop)
- High-speed Internet connection (recommended)
- Webcam (recommended)

For more information on technology resources available to UNL students, check out UNL IT resources: [https://its.unl.edu/](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, VidGrid, Zoom).

**ASSESSMENT AND GRADING**

**Assessments**

**Weekly Reaction Papers and Peer Review (33%).** Weekly reaction papers will be due before 11:59pm CST on the Sunday preceding each class session. These papers should be ~2 pages (double spaced), focus on that week’s readings, and be submitted through Canvas Discussions (so they are visible to your classmates). 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 Monday 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 9 opportunities to submit reaction papers and 8 will be graded, so it’s fine to miss 1 submission (or submit all 9 and Canvas will drop the lowest score).

**Attendance and Participation (17%).** Each student will be expected to attend weekly web conference meetings via Zoom and participate in discussion of the readings. You are encouraged (but not required) to share both video and audio during these meetings to help facilitate discussion and a sense of community.

**Discussion Leading (8%).** Two students will be randomly assigned to lead discussion during each class session from Weeks 5-10. 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 13 and 14), 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 synchronously in our Zoom meetings during those weeks.

Final Research Paper (33%). A final research paper will be due on Monday, May 3, before 11:59 pm 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 12 (4/13), 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. 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, and at the sole discretion of the instructor.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Weekly Reaction Papers</th>
<th>200</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<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>

A+ = 97-100%
A = 93-96.9%
A- = 90-92.9%
B+ = 87-89.9%
B = 83-86.9%
B- = 80-82.9%
C+ = 77-79.9%
C = 73-76.9%

Updated 2021-03-12
C- = 70-72.9%
D+ = 67-69.9%
D = 63-66.9%
D- = 60-62.9%
F = < 59.9%

COURSE POLICIES

Deadlines and Completion of Coursework

Regular engagement in the course through synchronous 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. I realize these are complicated times and students may be dealing with additional constraints on their time and resources, in addition to health concerns, so I would just encourage you to reach out to me if you find you are having trouble keeping up with the course for whatever reason. Your health and safety (and that of the surrounding community) should be the top priority in the midst of a pandemic.

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 stop by my Virtual Office Hours on Zoom (make an appointment at https://calendly.com/ingridhaas/pols-950-virtual-office-hours) or email me with your availability to meet if my regular meeting times (MW 9-11am CST) don’t work for you.

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

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.

Updated 2021-03-12
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.

**Academic Honesty Policy**

Academic honesty is essential to the existence and integrity of an academic institution. The responsibility for maintaining that integrity is shared by all members of the academic community. The University's Student Code of Conduct ([https://studentconduct.unl.edu/student-code-conduct](https://studentconduct.unl.edu/student-code-conduct)) addresses academic dishonesty. Students who commit acts of academic dishonesty are subject to disciplinary action and are granted due process and the right to appeal any decision.

**Diversity and Inclusion**

The University of Nebraska-Lincoln does not discriminate on the basis of race, ethnicity, color, national origin, sex (including pregnancy), religion, age, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, genetic information, veteran status, marital status, and/or political affiliation.

**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.

**Face Coverings Syllabus Statement**

As of July 17, 2020, and until further notice, all University of Nebraska–Lincoln (UNL) faculty, staff, students, and visitors (including contractors, service providers, and others) are required to use a facial covering at all times when indoors except under specific conditions outlined in the COVID 19 face covering policy found at: [https://covid19.unl.edu/face-covering-policy](https://covid19.unl.edu/face-covering-policy). This statement is meant to clarify classroom policies for face coverings:

To protect the health and well-being of the University and wider community, UNL has implemented a policy requiring all people, including students, faculty, and staff, to wear a face covering that covers the mouth and nose while on campus. The classroom is a community, and as a community, we seek to maintain the health and safety of all members by wearing face coverings when in the classroom. Failure to comply with this policy is interpreted as a disruption of the classroom and may be a violation of UNL’s Student Code of Conduct.

Individuals who have health or medical reasons for not wearing face coverings should work with the Office of Services for Students with Disabilities (for students) or the Office of Faculty/Staff Disability Services (for faculty and staff) to establish accommodations to address the health concern. Students
who prefer not to wear a face covering should work with their advisor to arrange a fully online course schedule that does not require their presence on campus.

**SUPPORT SERVICES**

**Services for Students with Disabilities** ([https://www.unl.edu/ssd/home](https://www.unl.edu/ssd/home))

The University strives to make all learning experiences as accessible as possible. If you anticipate or experience barriers based on your disability (including mental health, chronic or temporary medical conditions), please let me know immediately so that we can discuss options privately. To establish reasonable accommodations, I may request that you register with Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD). If you are eligible for services and register with their office, make arrangements with me as soon as possible to discuss your accommodations so they can be implemented in a timely manner. SSD contact information: 117 Louise Pound Hall; 402-472-3787.

**Writing Center** ([https://www.unl.edu/writing/home](https://www.unl.edu/writing/home))

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.

In 2020-21, there are two ways you can connect with a Consultant: Online (a real-time, video conversation) and eTutoring (email feedback). To learn more about these options and view video tutorials, please visit our Online Writing Services Page ([https://www.unl.edu/writing/online-writing-center-services](https://www.unl.edu/writing/online-writing-center-services)). You can sign up any time by visiting [unl.mywconline.com](http://unl.mywconline.com). For more information about the Writing Center, please visit [unl.edu/writing](http://unl.edu/writing).

**Academic Support Services**

You can schedule free appointments for individual academic coaching with First-Year Experience and Transition Program staff through MyPLAN. You can also take advantage of study stops--which provide individual and group study with learning consultants in a variety of disciplines--and free group workshops on topics such as time management, goal setting, test preparation, and reading strategies. See [success.unl.edu](http://success.unl.edu) for schedules and more information.

**Counseling and Psychological Services**

UNL offers a variety of options to students to aid them in dealing with stress and adversity. Counseling and Psychological & Services (CAPS; [https://caps.unl.edu](https://caps.unl.edu)) is a multidisciplinary team of psychologists and counselors that works collaboratively with Nebraska students to help them explore their feelings and thoughts and learn helpful ways to improve their mental, psychological and emotional well-being when issues arise. CAPS can be reached by calling 402-472-7450. Big Red Resilience & Well-Being (BRRWB; [https://resilience.unl.edu/home](https://resilience.unl.edu/home)) provides one-on-one well-being coaching to any student who wants to enhance their well-being. Trained well-being coaches help students create and be grateful for positive experiences, practice resilience and self-compassion, and find support as they need it. BRRWB can be reached by calling 402-472-8770.

Updated 2021-03-12
**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
(Tentative) Course Schedule and Reading List

Overview
Week 1 (1/26): Course Introduction
Week 2 (2/2): Conceptualizing Attitudes
Week 3 (2/9): NO CLASS (SPSP Conference)
Week 4 (2/16): Experimental Design
Week 5 (2/23): Attitude Measurement; Implicit versus Explicit Attitudes
Week 6 (3/2): The Primacy of Affect and the “Hot Cognition” Hypothesis
Week 7 (3/9): Ambivalence
Week 8 (3/16): Attitude Formation, Change, and Persuasion
Week 9 (3/23): Impact of Attitudes on Perception and Cognition
Week 10 (3/30): Impact of Attitudes on Behavior
Week 11 (4/6): Cognitive Neuroscience of Political Attitudes and Evaluation
Week 12 (4/13): (Mandatory) Research Proposal Consultations (sign up via Calendly link)
Week 13 (4/20): Research Presentations
Week 14 (4/27): Research Presentations
Final Papers due: Monday, May 3, 11:59pm CST

Week 2 (2/2): Conceptualizing Attitudes

Optional, but recommended:

Week 3 (2/9): NO CLASS (SPSP Conference)

Week 4 (2/16): Experimental Design

Generating Hypotheses

Causality, Statistical Validity, and Internal Validity

**Dependent Variables and Construct Validity**


**Optional:**


**Week 5 (2/23): Attitude Measurement; Implicit versus Explicit Attitudes**

**Attitude Measurement**


**Implicit versus Explicit Attitudes**


**Optional:**


**Week 6 (3/2): The Primacy of Affect and the “Hot Cognition” Hypothesis**

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

Updated 2021-03-12


**The “Hot Cognition” Hypothesis**


Optional:


**Week 7 (3/9): Ambivalence**

*Ambivalence*


Optional:


**Week 8 (3/16): Attitude Formation, Change, and Persuasion**


**Optional:**


**Week 9 (3/23): Impact of Attitudes on Perception and Cognition**


**Optional:**


**Week 10 (3/30): Impact of Attitudes on Behavior**

Optional:

Week 11 (4/6): Cognitive Neuroscience of Political Attitudes and Evaluation

Neuroscience of Attitudes and Evaluation

Neuroscience of Political Attitudes
Optional:

Updated 2021-03-12


