

POLISCI 3417G: Political Psychology

Thursdays from 2:30-4:30pm, University College, Room: 3225

Instructor: Noah Vanderhoeven, Email: nvande43@uwo.ca

Office hours: Tuesdays from 10-11am or by appointment, office 7330

Political psychology is the use and application of psychological theories and methods to questions of political interest. This undergraduate-level seminar course will examine research on political behaviour from an interdisciplinary perspective, focusing on literatures in political psychology, biopolitics, and the life sciences. We will consider the implications of human psychology, biology, genetics, physiology, cognition, neuroscience, and evolution for understanding political attitudes, beliefs, ideology, identity, and behaviour.

Much of political psychology is based upon the subfield social psychology, which is “the scientific study of how people’s thoughts, feelings, and behaviors are influenced by the actual, imagined, or implied presence of others” (Society for Personality and Social Psychology). But increasingly, other psychology and life science theories and methods have been applied to studying political phenomena.

Objectives:

- Understand the logic of political psychology and its contribution to our understanding of political phenomenon.
- Become familiar and engage with key psychological concepts that are applied in a political context, dealing with the application of human psychology, biology, genetics, physiology, cognition, neuroscience, personality and evolution to our understanding political attitudes, beliefs, ideology, identity, and behaviour.
- Evaluate strengths and weaknesses of political science research that uses political psychology methods.
- Contribute to discussions on the use of political psychology to understand political phenomenon.

Course Requirements:

Group Research Design (25 points) — In groups of 5 or 6, you will work as a social psychology lab to develop a research design for a proposed study. This will be a 12-16-page (double spaced) research design that will aim to address a research question by proposing hypotheses and a method to study your research question. Each week, you will be given class time to work on your research proposal and research design, attendance and engagement will be assessed during this in-class time to work on these group assignments. You will also be asked to submit an assessment of individual contributions for the research design near the end of the course.

- It should include the following:
 - A clear research topic and corresponding research question,
 - A brief literature review (4-6 pages double spaced) for your topic and research question,
 - Clear hypotheses that outline how you will test your research question
 - envision you would study the topic and to investigate your hypotheses.
 - A reference list of the work that you consulted while preparing your proposal (at least 8 sources, including a minimum of at least 5 academic sources beyond any relevant assigned reading for the course).
 - The writing reflections and the research proposal will ask you to begin thinking about or developing parts of your final research design.
 - The goal is that you will be able to take the work done from those assignments and the feedback you on your research proposal and use it to put together your final research design.
 - More details about this assignment will be posted on OWL and discussed in class as we get closer to the assignment due date.

Group Research Proposal (5 points) — In your lab groups, you will prepare a 2-3-page (double spaced) research proposal. The aim of the proposal is to focus your research question and begin to develop a strategy for the rest of your final research design. This will be submitted before the final research design, and you will be provided with feedback to address for your final design.

- It should include the following:
 - A statement of your topic, and a clear research question about the topic.
 - Discussion of some relevant academic theories and/or concepts that you could use to organize your research. If existing academic research has addressed similar research questions to yours, use it to generate some hypotheses, consider if you want to replicate a similar design and hypotheses or critically respond to existing work and address a gap in the literature. This section should resemble an outline for a short literature review for your final research design.
 - A plan for completing the research—what information you need to answer your question (be as precise as you can - eg., ideas for an experiment or experiments, statistics about X or Y), and how and where you plan to look for that information or why you are considering a certain method.

- A reference list of the work that you consulted while preparing your proposal (at least 3-5 sources, including a minimum of at least 3 academic sources beyond any relevant assigned reading for the course).
- More details about this assignment will be posted on OWL and discussed in class as we get closer to the assignment due date.

Engagement and Attendance (10 points) — This is an undergraduate-level seminar so attending class and participating in group discussion is an important component of the learning environment. Attendance will be tracked each class and engagement will be assessed on an ongoing basis. Class discussions will be a combination of small group work and class discussions. Attendance and engagement will also be assessed during group work time for the research design. 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. Engagement looks like: tracking with the discussion, paying attention, taking notes. Students will lose points for absences, surfing the internet or messaging/texting on laptops or phones during class discussion, or generally being distracted or distracting from class activities.

In-class writing reflections (15 points) — THREE times during the term, students will be given class time to write a ONE to TWO PAGE, double spaced reflection in response to a question concerning the readings and theme of a class week's lecture. These will be held randomly during certain weeks of the course. In your response, you may also want to highlight aspects of the readings you found interesting, challenging, and questionable. You will be given 20 minutes at the start of class to write and submit a response on OWL to the week's question, and it should be submitted in 12-point font, double-spaced with 1-inch margins, pdf or Microsoft word document are both acceptable.

Pop quizzes (10 points) — FIVE quizzes each individually worth 2 points, randomly held in-person during certain weeks of the course. These will be 5-8 question multiple choice assessments. Each quiz will focus on the key terms and concepts discussed that week's assigned readings or during lectures. You will have 15 minutes to complete the quiz in class. If you are absent from class, you will have until the start of the next week's class to complete the quiz.

Final Exam (35 points) — A mixture of short answer questions and an essay question. This will be a cumulative in-person assessment of course concepts covered in course readings and lectures. It will be held during the April exam period and scheduled by the office of the registrar. More information about the specific date, time and place will be given closer to the exam period.

Due dates for the research proposal and final research design:

Research Proposal: March 5th

Final Research Design: March 26th

Weekly schedule:

All assigned readings will be available through Western Libraries, the course's OWL Brightspace site (<https://westernu.brightspace.com/>), or online. Assigned reading should be done BEFORE the class in which it is to be discussed.

Week one: Introduction to the Course

Stone, S., Johnson, K. M., Beall, E., Meindl, P., Smith, B., & Graham, J. (2014). Political psychology. *Wiley Interdisciplinary Reviews: Cognitive Science*, 5(4), 373–385.

Week two: Why Psychology is Needed to Study Politics

Huddy, L., Sears, D., Levy, J., & Jerit, J. (Eds.). (2023). Introduction: Theoretical foundations of political psychology. In *The Oxford Handbook of Political Psychology* (pp. 1-20). Oxford University Press.

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.

Week three: The Evolutionary Psychology of Political Behaviour

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.

Claessens, S., Osborne, D., Sibley, C., & Atkinson, A. (2022). The evolutionary basis of political ideology. In D. Osborne & C. Sibley (Eds.), *The Cambridge Handbook of Political Psychology* (pp. 22-36). Cambridge University Press.

Gelfand, M. J., Raver, J. L., Nishii, L., Leslie, L. M., Lun, J., Lim, B. C., Duan, L., et al. (2011). Differences between tight and loose cultures: A 33-nation study. *Science*, 332(6033), 1100-1104.

Week four: Is it nurture or nature? Looking into genetics and socialization

OpenStax. (n.d.) Lifespan development. In *Psychology* (2nd Ed). Retrieved from <https://openstax.org/books/psychology-2e/pages/9-key-terms>.

Alford, J. R., Funk, C. L., & Hibbing, J. R. (2005). Are political orientations genetically transmitted? *American Political Science Review*, 99(2), 153-67.

Weinschenk, A. C., & Dawes, C. T. (2022). Civic education in high school and voter turnout in adulthood. *British Journal of Political Science*, 52(2), 934-948.

Week five: Understanding and Measuring Emotion and Human Behaviour

OpenStax. (n.d.). Emotion. In Psychology (2nd Ed). Retrieved from <https://openstax.org/books/psychology-2e/pages/10-4-emotion>.

Wood, A., & Coan, J. A. (2023). Beyond nature versus nurture: The emergence of emotion. *Affective Science*, 4, 443–452.

Inbar, Y., Pizarro, D. A., & Bloom, P. (2009). Conservatives are more easily disgusted than liberals. *Cognition and emotion*, 23(4), 714-725.

Week six: Emotion and Politics

Feldman Barrett, L. (2015, July 31). What emotions are and aren't. The New York Times. Retrieved from <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/08/02/opinion/Sunday/what-emotions-are-and-arent.html>

Schumacher, G., Rooduijn, M., & Bakker, B. N. (2022). Hot populism? Affective responses to antiestablishment rhetoric. *Political Psychology*, 43(5), 851-871.

McDermott, R. (2014). The body doesn't lie: A somatic approach to the study of emotions in world politics. *International Theory*, 6(3), 557-562.

Week seven: NO CLASS, READING WEEK

Week eight: Personality and Politics

OpenStax. (n.d.). Personality. In Psychology (2nd ed.). Retrieved from <https://openstax.org/books/psychology-2e/>

Big Five Personality Test. <https://fivethirtyeight.com/features/most-personality-quizzes-are-junk-science-i-found-one-that-isnt/>.

HEXACO. <http://hexaco.org/>

Arceneaux, K., Gravelle, T. B., Osmundsen, M., Petersen, M. B., Reifler, J., & Scotto, T. J. (2021). Some people just want to watch the world burn: The prevalence, psychology and politics of the 'Need for Chaos'. *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society B*, 376(1822), 20200147.

Week nine: Identity, Groups, and Politics

- Brown, R. (2020). The social identity approach: Appraising the Tajfellian legacy. *British Journal of Social Psychology*, 59(1), 5-25.
- Schneider, M., & Bos, A. (2023). The political psychology of gender. In L. Huddy, D. Sears, J. Levy, & J. Jerit (Eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Political Psychology* (pp. 694-732). Oxford University Press.
- Perez, E., & Vicuna, B. (2023). The gaze from below: Toward a political psychology of minority status. In *The Oxford Handbook of Political Psychology* (pp. 918-944). Oxford University Press.

Week ten: Cognition & Neuroscience & Politics

- OpenStax. (n.d.). What is cognition? In *Psychology* (2nd ed.). Retrieved from <https://openstax.org/books/psychology-2e/>
- OpenStax. (n.d.). The brain and spinal cord. In *Psychology* (2nd ed.). Retrieved from <https://openstax.org/books/psychology-2e/>
- Eisenberger, N. I., Lieberman, M. D., & Williams, K. D. (2003). Does rejection hurt? An fMRI study of social exclusion. *Science*, 302(5643), 290-292.
- Nam, H. H., Jost, J. T., Kaggen, L., Campbell-Meiklejohn, D., & Van Bavel, J. J. (2018). Amygdala structure and the tendency to regard the social system as legitimate and desirable. *Nature Human Behaviour*, 2(2), 133-138.

Week eleven: The Political Psychology of Decision Making and Participation

- Lau, R., & Redlawsk, D. (2023). Political decision-making. In L. Huddy, D. Sears, J. Levy, & J. Jerit (Eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Political Psychology* (pp. 150-190). Oxford University Press.
- Taber, C. S., & Lodge, M. (2016). The illusion of choice in democratic politics. *Advances in Political Psychology*, 37(S1), 61-85.
- Pennycook, G., & Rand, D. G. (2019). Lazy, not biased: Susceptibility to partisan fake news is better explained by lack of reasoning than by motivated reasoning. *Cognition*, 188, 39-50.

Week twelve: Stress, Health, and Political Psychology

- Ksiazkiewicz, A. (2020). Conservative larks, liberal owls: The relationship between chronotype and political ideology. *The Journal of Politics*, 82(1), 367-371.
- Landwehr C, & Ojeda C. Democracy and Depression: A Cross-National Study of Depressive Symptoms and Nonparticipation. *American Political Science Review*. 2021;115(1):323-330. doi:10.1017/S0003055420000830
- Smith, K. B. (2022). Politics is making us sick: The negative impact of political engagement on public health during the Trump administration. *Plos One*, 17(1), e0262022.

Week thirteen: Social Cognition, Intergroup Relations & Prejudice (EXAM REVIEW)

- Fiske, S. T., Cuddy, A. J., & Glick, P. (2007). Universal dimensions of social cognition: Warmth and competence. *Trends in Cognitive Sciences*, 11(2), 77-83.
- Cook, C. L., Li, Y. J., Newell, S. M., Cottrell, C. A., & Neal, R. (2018). The world is a scary place: Individual differences in belief in a dangerous world predict specific intergroup prejudices. *Group Processes & Intergroup Relations*, 21(4), 583-596.

Course Policies

Late Policy, Academic Accommodations and Considerations

Academic Accommodations:

- Students who believe that they require ongoing academic accommodations due to a disability are encouraged to request accommodation through Accessible Education. More information can be found here: [Accessible Education](#)

Late Work:

- Late assignments are unacceptable and will be penalized at a rate of five percent (5%) per day (including weekends). Students should get ahead of due dates by starting to work on assignments early.
- Assignments later than 7 days will not be accepted and will receive a grade of zero.
- If you require an extension due to an illness or other extenuating circumstance, please read the policy outlined below.

Requests for extensions and missed lectures or exams:

- If you are sick or face other extenuating circumstances that prohibit you from submitting an assignment on time, attending class, or writing a quiz, the circumstance must be documented according to Western's Academic Consideration Policy.
- The process for granting consideration/accommodation for a range of issues is managed through Academic Counsellors in the student's home faculty.
- Students are required to use the Student Absence Portal to submit requests for Academic Consideration. More information about the portal and the University's Academic Consideration policy can be found here: [Office of the Registrar – Academic Consideration](#)
- **All requests for medical or compassionate extensions must go through Academic Counseling only.** Please do not email medical documentation or other information to the instructor for the course. Accommodation requests received by Academic Counselling are sent to instructors shortly after, and it is the student's responsibility to follow up with instructors and make the appropriate arrangements if approved.

Policy specific to participation, writing responses and quizzes:

- If you do not submit a quiz or writing response by the deadline, i.e. you are absent from class, you will receive a grade of zero for the in-class assignment.
- If you are absent from class six or more times you cannot receive greater than half of the 10% of your course grade attributed to engagement and participation.
- If your request for Academic Consideration for missing a writing response is approved or you choose to use your one undocumented absence for the term for a class where a writing response was held, you will be given until the next course week to complete the short writing response and submit it on OWL.

Make up work and grade appeals:

- There are no opportunities to "make up" any assignments where a student received a grade that they felt was not satisfactory.
- If you are concerned that your assignment was not graded fairly or correctly, you must wait 48 hours before contacting the instructor to appeal your grade. To appeal your grade, you must email a 1-page written explanation stating why you think your assignment was improperly graded. The instructor will respond to your appeal in writing.
- This policy is meant to promote fairness for students, as well as respect for the course instructor.

Statement on the Use of Generative AI:

- Students are expected to learn how to conduct research through a process of trial and error. Running course materials through GenAI or using GenAI to complete a course assessment is considered unoriginal work, and therefore, plagiarism.
- The use of generative AI tools in this course is permitted for brainstorming ideas, finding preliminary information about topics, checking for how assignments might be received by a potential grader, and improving grammar and style.
- It is not acceptable to continually consult generative AI tools when learning how to develop research ideas and write about them. GenAI tools should not be used to produce a student's written work in any form. It can be destructive to use GenAI when learning to conduct research, as it increases your dependence on the tool and decreases your ability to remember or comprehend the decisions that are a part of the research process. Furthermore, students are expected to rely mostly on concepts discussed in class and the instructor will provide sufficient examples that students can refer to when completing assignments.
- If AI is used for one or more of the permitted uses for individual or group assignments, a statement must be included at the end of the assignment, before the reference list, disclosing how it was used. This statement should be included under the heading, "Artificial Intelligence (AI) Declaration". It must explain which AI tools were used, for what reasons, and acknowledge that the author has full responsibility for the contents of the assignment.
- Copies of all AI generated content used in individual or group assignments must be saved and made available to the instructor or TAs if asked. Any assignment that is found to have used generative AI tools in unauthorized ways may result in a failure to receive full grades, the need to resubmit a revised version, or a grade of zero. If in doubt about acceptable AI usage, please ask the instructor for clarification. If AI is not used at all, no declaration is needed. AI declarations will not be counted towards word limits.

Office Hours Policy:

- Office hours will be held during the specified time and students are encouraged to make use of those opportunities instead of requesting alternative meeting times.

- However, office hours can be scheduled by appointment, at a time that works for both the instructor and the student, if regular office hours conflict with a student's course schedule or life responsibilities.
- Office hours by appointment are not available before 9am or after 5pm Eastern Standard time.

Email Policy:

- Please include the course code in the subject line.
- I will not respond to emails before 9am or after 5pm during the week and will be less responsive on weekends.
- I will do my best to respond to emails within 2 days, not including weekends.
- If I do not respond to you after 2 days, please send me a follow up email if your concern remains.

Accessibility Policy:

- I will make all slides will be posted on OWL Brightspace prior to the start of class.
- If I need to record lectures, I will endeavour to make sure recorded lectures use closed captions and make them available.
- If any of my slides use colours or fonts that are hard to read, please reach out to me via email and I will adapt the slides to make them easier to read.

Approach to Inclusivity, Diversity and Respect:

- All students should feel valued and empowered to express their perspectives while maintaining a spirit of mutual respect and academic integrity.
- This course recognizes the richness that diverse backgrounds, perspectives, and experiences bring to the learning environment.
- I will actively strive to create an atmosphere where individuals from all identities—regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, ability, religion, or socioeconomic background—can contribute meaningfully and feel included.
- Diversity of thought and lived experience enhances our understanding of political systems and fosters critical analysis.
- **Responsibilities of Students and Instructor:**
 - Students are encouraged to engage actively and respectfully, listening to and learning from diverse perspectives.
 - The instructor is committed to fostering an inclusive environment, addressing any concerns related to discrimination or exclusion, and facilitating fair and open discussions.
 - Everyone in the classroom shares responsibility for upholding these principles of inclusivity, diversity, and respect.
- By adhering to these guidelines, we can create a learning space that is intellectually stimulating, respectful, and welcoming to all.

Class participation rules:

- Below are some general guidelines for class participation and interaction with other students in the form of in class discussion.
 - Everyone has the right to be heard.
 - No name calling or personal remarks.
 - Recognize that everyone starts from different bases of knowledge.
 - Have the humility to recognize that you do not know everything and that everyone stands to improve.

Children in Class:

I applaud all of you who go to school with children! It is difficult to balance school, work, and family commitments, and I want you to succeed. If this applies to you, here are my policies regarding children in class:

1. All breastfeeding babies are welcome in class as often as needed. If your baby requires your attention, you can step outside and tend to them.
2. Non-nursing babies and older children are welcome as well. I understand that babysitters fall through, partners have conflicting schedules, children get sick, and other issues like a global pandemic arise that leave parents with few other options. If your child requires your attention, you can step outside and tend to them.
3. All students are expected to join me in creating a welcoming environment that is respectful of your classmates who bring children to class.

I understand that sleep deprivation and exhaustion are among the most difficult aspects of parenting young children. The struggle of balancing school, work, childcare, and high inflation is tiring, and I will do my best to accommodate any such issues while maintaining the same high expectations for all students enrolled in the class. Please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions or concerns if this policy applies to you.

University Policies

Statement on Academic Offenses:

- Scholastic offences are taken seriously, and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at the following Web site:

Scholastic Discipline Policy (Undergrad)

- All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com.

Statement on Use of Electronic Devices:

- Students are allowed and encouraged to use their laptop during class time, however, they are expected to refrain from scrolling social media and looking at other non-class related content. Students should avoid using cellphones during recorded lectures.

Links to University Support Services

- Registrarial Services
- USC Services
- Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to: [Mental Health@Western](mailto:MentalHealth@Western) for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.

Statement on Gender-Based Violence:

- Western is committed to reducing incidents of gender-based and sexual violence (GBSV) and providing compassionate support to anyone who is going through or has gone through these traumatic events. If you are experiencing or have experienced GBSV (either recently or in the past), you will find information about support services for survivors, including emergency contacts at the following website here. To connect with a case manager or set up an appointment, please contact support@uwo.ca.