

Political Science 350 | Emotion and Politics

Fall Semester 2013

TR 12:30-1:45 | Jorgensen Hall 251

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Course website: Accessible through <http://my.unl.edu>

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this course is to increase your understanding of the role of emotion in politics. Contrary to classic theories of political science suggesting that decisions are made on the basis of rational cost-benefit analysis, recent work in the field of political psychology has shown that political decisions are not immune from the influence of emotion. Rather, that political decisions are subject to the same emotional and affective processes that guide all human behavior. We will discuss the interplay and relative influence of cognition and emotion as well as classic and contemporary theories of emotion. We will explore recent research on the impact of emotion on political attitudes and opinions, political behavior, political campaigns, and political advertising, and discuss current theories of the role that emotions play in politics. Finally, we will consider the implications—what does this mean for candidates who are trying to get elected? citizens who are trying to engage in political discourse? This course looks at the impact of emotion at the individual level (how emotions influence individual thoughts about politics) and at the group level (how emotion leads to shifts in American public opinion). To accomplish these goals, we will draw on theory and research from several other disciplines, including psychology, neuroscience, and philosophy.

REQUIRED TEXTS

Marcus, G. E. (2012). *Political psychology: Neuroscience, genetics, and politics*. New York: Oxford University Press. [ISBN: 978-0195370645]

Neuman, W. R., Marcus, G. E., Crigler, A. N., & MacKuen, M. (2007). *The affect effect: Dynamics of emotion in political thinking and behavior*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. [ISBN: 978-0226574424]

Westen, D. (2008). *The political brain: The role of emotion in deciding the fate of the nation*. New York: Public Affairs. [ISBN: 978-1586485733]

Any additional readings will be posted on the course website.

ACHIEVEMENT-CENTERED EDUCATION (ACE) OUTCOMES

This course has been approved for Learning Outcome #6 (Use knowledge, theories, methods, and historical perspectives appropriate to the social sciences to understand and evaluate human behavior).

COURSE FORMAT AND GRADES

This course will combine lecture and discussion. I will deliver brief lectures to introduce students to new topic areas or situate readings in context, but much of our time in the classroom will be spent on discussion and in-class activities. For this reason, it is important that students do the reading in advance of each class period, and come prepared to discuss the topic each week.

Class Participation. 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 activities will also count toward your participation grade. Finally, we will use the discussion board on Blackboard to supplement our class discussions. I will occasionally post questions here for you to consider, or ask you to submit links to relevant information (e.g., news articles that pertain to class). Participation in the discussion board is encouraged, as it will help supplement your participation grade, and I encourage you to check it often.

Reaction Papers. In order to encourage critical analysis of the readings, you will be required to submit brief reaction papers approximately once a week. Each paper should provide a bit of background or summary of the reading, describe your thoughts about the issue, and then introduce a question that would be useful to discuss in class. These questions could focus on something in the readings that was confusing, a critique of the research, implications, or really anything relevant that the readings bring to mind. Reaction papers are due before class, by 11:00am, and should be submitted on Blackboard (see course schedule for specific deadlines). This will enable me to read through your thoughts and questions prior to our class meeting. I will give additional information about this assignment in class.

Exams. You are required to take two written exams. These exams will test your knowledge of the course material and ability to think critically about the topics we cover. The exams will contain primarily short answer and essay questions. The second exam is not cumulative, but you will be expected to synthesize the concepts we have discussed throughout the semester.

Final Paper. Your final paper assignment will require you to use what you have learned about emotion and politics and apply this information to current political events. We will go over the details of the assignment in class. The final product will be a paper that is 10-15 pages (double-spaced) in length. Final papers will be due Friday, 12/20, by 9:30am, and should be submitted on Blackboard.

Final grades are based on a possible 500 points and will be based on the distribution and percentages below. I generally do not round up, and I don't give incompletes. Final grades will be curved up 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.

Participation	100	Points	Percent	Grade	Points	Percent	Grade
Reaction Papers	100	485	97-100%	A+	385	77-80%	C+
Exam #1	100	465	93-97%	A	365	73-77%	C
Exam #2	100	450	90-93%	A-	350	70-73%	C-
Final Paper	100	435	87-90%	B+	335	67-70%	D+
-----		415	83-87%	B	315	63-67%	D
Total	500	400	80-83%	B-	300	60-63%	D-
		< 300	< 60%	F			

COURSE POLICIES

Attendance, Preparation, and Participation

Regular attendance is expected and any unexcused absences will count against your participation grade. 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 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 and will do my best to respond to your questions within 24 hours. You are also welcome 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.

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 at least one week prior to the paper due date or exam date. If you foresee being unable to turn in a paper or take an exam on the assigned date, contact the instructor *immediately*. Excused absences for University sponsored events (field trips, athletic trips) and medical / personal emergencies *must be documented*.

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.

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 350 | TENTATIVE COURSE SCHEDULE

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

WEEK	DATE	TOPIC	READING	ASSIGNMENTS
1	T 8/27	Introduction & Course Overview		
	R 8/29	The Political Brain	Westen Ch. 1-3	
2	T 9/3	Introduction to Political Psychology	Marcus Ch. 1, 3	
	R 9/5	The Political Brain (continued)	Westen Ch. 4-6	Reaction Paper #1
3	T 9/10	Methods in Political Psychology	Marcus Ch. 2	
	R 9/12	The Political Brain (continued)	Westen Ch. 7-8	Reaction Paper #2
4	T 9/17	Neuroscience and Political Psychology	Marcus Ch. 4	
	R 9/19	The Political Brain (continued)	Westen Ch. 9-10	Reaction Paper #3
5	T 9/24	Mind, Brain, & Consciousness	Marcus Ch. 5-6	
	R 9/26	NO CLASS		
6	T 10/1	Personality; Democratic Politics	Marcus Ch. 7-8	
	R 10/3	The Political Brain (continued)	Westen Ch. 11-12	Reaction Paper #4
7	T 10/8	Context & Future Directions	Marcus Ch. 9-10	
	R 10/10	The Political Brain (continued)	Westen Ch. 13-15	Reaction Paper #5
8	T 10/15	EXAM #1		
	R 10/17	Introduction to TAE; Philosophy	TAE Ch. 1-2	Reaction Paper #6 (Group A)
9	T 10/22	No class – Fall Semester Break		
	R 10/24	Social Cognition	TAE Ch. 3	Reaction Paper #6 (Group B)

WEEK	DATE	TOPIC	READING	ASSIGNMENTS
10	T 10/29	Decision Neuroscience	TAE Ch. 4	Reaction Paper #7 (Group A)
	R 10/31	The Primacy of Affect	TAE Ch. 5	Reaction Paper #7 (Group B)
11	T 11/5	Affective Intelligence	TAE Ch. 6-7	Reaction Paper #8 (Group A)
	R 11/7	Fear, Anger, & Enthusiasm	TAE Ch. 8	Reaction Paper #8 (Group B)
12	T 11/12	Anxiety & Anger	TAE Ch. 9	Reaction Paper #9 (Group A)
	R 11/14	Hope	TAE Ch. 10	Reaction Paper #9 (Group B)
13	T 11/19	Public Attention	TAE Ch. 11	Reaction Paper #10 (Group A)
	R 11/21	Meaning and Cultural Symbols	TAE Ch. 12	Reaction Paper #10 (Group B)
14	T 11/26	Affective Intelligence in the Aggregate	TAE Ch. 13	Reaction Paper #11 (Group A)
	R 11/28	NO CLASS – Thanksgiving Break		
15	T 12/3	Fear	TAE Ch. 14	Reaction Paper #11 (Group B)
	R 12/5	Political Campaigns	TAE Ch. 15	Reaction Paper #12 (Group A)
16	T 12/10	Cognitive Neuroscience	TAE Ch. 16	Reaction Paper #12 (Group B)
	R 12/12	EXAM #2		
***	F 12/20	FINAL PAPER DUE BY 9:30 AM		