

Psychology and International Relations

Wesleyan University

GOVT 332, Fall 2019

FISK 121

Tuesdays and Thursdays 2:50pm - 4:10pm

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This course will assess the role that individual and social psychology plays in international relations and foreign policy decision-making. No knowledge of either IR or psychology is required for participation. Many conceptions of international relations ignore the role that psychology plays in shaping international outcomes. This class will establish a baseline understanding of these common conceptions in IR and will then explore the challenges and promise of incorporating psychological variables into our understanding of the causes of international conflict and cooperation.

There will be between 50 and 100 pages of reading per class. All readings will be on the course moodle. The syllabus may be altered as we go along. Please check the course website for the most recent syllabus and readings.

Grades and Requirements:

In-class Midterm Exam: 25%

Final Exam: 25%

Literature Review for Final Project: 10%

Final Research Proposal: 25%

Participation: 15%

Literature Review for Research Proposals

Each student will select a topic of interest that will motivate their research proposal. All students will submit a literature review on their topic by November 1st. It should be roughly 3 - 5 pages in length and should lay out what is known and unknown about this topic.

Final Paper

Final papers will take the form of a research proposal or an in-depth case study exploring how themes we have talked about in class play a role in a particular foreign policy outcome. Papers should be 7 - 10 pages in length. Papers will be on the last day of class.

Participation

Participation during class is important for a number of reasons. First, it allows you to demonstrate that you are engaged with the course and are processing its contents. Second, it helps you develop the important skill of feeling comfortable offering your opinion in front of many others. Third, it provides you practice at making verbal arguments in constructive and respectful ways. Class participation will be evaluated not solely on the amount that you talk but also on the quality of your comments and on the degree to which you respond to the comments of others.

Participation will also take the form of comments posted to our course Moodle at least one hour prior to class. These posts can include a brief summary of the readings, but should mainly focus on questions you had about the reading and analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of the arguments presented by the authors.

Class Conduct:

A few guidelines to ensure that class time will run smoothly and will adhere to basic notions of respect for others.

- Arrive on time so as not to disturb others and to ensure you don't miss the comments of others.
- No laptops. No texting, surfing, making or answering calls, or any other form of electronic disturbance during class. Turn off all cell phones.

Course Outline

I. Introduction and Baseline: What are We Going to Learn?

1. Tuesday, September 3rd: Course Introduction and The News

What questions will we be asking? How will we go about answering them?
What is the latest IR news?

2. *Thursday, September 5th: Our Baseline: Rationality and Bounded Rationality in IR and Beyond*

- Mercer, Jonathan (2005), “Rationality and Psychology in International Politics,” *International Organization*, 59(1): 77 - 106.
- Fearon, James *Rationalist Explanations for War*
- Rathbun, Brian, et al. (2017), “Homo Diplomaticus: Mixed Method Evidence of Variation in Strategic Rationality,” *International Organization*, pp. 33 - 60.

II. Individuals and Methods

3. *Tuesday, September 10th: How do you study this?*

How do you measure perceptions? Can we learn about elites from studying non-elites?

- Levitt, Steven D. and John A. List, “What do Laboratory Experiments Measuring Social Preferences Reveal about the Real World,” *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 21(2): 153 - 174.
- Mintz, A., et al. (2006). “Can We Generalize from Student Experiments to the Real World in Political Science, Military Affairs, and International Relations?,” *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 50(5) : 757-776.
- Greenstein, F. I. (1992). “Can Personality and Politics be Studied Systemically?,” *Political Psychology*, 13(1): 105 - 128

4. *Thursday, September 12th: Leader Psychology*

Under what condition might leader psychology matter?

- Byman, D.L. and K.M. Pollack (2001). “Let us now praise great men: bringing the statesman back in,” *International Security*, 25(4): 107 - 146.
- Gallagher, Maryann and Susan Allen, (2013) “Presidential Personality: Not Just a Nuisance,” *Foreign Policy Analysis*, Vol. 10, No. 1, pp. 1 - 21
- Dyson SB. 2006. Personality and foreign policy: Tony Blair’s Iraq decisions. *Foreign Policy Analysis*: 289 - 306

5. *Tuesday, September 17th: More on Personality*

Moral Foundations Theory and Perceptions

- Kertzer, Joshua, et al. “Moral Support: How Moral Values Shape Foreign Policy Attitudes,” *Journal of Politics*, vol. 76, no. 3, pp. 825 - 840.
- Gerber AS, Huber GA, Doherty D, Dowling CM, Ha SE. 2010. Personality and political attitudes: Relationships across issue domains and political contexts. *American Political Science Review* 104: 111-133.

6. Thursday, September 19th: Emotions at the Individual Level

How do emotions affect decision making? Is emotionality bad for diplomacy?

- Crawford, N (2000) The passion of world politics: Propositions on emotion and emotional relationships, *International Security*, 24(4): 116 - 156.
- Moons, Wesley and Diane Mackie (2007), “Thinking Straight While Seeing Red: The Influence of Anger on Information Processing,” *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, pp. 1 - 14.
- Small, Deborah and Jennifer Lerner, “Emotional Policy: Personal Sadness and Anger Shape Judgments about a Welfare Case,” *Political Psychology*, vol. 29, no. 2, pp. 149 - 168.

7. Tuesday, September 24th: Cases

What evidence is there for emotional mechanisms?

- Sasley, B. E. (2010). “Affective attachments and foreign policy: Israel and the 1993 Oslo Accords,” *European Journal of International Relations*, pp. 687 - 709.
- Hall T, Yarhi-Milo K. 2012. “The personal touch: Leaders’ impressions, costly signaling, and assessments of sincerity in international affairs.” *International Studies Quarterly*, 56: 560-573
- Holmes, Marcus and Keren Yarhi-Milo. (2017). “The Psychological Logic of Peace Summits: How Empathy Shapes Outcomes of Diplomatic Negotiations,” *International Studies Quarterly* 61: 107 - 122.

8. Thursday, September 26th: Cognitive Biases

How might fundamental attribution bias, overconfidence and others affect foreign policy?

- Daniel Kahneman (2011), *Thinking, Fast and Slow*, (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, New York), Chs. 11, 22, 25, 34

- Daniel Kahneman and Jonathan Renshon, “Why Hawks Win,” *Foreign Policy* (January / February 2007).
- Rapport, Aaron (2013), “The Long and Short of It: Cognitive Constraints on Leaders’ Assessments of Postwar Iraq,” *International Security*, 37 (3): 133-171.

9. Tuesday, October 1st: Framing

Where do our political frames come from? Historical analogy and conceptual metaphors

- Khong, Y.F. (1992) *Analogies at War: Korea, Munich, Dien Bien Phu, and the Vietnam Decision of 1965*, Princeton University Press. pp. 2 - 46.
- Shimko, K.L. (1994). Metaphors and foreign policy decision making. *Political Psychology*, 15 (4): 655 - 671.
- Hehir, Aidan (2006). “Impact of Analogical Reasoning on US Foreign Policy Towards Kosovo,” *Journal of Peace Research*, 43 (1): 67 - 81

10. Thursday, October 3rd: Prospect Theory

What is prospect theory and how does it apply to IR? What are some cases in which it might apply?

- McDermott, Rose. (1992), Prospect Theory in International Relations: The Iranian Hostage Rescue Mission. *Political Psychology*, 13(2): 237 - 263. pp. 174 - 187.
- Kahneman, Daniel, “Prospect Theory” in *Thinking, Fast and Slow*, (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, New York).
- Farnham, B. (1992). “Roosevelt and the Munich Crisis: Insights from Prospect Theory,” *Political Psychology*, 13(2): 205 - 235.

11. Tuesday, October 8th: Evolutionary and Biological Explanations

- Lopez, A.C., et al. (2011). States in Mind: Evolution, Coalitional Psychology and International Politics. *International Security*, 36(2): 48 - 83.
- Johnson, D. et al. (2006). “Overconfidence in Wargames: Experimental Evidence on Expectations, Aggression, Gender and Testosterone,” *Proceedings of the Royal Society B: Biological Science*, 273(1600): 2513 - 2520.

- McDermott, Rose, et al. (2008) “On the Evolutionary Origin of Prospect Theory Preferences,” *Journal of Politics*, 70(2): 335 - 350.

12. *Thursday, October 10th*: No Class.

13. *Tuesday, October 15th*: **In-Class Midterm Exam**

14. *Thursday, October 17th*: In-Class Research Project Work

III. What Factors Affect Group Decision-Making?

15. *Thursday, October 24th*: *Groupthink and The Effects of History on Group Attitudes*

- Irving Janis (1983), *Groupthink: Psychological Studies of Policy Decisions and Fiascoes*, (Houghton Mifflin: Boston), Ch. 1 and pp. 174 - 187.
- Irving Janis (1983), *Groupthink: Psychological Studies of Policy Decisions and Fiascoes*, (Houghton Mifflin: Boston), Ch. 8.
- Michael Roskin, “From Pearl Harbor to Vietnam: Shifting Generational Paradigms and Foreign Policy,” *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. 89, No. 3, Autumn, 1974, pp. 563-576.

16. *Tuesday, October 29th*: *Groupthink and the Iraq War*

- PBS Frontline, “Bush’s War,” Part I.

17. *Thursday, October 31st*: *Social Identity Theory and Minimal Group Paradigms*
Literature Review Due Before Class Today

- Tajfel, Henry, *Social Identity and Intergroup Relations*, pp. 1 - 36, 139 - 162.
- Gries, Peter Hays, (2005) “Social Psychology and the Identity-Conflict Debate: Is the “China Threat” Inevitable?” *European Journal of International Relations* 11(2): 235 - 265.

18. *Tuesday, November 5th: Status in International Politics*

- Larson, D. and Shevchenko, A. (2010). Status seekers: Chinese and Russian responses to US Primacy. *International Security*, 34(4): 63 - 95.
- Barnhart, J. (2016) "Status Competition and Territorial Aggression: Evidence from the Scramble for Africa," *Security Studies*.

19. *Thursday, November 7th: Group-Based Emotions*

- Mackie, et al. "Intergroup Emotions: Explaining Offensive Action Tendencies in an Intergroup Context," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, Vol. 79, No. 4, pp. 263 - 275.
- Lerner, J. et al. "Effects of Fear and Anger on perceived risks of terrorism: A National Field Experiment," *Psychological Science*, vol. 14, no. 2, pp. 144 - 150.
- Hall TH. 2015. Emotional diplomacy: Official emotion on the international stage. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press

20. *Tuesday, November 12th: Revenge and Humiliation*

- Lowenheim, Oded and Gadi Heimann, (2008) "Revenge in International Politics," *Security Studies*, vol. 17, no. 4, pp.
- Ginges and Atran, "Humiliation and Inertia Effect: Implications for Understanding Violence and Compromise in Intractable Intergroup Conflict," *Journal of Cognition and Culture*,, pp. 281 - 294.
- Liberman, Peter, "Retributive Support for International Punishment and Torture," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, , vol. 57, no. 2, pp. 285 - 306.

21. *Thursday, November 14th: Policy and The Psychology of Deterrence and Commitment*

- Powers, Kathleen and Daniel Altman, "The Puzzle of Coercion Failure: How Psychology Explains Resistance to Threats," *Working Paper*.
- Lebow, Richard Ned and Janice Gross Stein. (1989) "Rational Deterrence Theory: I Think, Therefore I Deter," *World Politics*, 41(2): 208 - 224.

- Renshon, Jonathan, et al. (2017) “Emotions and the Micro-Foundations of Commitment Problems,” *International Organization* 71: 189 - 218.

22. *Tuesday, November 19th: How Does IR Affect Psychology*

23. *Thursday, November 21st: Conclusions and Review.*

Tuesday, November 26th and Thursday, November 28th: No Class.

25. *Tuesday, December 3rd: Project Presentations*

26. *Thursday, December 5th: Project Presentations*