

POL342H1S: Topics in Methods I (Political Psychology)

Monday 9:00-11:00 AM

Location: BL 325

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Office Hours: Mondays, 12-2pm (SS 3007)

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Course Description and Learning Objectives

This course provides an introduction to major ideas and research methods in political psychology. Rather than focusing on *what* happened in politics (e.g., who won an election), we focus on *why* people think, feel, and behave politically as they do. We examine how psychological processes shape political attitudes and behavior at the individual and group levels, including personality, emotion, social identity, polarization and conflict, racialized attitudes, misperceptions and conspiracy beliefs, and persuasion. There is a strong emphasis on how political psychologists measure core concepts and tests causal claims.

Students will learn to (1) read and evaluate empirical political psychology research, (2) operationalize social science constructs into measurable variables, (3) design an experimental research study to test a political psychology question, and (4) apply political psychology concepts to real world political behavior and contemporary debates.

Course Format

This is a discussion-based seminar. Class time will be spent on a combination of lectures, and seminar discussion.

Evaluations and Course Grade

The final course grade reflects your level of demonstrated achievement of the course Learning Objectives listed above. Evaluations provide feedback on your progress towards the final course grade.

Evaluations	Weight	Deadline	Submit via
Measurement Exercise	10%	February 2, 11am	In-class
Quizzes	20% (4*5%)	Jan 19 (Q1), Feb 9 (Q2), March 9 (Q3), March 23 (Q4)	In-class
Research Proposal Outline	15%	February 22, 11:59pm	Quercus via Turnitin
Peer Review	15% (2*7.5%)	March 2, 11am	In-class
Film Commentary	5%	March 30, 10pm	Quercus
Research Proposal Essay	35%	April 2, 11:59pm	Quercus via Turnitin

Evaluation Criteria

The following sections detail the course's assignment criteria. In addition to the brief descriptions below, detailed rubrics and instructions are provided on Quercus.

Measurement Exercise (10%)

Students will complete an in-class measurement exercise in groups of 6–7. Groups will be given two variables and asked to (1) define each concept, (2) propose a causal theory and mechanism linking them, (3) identify concerns of reverse causality and confounds, (3) operationalize each variable, and (4) discuss potential measurement error.

The activity has two graded components: an individual pre-write (3%) and a group submission (7%). Worksheets will be provided in class, and all group members are expected to contribute to the discussion and final submission. Each group will designate someone to record the group's answers and submit the completed worksheet after class (submission instructions will be provided), and a presenter. Due to time constraints, a few groups will be selected at random to present their work in front of the class.

This will take place **in class**, on **January 26 at 9am** (Session 4).

Weekly Quizzes (20%)

There will be four quizzes throughout the course, each worth 5% of your final grade (20% total). Quiz dates and the sessions they cover are listed in the session summary table. Quizzes will focus on material covered in assigned readings and slides (where applicable). For example, Quiz 1 is on Session 3, and it covers materials from Session 2 and 3. This means readings and lectures for Session 2, and *just* readings for Session 3.

Each quiz will consist of 8-10 multiple-choice questions and will be completed in class using a laptop. Quizzes will take place at the beginning of the lecture (unless communicated otherwise), and 15 minutes will be allotted for their completion. A link to the quiz will be provided during class, and only students attending in person will be able to complete it.

Research Proposal Outline (15%)

Students will write *an experimental research proposal* for a political psychology phenomenon of interest as their final assignment.

First, students will submit a Research Proposal Outline (2-3 pages, double spaced). This Outline must include: (1) a research question, (2) a brief literature review, (3) causal theory, (4) experimental design sketch, (5) intended hypotheses, and (6) anticipated challenges. Detailed instructions and a grading rubric will be posted on Quercus.

The Outline must be submitted **via Turnitin through Quercus by 11:59pm, Sunday, February 22nd**. Two versions of this assignment will be submitted: (1) a Word document with Track Changes; and (2) a clean, anonymous PDF version (used for peer review)

Peer Review (15%)

Students will complete an in-class peer review workshop for the research proposal outline. Each student will review **two** classmates' outlines and provide constructive feedback using the structured rubric

provided on Quercus. Feedback should focus on the clarity of the research question, the logic of the proposed theory and hypotheses, the quality of the experimental design, and potential threats to validity (e.g., measurement issues, noncompliance/attrition, external validity).

Students will receive a print-out of two student Outlines in class. They will submit their peer reviews **via Quercus on March 2 at 11am** (Session 9).

Research Proposal Essay (35%)

Students will write *an experimental research proposal* for a political psychology phenomenon of interest, building off their Outline.

Amongst other things specified the Guidelines + Rubric posted on Quercus, you will be evaluated on: (1) writing and formatting; (2) the clarity and significance of your research question; (2) your use of relevant scholarly literature to motivate the project; (3) the coherence of your theory and proposed causal mechanism(s); (4) the appropriateness of your sampling plan, design, hypotheses, proposed analysis; (5) your discussion of limitations; and (6) discussion of how classmates' peer reviews were incorporated or not incorporated.

The Essay must be submitted **via Turnitin through Quercus by 11:59pm, Friday, April 3rd** with Track Changes on.

Film Commentary (5%)

After we watch the film in class, students will post a short comment on the Quercus discussion board connecting the movie to course material. In your post, identify **one or two themes** from the film that relate to concepts, theories, or findings we have covered. Then, respond thoughtfully to **at least one** classmate's comment (e.g., by adding a related example, raising a question, or offering a respectful disagreement). Posts will be graded on the clarity of the connection to course material and the quality of engagement.

Discussion points must be submitted **via Quercus by 10:00pm, Monday, March 30th**.

Grading and Assessment

Final Grades in the course are given as letter grades. They reflect your overall performance in achieving the stated course learning objectives. Assessment on interim evaluations can take many forms and are intended to give you an indication of where you stand relative to others. This will allow you to make adjustments to your approach, your expectations, and your performance. Please contact your instructor if you would like more guidance on your individual course performance.

Late Penalty

All written assignments will be subject to a 2-percentage point penalty per day after submission. All students will receive **one** "life happens" 2-day extension. This can be used for *either* the Research

Proposal Outline or the Research Proposal Essay. If you use this extension, please write in the comments in Quercus that you have used your extension.

Beyond this, students must follow the guidelines on Academic Accommodations and Missed Academic Work stated below.

Computer-related problems, such as the crash of your computer, a slow Internet connection, or an occasional slow response of the server, will not be considered as an acceptable reason to request for extension or waiver of a late penalty. In addition, sending your assignment to the instructor via email will not be considered as a submission. For these reasons, I strongly suggest you avoid a last-minute completion or submission of assignments. I also suggest you frequently take a backup of the electronic files of your draft essay in an electronic storage other than your computer. If you have a UTmail+ account, you have access to 1TB of storage in your OneDrive at UofT and you can make a backup there.

Grade Appeals

If you would like anything re-graded, you must prepare a **one-page memo** outlining your case for regrading for the instructor. This memo must reference specific criteria from the rubric provided to you on Quercus. The memo needs to be serious and specific in order for the assignment to be re-assessed.

You must submit this memo after a **72-hour cooling off period** subsequent to the release of the grade and **no later than 7 days after the** release of the grade. Appeal requests received before the 72-hour cooling off period and after the 7-day window will not receive a response.

Turnitin

Normally, students will be required to submit their course essays to the University's plagiarism detection tool for a review of textual similarity and detection of possible plagiarism. In doing so, students will allow their essays to be included as source documents in the tool's reference database, where they will be used solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism. The terms that apply to the University's use of this tool are described on the Centre for Teaching Support & Innovation website (<https://uoft.me/pdt-faq>)

Students are also strongly advised to keep rough and draft work and hard copies of their assignments. These should be kept until the marked assignments have been returned. All graded assignments are to be kept by students until the grades have been posted on ACORN.

Academic Integrity

Case write-ups, papers, assignments and all other deliverables must be original work, giving credit to the work of others where appropriate. This applies to individual and group deliverables. All members of a group are accountable for the academic integrity of their submissions. You are encouraged to consult the following websites to ensure that you follow the appropriate rules. Ignorance of these rules is not a defense in cases of violations, which can result in very serious academic sanctions. Please visit the [University of Toronto Academic Integrity](#) and the [UofT Writing Centre Resources](#) websites for further detail and help on the proper use of citations.

Generative AI Policy

Use of Generative AI tools are prohibited in this course. This includes using AI tools (e.g., ChatGPT, Claude, Gemini, GPT-enabled Bing) to:

- write or rewrite any portion of an assignment
- summarize course readings in place of completing them
- produce references or citations

All work you submit must be completed independently and reflect your own thinking and writing. Because generative AI systems can produce incorrect claims and fabricated citations, they are not considered legitimate sources of information for this course. Using AI in unauthorized ways, or submitting AI-generated text or citations, constitutes academic dishonesty and will be addressed under the Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters.

Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters

Please read the University's [Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters](#). It applies to all your academic activities and courses. The Code prohibits all forms of academic dishonesty including, but not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, and the use of unauthorized aids. Violating the Code may lead to penalties up to and including suspension or expulsion from the University. You are expected to know the Code and inform yourself of acceptable academic practices – ignorance of the Code or the acceptable academic practices is not a valid defense if you are accused of a violation.

Class Schedule

SESSION 1 (January 5): Introduction to Political Psychology

1. Course syllabus
2. Ditonto, T., Mattes, K., & Tobin, J. (2025). Are citizens politically competent? The evidence from political psychology. In *Handbook of Innovations in Political Psychology* (pp. 172-205). Edward Elgar Publishing.

Suggested readings:

- Sevi, Semra. 2021. [A Guide to Regression Tables](#).

SESSION 2 (January 12): Personality Traits and Politics

1. Landry, A. P., Druckman, J. N., & Willer, R. (2024). Need for chaos and dehumanization are robustly associated with support for partisan violence, while political measures are not. *Political Behavior*, 46(4), 2631-2655.
2. Bakker, B., Schumacher, J. and Rooduijn, M. (2021). The populist appeal: Personality and antiestablishment communication. *The Journal of Politics*, 83(2), 589-601.

Suggested readings:

- Perrin, A. J. (2005). National threat and political culture: Authoritarianism, antiauthoritarianism, and the September 11 attacks. *Political Psychology*, 26(2), 167-194.
- Bakker, B.N. (2022). Personality Approaches to Political Behavior. In *The Oxford Handbook of Political Psychology* (3rd edition).

SESSION 3 (January 19): Experiments in Political Psychology

QUIZ 1 (Session 2-3)

Guest lecture by [Professor Daniel Rubenson](#)

1. Frank Michael. C. et al. (2023). Experimentology: An Open Science Approach to Experimental Psychology Methods. [Chapter 1, Experiments]
2. Rubenson, D., & Dawes, C. T. (2022). Subtle primes of in-group and out-group affiliation change votes in a large-scale field experiment. *Scientific reports*, 12(1), 22526.

Suggested readings:

1. Broockman, D., & Kalla, J. (2016). Durably reducing transphobia: A field experiment on door-to-door canvassing. *Science*, 352(6282), 220-224.

SESSION 4 (January 26):

CLASS CANCELLED DUE TO UNIVERSITY CLOSURE

SESSION 5 (February 2): Measurement Exercise

1. Canadian Election Study (CES), [2025](#)
2. Berinsky, Adam J. (2017). “Measuring Public Opinion with Surveys.” *Annual Review of Political Science* 20 (Volume 20, 2017): 309–29

Suggested readings:

- Sen, M., & Wasow, O. (2016). Race as a bundle of sticks: Designs that estimate effects of seemingly immutable characteristics. *Annual Review of Political Science*, 19(1), 499-522.

SESSION 6 (February 9): Red Blue, Blue Brain? Alternative Approaches to Political Psychology

QUIZ 2 (Session 3+6)

1. Glynn, A. N., & Sen, M. (2015). Identifying judicial empathy: Does having daughters cause judges to rule for women's issues? *American Journal of Political Science*, 59(1), 37-54.
2. Bakker, B. N., Schumacher, G., & Rooduijn, M. (2021). Hot politics? Affective responses to political rhetoric. *American Political Science Review*, 115(1), 150-164.

3. Bakker, B.N., Schumacher, G., Gothreau, C. et al. (2020). Conservatives and liberals have similar physiological responses to threats. *Nat Hum Behav* 4, 613–621.
4. Jost, J. T., Nam, H. H., Amodio, D. M., & Van Bavel, J. J. (2014). Political neuroscience: The beginning of a beautiful friendship. *Political Psychology*, 35, 3-42.

Suggested readings:

- Webster, S. W., Connors, E. C., & Sinclair, B. (2022). The social consequences of political anger. *The Journal of Politics*, 84(3), 1292-1305.
- Brader, T. (2005). “Striking a responsive chord: How political ads motivate and persuade voters by appealing to emotions.” *American Journal of Political Science*, 49(2), 388-405.
- Soroka, S., Fournier, P., & Nir, L. (2019). “Cross-national evidence of a negativity bias in psychophysiological reactions to news.” *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 116(38): 18888-18892.
- Bang Petersen, M. (2023). The evolutionary approach to political psychology. In *The Oxford Handbook of Political Psychology* (3rd edn).

SESSION 7 (February 16): FAMILY DAY, NO CLASS

RESEARCH PROPOSAL OUTLINE DUE FEBRUARY 22

SESSION 8 (February 23): Group Identity, Intergroup Relations, and Conflict

1. Iyengar, Shanto, Gaurav Sood, and Yphtach Lelkes. (2012). “Affect, Not Ideology: A Social Identity Perspective on Polarization.” *Public Opinion Quarterly* 76: 405-31.
2. Kim, T. (2025). The Effects of Partisan Elites’ Violent Rhetoric on Support for Political Violence. *Political Behavior*, 1-66.

Suggested readings:

- Tajfel, H., & Turner, J. C. (2010). The Social Identity Theory of Intergroup Behavior. In P. J. Schulz (Ed.), *Communication Theory*. SAGE Publications Ltd.
- Jardina, Ashley. (2021). “In-group love and out-group hate: White racial attitudes in contemporary US elections.” *Political Behavior* 43.4: 1535-1559.

SESSION 9 (March 2): PEER REVIEW ASSIGNMENT

SESSION 10 (March 9): Race, Racial Priming, Racial Prejudice

QUIZ 3 (Session 8-10)

1. Valentino, N. A., Neuner, F. G., & Vandenbroek, L. M. (2018). The changing norms of racial political rhetoric and the end of racial priming. *The Journal of Politics*, 80(3), 757-771.
2. Choi, D. D., Poertner, M., & Sambanis, N. (2023). The hijab penalty: Feminist backlash to Muslim immigrants. *American Journal of Political Science*, 67(2), 291-306.

Suggested readings:

- Laird, C., Colquhoun, A., & Jensen, I. (2025). Case study: Racial Attitudes, Messaging, and Appeals. In *Handbook of Innovations in Political Psychology* (pp. 374-395). Edward Elgar Publishing.
- Tesler, Michael. (2012). “The Spillover of Racialization into Health Care: How President Obama Polarized Public Opinion by Racial Attitudes and Race.” *American Journal of Political Science*, 56: 690-704.

SESSION 11 (March 16): Persuasion, Part I (Reception & Resistance)

1. Nyhan, B., & Reifler, J. (2010). When corrections fail: The persistence of political misperceptions. *Political Behavior*, 32(2), 303–330.
2. Druckman, J. N. (2022). A framework for the study of persuasion. *Annual Review of Political Science*, 25, 65-88.

Suggested readings:

- Valli, C., Gadarian, S. A. K., & Nai, A. (2025). Persuasion. In *Handbook of innovations in political psychology* (pp. 329-353). Edward Elgar Publishing.
- Guess, A. M., Malhotra, N., Pan, J., Barberá, P., Allcott, H., Brown, T., ... & Tucker, J. A. (2023). How do social media feed algorithms affect attitudes and behavior in an election campaign? *Science*, 381(6656), 398-404.

SESSION 12 (March 23): Persuasion, Part II (Who persuades?)

QUIZ 4 (Session 11-12)

1. Broockman, D. E., & Kalla, J. L. (2025). Consuming cross-cutting media causes learning and moderates attitudes: A field experiment with Fox News viewers. *The Journal of Politics*, 87(1), 246-261.
2. Broockman, D. E., Kalla, J. L., Caballero, C., & Easton, M. (2024). Political practitioners poorly predict which messages persuade the public. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 121(45), e2400076121.

Suggested reading:

- Luttrell, A. (October 13, 2025). [#109: The Realities of Political Persuasion with David Broockman](#), *Opinion Science* (Podcast)
- Aggarwal, M., Allen, J., Coppock, A., Frankowski, D., Messing, S., Zhang, K., ... & Zheng, S. (2023). A 2 million-person, campaign-wide field experiment shows how digital advertising affects voter turnout. *Nature Human Behavior*, 7(3), 332-341.

SESSION 13 (March 30): Movie + Discussion

Watch *12 Angry Men* in class

Accessibility Services

Academic accommodations and resources are available should you experience disability-related barriers that prohibit the demonstration of the knowledge and skills required to complete your academic program. These accommodations and resources are designed to provide equitable opportunities for students with disabilities to achieve their academic goals.

Disability-related accommodations are available through registration with the [University of Toronto's Accessibility Services](#). This helps maintain privacy and confidentiality and provides students with support when requesting and accessing accommodations. Students who register with Accessibility Services may also be eligible for disability-related services/equipment.

Instructors will direct students who make disability-related accommodation requests to register with [Accessibility Services](#). Once you complete the registration process, you will work with an Advisor who can set you up with reasonable, disability-related accommodations and/or resources.

Students with accommodations have access to Letters of Accommodation that should be provided to course instructors outlining specific accommodations they can request within that course. For example, if a student is given more time to work on an assignment this would be outlined in their Letter of Accommodation. Any accommodations not outlined in the letter from Accessibility Services are up to the instructor's discretion. Students can connect with their Accessibility Advisor to discuss their accommodations throughout the year.

Information about registering with [Accessibility Services](#) is available on the website and in the office's Graduate and Professional Program Handbook: <https://studentlife.utoronto.ca/task/read-the-handbook/> There's also a short video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hAq62IF4IPg&t=2s> If you're unsure whether you have a disability, please don't hesitate to connect with the office to discuss: accessibility.services@utoronto.ca

Academic Accommodations

Occasionally students will need to apply for an academic accommodation due to disability, illness, religious observance, or personal emergency. **Note: Students are expected to request accommodations in advance of assignments or tests. Failure to do so may result in a late penalty being applied.**

Accessibility-related accommodations

All requests for an academic accommodation due to disability are handled by the University of Toronto's Accessibility Services, not the instructor. For disability-related accommodations, Accessibility Services staff will determine suitable accommodations on a case-by-case basis based on recommendation from health providers and with student input. You will provide an Accessibility Services letter as official documentation.

ACORN Absence Declaration Tool

If you need an accommodation for a health condition or injury, a personal or family emergency, or bereavement, you may use the Absence Declaration Tool on ACORN. Students who declare an absence in [ACORN](#) should expect to receive reasonable academic consideration from their instructor without the need to present additional supporting documentation. **Students can only use the ACORN Absence Declaration Tool once per academic term (e.g., the fall term) for a maximum period of 7 consecutive calendar days.**

The ACORN Absence Declaration Tool requires students to select the course(s) they wish to have academic consideration granted, as well as provide the email address(es) to whom their course syllabus identifies as the contact (e.g., instructor, advisor). A record of the absence is sent to the self-provided email(s) at the time of submission, and a receipt of the absence declaration is also sent to the student's University of Toronto email address. Submitting an absence declaration does not initiate the process of academic consideration. It is the student's responsibility to arrange for academic consideration (e.g., through following instructions in the syllabus).

If a non-disability related accommodation request is made along with an absence declaration on ACORN, a resolution will be determined by the instructor. This may take the form of any alternate deliverable, deadline extension, re-weighted course grade calculation, make-up exam, or another solution deemed appropriate by the instructor. If an accommodation request is not made along with an absence declaration, the missed or late deliverable will be subject to an academic penalty. The extent of the penalty is at the discretion of the instructor.

The ACORN Absence Declaration Tool is intended to be used in the following circumstances:

- A health condition or injury (e.g., illness, serious physical harm, mental health issue, scheduled surgery)
- A personal or family emergency (e.g., unanticipated and unavoidable familial incident beyond the student's control)
- Bereavement (e.g., the death of a student's immediate family member or close friend)

The ACORN Absence Declaration Tool is not intended to be used in the following circumstances:

- Personal social obligations
- Travel not related to their academic program
- Technological issues
- The avoidance of deadlines or tests

Students in the following circumstances should be directed to existing divisional or University processes:

- Chronic and ongoing health conditions
- Religious observances
- Athletic obligations (e.g., Varsity sporting events)
- Attendance of a University sponsored event (e.g., field trip, awards ceremony)
- Mandatory legal obligations (e.g., jury duty)

Alternative accommodations and documentation

Students seeking academic consideration due to chronic health issues, or a disability should contact the [Accessibility Services Office](#). Religious observances will be accommodated according to [Policy on Scheduling of Classes and Examinations and Other Accommodations for Religious Observances](#). Support can be provided by the divisional registrar's office if students are unsure of what resources are available

Students who have already used one absence declaration in a term will be restricted from declaring any further absences using the ACORN Absence Declaration Tool. Students are required to arrange any further academic consideration directly with their instructor or advisor and should consult their academic division's policies and procedures regarding absences for the appropriate next steps. Students may be asked to provide supporting documentation as evidence of their absences such as the University approved [verification of illness form \(VOI\)](#).

Mental Health and Wellness

The University of Toronto's [Student Mental Health Resource Guide](#) is an online tool where students can access various on-campus and off-campus mental health resources, including those listed below.

Not in crisis, but want to talk to someone? [Telus Health Student Support](#) is a 24/7 confidential support for health, mental health, school, or general issues. Available by call or text and in 146 languages.

Feeling distressed? Are you in crisis? There's help. Call Good2Talk: 1-866-925-5454 (Ontario); text GOOD2TALK to 686868. Free, confidential helpline with professional counselling, information and referrals for mental health, addictions and well-being, 24/7/365. You can also contact [My Student Support Program \(MySSP\)](#) 1-844-451-9700 (North America); 001-416-380-6575 (Outside of North America) or the [U of T Employee & Family Assistance Program \(EFAP\)](#) 1-800-663-1142 (toll-free); 1-866-398-9505 (TTY); 604-689-1717 (collect). Visit "[Feeling Distressed?](#)" for more resources.

Are you in immediate danger? For Personal Safety – Call 911, then Campus Community Police*
UTSG Police: 416-978-2222 | U of T Mississauga Police: 905-569-4333 | U of T Scarborough Police
416-978-2222 | Centre for International Experience Safety Abroad 416-946-3929.

*24/7/365; Campus Community Police can direct your call to the right service.