

Political Science 9744L
Biology and Political Behaviour
9 to 11:30 a.m. T/W/Th
SSC7210
Summer 2022

Instructor: Dr. Amanda Friesen, afries4@uwo.ca

Office hours: By appointment in SSC7245

Course Description:

Traditionally, political scientists have posited that human political behavior is a product of rational thinking, that we somehow weigh the costs and benefits of partisanship or a policy preference and select the one that provides the most benefit. Sources of influence have included family, peers, schools, society, culture, historical events and so on. Recently, social scientists have begun to test whether political attitudes and orientations may emerge from our biology. From thinking about political orientations like a heritable personality trait to another manifestation of an individual's general processing of their environment, biology and politics is a nascent, ever-expanding, exciting sub-field within political behavior. This seminar will explore the various approaches, leading scholars, and innovative methods in testing hypotheses related to the origins of political beliefs and behavior. Readings are generally organized around methodology – the dependent variable mainly remains the same. That is, you will read articles that test associations of something like political ideology with behavior genetic twin studies, neurobiology, psychophysiology, cognition, etc.

Course Materials

All of the readings will be scholarly articles posted to the Owl course site, under Resources.

Course Requirements

Discussion Questions (10 points): Students will write 7-10 discussion questions for their assigned day of readings, dedicating at least 1-2 questions per reading and including any questions that might address the overall theme of the class period. These will be submitted to the entire class through Owl by 9 p.m. the evening before the class period so classmates have a chance to think through answers as they complete the reading. Questions should go beyond “what was this article about?” or “What was the key variable?” to ask broad questions about theory and method (“What are the advantages and disadvantages to using neuroscience to study politics?” “What are some missing variables, measures or explanations in this study?”). Or to inquire about implications of the findings for advancing science or applying to understanding political behavior and events. Dr. Friesen will help facilitate the class discussion with the assigned student.

Participation (10 points): This is a graduate-level seminar so group discussion is an important component of the learning environment. Students are not required to speak in every discussion but rather should demonstrate a pattern of being engaged, asking questions, and offering comments on a regular basis.

The following assignments should be submitted on Owl in 12-point font, double-spaced with 1-inch margins. More assignment details and examples are located on Owl.

Short Papers (20 points total) – Students will write **two, two-page** papers addressing a day’s readings. Papers are due on the day of the reading assignment. The paper should include no more than one paragraph of summary but then move on to discuss the strength of the argument or research design, offer further research questions and pose hypotheses to questions raised, and a proposed research design to test the hypotheses. Students may also raise implications for public policy or politics in a democracy. Because you may choose any of the days’ readings on which to write, **NO LATE PAPERS WILL BE ACCEPTED**. If you run out of time, simply choose to write a paper another day.

Research Design (60 points): Students will write a research design (about 12-15 pages) involving formulating a research question with testable hypotheses. Emphasis will be on writing a coherent, well-supported argument based on the extant literature and proposing a design to test said hypotheses, much like a pre-analysis plan in open science practices. The research design is due on **May 27 by 11:55 p.m.** but you can turn it in any time before that due date. You may choose your own topic pertaining to biology and politics but students are encouraged to consult with me before starting. Late research papers will be docked one full grade for each 24-hour period they are late.

COURSE SCHEDULE

May 3: Course Introduction: Why should we study biology and political behavior?

Arceneaux, Kevin. 2020. “What Can Biopolitics Teach Us About Democratic Representation?” *Politics and the Life Sciences* 39 (1): 4-8.

Thornhill, Randy, Corey L. Fincher, and Devaraj Aran. 2009. “Parasites, Democratization, and the Liberalization of Values across Contemporary Countries.” *Biological Reviews* 84: 113-31.

May 4: The Psychological Bases of Political Beliefs

Hatemi, Peter K., and Rose McDermott. 2012. “Broadening Political Psychology.” *Political Psychology* 33 (1): 11-25.

Huddy, Leonie, Stanley Feldman, Charles Taber, and G. Lahav. 2005. “Threat, Anxiety, and Support of Anti-terrorism Policies.” *American Journal of Political Science* 49: 610-25.

Fatke, Matthias. 2017. “Personality traits and political ideology: A first global assessment.” *Political Psychology* 38 (5): 881-899.

May 5: Evolutionary Psychology & Politics

Gelfand, Michele J., Jana L. Raver, Lisa Nishii, Lisa M. Leslie, Janetta Lun, Beng Chong Lim, Lili Duan et al. 2011. "Differences between tight and loose cultures: A 33-nation study." *Science* 332 (6033): 1100-1104.

Jensen, Carsten, & Petersen, Michael B. 2017. "The deservingness heuristic and the politics of health care." *American Journal of Political Science* 61 (1): 68-83.

Shackelford, T. K., & Liddle, J. R. (2014). Understanding the mind from an evolutionary perspective: an overview of evolutionary psychology. *Wiley Interdisciplinary Reviews: Cognitive Science*, 5(3), 247-260.

May 10: Genes and Politics

Guest Speaker: Aaron Weinschenk, Professor of Political Science, University of Wisconsin-GB

Alford, John R., Carolyn L. Funk, and John R. Hibbing. 2005. "Are Political Orientations Genetically Transmitted?" *American Political Science Review* 99 (2): 153-67.

Ksiazkiewicz, Aleksander, and Amanda Friesen. 2019. "The Higher Power of Religiosity over Personality on Political Ideology." *Political Behavior*. [Online First](#)

Weinschenk, Aaron C., & Dawes, Christopher T. 2019. "The effect of education on political knowledge: evidence from monozygotic twins." *American Politics Research*, 47(3), 530-548.

May 11: Disgust Sensitivity and Politics

Van Leeuwen, F., Inbar, Y., Petersen, M. B., Aarøe, L., Barclay, P., Barlow, F. K., ... & Tybur, J. M. (2021). Disgust sensitivity relates to attitudes toward gay men and lesbian women across 31 nations. *Group Processes & Intergroup Relations*, 13684302211067151.

Clifford, Scott, Erisen, C., Wendell, D., & Cantu, F. Disgust Sensitivity and Support for Immigration Across Five Nations. *Politics and the Life Sciences*, 1-39.
<https://doi.org/10.1017/pls.2022.6>

Clifford, Scott, & Wendell, Dane G. 2016. How disgust influences health purity attitudes. *Political Behavior*, 38(1), 155-178.

May 12: Health, Sleep & Politics

Guest Speaker: Aleksander Ksiazkiewicz, Associate Professor, UIUC

Ksiazkiewicz, Aleksander. 2020. "Conservative larks, liberal owls: The relationship between chronotype and political ideology." *The Journal of Politics* 82 (1): 367-371.

Landwehr, Claudia, and Christopher Ojeda. 2020. "Democracy and Depression: A Cross-National Study of Depressive Symptoms and Nonparticipation." *American Political Science Review*. 1-8.

Goosby, Bridget J., and Chelsea Heidbrink. 2013. "The Transgenerational Consequences of Discrimination on African-American Health Outcomes." *Sociology Compass* 7(8): 630-643.

May 17: Psychophysiology & Politics

Fournier, Patrick, Stuart Soroka, and Lilach Nir. 2020. "Negativity Biases and Political Ideology: A Comparative Test across 17 Countries." *American Political Science Review* 114 (3): 775-791.

Friesen, Amanda, Kevin B. Smith, and John R. Hibbing. 2017. "Physiological Arousal and Self-Reported Valence for Erotic Images Correlate with Sexual Policy Preferences." *International Journal of Public Opinion Research* 29 (3): 449-470.

May 18: Cognition and Social Behaviour

Fazio, Russell H. 2007. "Attitudes as object–evaluation associations of varying strength." *Social cognition* 25 (5): 603-637.

Galdi, Silvia, Luciano, Arcuri, and Bertram Gawronski. 2008. "Automatic Mental Associations Predict Future Choices of Undecided Decision-Makers." *Science* 321: 1100-02.

McNulty, James K., Michael A. Olson, Andrea L. Meltzer, and Matthew J. Shaffer. 2013. "Though they may be unaware, newlyweds implicitly know whether their marriage will be satisfying." *Science* 342 (6162): 1119-1120.

Zmigrod, L., Rentfrow, P. J., & Robbins, T. W. (2020). The partisan mind: Is extreme political partisanship related to cognitive inflexibility?. *Journal of Experimental Psychology: General*, 149(3), 407.

May 19: Neuroscience & Politics

Eisenberger, Naomi I., Matthew D. Lieberman, and Kipling D. Williams. 2003. "Does rejection hurt? An fMRI study of social exclusion." *Science* 302 (5643): 290-292.

Maguire, Eleanor A., David G. Gadian, Ingrid S. Johnsrude, Catriona D. Good, John Ashburner, Richard S.J. Frackowiak, and Christopher Frith. 2000. "Navigation-related Structural Change in the Hippocampi of Taxi Drivers." *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 97 (8): 4398-4403.

Jost, John T., H. Hannah Nam, David M. Amodio, and Jay J. Van Bavel. 2014. "Political neuroscience: The beginning of a beautiful friendship." *Political Psychology* 35: 3-42.

Haas, Ingrid J., Melissa N. Baker, and Frank J. Gonzalez. 2017. "Who can deviate from the party line? Political ideology moderates evaluation of incongruent policy positions in insula and anterior cingulate cortex." *Social Justice Research* 30 (4): 355-380.

May 24: Endocrinology and Politics

Nofsinger, J. R., Patterson, F. M., & Shank, C. A. (2018). Decision-making, financial risk aversion, and behavioral biases: The role of testosterone and stress. *Economics & Human Biology*, 29, 1-16.

French, Jeffrey A., Kevin B. Smith, John R. Alford, Adam Guck, Andrew K. Birnie, and John R. Hibbing. 2014. "Cortisol and politics: variance in voting behavior is predicted by baseline cortisol levels." *Physiology & Behavior* 133: 61-67.

Blanton, Hart, Erin Strauts, and Marisol Perez. 2012. "Partisan identification as a predictor of cortisol response to election news." *Political Communication* 29 (4): 447-460.

May 27

Final Papers Due at 11:55 p.m.