

## *Political Psychology & Presidential Elections*

"Just because you do not take an interest in politics doesn't mean politics won't take an interest in you."  
Pericles (495 - 429 BC)

### **Catalog Description**

In a presidential election year, this team-taught Honors course will focus on the relatively new, hybrid discipline of political psychology and its contributions to understanding, analyzing, and predicting the race for the presidency of the United States. Come learn about the psychological origins of political behavior, including leadership, voting, media, nationalism, race/ethnicity, terrorism, and international security. Jointly taught by a political scientist and a clinical psychologist. (We offer an optional two-day field trip to Washington, DC as well.)

### **Faculty Information**

Professor: John C. Norcross, PhD, Distinguished Professor of Psychology  
Contact numbers: 570.941.7638 (office); john.norcross@scranton.edu (e-mail)  
Web page: [www.scranton.edu/faculty/norcross/](http://www.scranton.edu/faculty/norcross/)  
Office hours: Monday 8:30 – 10:00, Tuesday 10:00 – 11:30, and by appointment  
Office location: 224 Alumni Memorial Hall

Professor: Leonard W. Champney, PhD, Professor of Political Science  
Contact numbers: 570.941.7438 (office); leonard.champney@scranton.edu (e-mail)  
Office hours: MW 10:00 – 10:45, TR 1:00 – 3:00, and by appointment  
Office location: 408 O'Hara Hall

### **Required Texts**

Abramson, Aldrich, & Rohde. (2012). *Change and continuity in the 2008 and 2010 elections*. Los Angeles: CQ Press. **(AAR)**

Cottom, Masters, Preston, & Dietz. (2016). *Introduction to political psychology* (third edition). New York: Routledge. **(CMPD)**

Students are also responsible for class handouts, video clips, and maintaining a working knowledge (from mainstream media) of the 2016 presidential campaign and election.

### **Student Learning Objectives (SLOs)**

Students will develop and demonstrate:

- ◆ *knowledge of the hybrid discipline of political psychology* as evidenced by acceptable performance on multiple quizzes and a final examination, preparation of reaction papers, and class participation
- ◆ *knowledge of presidential elections in the United States* as demonstrated by acceptable preparation of reaction papers, performance on multiple quizzes and a final examination, and class participation
- ◆ *speaking and leadership skills* in a seminar as evidenced by contributions to seminar discussions and co-facilitation of one class meeting
- ◆ *writing skills* as evidenced by competent preparation of multiple expository papers

## Evaluation Process

Your grade in this course will be determined by your performance on weekly quizzes, a final examination, six reaction papers, and class participation. Grades will be maintained on D2L.

There will be 12 weekly quizzes (10 points apiece) and one final examination (30 points). The weekly quizzes/reading rewards will be given at the beginning of class; these quizzes will cover reading assignments due for that class period. Make-up quizzes are not available; missed quizzes become dropped quizzes. The final exam will assess both your knowledge of material covered in the last two weeks of class and your mastery of broad themes throughout the course.

Six papers, accorded 20 points apiece, are also requested. Instructions for preparing the papers are attached. Collaboration and consultation with other students are not permitted in preparing these papers. You may consult with the Writing Center and the professor(s), but otherwise the papers must represent your original, independent work.

Finally, your class participation is welcomed and expected. That will be enhanced by your preparation of discussion questions and informal co-facilitation of one class meeting (see Paper 5, below). The quality of your class participation will be determined jointly by the professors and the student.

Putting it all together:

Best 10 of 12 quizzes (10 each)	100 ( $\approx$ 33% of grade)
Final examination	30 ( $\approx$ 10% of grade)
Six papers/projects (20 each)	120 ( $\approx$ 40% of grade)
Class participation	<u>50 (<math>\approx</math> 17% of grade)</u>
	300 possible points

## Course Policies

This course will be conducted as a seminar. We will meet from approximately 4:00 to 5:20, take a five-minute break, and then return to meet from 5:25 to 6:40

Regular class attendance is essential for a comprehensive understanding of the subject matter. You are responsible for all announcements made in class. If absent from a class, you are responsible for the material covered.

Please refer to the University's *Academic Code of Honesty*. Plagiarism, dishonest quiz/exam behavior, or collaboration on individual papers will result in a grade of F for the course. As stated in the *Student Handbook*: Failures in the area of academic honesty strike at the heart of what is essential to the University community – the pursuit of truth. Sharing either multiple-choice questions or discussion questions with students in advance will constitute dishonest behavior.

To receive appropriate accommodations, students with disabilities must register with the Center for Teaching and Learning Excellence and provide current health documentation.

You are encouraged to participate fully and civilly in class. At the same time, we will not tolerate disruptive or offensive behavior that is antithetical to our university ideals or that is contrary to a conducive learning environment. Civility is a fragile construct that each of us must cherish and protect.

Turn off your cell phone while in class. You may not text, tweet, or venture online during class. Violation of this policy will be punished – one that does not infringe on your 8th amendment rights.

## Course Calendar and Assignments

<i>Dates</i>	<i>Topics</i>	<i>Reading</i>	<i>Assignment</i>
Aug 23	Welcome; What is Political Psychology?		
Aug 30	The 2008 Presidential Election	AAR Chs. 1, 2 3	Quiz #1
Sep 6	Factors Shaping Voter Behaviors	AAR Chs. 4 & 5	Quiz #2 Paper 1
Sep 13	Factors Shaping Voter Behaviors (cont)	AAR Chs. 6, 7, 8	Quiz #3
Sep 20	The 2008 & 2010 Congressional Elections	AAR Chs. 9 & 10	Quiz #4
Sep 27	The 2008 & 2010 Congressional Elections	AAR Chs. 11 & 12	Quiz #5 Paper 2
Oct 4	Personality & Politics	CMPD Chs. 1 & 2	Quiz #6
Oct 11	Fall Break; no class		
Oct 18	Psychology of Identity & Groups	CMDP Ch. 3 & 4	Quiz #7 Paper 3
Oct 25	Political Leaders	CMDP Ch. 5	Quiz #8
Nov 1	Politics & Voting	CMDP Ch. 6	Quiz #9
Nov 8	The Media and Politics	CMDP Ch. 7	Quiz #10 Paper 4
Nov 15	Race/Ethnicity and Politics	CMDP Ch. 8	Quiz #11
Nov 22	Nationalism and Politics	CMDP Ch. 10	Quiz #12
Nov 29	Closing; Student Choice (Terrorism or International Security)	CMDP TBA	Paper 6  Final exam

## GUIDELINES FOR PAPERS

Kindly type all papers double-spaced with conventional fonts and one-inch margins. Please record your word count at the end of each paper and place your name on the *back* of the last page (to permit “blind” grading). Papers are due at the beginning of the designated class period. Avoid cover sheets and extra blank pages (save trees!).

### **Paper 1. Construct Multiple-Choice Questions** (Norcross)

You will contribute to this course and your fellow students by creating engaging multiple-choice questions for the weekly quizzes. You will be assigned one chapter from a course textbook and will write 6 multiple-choice questions. Expect to devote two or three hours to the task. Three of those questions can be definitional or knowledge questions; the other three questions should ask students to apply the material in the chapter, as opposed to regurgitating memorized material. Select core principles in the chapters and then construct the quiz questions as applications of that knowledge. At the top of each item, indicate the chapter number for that item. Construct four response options for each item, bolding or asterisking the correct option.

Herewith are several guidelines for writing multiple-choice items:

- ◆ Ensure each question/item covers meaningful content.
- ◆ Avoid “complex” multiple-choice items, which present a number of conditions in the item stem (e.g., a & b, but not c).
- ◆ Make the items appear neat and easy to follow.
- ◆ Use novel material to test higher-level learning; paraphrase textbook language in a quiz item to avoid testing for simple recall.
- ◆ Feature the central idea in the stem instead of in the response choices.
- ◆ Word the stem positively; avoid negatives such as NOT or EXCEPT. If negative words are used, use the word cautiously and place the word in capitals and boldface.
- ◆ Avoid giving clues to the correct answer, such as always, never, and completely; grammatical inconsistencies that cue the test-taker to the correct choice; or absurd options.
- ◆ Vary the location of the right answer (e.g., not mostly c as correct answer).
- ◆ Avoid all-of-the-above and none-of-the-above.
- ◆ Make all distractors plausible.
- ◆ Keep things simple, concentrating on what you want to assess.

Kindly email your six questions in a single Word document to [john.norcross@scranton.edu](mailto:john.norcross@scranton.edu). Congratulate yourself for assisting future students in recalling and, most importantly, applying the valuable knowledge they acquired in this seminar.

### **Paper 2. Predict Results of the 2016 Presidential Election** (Champney)

In this paper, you will clearly identify the (1) winner of the presidential election, (2) the % of popular votes cast nationwide for both major-party candidates, and (3) the precise number of electoral votes earned by the victorious candidate. Of the handful of contested states discussed in class, identify two states the Democrat will win and two states the Republican will win. Explain why for each of those four states. The target word count is between 600 and 1,000.

### **Paper 3. Analyze and Synthesize Paper I** (Champney)

In this paper, you will select Chapter 2, 3, or 4 of CMPD. Use the principles in that chapter as a

framework for *analyzing* ANY ONE of the Chapters in AAR. The target word count is between 800 and 1,000.

#### **Paper 4. Analyze and Synthesize Paper II (Champney)**

Select Chapter 5, 6, or 7 of CMPD. Use the principles in that chapter as a framework for *analyzing* ANY one of the Chapters in AAR, but do not select the same AAR chapter you employed in Paper 3. The target word count is between 800 and 1,000.

#### **Paper 5. Prepare Discussion Questions and Co-facilitate a Class (due date will vary for each student; Norcross)**

Read the chapters for the assigned class and prepare five stimulating discussion questions. Bring several copies of those questions to class; your professors will arrive a few minutes before class to review and refine those questions with you.

The professors will lead the class and, at several junctures, they will request that you ask one of your prepared discussion questions. When co-facilitating:

- ◆ learn to hold back on your own thoughts, instead privileging your peers' responses.
- ◆ provide a context and introduction for the question; rather than simply asking the question, give a couple of sentences explaining it or placing it in the context of the assigned readings.
- ◆ ask one question at a time; avoid asking multiple-part questions.
- ◆ prompt and encourage fellow students to elaborate on their responses. E.g., "What makes you say so?" "Could you elaborate on your reasons?"
- ◆ involve all students in the class discussions; learn to draw out contributions and go around the seminar room at least once and ask everyone for a focused response.
- ◆ pause before expecting or requesting responses; we all need time to formulate answers to questions of complexity; offer encouragement, maintain eye contact, and let the question stand for 15 seconds.
- ◆ reward and praise students for contributing (a simple "thank you" typically suffices); the reward is contingent on a genuine effort to contribute, not on providing a "correct" or super answer.
- ◆ concern yourself not with getting through your entire list of questions; focus instead on facilitating a lively, quality discussion.
- ◆ your co-facilitation will be assessed on the following grading criteria: Facilitation skill; preparation; organization; interest; engagement; initiative; quality of the five prepared questions
- ◆ spend a few minutes with your professors immediately after class to assess your performance on these criteria, discuss the co-facilitation experience, and receive written feedback on your performance.

#### **Paper 6. Summarize What You Learned and Gained in This Seminar (Norcross)**

In this paper, you will encapsulate, in between 600 and 1,000 words, what you learned and gained by virtue of completing this seminar. We seek discerning and balanced analyses, not puff pieces designed to flatter the professors. To be sure, highlight your most impactful learnings and note how the content of the course will apply to your academic career and to you as a citizen. Also mention what you learned about yourself (including any misconceptions corrected) and what you learned from the process of the seminar (as opposed to the course content; that is; what you learned as well as how you learned). In the final paragraph or two, please identify which topics you wish we had spent more time on and those you wish we spent less time on.