Instructor: Michael Meffert   Time: MWF 11:35-12:30
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Course Description

  The world that we have to deal with politically is out of reach, out of sight, out of mind. It has to be explored, reported, and imagined. […Man] is learning to see with his mind vast portions of the world that he could never see, touch, smell, hear, or remember. Gradually, he makes for himself a trustworthy picture inside his head of the world beyond his reach (p. 29).

  For the real environment is altogether too big, too complex, and too fleeting for direct acquaintance. We are not equipped to deal with so much subtlety, so much variety, so many permutations and combinations. And although we have to act in that environment, we have to reconstruct it on a simpler model before we can manage with it (p. 16).

<div align="center">Walter Lippmann, Public Opinion, 1922.</div>

  Citizens live in a social world, and they interact with their environment. This has important consequences on what they know and how they think, what information they use, how they make decisions, and how they interact with other people and groups. These questions – from a political perspective – will be addressed in the course. The field of social psychology will help to understand and explain political phenomena like political attitudes and behavior.

  The course is divided in three major sections. It begins with a systematic introduction to social psychological theories and research and a look at some examples of political applications. Guided by the cognitive information processing perspective, the specific topics covered here include such concepts as knowledge structures, attributions, perceptions, attitudes, and stereotypes. The second section will focus on political questions, in particular what people know about politics and how they make decisions (e.g. vote choice). Other important topics are media effects and dynamics in public opinion. The third section will cover three selected topics on social interaction, beginning with social influence and a special focus on obedience to authority. It is followed by group behavior and elite decision-making, and concludes with a look at altruism.

Prerequisites

POL 101 or 102 or 103 or 105; POL 201 or any other course satisfying the major's methodology requirement.

Required Readings

- Taylor, Shelley E., Letitia Anne Peplau, and David O. Sears. 1997. *Social Psychology*. 9th ed. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Course Reader.

  The textbook is available at the university bookstore and at Stony Books across 25A near the railroad station. It is not available at the university library. The course reader with additional journal articles and book chapters will be made available at the cost of copying in one of the first sessions and in the department office.

Examinations, Papers, Grading

The final grade of the course will be a weighted average based on the following elements:
- 4 quizzes: 30%
- 2 short papers: 40%
- 1 presentation: 15%
- participation: 15%

Without a major mid-term or final exam, this grading system encourages continuous work and participation.

Quizzes - The quizzes will be scheduled on short notice (one class in advance) and cover the material from the readings and lecture. They will ask for short definitions and short answers. There will be no makeup quizzes (see section on participation below). The three best quizzes will be counted for the final grade.

Papers - You will write two papers during the term. Each should have a length of about 5 typed, double-spaced pages. These papers should follow the usual formal requirements and include references for the sources you use (as footnotes, endnotes, or bibliography). Every use of material from other sources has to be properly identified (e.g. by quotation marks). Instances of plagiarism will automatically lead to a failure of the course. Possible paper topics include:
- Discuss Lippmann's statement (opening the syllabus) in terms of cognitive theories (first paper only).
- Apply one or more of the psychological theories to a recent political event (one paper only).
- A comparison/contrast of theories covered in class.
- Other paper options will be announced in class during the semester.

Once you have decided on a topic, it will be useful to discuss it during office hours or after class *before* you start writing it. The deadlines are 10/27 for the first paper and 12/12 for the second paper.

Presentation - You will choose one article or book chapter marked with an asterisk (*) in the syllabus (limit of one student each, on first-come first-served basis). You are expected to present a short summary of the reading in class and offer some critical remarks and/or discuss it in light of other concepts. You should raise questions for class discussion. The grade will be based on the quality and form of presentation.

Participation - You are expected to read and prepare the assigned readings before each class meeting in order to be able to understand and follow the lecture (which assumes your familiarity with the material) as well as to participate in class discussions. The grade will be based on your substantive contribution in class (comments and questions) but also on your attendance.

Your are expected to attend class regularly, and attendance will be assessed by an occasional roll call. Any absence from class requires notification before the class meeting (in person, by phone, or by e-mail). Otherwise, your participation grade will suffer, and more importantly, any missed quizzes will be counted as 0 points/failed. Unexpected emergencies like accidents will have to be documented in adequate written form.

Extra Credit - During the session, an opportunity to participate in political science department research projects might arise. You will be informed about these experiments or surveys in advance and your (voluntary) participation will be counted as extra credit.

Important Note - If you have a physical, psychological, medical, or learning disability that may impact on your ability to carry out assigned course work, I would urge that you contact the staff in the Disabled Student Services office (DSS), Room 133, Humanities (phone: 632-6748/TDD). DSS will review your concerns and determine, with you, what accommodations are necessary and appropriate. All information and documentation of disability is confidential.

COURSE SCHEDULE

The schedule is organized around weeks (with dates given in brackets). While a topic is assigned for each week, this schedule has preliminary character. Some topics will require more time, others less than a week. Consequently, the exact dates for each topic will change to some (but limited) degree during the semester.
Note: The numbers in square brackets refer to the subsequent list of lecture topics and readings.

INTRODUCTION

Week 1   (9/3-9/5)   Introduction in Theories and Methods in Social Psychology [1]

THE COGNITIVE APPROACH: KNOWLEDGE STRUCTURES, INFORMATION PROCESSING, AND ATTITUDES

Week 2   (9/8-9/12)   Inference, Schemas, and Heuristics [2]

Week 3   (9/15-9/19)   Attribution [3]

Week 4   (9/22-9/26)   Person Perception [4]

Week 5   (9/29-10/3)   Attitudes and Attitude Change [5]

Note: Rosh Hashanah (classes on Wed. 10/1 follow Thursday schedule; no classes 10/2-10/3)

Week 6   (10/6-10/10)   Attitudes and Attitude Change (cont.)

Week 7   (10/13-10/17)   Stereotypes (I): Racial Prejudice [6]

Week 8   (10/20-10/24)   Stereotypes (II): Gender [7]

POLITICAL APPLICATIONS: PUBLIC OPINION, MASS MEDIA, POLITICAL BEHAVIOR

Week 9   (10/27-10/31)   *First Paper Due (10/27)*

Political Socialization, Political Belief Systems, and Voting [8]

Week 10   (11/3-11/7)   Political Socialization, Political Belief Systems, and Voting (cont.)

Week 11   (11/10-11/14)   Mass Media Effects [9]

Week 12   (11/17-11/21)   Public Opinion [10]

SELECTED TOPICS ON SOCIAL INTERACTION

Week 13   (11/24-11/28)   Social Influence: Authority and Obedience [11]

Note: Thanksgiving (no classes on 11/27 & 11/28)

Week 14   (12/1-12/5)   Group Behavior/Elite Decision Making [12]

Week 15   (12/8-12/12)   *Second Paper Due (12/12)*

Altruism/Helping Behavior [13]

[Week 16   (12/15-12/22)   Final Examinations Period]

<div style="text-align: center">**LECTURE TOPICS AND READINGS**</div>

<div style="text-align: center">**INTRODUCTION**</div>

1) Introduction in Theories and Methods in Social Psychology
📖 *Social Psychology*: ch. 1, "Theories and Methods in Social Psychology." (pp. 2-27).

THE COGNITIVE APPROACH: KNOWLEDGE STRUCTURES, INFORMATION PROCESSING, AND ATTITUDES

2) Inference, Schemas, and Heuristics
📖 *Social Psychology*: ch.2, "Social Cognition: Understanding the Social World" (pp. 28-53).
📖 Lodge, Milton, and Ruth Hamill. 1986. "A Partisan Schema for Political Information Processing." *American Political Science Review* 80:505-519.

3) Attribution
📖 *Social Psychology*: ch. 3, "Attribution: Explaining Social Behavior" (pp. 54-81).
📖 *Iyengar, Shanto. 1989. "How Citizens Think about National Issues: A Matter of Responsibility." *American Journal of Political Science* 33:878-900.

4) Person Perception
📖 *Social Psychology*: ch. 4, "Person Perception: Forming Impressions of Others." (pp. 82-109).
📖 Miller, Arthur H., Martin P. Wattenberg, and Oksana Malanchuk. 1986. "Schematic Assessments of Presidential Candidates." *American Political Science Review* 80:521-540.

5) Attitudes and Attitude Change
📖 *Social Psychology*: ch. 6, "Attitudes and Attitude Change" (pp.138-173).
📖 Zaller, John, and Stanley Feldman. 1992. "A Simple Theory of the Survey Response: Answering Questions versus Revealing Preferences." *American Journal of Political Science* 36:579-616.

6) Stereotypes (I): Racial Prejudice
📖 *Social Psychology*: ch. 7, " Prejudice" (pp. 174-203).
📖 *McConahay, John B. 1986. "Modern Racism, Ambivalence, and the Modern Racism Scale." In *Prejudice, Discrimination, and Racism*, ed. John F. Dovidio and Samuel L. Gaertner. Orlando: Academic Press.
📖 Devine, Patricia G. 1989. "Stereotypes and Prejudice: Their Automatic and Controlled Components." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 56:5-18.
📖 *Hewstone, Miles. 1989. "Changing Stereotypes with Disconfirming Information." In *Stereotyping and Prejudice: Changing Conceptions*, ed. Daniel Bar-Tal, Carl F. Graumann, Arie W. Kruglanski, and Wolfgang Stroebe. New York: Springer Verlag.

7) Stereotypes (II): Gender
📖 *Social Psychology*: ch. 12, "Gender" (pp. 308-333).
📖 *Huddy, Leonie. 1994. "The Political Significance of Voters' Gender Stereotypes." In *Research in Micropolitics: New Directions in Political Psychology*, ed. Michael X. Delli Carpini, Leonie Huddy, and Robert Sapiro. Greenwich, CT: JAI Press.

POLITICAL APPLICATIONS: PUBLIC OPINION, MASS MEDIA, POLITICAL BEHAVIOR

8) Political Socialization, Political Belief Systems, and Voting

- *Social Psychology*: Section on "Political Socialization & Public Opinion and Voting" in ch. 17, "Social Psychology and Politics" (pp. 434-444).
- *Dalton, Russell J. 1996. "The Nature of Mass Beliefs" (pp. 15-39), "Partisanship and Electoral Behavior" (pp. 196-219), and "Attitudes and Electoral Behavior" (pp. 220-238). In *Citizen Politics: Public Opinion and Political Parties in Advanced Western Democracies*. 2nd. ed. Chatham, NJ: Chatham House.
- Lodge, Milton, and Patrick Stroh. 1993. "Inside the Mental Voting Booth: An Impression-Driven Process Model of Candidate Evaluation." In *Explorations in Political Psychology*, ed. Shanto Iyengar and William J. McGuire. Durham: Duke University Press. (pp. 225-263).

9) Mass Media Effects

- *Social Psychology*: Section on "Mass Media" in ch. 17, "Social Psychology and Politics" (pp. 444-454).
- *Social Psychology*: Section on "Media Violence" in ch. 14, "Aggression" (pp. 376-384).
- *Bennett, W. Lance. 1996. "The Public: Prisoners of the News?" In *News: The Politics of Illusion*. 3rd ed. White Plains, NY: Longman. (pp. 167-192).

10) Public Opinion

- *Noelle-Neumann, Elisabeth. 1991. "The Theory of Public Opinion: The Concept of the Spiral of Silence." In *Communication Yearbook 14*, ed. James A. Anderson. Newbury Park: Sage. (pp. 256-287).
- Zaller, John. 1993. "The Converse-McGuire Model of Attitude Change and the Gulf War Opinion Rally." *Political Communication* 10:369-388.
- Zaller, John. 1994. "Elite Leadership of Mass Opinion: New Evidence from the Gulf War." In *Taken By Storm: The Media, Public Opinion, and U.S. Foreign Policy in the Gulf War*, ed. W. L. Bennett and David L. Paletz. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. (pp. 186-209).

SELECTED TOPICS ON SOCIAL INTERACTION

11) Social Influence: Authority and Obedience

- *Social Psychology*: ch. 8, "Social Influence" (pp. 204-225).
- *Sabini, John P., and Maury Silver. 1993. "Destroying the Innocent with a Clear Conscience: A Sociopsychology of the Holocaust." In *Political Psychology: Classic and Contemporary Readings*, ed. Neil J. Kressel. New York: Paragon House. (pp. 192-217).
- *Kelman, Herbert C., and V. Lee Hamilton. 1993. "Sanctioned Massacres." In *Political Psychology: Classic and Contemporary Readings*, ed. Neil J. Kressel. New York: Paragon House. (pp. 232-240).

12) Group Behavior/Elite Decision Making

- *Social Psychology*: ch. 11, "Behavior in Groups" (pp. 278-307).
- *Social Psychology*: Section on "International Conflict" in ch. 17, "Social Psychology and Politics" (pp. 455-459).
- *Janis, Irving L. 1993. "Groupthink." In *Political Psychology: Classic and Contemporary Readings*, ed. Neil J. Kressel. New York: Paragon House. (pp. 360-366).
- *Jervis, Robert. 1993. "The Drunkard's Search." In *Explorations in Political Psychology*, ed. Shanto Iyengar and William J. McGuire. Durham: Duke University Press. (pp. 338-360).

13) Altruism/Helping Behavior

- *Social Psychology*: ch. 13, "Helping Behavior" (pp. 334-359).
- Monroe, Kristen R. 1994. "A Fat Lady in a Corset: Altruism and Social Theory." *American Journal of Political Science* 38:861-893.