

## PS111: Political Psychology

**\*\*Last updated 8/14/24\*\***

### Main information:

Fall 2024

*Professor:*

Debbie Schildkraut  
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*Teaching Assistant:*

Linda Bachg; [linda.bachg@tufts.edu](mailto:linda.bachg@tufts.edu)

*Class meets:*

BLOCK G+: Mon. & Wed., 1:30pm-2:45pm, Room 206 Anderson Wing, SEC

*Office hours:*

Tuesdays, 1:00-3:00pm (in person, though we can meet on Zoom if that works better). Book office hours at <https://calendly.com/deborahschildkraut>. Once you sign up for a meeting, you will get a confirmation email with a link you can use to change or cancel the appointment. Email me to set up appointments for other times.

Meetings with TA are by appointment.

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### Course description:

Political psychology is an interdisciplinary field that employs social and cognitive psychological theories to examine the world of politics. It is concerned with the role of human thought, emotion, and behavior in politics and in the linkages between these elements. We will explore several approaches to understanding the psychology of political behavior, with an emphasis on how context and institutional design can shape how people think and act politically. Topics covered include: information processing, rationality, emotions, personality, stereotyping, prejudice, intergroup conflict, and altruism.

The field of political psychology is vast, and there are several rich research traditions in the discipline that will *not* be covered in this course. Instead, the course focuses on a broad range of issues that deal with how ordinary citizens make sense of their political surroundings and how their understandings of the political world are linked to their political beliefs and behaviors. We will study the roles of political leaders, the media, race, ethnicity, gender, norms, and emotions in shaping how individual citizens experience politics. Most of the readings emphasize politics in the United States, though the field itself speaks to every aspect of political science.

We will also focus on methodological concerns in this course, spending time critiquing how scholars in political psychology test their arguments and designing our own approaches. The works we read use surveys, interviews, and/or experiments to collect data and investigate the dynamics of political attitudes and behaviors. Critiquing and designing such research techniques will help you to become

critical consumers of social science information and provide an opportunity for your own creativity to be brought to bear on empirical investigations of the relationships between citizens and politics. This course fulfills the Political Science Department's methodology requirement.

### **Course format and requirements:**

Class meets twice per week in either a lecture or workshop format. You are expected to come to class prepared to discuss issues raised in the readings. If you miss class: (1) let me or our TA know, (2) see slides posted on Canvas, and (3) seek notes from a classmate. Then see me if you want to go over the missed material. ***Do NOT come to class if you feel sick.***

View the **syllabus** to see what is assigned and planned for each day.

View the relevant **Canvas** module to access the materials for that day.

I expect you to have read the assignments *before class* on the date they are listed and to have something to say about them. For weeks in which there is more than one reading listed, please read the items in the order in which they appear on the syllabus.

I strongly encourage you to follow current events and to read a national newspaper several times per week. I will be relying on current political issues and events for illustration, and I welcome your examples and observations in this regard.

### **Required Readings:**

There are no books to buy for this course. All required readings are posted on CANVAS. Each week has its own module with the readings and related materials for each day.

**SKIM:** Occasionally, you are asked to **skim** a reading. "**Skim**" means you should be able to discuss the main idea of the reading, but you will not be held responsible for specific details.

**PRIORITIZE:** There may be times where it feels like there is too much reading. To make it more manageable, prioritize the readings that seem most interesting to you or that seem most difficult and you think you may need help making sense of it. For the other readings, be sure you know the main topics, findings, and arguments so you know that you can go to them when you want information on the topics they contain. At no point in the semester will I require you to memorize material from the reading nor will I quiz you on random details; you will have all readings at your disposal for all assignments. Knowing what's in them will help you use your time efficiently on exams and when working on projects.

### **A note on course content:**

The content and discussion in this course addresses topics that can be emotionally and psychologically challenging, including racism, sexism, and violence. Although it is my hope that you can engage with all of our course material, it is acceptable for you to excuse yourself from lectures or discussions at any time if you feel you need to. If you feel you need to skip a particular reading, please let me know so we can work together to find ways to deliver course concepts differently.

## Course website:

If you are already registered for PS111, you should have access to the course website on CANVAS. There, you will find the syllabus, weekly modules, readings, and other resources you may find useful as you work on assignments. I use CANVAS to send emails regarding announcements and possible syllabus changes or updates, and you will use CANVAS to complete assignments. CANVAS automatically uses your "tufts.edu" email address; if this is not your preferred address, you must make sure that emails sent to you through CANVAS are forwarded to the appropriate location. It is your responsibility to make sure that you receive **and read** class emails. If you have trouble with CANVAS, request help at [canvas@tufts.edu](mailto:canvas@tufts.edu). Technology help for students is also available at: <https://it.tufts.edu/technology-students>.

Note: if you click on a link for a reading and it doesn't open, try clicking where it says to open the file in a new window (near the top of the page).

## Important Dates:

Wed, Oct. 2: **Experiment design due by 1:30pm**

Mon, Oct. 14: NO CLASS: Indigenous People's Day

Mon, Oct. 21: **Exam 1 due by 1:30pm**

Mon: Nov. 4: One paragraph description of final project topic due

Mon, Nov. 11: NO CLASS: Veterans Day

Tues, Nov. 12: MONDAY SCHEDULE

Tues, Nov. 26 **Exam 2 due by 11:59pm. *NOTE date and time!***

Wed, Nov. 27: NO CLASS: Thanksgiving Break

Wed, Dec. 4: Prospectus due

Mon, Dec. 16: **Final project due, 12pm**

## Assignments and Grading:

Asynchronous participation:	10%
Experiment design:	20%
Take home Exam 1:	20%
Take home Exam 2:	20%
Final project prospectus:	5%
Final project:	25%

All assignments except asynchronous participation are graded out of 100 points. I take off 5 points for every day that an assignment is late. The asynchronous participation grade is a tally of the completed assignments. I convert numbers to letters in the following manner:

97 – 100 = A+; 94 – 96 = A; 90 – 93 = A-; 87 – 89 = B+; 84 – 86 = B; 80 – 83 = B-; 77 – 79 = C+; 74 – 76 = C; 70 – 73 = C-; 65 – 70 = D; Below 65 = F

### **Asynchronous participation (10% of course grade):**

Most weeks, you are asked to engage in a short asynchronous online activity to be completed by the start of class on the day indicated on the syllabus. Normally, this engagement is in the form of a content reaction. These reactions can be questions you would like addressed, critiques of readings, connections to current events, or ideas for further research. They can also be questions that came to you during class, critiques of scholarship discussed in lecture, or responses to comments from classmates. Sometimes the weekly engagement will ask you to post questions for an upcoming guest speaker. You will find the link to the week's assignment in the module for that week. A guide to writing effective content reactions is on CANVAS under the Module for Week 1. Your grade is the percentage of assignments that you have completed on time.

### **Experiment design (20% of course grade):**

This assignment asks you to design an experiment that can be used to test a hypothesis related to theories in political psychology. The write-up for the experiment should be about 5-7 pages long and is worth 20% of your course grade. You will receive more instructions soon (including specific guidance regarding aspects of experimental design, such as control groups, random assignment, etc.). The assignment is due at the start of class on **10/2**. Come to class on **9/30** prepared to talk about your design. Examples of successful experiment design assignments are available for you to see in a module on CANVAS. Papers should be submitted in **.docx** or **.pdf** format.

### **Research project (30% of course grade):**

You have a choice of whether the final project will be a recorded presentation or a paper.

If you choose a paper, it should be about 16 pages (numbered, double-spaced, 1-inch margins). If you choose the recorded presentation, it should be 15-18 minutes long. The project is worth 25% of your course grade. The prospectus is worth 5% of your course grade. You will have a lot of freedom in choosing the topic for your project, though I provide suggestions, guidelines, and expectations to help you arrive at a workable idea. The main requirement is that your project be a **research proposal related to any topic in our course syllabus.**

First, you need to select a broad topic **related to our syllabus** that interests you. Then you need to narrow your topic to a **specific, testable** research question. Designing your proposal will require you to:

- review relevant scholarly literature
- identify remaining controversies, problems, or unresolved issues
- design a study that would allow scholars to investigate a specific, testable question that derives from the remaining controversies, problems, or unresolved issues you've identified.

This assignment will require you to find, read, and incorporate scholarly academic readings not included on our syllabus. I **do not** expect you to collect your own data or to conduct your own experiments or surveys. You **are** allowed to use your experiment design as a starting point for this research proposal.

More information about this assignment will be provided in October. A one-paragraph description of your project topic is due on **Nov. 4** (counted as part of your asynchronous participation grade). A 5-page (minimum) prospectus is due at the start of class on **Dec. 4**. The prospectus should include:

- o Whether you plan to write a paper or submit a presentation
- o A detailed description of your paper topic and research strategy
- o An outline of the paper
- o A list of the sources you have consulted to date

On **Dec. 4**, you are also expected to share copies of your prospectus with the students in your peer review group. On our last class session, students will meet in assigned groups to critique each other's ideas. You will then be asked to post information on Canvas, seen only by me, about the feedback you received during the peer review session.

Each student should meet with me or our TA at least once to discuss the research projects. The project is due at 12pm on **Dec. 16**. Papers and prospectuses should be submitted in **.docx** or **.pdf** format.

Examples of successful projects from past semesters are available for you to see on CANVAS.

### **Tufts policy on sharing course information:**

It is against Tufts policy for anyone to share any content made available in this course including course syllabi, reading materials, powerpoint slides, videos, handouts, and exams with anyone outside of the course without the express permission of the instructor. This especially includes any posting or sharing of videos or other recordings on publicly accessible websites or forums. Any such sharing or posting could violate copyright law or law that protects the privacy of student educational records.

### **Extensions on assignments:**

While it is best to avoid extensions and having material pile up, please know you can ask for extensions on assignments. If you ask, please ask as far in advance as possible and suggest an alternate due date. Indicate how much additional time you think you will need, and we'll go from there.

### **Office hours:**

Office hours are a chance for you to talk with me about your coursework, the PS major, your thoughts on life after Tufts, or pretty much anything else. Office hours are by appointment at <https://calendly.com/deborahschildkraut>. **Office hours are my preferred way to meet with you**, but if the available times conflict with your schedule, send an email and we will find another time.

### **Academic integrity:**

Assignments you submit for this course will be reported to the Office of Community Standards if any evidence of academic dishonesty is detected. When in doubt, cite! Tufts Academic Integrity Resources can be found here: <https://students.tufts.edu/community-standards/support-resources/academic-integrity-resources>.

### **Academic Support and Accessibility Services at the StAAR Center:**

The StAAR Center offers a variety of resources to all students, and services are free to all enrolled students. You can make an appointment to work on any writing-related project or assignment, attend subject tutoring, or meet with an academic coach to hone fundamental academic skills like time

management or overcoming procrastination. You can make an appointment by visiting [go.tufts.edu/TutorFinder](https://go.tufts.edu/TutorFinder), or by visiting <https://students.tufts.edu/staar-center>. You also take a self-assessment [quiz](#) to identify your work and study habits and connect with relevant resources. The StAAR Center is also where you should go to register for academic accommodations.

## AI Technology:

- Submitting work generated by AI technology without attribution is considered a form of plagiarism.
- When submitting work, **any portion of your work where you used AI technology at any stage for any reason requires citation**, even if you are not adopting AI text verbatim.
- Assume that all facts and sources provided by AI technology are false; verify and cite the sources you used to verify.
- In an AI citation, provide (1) the prompt you used, (2) the name of the AI tool and, if available, the version, (3) the company that provides the tool, (3) the date you used it, and (4) the AI url. Note that the AI tool is NOT an author.
- Example from the Modern Language Association:  
“Describe the symbolism of the green light in the book *The Great Gatsby* by F. Scott Fitzgerald” prompt. *ChatGPT*, 13 Feb. version, OpenAI, 8 Mar. 2023, [chat.openai.com/chat](https://chat.openai.com/chat).

## Register to vote:

If you are eligible and aren't registered to vote, you can register here:  
<https://tufts.turbovote.org/register>.

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## Topics and Readings:

### Week 1:

W, Sept. 4: Introduction: What is political psychology?

\*\*\*complete PS111 Fall 2024 Student Information Survey on CANVAS (not anonymous)

\*\*\*complete a separate anonymous PS111 Survey posted on CANVAS.

### Week 2:

M, Sept. 9: Opinion formation: Converse and his legacy

Reading:

- PS111 syllabus (all of it)
- Writing Content Reactions
- Guide for Class Discussion
- Converse, Philip. 1964. “The Nature of Belief Systems in Mass Publics,” originally in *Ideology and Discontent*, David Apter, ed. **Read only pp. 1-18; 24-34; 44-53.**

W, Sept. 11: Information Processing: Rationality

Reading:

- Kinder, Donald, and Don Herzog. 1993. “Democratic Discussion,” in *Reconsidering the Democratic Public*, George Marcus and Russell Hanson, eds. University Park: Penn State Press. pp. 347-377.

- Simon, Herbert. 1985. "Human Nature in Politics: The Dialogue of Psychology with Political Science," *American Political Science Review* 79
  - Pp. 293-298; 301-303.
- Tversky, Amos, and Daniel Kahneman. 1981. "The Framing of Decisions and the Psychology of Choice," *Science* 211: 453-458.
- **Post content reaction**

### Week 3:

M, Sept. 16: Information Processing: Motivated Reasoning

Reading:

- Taber, Charles, Milton Lodge, and Jill Glathar. 2001. "The Motivated Construction of Political Judgments," in *Citizens and Politics: Perspectives from Political Psychology*, James Kuklinski, ed. New York: Cambridge University Press. pp. 198-226.
- **SKIM:** "President Clinton Impeached." History.com.
- Fischle, Mark. 2000. "Mass Response to the Lewinsky Scandal: Motivated Reasoning or Bayesian Updating?" *Political Psychology* 21(1): 135-159.
- **SKIM:** Bayes, Robin, James Druckman, Avery Goods, and Daniel Molden. 2020. "When and How Different Motives Can Drive Motivated Political Reasoning. *Political Psychology* 41(5): 1031-1052.

**\*\*Experiment assignment discussed today\*\***

W, Sept. 18: Using Experiments in Political Psychology

Reading:

- Druckman, James, et al. "Experiments: An Introduction to Core Concepts," in *The Cambridge Handbook of Experimental Political Science*. pp. 15-22 only.
- Zimbardo, Philip. 1973. A Pirandellian Prison, in *The New York Times Magazine*, April 8, 1973.
- Hoover & Donovan, "Measuring Variables and Relationships," from *The Elements of Social Scientific Thinking*. Wadsworth: 2008. pp. 16-19; 26-28; 67-69; 98-110.
- **OPTIONAL:** APSA Principles and Guidance for Human Subjects Research, 2020.
- **Post content reaction**

### Week 4:

M, Sept. 23: Emotions

Reading:

- Albertson, Bethany and Shana Gadarian. 2015. *Anxious Politics: Democratic Citizenship in a Threatening World*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
  - Ch 1 (pp. 1-11); Ch3 (pp. 43-56 and 65-72); Ch 6 (pp. 151-156).
- Coaston, Jane. 2020. "How anxiety changes political behavior," Vox.com interview with Albertson and Gadarian.

W, Sept. 25: Emotions, continued

Reading:

- Banks, Antoine J., Ismail K. White, and Brian D. McKenzie. 2019. "Black Politics: How Anger Influences the Political Actions Blacks Pursue to Reduce Racial Inequality," *Political Behavior* 41: 917-943.
- Phoenix, Davin. 2019. *The Anger Gap: How Race Shapes Emotion in Politics*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
  - Pp. 1-21; 70-79; 122-130; 153-159; 170-180.
- **Post content reaction**

### **Week 5:**

M, Sept. 30: Experiment workshop

No new reading/no content reaction

- **Come to class prepared to talk about your experiment design**

W, Oct. 2: Emotions workshop

Reading:

- Gutierrez, Angela, Angela X. Ocampo, Matt A. Barreto, and Gary Segura. 2019. "Somos Más: How Racial Threat and Anger Mobilized Latino Voters in the Trump Era," *Political Research Quarterly* 72(4): 960-975.
  - Come to class prepared to discuss in small groups the methods and findings in this article

**\*\*EXPERIMENT DESIGN Due by 1:30pm\*\***

### **Week 6:**

M, Oct. 7: Personality

Reading:

- Mondak, Jeffery. 2010. *Personality and the Foundations of Political Behavior*. Cambridge University Press.
  - Ch. 1 (pp. 1-8); Ch. 2 (pp. 47-63)
- McDermott, Monika. 2016. *Masculinity, Femininity, and American Political Behavior*. Oxford University Press.
  - Ch. 1 (pp. 1-16; 26-27); Ch. 2 (pp. 35-37, 46-55); Ch. 3 (pp. 57-76).

W, Oct. 9: Personality, continued

Reading:

- McDermott.
  - Ch. 4 (pp. 87-102).
- Gidengil, Elisabeth, and Dietlind Stolle. "Beyond the Gender Gap: The Role of Gender Identity." *The Journal of Politics* 83, no. 4 (2021): 1818-1822.
- Cassino, Dan, and Yasemin Besen-Cassino. "Of masks and men? Gender, sex, and protective measures during COVID-19." *Politics & Gender* 16, no. 4 (2020): 1052-1062.
- **Post content reaction**
- **\*\*Exam 1 posted today\*\***



## Week 7:

M, Oct. 14: NO CLASS

W, Oct. 16: Make up day/talk about final project

**\*\*Research project guide distributed today\*\***

## Week 8:

M, Oct. 21: Visit with Christine Slaughter, scholar of political psychology at Boston University

Reading:

- Slaughter, Christine. 2021. "Black Women's Optimism, Resilience, and Political Engagement in Times of Crisis" 2021 -2022. *PHILLIS: The Journal for Research on African American Women*.
- Brown, Nadia, Christine Slaughter, and Michael Strawbridge. 2024. "The Divine Nine and Black Voter Support for Kamala Harris," *GoodAuthority.org*.
- **Post question for guest speaker, Christine Slaughter, Assistant Professor of Political Science at Boston University**

**\*\*EXAM 1 DUE by 1:30pm\*\***

W, Oct. 23: Stereotypes

Reading:

- Rothbart, Myron, and Oliver John. 1993. "Intergroup Relations and Stereotype Change: A Social-Cognitive Analysis and Some Longitudinal Findings," in *Prejudice, Politics, and the American Dilemma*, Sniderman, Tetlock, and Carmines, eds. pp. 32-45.
- Gaertner, Samuel, et al. 2005. "Aversive Racism: Bias without Intention," *Handbook of Employment Discrimination Research*, Springer
  - ONLY READ pp. 377-381, 383-388.
- Nordell, Jessica. 2017. "Is this how discrimination ends?" *The Atlantic*. May 7, 2017.
- Phillip Atiba Goff. 2018. "A better solution for Starbucks," *New York Times*, May 30, 2018.
- **OPTIONAL**: Keith Payne, Laura Niemi, and John M. Doris. 2018. "How to think about "implicit bias," *Scientific American*.
- **OPTIONAL**: Take an Implicit Association Test at: <https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/takeatest.html>

## Week 9:

M, Oct. 28: Stereotypes and privilege

Reading:

- Branscombe, Nyla R., Michael T. Schmitt, and Kristin Schiffhauer. 2007. "Racial attitudes in response to thoughts of white privilege." *European Journal of Social Psychology* 37: 203-215.
- Schaffner, Brian. 2020. "White Republicans and Independents are starting to acknowledge their privilege, but will it last?" *DataForProgress.org*.
- Sherif, Muzafer. 1956. "Experiments in Group Conflict," *Scientific American*.
- Shariatmadari, David. 2018. "A real life Lord of the Flies: The troubling legacy of the Robbers Cave Experiment," *The Guardian*, April 16, 2018.

W, Oct. 30: Group conflict

Reading:

- Ellison, Shin, and Leal. 2011. "The Contact Hypothesis and Attitudes Toward Latinos in the United States," *Social Science Quarterly*.
- Craig, Maureen, and Jennifer Richeson. 2014. "More Diverse Yet Less Tolerant? How the Increasingly Diverse Racial Landscape Affects White Americans' Racial Attitudes." *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* 40(6): 750-761.
- **Post content reaction**

### **Week 10:**

M, Nov. 4: Group Conflict, continued

Readings:

- Shook and Fazio. 2008. "Interracial Roommate Relationships: An Experimental Field Test of the Contact Hypothesis," *Psychological Science* 19(7): 717-723.
- Enos, Ryan. 2017. "How Segregation Leads to Racist Voting By Whites," Vox.com
- Dixon, John, et al. 2010. "'Let Them Eat Harmony': Prejudice-Reduction Strategies and Attitudes of Historically Disadvantaged Groups," *Current Directions in Psychological Science* 19(2): 76-80.
- Resnick, Brian. 2020. "How to talk someone out of bigotry," Vox.com
  - Try to also watch the embedded video in this article (8 minutes) illustrating a deep canvassing conversation.

**\*\*\*one paragraph description of final project topic due (factored into asynch participation grade)\*\*\***

W, Nov. 6: Election day discussion

- Post a reaction or question about results from Election Day, or bring to our attention some local or state level election result that you think the class should know about.

### **Week 11:**

M, Nov. 11: NO CLASS

Tu, Nov. 12: CLASS MEETS: Group conflict workshop

Reading:

- Lajevardi, Nazita, et al. 2020. "The Paradox Between Integration and Perceived Discrimination Among American Muslims." *Political Psychology* 41(3): 587-606.
  - Come to class prepared to discuss in small groups the methods and findings in this article

W, Nov. 13: Group violence

Reading:

- Staub, Ervin. 1989. *The Roots of Evil: The Origins of Genocide and Other Group Violence*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Ch. 1 (pp. 3-8), Ch. 2 (pp. 13-22 and 28-32), Ch. 3 (pp. 38-50), Ch. 5 (pp. 73-78), ch. 6 (all), Ch. 10 (pp. 144-150 only).

## Week 12:

M, Nov. 18: Group violence, continued

Reading:

- Haslam, Alexander S., Stephen D. Reicher, and Jay J. Van Bavel. 2019. "Rethinking the Nature of Cruelty: The Role of Identity Leadership in the Stanford Prison Experiment." *American Psychologist* 74(7): 809-822.
- Watch "Obedience." Click the link on Canvas. Scroll down to and select "Academic video online." Write down answers to accompanying questions. You will not hand in your answers, but will use them during today's discussion.

W, Nov. 20: Bystanders and Altruists

Reading:

- Staub, Ervin. 1989. *The Roots of Evil: The Origins of Genocide and Other Group Violence*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Ch. 11 (pp. 151-158 and 165-167), Ch. 15 (pp. 241-245), Ch. 17 (pp. 264-266 and 268-273).
- Asch, Solomon. 1955. "Opinions and Social Pressure." *Scientific American* 193: 31 – 35.
- **SKIM:** Monroe, Kristen Renwick. 1991. "John Donne's People: Explaining Differences between Rational Actors and Altruists through Cognitive Frameworks," *Journal of Politics*, v51, n2, pp. 394-433.
- **\*\*Exam 2 posted today\*\***

## Week 13:

M, Nov. 25: Authoritarianism in Contemporary American Politics

Reading:

- Knuckey, Jonathan, and Komysa Hassan. 2022. "Authoritarianism and Support for Trump in the 2016 Presidential Election." *The Social Science Journal*. 59(1): 47-60
- Feldman, Stanley, and Christopher Weber. 2017. "Race and Authoritarianism: Convergent and Divergent Effects Among Whites and African Americans."
  - This file is a set of powerpoint slides from research in progress. What I want you to do as you look through it is see if you can put the graphs into your own words and use your explanations to summarize the authors' main arguments.
- Come to class prepared to discuss findings from both readings.

Tu, Nov. 26:

**\*\*Exam 2 due by 11:59pm\*\***

W, Nov. 27: NO CLASS

## Week 14:

M, Dec. 2: Make up day

W, Dec. 4: A visit from the Career Center

**\*\*Prospectus due\*\***

**Week 15:**

M, Dec. 9: Last day of class

Reading:

- Prospectuses from students in your peer review group.
- **Post your summary of the peer review feedback within 24 hours.**

**Mon, Dec. 16:** Final project due by 12pm