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PSC 483.01: Political Psychology

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COURSE DESCRIPTION: This course explores why humans think, feel, and act the way they do, in the realm of politics. While studying any aspect of politics in some way requires us to think about human psychology, in this course we focus on psychological theories about individual personality, learning, cognition, broader social influences, and group dynamics. The course is roughly divided into two sections. The first half of the course explores a wide range of concepts and theories with some illustrations of the theories in operation. The second half of the course uses the concepts and theories to explore in greater detail some of the more politically important questions related to political leaders, individuals, social groups, and societies as a whole. By the end of the course students should be able to apply the major psychological concepts and theories in evaluating human political thinking and behavior.

READINGS: There are no textbooks for this course. All readings will be available in traditional paper course reserves and on electronic reserves (ERES) at the Mansfield Library, and are listed individually in the “Course Topics and Readings” section below. Depending on the progress of course, I may change some of the readings to reflect the interests of students and political events. The ERES password is

Students should also be regular and critically aware consumers of news coverage, which provides a constant source of raw material for the analysis of human thought and action. For this reason you should keep up with news coverage in a major newspaper on a daily basis. The New York Times and The Washington Post are two of the best in news coverage and have free websites; www.nytimes.com www.washingtonpost.com. The Wall Street Journal is also a good news source, but it has less political news and is only available free on Factiva, through the Mansfield Library website.

GRADES AND REQUIREMENTS: This is a small class, so with both discussion and lecture. In addition, the course material is varied, at times complex and theoretical, so daily attendance, keeping up with readings, and thoughtful participation are essential. Our discussions and lectures will cover material not in the course readings, and vice-versa. All lecture and reading material will potentially be on the exams. To participate in discussion and do well on the exams, you will need to keep up with the assigned reading, and there will be several days during the semester when there will be unannounced written reading reflections on the current readings. These pop reading reflections are 5% of the course grade and cannot be made up if you miss one, so it’s important to attend class regularly and keep up with the readings, taking notes and preparing questions.

Class participation is also part of the course grade. One of the most important forms of class participation is asking questions (in addition to contributing your own analysis and answers to others’ questions, including mine). If you have questions about the readings, lectures, or discussions, you should ask them, and preparing questions about the readings is an excellent way to ensure you get the most out of them. Participating frequently and intelligently in class discussions counts 5% toward the course grade. Another crucial part of discussion is respecting others and their perspectives. This is especially important as we explore the sometimes intellectually and emotionally difficult topics in this course. There will be at least two short papers based on various topics and exercises (some out of class). Each short paper will be 5% of the course grade. If more than two papers are assigned the weight of one or both exams
and/or the research paper proportion of the grade will be lowered.

There will be two exams: a midterm and a final. The final will be comprehensive but weighted toward the material in the second half of the course. Both exams will have material from both lectures and readings.

There will be a research paper of 8-10 pages in length that will provide you an opportunity to do an original research project, applying psychological theories and concepts to a topic of your choosing related to current or past political events. The specific requirements of the paper will be provided later in the semester.

**GRADES:** Grades will be calculated according to the following percentages:

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<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>93-100</td>
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<tr>
<td>A−</td>
<td>90-92.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>87-89.9</td>
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<td>B</td>
<td>83-86.9</td>
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<td>B−</td>
<td>80-82.9</td>
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<td>C+</td>
<td>77-79.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>73-76.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>C−</td>
<td>70-72.9</td>
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<td>D+</td>
<td>67-69.9</td>
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<td>D</td>
<td>63-66.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>D−</td>
<td>60-62.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>below 60</td>
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</tbody>
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Short papers (5% each, 2-4 papers) 10-20%
Participation in discussion 5%
Written Reading Reflections 5%
Midterm exam 25%
Research paper (8-10 pages) 25%
Final exam 30% of course grade

(If more than two short papers are assigned the weight of both the midterm and final exam in the course grade will be lowered by 5%).

**The short papers, midterm and final exams, and the research paper must be completed and turned in on time in order to pass this course.**

**PSC 400:**
Undergraduate students taking the 1-credit PSC 400 Advanced Writing course will write a 4-page research proposal, complete a draft of the Research paper on which I will provide comments, and based on the comments students will revise the paper into final form. The final version of the paper will be 14-15 pages instead of 8-10, and graded on writing clarity and organization, as well as content. First drafts will be due one week before the draft is due for the rest of the class.

**ACADEMIC HONESTY:**
All students must practice academic honesty. Academic misconduct is subject to an academic penalty by the course instructor and/or a disciplinary sanction by the University. All students need to be familiar with the Student Conduct Code. The Code is available for review online at [http://life.umt.edu/VPSA/name/StudentConductCode](http://life.umt.edu/VPSA/name/StudentConductCode).

The University of Montana Student Conduct Code prohibits plagiarism, which is “representing another person’s words, ideas, data, or materials as one’s own.” This is a serious academic violation that can result in penalties up to suspension or expulsion from the University. **I take academic honesty very seriously, and will do my utmost to prevent, uncover, and penalize any form of cheating in this course.** See the UM plagiarism warning at [http://www.umt.edu/catalog/academic/policy.htm#plagiarism](http://www.umt.edu/catalog/academic/policy.htm#plagiarism) and the Student Conduct Code at [http://life.umt.edu/VPSA/name/StudentConductCode](http://life.umt.edu/VPSA/name/StudentConductCode).

Please contact me if you have any questions or concerns about academic honesty.
CLASS COURTESY:
In order to have a pleasant and effective learning environment in class, we need to observe a few basic courtesies. This is a small campus, so it is possible to get to the classroom on time from all other campus buildings; arriving late or leaving early disrupts the class and disturbs other students and the instructor. Please turn off all cell phones before class begins. If you have a question or comment about the material, please raise your hand so we can all discuss it, instead of talking to your neighbor. We’ll all benefit if we just keep in mind the reason we’re in the room together.

DROP POLICY AND INCOMPLETES:
You can drop classes on Cyberbear until February 13. From February 13 until March 9 you can drop using a drop slip signed by me. After March 9, you must go through the more formal and difficult “late drop” petition process. I will sign late drop petitions for only one week after the midterm exams are graded, and not thereafter except under extraordinary circumstances.
Incompletes will only be permitted when all the conditions set forth in the official University policy are met — the Incompletes policy is on page 23 of the University of Montana 2008-2009 Catalog and http://www.umt.edu/catalog/academic/policy.htm#incomplete.

DSS STUDENTS:
Qualified students with disabilities will receive appropriate accommodations in this course. Students with disabilities requesting accommodations on exams, papers, or other course requirements should contact me as soon as possible, and must contact DSS in order to arrange for and provide me with a letter of approval for accommodations. DSS is in Lommasson Center 154.

EMAIL AND BLACKBOARD
In order to obtain course materials and access your grades and other important course information, you will need to sign into the Blackboard website that has been created for this course. Information on how to access your account is at: http://umonline.umt.edu/StudentInfo/welcome.htm
Blackboard uses your official UM email account, so you should check it frequently. I may also send e-mails to your official UM e-mail account. If you use another email account, go into Cyberbear to have your official UM email forwarded to your preferred email account.

GRADUATE STUDENTS
Graduate students taking this course must complete additional graduate-level readings for each course topic as specified by the instructor, and must complete a 20-25 page research paper consisting of a research question, research design and hypothesis incorporating at least three psychological theories, extensive literature review, and an analysis that synthesizes the three components.
TOPICS AND READINGS

I. Psychological Explanations of Human Behavior - Who Are We?

Alternative / Supplemental Reading:

II. Personality-based Approaches to Leadership and Ideology

III. Learning and Politics
IV. Human Cognition: Can We Be Rational?

Supplemental Reading:

V. Emotion, Attitudes, and Behavior
Marcus on *The Sentimental Citizen*, pp. 79-132 - Enthusiasm, Anxiety, Loathing (chs 5-7)

MIDTERM EXAM: WEDNESDAY, MARCH 11 (TENTATIVE DATE)

VI. Perceiving Others
*** IAT test readings and practice. https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/demo/****
Kahn, Kim Fridkin. 1996. “Introduction,” “The Impact of Coverage Differences and Sex Stereotypes,” and “Conclusions and Implications.” Chapters 1,5, and 10 in *The Political Consequences of Being a Woman*.

VII. Group Influence
VIII. Obedience and Morality - a “Continuum of Destruction”?
Milgram, Stanley. 1974. *Obedience to Authority* (more selected frightening chapters).
Sociopsychology of the Holocaust.” Ch. 14 in Kressel, *Political Psychology: Classic and
Contemporary Readings*.
Kelman, Herbert C., and V. Lee Hamilton. 1993. “Sanctioned Massacres” Ch. 14 in Kressel,
*Political Psychology: Classic and Contemporary Readings*.
Contemporary Terrorism.” *Political Psychology* 26: 615-636.
Monroe, Kristen Renwick 1996. Chapters 1 and 9 in *The Heart of Altruism: Perceptions of a Common

IX. Collective Action and Protest
Gurr, Ted. 1972. “Psychological Factors in Civil Violence.” In Fierabend, Ivo, et al., *Anger,
Violence, and Politics*.

X. Decisionmaking and Leadership
Psychology*.

XI. Political Tolerance
Quarterly* 52:26-32.
Less Information.” Chapter 11 in *Reconsidering the Democratic Public*, eds. George E.
Marcus and Russell L. Hanson.

RESEARCH PAPER: DUE MONDAY, DECEMBER 3 IN CLASS.

XII. Political Deliberation
Engagement in the Twenty-First Century*, selected chapters.
Mutz, Diana. 2006. *Hearing the Other Side: Deliberative versus Participatory Democracy*, selected
chapters.
FINAL EXAM: TUESDAY, MAY 12, 3:20 – 5:20 PM