

Political Science 390: Our Political Minds
Spring 2014
M/W 2:40-4:10 PM
Levan 502

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Office Hours: Mondays 10:00-11:00 AM, Wednesdays 4:30-5:30 PM, Thursdays, 4:00-5:00 PM, or by appointment

Course Overview and Objectives

This capstone seminar is designed to encourage you to reflect upon your time at DePaul and to consider your life after graduation as a thoughtful and informed citizen. In your various Political Science courses, you have encountered a wide range of information about politics, theories for understanding that information, and different perspectives about the world and politics. Along the way, you have encountered ideas and viewpoints with which you agreed and disagreed. This course is designed to challenge you to reflect upon how you (and those around you) think about politics and form opinions about political issues. Drawing on readings from political science, psychology, and behavioral economics, we will examine how and why we think about politics as we do. In particular, we will consider two themes:

1. *What unites us:* In what ways do we all tend to see things in the same way, aspire to the same goals, and fall prey to the same mistakes or pitfalls of reasoning about politics?
2. *What divides us:* Reasonable people disagree about political values and what should be done to achieve them. Individuals also develop different styles of thinking and responding to events. These different value systems and styles of thinking animate political conflict between adherents of rival ideologies.

By the time you complete this course, you should develop a better understanding of your own style of thinking about politics, your political values, and how these are similar to or different from that of others. You will also develop a deeper understanding of the biases and value judgments that affect your political judgments. Finally, you will be in a better position to consider how we can participate effectively in a democratic society. As with all your Political Science courses, the aims of this course will be:

1. To increase your substantive knowledge about an important subfield of political science—political psychology.
2. To continue the process of developing your ability to think critically about important questions related to political science—including how to assess competing arguments, to draw logical inferences from specific arguments, to use evidence to assess the accuracy of theoretical arguments.
3. To develop your ability to express complex ideas and information effectively in writing, verbally, and visually.
4. To continue the process of preparation for a life of democratic citizenship.

Readings:

There are two required books for this course and a number of articles available via Electronic Reserve. Be warned that the books are fairly lengthy, and some readings contain statistical analyses. This is nothing that you cannot handle, but you will need to be prepared to read some sections carefully. The books are:

- Jonathan Haidt. 2013. *The Righteous Mind: Why Good People Are Divided by Politics and Religion*.
- Daniel Kahneman. 2011. *Thinking, Fast and Slow*. New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux.

Grading:

Your grade will be determined by your performance on two major writing projects, a series of quizzes, and your efforts to collect and enter survey data that will be shared among the class for the analytical paper project:

- In-class quizzes & activities 10%
- Curriculum Assessment Project 40%
 - Curriculum Reflection 15%
 - Survey Reflection 25%
- Survey Collection & Entry 10%
- Analytical Paper 40%
 - Question & Hypothesis 5%
 - Final Paper 20%
 - Presentation 15%

In-Class Activities & Quizzes: We will have occasional quizzes and in-class individual or group activities designed to assess your understanding of assigned readings and concepts discussed in recent class meetings. The quizzes will be a mixture of short-answer and multiple-choice questions, and will last no more than 10 minutes. They will be administered promptly at the start of class, meaning that arriving late will reduce your time to complete the quiz. There are no make-up quizzes; I will excuse missed quizzes with documentation from the Dean of Students Office.

Curriculum Assessment Project: In keeping with the nature of the Capstone Seminar, each of you will complete a quarter-long paper reflecting on your educational experience at DePaul and how your own political values have interacted with your experiences to shape your development. You will write the paper in two stages to allow for reflection and the development of your insights.

Curriculum Reflection: Compile a list of 6 salient experiences or moments during your time at DePaul that caused you to experience a strong intellectual and/or emotional reaction to what was being said, debated, presented, etc. This can be a positive or negative reaction: agreement, disagreement, anger, joy, sadness, elation, disgust, etc. A mixture of different types of reactions is preferable. These can be specific things that your professors or classmates said during class, readings, on-campus events or presentations, student organization events, study groups, coffee shop debates with classmates, etc. These criteria are intentionally vague, but it should have a definite connection to your DePaul/undergraduate experience (i.e., you cannot include an argument you had with a family member or an old high school friend, etc).

The only specific requirement is that ***three of these events should be from Liberal Studies courses at DePaul.*** Here is a link to the learning domains: <http://liberalstudies.depaul.edu/About/LearningDomains/index.asp>.

Reflect on just what your reaction was and why it happened. For each episode, write a 1-2 paragraph description of what happened, and why (in hindsight) you reacted as you did. The focus should be on the substance of what was said and why you reacted as you did. Organize these reactions according to their substance. In deciding how to organize them, think about the common themes underlying them: which were positive and which were negative, what was the topic of each, etc? Conclude by writing a summary paragraph describing the organization of these ten events. This reflection should be somewhere between 3-5 pages long.

Survey Reflection: On April 23, you will receive back the survey that you completed during the first week of the class, along with a key to the responses. Your second task is to write a reflection and analysis of your own survey results, given what you have learned during the course. Describe the patterns that appear in your results. What do your survey results suggest about your moral and political values? What do they indicate? What are the patterns that appear, and are they strong or weak? In short, what are your political and moral values, according to these

survey results? Finally, how well do your political/moral values relate to your expressed political and policy opinions and preferences? Do they conform to the relationship that the readings predict, or are they anomalous? Why?

Reflecting back on your undergraduate experience (the six episodes you described) and your survey results and reflection, consider the following question(s):

How have your own political and moral values influenced your undergraduate experience? Looking back on those experiences, do you find that you were more likely to accept or be happy about ideas or claims that accorded with your values and to reject or be angered by views that you did not agree with?

Considering what you have learned in this course, did you find yourself engaging in the sort of reasoning our readings describe as you look back? Did you seek out courses, events, and experiences that were “worldview-affirming” or did you also seek out ideas and experiences that challenged your preconceptions?

This paper should be about 5-7 pages long.

Survey Collection & Entry: Each student will be responsible for administering a brief political survey to people outside of this class (classmates, relatives, friends, etc.), entering the results of those surveys into a Microsoft Excel file (I will provide a template on D2L), and uploading that file to D2L by the assigned date. Grades will be assigned on a pass/fail basis. You will earn the full 10 points for collecting and entering the information properly on time. Failure to do so correctly and on time will result in a grade penalty. Because the entire class will rely upon the data you help to collect, it is of the essence that you take this assignment seriously and complete it fully and on time.

Analytical Paper: This paper requires you to conduct an analysis of the survey data collected by the class. In order to do so, you will first develop a research question and hypothesis about the relationship between two or more of the political values and other individual characteristics being measured in the survey that is informed by our course material or other Political Science courses that you have taken. Then you will submit a series of charts that present the analysis of the data before writing the paper. Finally, you will write the paper describing your research question, your hypothesis, your analysis, and your findings.

Question and Hypothesis: You must submit a brief (one page) description of the research question that you are asking (it should start with “who”, “how”, or “what”), the specific hypothesis that you wish to examine, and the theory from which it derives. A hypothesis is a specific, observable prediction that derives logically from a theory (or causal explanation). The hypothesis must be a statement that you can verify as being true or false based on your analysis of the data. To give a (brief, non-related) example:

- Question: How does the weather affect voter turnout?
- Theory: The decision to vote is the result of a cost-benefit analysis. People vote when the benefits that they accrue from voting outweigh the costs of voting. Anything that makes voting more costly or difficult without also increasing its benefit will make people less likely to vote.
- Hypothesis: Voter turnout will be lower in areas where it is raining on Election Day.

Final Paper: This final part of the assignment requires you to write a paper of 5-7 pages of text (i.e., not including the charts themselves) describing your question, hypothesis, analysis, findings, and conclusions, in the form of a social scientific research report. Your paper must include the charts and a bibliography of the works that you consulted. This paper requires that you cite at least 3 additional sources beyond assigned course material.

Presentation: During the final week, students will present the results of the findings from their final paper to the class. Presentations should be 8-10 minutes long, accompanied by a visual presentation (i.e., slides) using Powerpoint or a pdf viewer. The presentation should guide the class through your question and hypothesis, a description of your analysis of the survey data, your findings, and conclusions.

For the final paper and presentation, you will rely on skills that you (should) have developed during your Liberal Studies educations (e.g., LSP 120/121) to develop a series of graphs or charts that display the main findings of your analysis. These should include common graphs such as bar charts, X-Y scatterplots, linear regression trendlines, and pie charts. The emphasis in designing the charts should be on the effective and honest communication of results to a viewer/reader.

Final Grades: The **minimum** grade needed to earn each letter grade is as follows: A (94.0), A- (90.0), B+ (87.0), B (84.0), B- (80.0), C+ (77.0), C (74.0), C- (70.0), D+ (67.0), D (60.0), F (59.9 and below).

Note that you must receive a grade of C- or higher in order to fulfill the Capstone requirement and graduate!

A Final Note about Grading and Expectations: This is a 300-level university course. It is expected that students enter this course with a strong background in Political Science, including some understanding of political socialization and/or public opinion, and/or a willingness to work independently to obtain that knowledge. In addition, I expect a high standard for classroom discussion, decorum, preparation, and graded work as a matter of course. As this will be a small, seminar-oriented course, regular and informed preparation is considered a necessary component of this course.

Policies and Procedures

Instructor Contact: I hold regular weekly office hours at the times listed at the top of the first page of the syllabus. You are strongly encouraged to drop by at any time during these hours; you do not need to make an appointment or let me know in advance. If you cannot drop by during office hours, I am happy to schedule another time that works for both of us. I hope that you will consider coming by at least once during the quarter; I enjoy talking to students and want to help each of you do well in this course. You are especially urged to contact me *as soon as possible* if you have questions or concerns about course material, your performance, my expectations, etc, or if other problems are arising that are affecting your ability to do the coursework. However, I also encourage students to drop by just to discuss interests or topics related to the course.

Excused Absences: If a serious illness or personal emergency causes you to miss an extended amount of class or to be unable to complete assignments on time, you should notify the Dean of Students Office and ask for them to send documentation to me. The Dean of Students Office is located in Student Center Suite 307 (LPC) or DePaul Center Suite 11001 (Loop). Understand that I will not grant extensions or exceptions to course policies without documentation from the Dean of Students.

Desire2Learn: I use D2L as a means to post announcements readings, notes, and other course materials (including a back-up copy of this syllabus). You will also use D2L for submitting memos, papers, and reviews. You should plan on accessing D2L regularly (at least once between each class meeting). Because I will occasionally use D2L to send mass emails to the class, you should make sure that the system has your correct email address and that you check it regularly.

Disabilities: Students who need accommodations for a disability should contact me privately as early as possible during the quarter. I take these concerns seriously and will do what I can within reason and university policy to help. All discussions will remain confidential. In order to receive the most appropriate accommodations, you must also contact either the Plus Program (for LD, AD/HD) or the Office for Students with Disabilities (for all other disabilities) at 773-325-1677 (Student Center #370).

Academic Integrity: In academia, ideas are everything, and so presenting the words or ideas of others as your own is theft. Cheating, plagiarism, or other forms of academic dishonesty will result *at a minimum* in a grade of 0 on the assignment and a report to the Academic Affairs Office. **Academic dishonesty on any assignment worth 20% or more of the final grade will result in a failing grade for the course, regardless of student performance**

on other assignments! Any work that you submit must be your own, and you must cite the sources of ideas or words that are not your own. If you have doubt about what constitutes a violation, you should consult the *Code of Student Responsibility* in the Student Handbook and/or consult me. Ignorance is never an excuse. Be aware of the following: making slight changes to the wording of another person's work without citing it is plagiarism; rules about plagiarism apply both to published and unpublished works; and submitting work that you have prepared for another course at DePaul or elsewhere in whole or part is cheating.

Classroom Decorum: As one of many students enrolled in this course, you have a shared responsibility to foster a constructive learning environment and to refrain from behavior that would hinder the ability of those around you to learn or for me to teach. At a minimum, you should:

- Arrive on time, stay until the end, and wait until class is over to put away materials
- Turn off the ringer on your mobile phone and put it away for the duration of class
- Refrain from eating food, talking, reading the paper, etc.
- Act respectfully towards your classmates
- Putting your head down on your desk, sleeping, etc.
- Avoid doing anything else that would distract your classmates or me.

*****You may not use laptops, tablets, and mobile phones during class*****

This policy is in place for two reasons. First, study after study shows that “multi-tasking” substantially reduces cognitive performance. In other words, you are not capable of thinking or learning properly if you are distracted. Second, and more importantly, the classroom is a shared learning environment in which each student plays a crucial role. Anything that detracts from that environment harms it for everyone else in the class—and makes it less likely that we will have a productive class meeting.

I will lower your final course grade by up to two “fractions” (i.e., from a B+ to B-) if you fail to observe these guidelines.

Late Assignments: Due dates for assignments are firm, and they are there to provide a fair environment for all students. Unless noted otherwise, late work will be penalized by a minimum of 10 points (i.e., one letter grade) for each 24 hours that it is late. I will not accept any work submitted more than 72 hours after the deadline without prior approval.

Student Responsibility: It is your responsibility as a student to be aware of and understand all requirements, due dates, policies, and announcements that I provide in this syllabus, announce in class or via email, or post on D2L—whether you were in attendance on a given day or not. It is also your responsibility to catch up on missed days; I will not provide one-on-one reviews for students missing class. **Understand that all course requirements, policies, and due dates listed in this syllabus apply to you universally whether I specifically mention it to you or not!** A copy of the syllabus is posted on D2L, and copies of any materials or links that we used in class are either on D2L (after class) or available from me. The full citation for each reading is provided in this syllabus so that you can find the reading directly if the Electronic Reserve system is not working. Finally, please do not wait until the last minute to deal with any concerns or problems with the course. Talk to me early!

Schedule of Classes

March 30 (Mon): Course Introduction

What Unites Us

April 1 (Wed): How we think about politics (and everything else)

- Kahneman, Chapters 1-3 (pp. 19-49)

April 6 (Mon): Associations & Political Judgments

- Kahneman, Chapters 4-6 (pp. 50-78)

April 8 (Wed): Career Discussion

- NOTE: Ed Childs from the Career Center will be visiting class. Because I want to see a good turnout for his visit, I will grade attendance on that date as an in-class quiz (you either get 0 or 100).
- **Curriculum Reflection due at start of class**

April 13 (Mon): How We Form Judgments

- Kahneman, Chapters 7-9 (pp. 79-105)

April 15 (Wed): Biases & Heuristics

- Kahneman, Chapters 10-15 (pp. 109-165)

April 20 (Mon): Biases & Causal Reasoning

- Kahneman, Chapters 16-18 (pp. 166-195)

April 22 (Wed): Economic Decision Making

- Kahneman, Chapters 25-29 (pp. 269-321)
- **Collected surveys must be entered into Excel and uploaded to D2L by start of class**

What Divides (and Unites?) Us

April 27 (Mon): Moral & Political Judgments Moral & Political Reasoning

- Haidt, Chapters 1-4

April 29 (Wed): Moral Foundations & Political Ideology

- Haidt, Chapters 5-7

May 4 (Mon): Moral Foundations & Political Conflict

- Haidt, Chapters 8

May 6 (Wed): Group Behavior & Political Conflict

- Haidt, Chapters 9-11
- **Analytical Paper Question & Hypothesis due at start of class**

May 11 (Mon): Conservatism vs. Authoritarianism

- Bob Altemeyer. 1996. *The Authoritarian Specter*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press. Chapter 1 (pp. 6-49).

May 13 (Wed): Threat, Conflict, and Political Attitudes

- Marc J. Hetherington & Jonathan D. Weiler. 2009. *Authoritarianism and Polarization in American Politics*. New York: Cambridge University Press. Chapter 4 (pp. 63-84).

May 18 (Mon): Intolerance

- Jarret T. Crawford & Eneda Xhambazi. 2015. "Predicting Political Biases Against the Occupy Wall Street and Tea Party Movements." *Political Psychology* 36(1): 111-21.

May 20 (Wed): Identity and Inclusion

- Elizabeth Theiss-Morse. 2009. *Who Counts as an American? The Boundaries of National Identity*. New York: Cambridge University Press. Chapter 6 (pp. 163-185).
- **Survey Reflection Papers due at the start of class!**

May 25 (Mon): No class—Memorial Day

May 27 (Wed): Disagreeing Constructively?

- Haidt, Chapter 12 (pp. 274-313)
- John R. Hibbing & Elizabeth Theiss-Morse. 2002. *Stealth Democracy*. New York: Cambridge University Press. Chapter 6 (pp. 129-59).

June 1 (Mon): Research Presentations

June 3 (Wed): Research Presentations

June 5 (Friday): Analytical Papers due at Noon