

Pol 3767
Political Psychology of Elite Behavior
Anderson Hall 230
Spring Term 2007
9:45-11 TTh

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Office Hours M 10-11
Th 11:30-12:30
And by appointment

In this course, we will examine the intersections of politics, personality and social psychology as it applies to the analysis of elite behavior, with particular reference to the U.S. We will explore the usefulness of psychological theories for analyzing political decision-making, particularly in the area of presidential foreign policy decisions. We will investigate the role of the individual, of group process, of political and social cognition, and of the political context in elite decision-making. We will address the following questions, so as you do the assigned reading, keep them in the front of your mind:

**Personality and Political Leadership:* Do the personalities of political leaders affect the type and quality of their decision-making? Are certain types of leaders more dangerous than others, what is the nature of this danger, and under what circumstances does this danger emerge? Does our particular electoral process and political context systematically select certain types of people for leadership positions? If so, with what consequences?

**Group Processes and Elite Decision-making:* What group processes can interfere with good decision-making, and how can leaders adapt decision-making processes to minimize these negative effects? What is the role of a leader's personality/character in shaping and guiding group decision-making? Can group processes enhance good judgment in U.S. foreign-policy decision making?

**Political Cognition and Elite Decision-Making:* What role do individual differences in social and political perception play in elite decision-making? How do decision-makers employ historical analogies and broader metaphors when they decide the fate of nations? Do metaphors enlighten or mislead, or both? What is the importance of principles of information processing and cognition? What is the importance of "ordinary" cognitive biases in human information processing relative to what we might call "motivated" biases in information

processing?

**Leadership Applications:* How does one take a specific example of decision-making and apply concepts from individual and group psychology to that particular set of decisions? Are there any patterns that we can discern across multiple situations and multiple decision makers? If so, do these patterns lend credence to some theories of decision making while undermining others?

We will address these general questions about the role of psychological theory within the context of specific political decisions—mostly foreign policy decisions--and issues. Our case studies will include the Bay of Pigs fiasco, the Cuban Missile Crisis, the Vietnam War decision making, Watergate, the Iranian Hostage Crisis, the Iran-Contra Affair, the Gulf War, and the War in Iraq.

The required texts include: James David Barber, *The Presidential Character*; Irving L. Janis, *Groupthink*; Yuen Foong Khong, *Analogies at War*; Steve A. Yetiv, *Explaining Foreign Policy: U.S. Decision-Making and the Persian Gulf War*; David Patrick Houghton, *U.S. Foreign Policy and the Iran Hostage Crisis* (available as an e-book from Cambridge University Press); Alex Roberto Hybel & Justin Matthew Kaufman, *The Bush Administrations and Saddam Hussein: Deciding on Conflict*; Bob Woodward, *State of Denial*.

The other readings on the syllabus—by Buchanan, McDermott, Levy and ‘t Hart—were ordered through the copyright permissions center and should also be available in the bookstore.

Grades will be based on two tests and three essays. Each examination counts approximately 25% of the final grade, and the essays count approximately 15% each toward the final grade. The remaining 5% of the grade will come from participation in section discussions and short in-class assignments.

Each essay should be no more than 6 double spaced pages with 1 inch margins and 12 cpi. You are assigned to write three of seven essays, whose due dates are noted below. You must write one and only one of the first three essays (essay #1 or essay #2 or essay #3). You should then write any two of the remaining four essays. Your essays should be analytical and not merely descriptive. We have read these materials, and do not need to be reminded of what we have read already. Do not summarize the authors’ arguments, but rather integrate, analyze, and critique them. Be sure to write a rough draft and then edit it carefully. Asking another person to read it and provide feedback about the clarity of your argument would be very helpful to you before crafting the final draft to be handed in. Be prepared to discuss the essay topics on the date they are due, whether or not you have chosen to write about that particular topic. On the dates that essays are due, we will break out into smaller discussion groups. Class participation in these discussions will enhance your comprehension of the class materials, and it can also improve your final grade.

Grades As Defined by University

Grades describe levels of achievement. University legislation prescribes the grades and symbols that will be reported on the student's transcript.

A-F Grade Base

- A** Achievement **outstanding** relative to the level necessary to meet course requirements
- B** Achievement **significantly above** the level necessary to meet course requirements
- C** Achievement **meeting the basic course requirements** in every respect
- D** Achievement **worthy of credit** even though it does not fully meet the basic course requirements in every respect
- F** Performance **failing to meet the basic course requirements**

Scholastic Honesty & Plagiarism

Academic integrity is essential to a positive teaching and learning environment. All students enrolled in University courses are expected to complete coursework responsibilities with fairness and honesty. Failure to do so by seeking unfair advantage over others or misrepresenting someone else's work as your own, can result in disciplinary action. The University Student Conduct Code defines scholastic dishonesty as follows:

Scholastic Dishonesty: Scholastic dishonesty means plagiarizing; cheating on assignments or examinations; engaging in unauthorized collaboration on academic work; taking, acquiring, or using test materials without faculty permission; submitting false or incomplete records of academic achievement; acting alone or in cooperation with another to falsify records or to obtain dishonestly grades, honors, awards, or professional endorsement; altering forging , or misusing a University academic record; or fabricating or falsifying data, research procedures, or data analysis.

Each of the assigned essays must represent your own work. You are required to submit your essay in both hard copy and electronic versions. We will be checking the electronic copies for evidence of plagiarism or inappropriate use of materials from the web.

In this course, a student responsible for scholastic dishonesty can be assigned a penalty up to and including an "F" or "N" for the course. If you have any questions regarding the expectations for a specific assignment or exam, ask.

Course Outline

Tuesday January 16-Thursday January 18 Overview & Introduction

Tuesday January 23 Personality and Presidential Style

Read: Barber, chs. 1-4, 11 pp. 1-122, 341-385.

Thursday January 25 Individual Leadership & Group Process: The Bay of Pigs Fiasco

Read: Janis, *Groupthink*, chs. 1-2, pp. 2-47.

Video: “Groupthink”

Tuesday January 30 Government Learning & The Cuban Missile Crisis

Read: Janis, chs. 6, and 8, pp. 14-47, 174-197.

Video: “At the Brink”

Thursday February 1 Discussion Sections

Essay #1: Janis relies on the concept of groupthink to help us understand the dynamics of White House decision-making in the cases of the Bay of Pigs and the Cuban missile crisis. Barber presents an analysis of JFK’s personal and political character to help us understand his decision-making strengths and weaknesses. Which of the two theoretical approaches did you find more appealing, and why? What are the strengths and weaknesses of each approach, and on balance, which way of thinking about the Bay of Pigs and the Cuban missile crisis do you think was more helpful to analysts? Can the two theories be integrated?

Tuesday February 6-Thursday February 8 Cognition in Foreign Policy Decision-Making

Read: Khong, *Analogies at War*, chs. 1-4, pp. 3-96.

Tuesday February 13 Analogical Reasoning & Vietnam Decision-Making

Read: Khong, chs. 5-7, pp. 97-205.

Tuesday night pizza and video “The Fog of War” (voluntary attendance)

Thursday February 15 Groupthink & Vietnam Decision-Making

Read: Janis, ch. 5, pp. 97-130.

Video: "LBJ & Vietnam"

Tuesday February 20 More On Analogical Reasoning & Vietnam

Read: Khong, chs. 8-9, pp. 209-264.

Thursday February 22 Discussion Sections

Essay #2: Compare and contrast Janis's use of groupthink, Khong's use of analogical reasoning, and Barber's analysis of character and style to explain LBJ's Vietnam decision making. Which of these theoretical approaches seems to be most helpful to us as analysts in understanding this set of decisions, and why? Can these theories be synthesized?

Tuesday February 27 Nixon & Watergate

Read: 1. Barber, ch. 5, pp. 123-168. 2. Janis, chs. 9-11, pp. 198-276.

Video: Watergate footage from "Nixon"

Thursday March 1 Watergate (continued)

Thursday night pizza and video "Dick" (voluntary attendance)

Tuesday March 6 Discussion Sections

Essay # 3: Examining all four case studies to date--Bay of Pigs, Cuban Missile Crisis, Vietnam War and Watergate--evaluate the relative theoretical power of Janis's theory of groupthink, Barber's analysis of presidential character and Khong's analysis of analogical reasoning in helping to explain presidential decision-making. Does one theory "work better" more generally or does it depend on the particular case under investigation? Do the theories contradict or support each other?

Thursday March 8 Midterm Examination

Monday March 12-Friday March 16 Spring Break

Tuesday March 20 Carter's Character & Style

Read: 1. Buchanan, *The Citizen's Presidency*, ch. 6, pp. 137-187. 2. Barber, ch. 13, pp. 398-455.

Thursday March 22 Carter's Demise: Iranian Hostage Crisis

Read: Houghton, *U.S. Foreign Policy and the Iran Hostage Crisis*, chs. 1-3

Tuesday March 27: More on Iranian Hostage Crisis

Read: Houghton, chs. 4-8.

Thursday March 29 Prospect Theory & The Iranian Hostage Crisis Decision-Making

Read: 1. Jack S. Levy, "Prospect Theory and International Relations," *Political Psychology* vol. 13, 1992, pp. 283-310. 2. Rose McDermott, *Risk-Taking in International Politics*, ch. 3, pp. 45-76.

Tuesday April 3 Discussion Sections

Essay #4: *Evaluate and compare* Houghton's and McDermott's explanations of the Carter Administration's decision-making during the Iranian hostage crisis. Assess the strengths and weaknesses of McDermott's application of prospect theory to the decisions that were taken with regard to the hostage crisis.

Thursday April 5 RR's Non-Demise: The Iran-Contra Affair

Read: Paul 't Hart, *Groupthink in Government*, ch. 14, pp. 215-269. Review Buchanan, *The Citizen's Presidency*, ch. 6, pp. 137-187

Tuesday April 10 The First President Bush and the Gulf War

Read: Steve A. Yetiv, *Explaining Foreign Policy: U.S. Decision-Making and the Persian Gulf War*, chs. 1-6.

Video: "To the Brink of War"

Thursday April 12 Discussion Sections

Essay #5: *Evaluate* 'T Hart's explanation of why the Reagan Administration made the

decision to trade arms for hostages. Contrast his explanation with 1) a prospect theory explanation, and 2) any one additional theoretical explanation introduced this semester in this class.

Tuesday April 17 More on the Gulf War

Read: Yetiv, chs. 7-11.

Thursday April 19: Discussion Sections

Essay #6: Yetiv argues that several different models contribute significantly to our understanding of how the U.S. decided to start the Gulf War in 1991. He argues that no one model provides the best explanation. This approach differs considerably from that adopted by Janis on groupthink, Barber on character, and Khong on cognition and analogical reasoning. In your essay, do two things. One, compare and evaluate the eclectic approach favored by Yetiv with the single-theory approach favored by the other authors. (E.g., what is gained or lost by the combinatorial approach versus the single-theory approach.) Two, IF you had to select one theory to explore in greater depth to explain the Gulf War decision making, which one would you select, and why?

Tuesday April 24 The Bush Administrations & Iraq

Read: Alex Roberto Hybel & Justin Matthew Kaufman, *The Bush Administrations and Saddam Hussein: Deciding on Conflict*, first half

Tuesday night pizza and video “Rumsfeld’s War” (10-26-04) and “The Dark Side” (6-20-06) (voluntary attendance)

Thursday April 26 The Bushes & Iraq (contd.)

Read: Hybel & Kaufman, second half.

Tuesday May 1 Discussion Sections

Essay #7: Compare and contrast the decision-making processes of Father Bush and Son Bush with regard to Iraq. What are the major similarities and differences in their decision-making processes, and what explains them?

Thursday May 3: Review

Read: Woodward, *State of Denial*, before the final exam.

Final Exam: Take-Home Essay Due on Saturday, May 12, 8 a.m.