

**Syllabus, Spring 2008**  
**PLSI 465 Reason, Passion, and Political Behavior**  
**San Francisco State University**

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### **Course Description**

This is a course on how people think and behave politically. In it we will examine two approaches to the topic. One assumes that most of our behavior is based on reasonable judgments made through some sort of calculation (e.g., cost/benefit). The other assumes that most of our actions are not so thoroughly considered, but are instead responses based in large part on feelings. We might call this dichotomy a contrast between reason and passion, or a question of the heart versus the mind. We undoubtedly employ both in our approach to politics. But which do we use when? And how do our tendencies in that regard impact our judgment about political things and people? Further, what are the implications for democratic process? And, finally, what about the normative question: How should citizens judge their political options?

### **Goals and Objectives**

At the conclusion of the course, you should

1. Know the basic history of how political scientists have studied and understood political attitudes.
2. Understand Rational Actor Theory and its application to political behavior.
3. Understand some prominent models of cognition and what they imply about political attitudes and behavior.
4. Appreciate how theories of democracy are affected by our assumptions about citizens and the bases of their political attitudes and behavior.

### **Course Requirements**

*Prerequisites:* You should have a basic understanding of the branches of the U.S. government and their respective roles. An introductory class in American politics is preferred but not required.

*Attendance and participation:* You are expected to attend class, complete the readings before class, and participate in discussions. A portion of your grade will be based on these factors. An attendance sheet will be circulated at each meeting; it is your responsibility to sign it. You are allowed three absences without penalty. Beginning with the fourth absence, you will lose two of the ten attendance/participation points for each absence. If you cannot make it to a class, then you should get lecture notes from a classmate.

*Research paper:* You will write a paper on a topic of your choosing within the material covered in this course. It should be eight to ten pages in length and include references to at least eight sources from outside the class readings. In the paper you should display a grasp of the material as well as an ability to critically discuss it. I encourage you to contact me and discuss your paper as you are working on it. A hard copy of the paper is due by Wednesday, April 16<sup>th</sup>, at 4:00 p.m. You may not submit your paper via email. Late papers will be marked down one grade step (e.g., from a B to a B-) for each calendar day they are late. Please read the statement on plagiarism at the end of this syllabus; if you have any questions, ask.

*Midterm and Final exam:* The exams will require you to demonstrate knowledge of the course material covered in lectures, discussions, and the readings. You will write the midterm during class time. It will contain a series of questions to which you will reply in a paragraph or two. The final exam is a take-home exam that you will write and hand in by Monday, May 19<sup>th</sup>, at noon. It will require you to synthesize information from the entire course. Note these dates. If you plan to travel this spring, then please plan accordingly. A conflict with your travel schedule is not a valid excuse for missing an exam. Makeup exams will be given only in cases of true emergencies.

*Grading:* Grades for this course will be calculated with no curve; one student's grade will not influence another student's chances. Grades are based on:

Class attendance and participation	10%
Paper	30%
Midterm exam	30%
Final exam	30%

Course grades are assigned in the following way:

94 – 100 = A	80 – 82 = B-	67 – 69 = D+
90 – 93 = A-	77 – 79 = C+	63 – 66 = D
87 – 89 = B+	73 – 76 = C	60 – 62 = D-
83 – 86 = B	70 – 72 = C-	0 – 59 = F

### **Required texts**

Neuman, W. Russell, George E. Marcus, Ann N. Crigler, and Michael MacKuen (eds.). 2007. *The Affect Effect: Dynamics of Emotion in Political Thinking and Behavior*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. ISBN: 9780226574424

Marcus, George E., W. Russell Neuman, and Michael MacKuen. 2000. *Affective Intelligence and Political Judgment*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. ISBN: 0226504697

Arthur Lupia, Samuel L. Popkin, and Mathew D. McCubbins (eds.). 2000. *Elements of Reason: Cognition, Choice and the Bounds of Rationality*. New York: Cambridge University Press. ISBN: 0521653320

Additional required readings are available through the course web page.

### **Other Considerations**

Please review the 2007 – 2008 *San Francisco State University Bulletin's* "General Policies and Procedures" section (pp. 81 – 90) for university policy regarding drops, withdrawals, incompletes, etc. If you have a physical, psychological, medical, or learning disability that may impact on your ability to carry out assigned course work, I urge you to speak with me and to contact the staff in the Disability Resource Center, Student Services Building, Room 110 (415/338-2472 Voice/TDD). They will review your concerns and determine with you what accommodations are necessary and appropriate. Information and documentation of a disability are confidential.

Please read the attached statement on plagiarism. If you have any questions, ask. Also, for the departmental policies, go to <http://bss.sfsu.edu/polisci/Full%20Plagiarism%20Policy.htm>.

Finally, I encourage you to visit me during office hours. If you cannot make it during my scheduled times, then we can set an appointment for some time that works for you.

## Week-by-week Schedule

Jan. 28 Introduction to course, situating our topic in the discipline  
Behavioralism, Neo-institutionalism, and Political Psychology

### **Part I. The Economic Approach: Rational Actors, Rational Choice**

Jan. 30 Introduction to modeling rational behavior  
Collective action problems, the tragedy of commons, the prisoners' dilemma  
Individual behavior: the vote, median voters, rational voters

Feb. 4 The paradox of voting: An early adjustment to Downs  
Read: Riker and Ordeshook (1968)

Feb. 6 An alternative to utility maximization  
Read: Ferejohn and Fiorina (1974), Edlin et al. (2005)

Feb. 11 A criticism of rational voting models and a response  
Read: Dowding (2005), Parsons (2006), Dowding (2006)

Feb. 13 Understanding the philosophical implications of RA Theory  
Read: MacDonald (2003)

### **Part II. Adapting Rational Actor Theory**

Feb. 18 Bounded rationality  
Read: *Elements of Reason* (hereafter *EOR*) Chapter 1, Simon (1985)

Feb. 20 Two models of bounded rationality: mental models and political competence  
Read: *EOR* Chapters 2 and 3

Feb. 25 A fixed-choice model of decision making  
The role of ethics in reasoning  
Read: *EOR* Chapters 4 and 5

Feb. 27 Review for midterm exam

Mar. 3 Midterm exam, in class

### **Part III. The Psychological Approach**

Mar. 5 The tension between RA Theory and Psychology  
Read: Monroe (1995)

Mar. 10 Comparing rational assumptions to psychological findings  
Read: *EOR* Chapter 8

Mar. 12 Two alternatives: knowledge and trust as heuristics; conceptual blending  
Read: *EOR* Chapters 11, 12

- Mar. 17      Affect, Cognition, and Nueroscience in the study of politics  
Read: McDermott (2004), *The Affect Effect* (hereafter *AE*) Chapter 1
- Mar. 19      Political cognition  
Read: *AE* Chapter 3
- Mar. 24, 26    Spring break
- Mar. 31      Cesar Chavez day, no classes
- Apr. 2        Midwest Political Science Association conference, reading/writing day
- Apr. 7        Review of course material to date  
Re-read the assignments from March 5 to March 19
- Apr. 9        Affect as primary and automatic in political judgments  
Read: *AE* Chapter 5
- Apr. 14      The Affective Intelligence Theory  
Read: *AI* Chapters 1, 2, 3
- Apr. 16      Empirical tests of Affective Intelligence  
Read: *AI* Chapters 4, 5 Papers due by 4:00 p.m.
- Apr. 21      Summary of Affective Intelligence  
Read: *AI* Chapters 6, 7; *AE* Chapter 6
- Apr. 23      Further tests of Affective Intelligence: anxiety and enthusiasm  
Read: *AE* Chapter 7, Neely (2007)
- Apr. 28      Fear, anger, and enthusiasm; anger distinct from anxiety  
Read: *AE* Chapters 8, 9
- Apr. 30      The role of hope in candidate appraisals  
Read: *AE* Chapter 10
- May 5        Mediated political news and the AI surveillance system  
Read: *AE* Chapters 11, 12
- May 7        Emotions and political campaigns  
Read: *AE* Chapters 13, 15
- May 12      Connecting emotions to rationality  
Read: *AE* Chapter 14
- May 14      Review for final exam
- May 19      Final exam is due in a hard copy by noon.

## A Statement on Plagiarism

Plagiarism is the most common form of academic dishonesty. The following passage, taken from Richard M. Eastman's book entitled *Style*, provides a cogent definition of plagiarism:

(P)lagiarism is the offering of someone else's words, pictures, data, ideas, and even conceptions as if they were one's own. Writers are indeed encouraged to draw upon the information and wisdom of others, but in the spirit of intellectual inquiry they are expected to state such indebtedness so that (a) their own creativity can be justly appreciated and (b) their use of sources, like a scientist's experiment, can be verified by others. Plagiarism differs from this productive use of sources in that the similarity of the original to the borrowing is very close; it is acknowledged imperfectly or not at all; and it shows little or no creative application by the borrower.

Plagiarism is a prime intellectual offense in that the borrower is faking discovery process. No community of writers and readers can thrive if its members counterfeit their achievements, deceive their critics, and take unfair competitive advantage of others. (Pages 270-1 of *Style* by Richard M. Eastman. New York: Oxford University Press, 1984).

Plagiarism comes in many forms which include (but are not necessarily limited to) the following:

1. Copying verbatim another person's written words without proper acknowledgment. In the case of a direct quote, "proper acknowledgment" entails placing quotation marks around the passage or (in the case of an extended passage) indenting the quotation.
2. Paraphrasing another person's written words without proper acknowledgment. Rephrasing the words does not remove the writer's obligation to indicate clearly that the material belongs to someone else.
3. Quoting or paraphrasing words that were found in a secondary source as if they were found in a primary source. Suppose, for example, that another author uses a quotation from Alfred Marshall that you would like to use in your paper. You may not present the quotation in a manner that will lead readers to believe that you found it by reading Marshall. Instead, you should say, "As so-and-so (19xx) observed, Alfred Marshall made the following statement about this issue:..."

Note: The points made in items 1-3 apply to the use of diagrams, tables, and statistics as well as words.

4. Failing to acknowledge editorial assistance that substantially improves the style and/or quality of your writing. If someone merely points out errors in grammar or punctuation in your writing, or awkward passages, or gives comments about the overall structure of the paper, which you then rewrite, it is not necessary to acknowledge their assistance, although courtesy should lead you to acknowledge substantial helpful editorial comments by colleagues. However, if your writing has been edited or rewritten by someone else in such a way that the style and quality no longer reflect your writing ability, you must acknowledge that editorial assistance was received.

5. Presenting an idea, model, derivation, proof, etc. that other researchers have developed or with which you received substantial assistance without proper acknowledgment. Plagiarism is not limited to the use of other people's words, but it includes the improper use of ideas and methodologies as well. If you choose to present someone else's model in your written work (for example), you must indicate that the model did not originate with you. If an important idea, proof, etc. was given to you by someone else, you must acknowledge the help that you received.

An exception to this point occurs when the model is so widely used and so well-known that it could not possibly be mistaken by the reader as your own (e.g., basic supply and demand models, or the use of ordinary least squares).

6. "Double submission" of papers. Students may not submit the same paper for credit in more than one course without the explicit permission of all instructors who will be evaluating the work.

Note that these rules apply to all written work that you circulate. Also, even starting with the first drafts given to your thesis advisor, you should work at making the appropriate acknowledgments and discuss any uncertain points with your advisor.

(This description of plagiarism is from the Statement on Academic Honesty, found on the SUNY Stony Brook Economics Department's web pages: <http://ws.cc.stonybrook.edu/economics/instruct/grad/honesty.html>. Another explanation of plagiarism can be found at the following SFSU site: <http://online.sfsu.edu/~rone/StudentHelp/Plagiarism.html>).