

Political Psychology and Involvement

POLSCI W164A 2025

Course format: online

4 semester credits

Course Description

What can psychology tell us about why believe what they believe about current events, vote the way they do, or even perpetrate atrocities? This class explores the sources of public opinion and political behavior through the application of psychological theories about personality, cognition, social influence, and identity. The course focuses on both underlying psychological theories and concepts and their political implications. This class will largely focus on applications in United States politics and society, but I will include examples from other countries as well.

Prerequisites

There are no prior course requirements.

Course Learning Objectives

After successfully completing this course, you will be able to:

- Understand and apply multiple psychological theories of political behavior.
- Understand and apply multiple psychological theories of cognition.
- Understand how political elites, peers, and friends influence political behavior and attitudes.
- Understand theories of identity and their implications for political behavior and intergroup relations.

Instructor Information and Communication

Course Instructor

David Broockman

Graduate Student Instructors (GSIs)

While the instructor will interact with the whole class and will oversee all activities and grading, as well as being available to resolve any issues that may arise, the GSIs will be your main point of contact. Your

GSI's are responsible for assisting you directly with questions about assignments and course requirements. The GSI's will also facilitate ongoing discussion and interaction with you on major topics in each module.

- **See bCourses.**

Office Hours

The course instructor and GSI's will offer office hours via Zoom. These office hours allow for synchronous interaction with the instructor and GSI's and are a good opportunity to discuss your questions relevant to the course.

Use the link on bCourses to attend office hours and get the zoom link.

Course Mail

You can also contact your GSI and instructor using the bCourses emailing system, accessed via your Inbox (in global navigation on the left). You can also choose to have your bCourses mail forwarded as text (SMS) or to your personal email.

Make sure to check the Course Mail for messages from the instructor. You can access course email within bCourses by clicking on the Inbox link or choose to have your course mail forwarded to your personal email account or your phone.

We will try our best to reply to your messages within 24 hours (on weekdays). Please refrain from last-minute emails, as we cannot guarantee an immediate response. Do not expect an email response over the weekend. Please only write emails of a professional nature, and limit them to shorter questions which may be answered in a sentence or two. Broad questions should be reserved for office hours—and we encourage you to visit our virtual office hours via Zoom.

Course Help

You're not alone in this course; the instructor and GSI's are here to support you as you learn the material. It's expected that some aspects of this course will take time to grasp, and the best way to grasp challenging material is to ask questions.

You can reach out to the course staff in office hours, during live discussion sections, and/or via email.

Students with Disabilities

If you require course accommodations due to a physical, emotional, or learning disability, contact [UC Berkeley's Disabled Students' Program \(DSP\)](#). Notify the instructor and GSI through course email of the accommodations you would like to use. You must have a Letter of Accommodation on file with UC Berkeley to have accommodations made in the course.

UC Berkeley is committed to providing robust educational experiences for all learners. With this goal in mind, we have activated the ALLY tool for this course. You will now be able to download reading materials in a format that best fits your learning preference (i.e., PDF, HTML, EPUB, and MP3). For more information, visit the alternative formats link or watch the video entitled, "[Ally in bCourses](#)."

Course Materials and Technical Requirements

Textbook / Required Materials

All course readings and required materials will be provided within the bCourses platform.

Technical Requirements

This course is built on a Learning Management System (LMS) called Canvas (UC Berkeley's instance of Canvas is called bCourses). You'll need to meet these [computer specifications to participate within this online platform](#).

Technical Support

If you're having technical difficulties please alert one of the GSIs immediately. However, understand that neither the GSIs, nor the instructor can assist you with technical problems. You must call or email tech support to resolve any technical issues.

To contact tech support, click on the "Help" button on the bottom left of the global navigation menu in bCourses. Be sure to document all interactions (save emails and transaction numbers).

Learning Activities and Assignments

You're expected to fully participate in all the course activities described below.

All times listed are Pacific Time—please adjust for your time zone. If you prefer, you can [set your own time zone](#) to display throughout bCourses.

VERY IMPORTANT

You won't be able to access your course material until you read and make your pledge to Academic Integrity.

You are expected to fully participate in all the course activities described here.

- Read all assigned readings
- Watch and listen to the lecture presentations
- Read web-based announcements and postings assigned during the course
- Compose and post assigned responses to lectures and readings
- Complete all required assignments and project
- Complete the final exam

Modules

A module is a grouping of topics related to one area of study, typically with readings, lectures and various kinds of assignments. Each module contains a list of Learning Outcomes for the module. Your assignments reflect the learning activities to perform to reach those outcomes. For an at-a-glance view of due dates and projects, refer to the course Calendar within bCourses.

Reading Assignments

Each week, you will find the assigned reading materials posted in bCourses.

Lectures

Recorded lectures support your readings and assignments but also contain additional material that may be included in the exams. Each lecture has been broken into sections. You are expected to take notes while viewing the lectures as you would in a regular classroom. You may also choose to print a handout of the slides that are provided in PDF format. Due to the inclusion of numerous images, videos, and animations, many of the lectures are considerable in file size and may take some time to download. For those of you with limited bandwidth, we strongly encourage you to download the longer lectures before attempting to view them.

Discussion Forum Participation

During the 8-week course, you will participate in five group discussion assignments in which we ask you to write reflectively and critically about the discussion topic. Your posts and responses are considered your class participation and represent a unique opportunity for you to

exchange views with your group-mates, share experiences and resources, and ensure your understanding of the course material.

Discussion groups have been pre-assigned and include other members of your GSI section. When you navigate to a discussion forum, you will automatically be taken to your group's instance of that discussion and to your group's space within the course. When finished with the discussion, you will need to navigate from your group space back to the main course space in order to continue participating in other aspects of the course.

While the Discussion Forum assignments are asynchronous (not real time), you will be expected to make an initial posting by 11:59 pm Friday (PDT) and to respond to at least two or more other students' postings by 11:59 pm Monday; continued participation throughout the remainder of the week is highly encouraged. See the instructions within each discussion forum for further guidelines.

Assigned group discussion questions are designed for students to connect the lecture, videos and readings with one's understanding of materials. Usually, there are no right or wrong answers; however, quality responses include reasonable assumptions, detailed explanations, and real-life examples. While each discussion assignment will have its own directions and grading scheme please see the sample rubric below.

Table 1: Discussion Rubric Base

	Exemplary	Satisfactory	Needs Development
Quantity and Timeliness (15%)	Submits both their own post and peer responses on time.	Submits their own post by deadline, but does not comment on peer's posts.	Does not submit their own post by first discussion deadline
Spelling and mechanics (10%)	Responses are free of grammatical, spelling or punctuation errors.	Responses are largely free of grammatical, spelling or punctuation errors.	Responses contain numerous grammatical, spelling and/ or punctuation errors.
Demonstrates understanding	Post and responses include	Post and responses include cautious	Limited examination of

of applicability to personal perceptions (25%)	deep examination of learning and changes in your approach. They show an open, non-defensive ability to self-appraise, discussing challenges and areas for growth. Asks and attempts to answer difficult questions and could include other resources that extend the learning of the community.	examination of learning and approach, engaging in some self-disclosure and self-appraisal , but resists asking or answering the difficult questions about perceptions/positions and/or experiences.	your learnings. Little self-disclosure, minimal risk in connecting concepts from class to personal shifts in perspective. Self-disclosure tends to be superficial and factual, without self-reflection.
Generates learning within the community (25%)	Posts include open-ended questions that elicit responses and reflections from other learners, and responses build upon and integrate multiple views from other learners to take the discussion deeper.	Posts include open-ended questions that elicit responses and reflections from other learners, and responses build upon the ideas of other learners to take the discussion deeper.	Posts include closed-ended questions or do not attempt to elicit responses and reflections from other learners, and/or responses do not build upon the ideas of other learners to take the discussion deeper.

Paper

The paper will involve applying theories of psychology or behavior we learned in the class. The paper must be at least 9 pages double spaced and must apply at least three of the theories we learned in class. Specific assignment details will be distributed over bCourses.

Synchronous Office Hour Attendance

You'll be required to attend two office hour sessions (with either a GSI or the professor -- either counts). You must attend at least one of these sessions during the first half of the course (i.e., before the midterm)

Midterm Exam

Between weeks 4-5 you'll be required to take an open-book midterm exam covering the content we've covered in Modules 1-4. The timed exam will include short-answer questions, multiple choice, and essay questions. You will have 90 minutes to complete the exam.

The midterm exam will be on **Friday, July 18**. You can complete the exam any time that day

Final Exam (30%)

You will take a timed three-hour, open-book final exam. The second midterm exam will cover content from Modules 1-8, with 1/4th of the content from Modules 1-4 and 3/4th from Modules 5-8. The timed exam will include short-answer questions, multiple choice, and essay questions. There will be no make-up exam.

The final exam will be on Friday, August 15. You can complete the exam any time that day.

Grading

Your final course grade will be calculated as follows:

Table 2: Final Grade Percentages

Category	Percentage of Grade
Participation: Discussion Forum Assignments Check-Your-Understanding quizzes	15%
Annotated Reading Assignments	5%
Attendance at two synchronous GSI sessions at least one before the middle of the term)	5%
Midterm Exam	20%
Final Exam	25%
Paper	30%

It is important to note that not all components are graded online and included in the online course grade book. Because of this, the online course grade book will not display your overall course grade at any given time or your final grade. It should simply be used to assess your performance on the components that are included within it: the

discussions, written assignments and midterm exam. Your final letter grade will be mailed to you by the registrar's office.

I challenge you to go beyond the grade. Though you go to Berkeley and academic achievement is for most Cal students a fundamental part of their identity, this class has the potential to give you a hundred times more than what an "A" represents. You can, if you play this right, emerge as a much more effective and more satisfied person and leader than you are the day you begin this class.

Grading Scale

- A+: instructor discretion (approximately top 5% of class)
- A: 93-100
- A-: 90-92.99
- B+: 87-89.99
- B: 83-86.99
- B-: 80-82.99
- C+: 77-79.99
- C: 73-76.99
- C-: 70-72.99
- D+: 67-69.99
- D: 65-66.99
- F: 64.99 and below

Strategies for Successful Learning

View the [Center for Teaching and Learning's page on \(meta\)cognitive strategies for student learning](#) to help you effectively study the material.

Take Care of Yourself

Do your best to maintain a healthy lifestyle this semester by eating well, exercising, getting enough sleep, and taking time to recharge your mental health. Taking time to care for yourself, and avoiding academic burnout, will help you achieve your academic, professional, and personal goals.

If you start to feel overwhelmed, be kind to yourself and reach out for support. Remember that seeking help is a courageous thing to do—for yourself and for those who care about you.

[Support Resources](#) include emotional, physical, safety, social, and other basic wellbeing resources for students. Academic resources can be found at the [Student Learning Center](#) and [English Language Resource](#) sites. Berkeley's Office of Emergency Management has resources to [prepare for emergencies](#).

Course Policies

Promptness

Homework assignments and discussion forum postings all have specific final due dates and times. You will not receive full credit if assignments are submitted after the indicated due date.

Further, each online activity must be submitted through the course website by the due date.

Email submissions will not be accepted. Students who wait until the final hours prior to a submission deadline risk having problems with their ISP, hardware, software, or various other site access difficulties. Therefore, it is advisable to submit assignments and tests through bCourses early. Lateness on assignments will incur a penalty of 10% per day without PRIOR consent from the instructor.

Honor Code

The student community at UC Berkeley has adopted the following Honor Code: "As a member of the UC Berkeley community, I act with honesty, integrity, and respect for others." The expectation is that you will adhere to this code.

Regrades

You may request your GSI re-grade an assignment if you think your grade is unfair. You must wait 24 hours before requesting a re-grade. However, note that a re-grade may result in a lower grade than your original grade. After your GSI re-grades an assignment, you may appeal the re-grade to the instructor.

Collaboration and Independence

Reviewing lecture and reading materials and studying for exams can be enjoyable and enriching things to do with fellow students. This is recommended. However, unless otherwise instructed, homework

assignments and the online exam are to be completed independently and materials submitted as homework should be the result of one's own independent work.

Collegiality

During our discussions, challenges must be posed professionally and respectfully. Discriminatory, intimidating, and otherwise intolerant language will not be permitted and will be addressed immediately.

Cheating

A good lifetime strategy is always to act in such a way that no one would ever imagine that you would even consider cheating. Anyone caught cheating on a quiz or exam in this course will receive a failing grade in the course and will also be reported to the University Center for Student Conduct. The expectation is that you will be honest in the taking of exams.

Plagiarism

All written work submitted in this course, except for acknowledged quotations, is to be expressed in your own words. It should also be constructed upon a plan of your own devising. The Berkeley Campus Code of Student Conduct defines plagiarism as "the use of intellectual material produced by another person without acknowledging its source" and stipulates that plagiarism includes:

1. Copying from the writings or works of others into one's academic assignment without attribution, or submitting such work as if it were one's own;
2. Using the views, opinions, or insights of another without acknowledgment; or
3. Paraphrasing the characteristic or original phraseology, metaphor, or other literary device of another without proper attribution.

Unacknowledged use of the words or ideas of others from any medium (print, digital, or otherwise) is plagiarism. The submission of plagiarized work will, under University rules, render the offending student subject to an F grade for the work in question or for the whole course, and will also make him/her liable for referral to the Student Judicial Affairs Office for further disciplinary action. Educate yourself about the campus code of conduct in relation to plagiarism. Ignorance

is not an excuse. If you feel overwhelmed about an assignment, speak to the professor or your GSI. DO NOT PLAGIARIZE!

Academic Integrity

You're a member of an academic community at one of the world's leading research universities. Berkeley creates knowledge that has a lasting impact in the world of ideas and on the lives of others; such knowledge can come from an undergraduate paper as well as the lab of an internationally known professor. One of the most important values of an academic community is the balance between the free flow of ideas and the respect for the intellectual property of others.

Scholars and students always use proper citations in papers; professors may not circulate or publish student papers without the writer's permission; and students may not circulate or post materials (handouts, exams, syllabi—any class materials) from their classes without the written permission of the instructor.

Any test, paper or report submitted by you and that bears your name is presumed to be your own original work that has not previously been submitted for credit in another course unless you obtain prior written approval to do so from your instructor. In all of your assignments, including your homework or drafts of papers, you may use words or ideas written by other individuals in publications, websites, or other sources, but only with proper attribution. If you're unclear about the expectations for completing an assignment or taking a test or examination, be sure to seek clarification from your instructor or GSI beforehand. For additional information on plagiarism and how to avoid it, read the UC Berkeley Library Citation Page, Plagiarism Section.

As a member of the campus community, you're expected to demonstrate integrity in all of your academic endeavors and will be evaluated on your own merits. The consequences of cheating and academic dishonesty—including a formal discipline file, possible loss of future internship, scholarship, or employment opportunities, and denial of admission to graduate school—are simply not worth it. Read more about Berkeley's Honor Code.

Incomplete Course Grade

Students who have substantially completed the course but for serious extenuating circumstances, are unable to complete the final exam, may request an Incomplete grade. This request must be submitted in writing to the GSI and instructor. You must provide verifiable documentation for the seriousness of the extenuating circumstances.

Refer to the Office of the Registrar's website for more information on the university's policy on [Incomplete Grades](#).

End of Course Evaluation

UC Berkeley is committed to improving our online courses and instruction. Before your course ends, please take a few minutes to participate in the course evaluation. We are interested in your online learning experience, and your feedback will help us plan for the future and make improvements. The evaluation does not request any personal information, and your responses will remain strictly confidential. Information about the course evaluation will be made available in bCourses.

Course Outline

Below is a weekly course schedule. All readings, lectures, and assignments are provided in bCourses for the assigned week. Check bCourses for specific assignment due dates.

Week 1: Do we make rational choices? Is self-interest all we care about? (June 23 - 27)

Lectures

- 1.1 Course Introduction
- 1.2 Rational Choice Theory
- 1.3 System 1 vs. System 2 thinking
- 1.4 Implication for politics: Retrospective voting
- 1.5 Prospect Theory
- 1.6 Revisiting retrospective voting
- 1.7 Retrospective voting through the lens of Prospect Theory

Readings

- Kahneman, Daniel. Thinking Fast and Slow. Chapter 1.
- Healy, Andrew and Gabriel S. Lenz. 2014. "Substituting the End for the Whole: Why Voters Respond Primarily to the Election-Year Economy." American Journal of Political Science, 58: 31-47.

Assignments

- Discussion Forum

Week 2: Theories of Behavior: Social and dispositional (June 28 – July 4)

Lectures

- 2.1 Personality and the Big 5
- 2.2 Genetic/biological origins of behavior
- 2.3 Authoritarianism
- 2.4 Social theories
- 2.5 Classical conditioning & symbolic politics

Readings & Videos

- Haidt, J. 2012. The Righteous Mind: Why Good People are Divided by Politics and Religion. Vintage. (Chapters 7 and 8)
- Jennings, M. Kent, Laura Stoker, and Jake Bowers. "Politics Across Generations: Family Transmission Re-examined." Journal of Politics. 2009.
- Watch: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FMnhyGozLyE>

Assignments

- Discussion Forum

Week 3: Theories of Cognition: How do we think? (July 5 – 11)

Lectures

- 3.1 Memory-based versus on-line processing
- 3.2 Heuristics
- 3.3 Schemas
- 3.4 Attribution Errors
- 3.5 Motivated Reasoning

Readings & Videos

- Watch: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sZwfNs1pqG0>
- Haidt, J. 2012. The Righteous Mind: Why Good People are Divided by Politics and Religion. Vintage. (Chapters 2-4)

Assignments

- Discussion Forum

Week 4: Social influence: How do other people influence us? (July 12 – July 18)

Lectures

- 4.1 Descriptive and prescriptive norms
- 4.2 Groupthink
- 4.3 Obedience to authority

Readings & Videos

- Gerber, Alan S., Donald P. Green, and Christopher W. Larimer. "Social pressure and voter turnout: Evidence from a large-scale field experiment." American political Science review (2008): 33-48.
- Hansen, Morten T. 2013. "How John F. Kennedy Changed Decision Making for Us All." Harvard Business Review. <https://hbr.org/2013/11/how-john-f-kennedy-changed-decision-making>
- Watch: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mOUEC5YXV8U>

Assignments

- Midterm

Week 5: Media and elite influence: How do political elites influence us? (July 19 – 25)

Lectures

- 5.1 Receive, Accept, Sample Model, part 1
- 5.2 Receive, Accept, Sample Model, part 2
- 5.2b Receive, Accept, Sample Model, part 3
- 5.3 What is "ideology"?
- 5.4 Why people consume media, and why that matters
- 5.5 Priming and agenda setting

Videos

Watch: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KAG37Kw1-aw>

- No readings or assignments this week - enjoy a break after the midterm!

Week 6: Theories of identity: What are identities and why do we have them? (July 26 – August 1)

Lectures

- 6.1 Social identity theory
- 6.2 Social identity and the collective action problem
- 6.3 When does intergroup conflict arise? Realistic Group Conflict Theory
- 6.4 Political elites can activate and alleviate intergroup conflict

Readings & Videos

- Watch: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XwMnLpfSpgw>
- Craig, Maureen A. and Richeson, Jennifer A. 2014. "On the Precipice of a 'Majority-Minority' America: Perceived Status Threat From the Racial Demographic Shift Affects White Americans' Political Ideology." *Psychological Science*, 25(6), 1189-1197.

Assignments

- Discussion Forum
- Paper

Week 7: Theories of identity: What are identities and why do we have them? (August 2 – 8)

Lectures

- 7.1 Outgroup threat
- 7.2 Difficulties in measuring prejudice and bias
- 7.3 Measuring prejudice and bias: The IAT and implicit attitudes
- 7.4 Common conceptualizations and measurement of anti-Black racial bias
- 7.5 New directions: White identity

Readings & Podcasts

- Listen:
<https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/white-identity-politics-with-ashley-jardina/id1367503431?i=1000446856969>
- Hutchings, Vincent L. 2009. "Change or More of the Same? Evaluating Racial Attitudes in the Obama Era." *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 73(5), 917-942.

Week 8: Applications: How can what we've learned help us understand politics? (August 9 – 15)

Lectures

- 8.1 Why are we so polarized? Partisanship as a social identity
- 8.2 How can we reduce prejudice and division?
- 8.3 Why do people seem to vote against their economic self-interest?

- 8.4 Why are populists winning so many elections?
- 8.5 Why do everyday people commit evil acts?
- 8.6 Summing up: Life lessons

Readings

- Mason, Lilliana. 2015. "'I Disrespectfully Agree': The Differential Effects of Partisan Sorting on Social and Issue Polarization." *American Journal of Political Science* 59:128–45.
- Jefferson, Hakeem. "Respectability and the Politics of Punishment among Black Americans." Under review.

Assignments

- Discussion forum
- Final Exam (August 15)