POLITICAL SCIENCE 5242 / 4242  WINTER 2012

POLITICS OF REASON, PASSION, AND BIOLOGY

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Thursday 5:30 pm – 8:30 pm

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Short abstract

This is a course about how people behave politically. Is political behavior driven by reason, passion, biology, or some combination of the three? Does reason or passion drive politicians and citizens to act as they do? Or does the dichotomy between the mind and the heart disguise a more fundamental biological basis to political behavior? Do these approaches leave any room for citizens to exercise their own judgment, or is autonomy lost altogether? Normative questions of justice, equality, and freedom are deeply embedded within each approach and must be confronted as they apply in practice. Although this material is inherently global and comparative, we principally want to investigate how it applies to Canada.

Extended overview:

This is a course about how people behave politically. Is political behavior driven by reason, passion, biology, or some combination of the three? As a first approach, we assume that it is based on rational judgments made through some sort of cost / benefit analysis, and we assume that our calculation of utility is informed by knowledge about public affairs. To test if this assumption operates in practice, we study the question of “culture wars” in North America.

The second approach is modernization theory, which is the intellectual descendent of structural Marxist and Weberian theory. This approach assumes that societies (and the individuals within them) change socially and psychologically in ways that correspond to change in the structure of the economy. These changes are rational, but they are large-scale, predictable, and independent of human volition.

The third approach assumes that political behavior is based principally on passion. When research in psychology is applied to political practice, the result is political marketing which is designed to appeal to voters’ emotions. Election campaigns are the height of applied science in this regard.

The fourth approach assumes that political behavior is driven by biology. Research from primatology indicates that much of what people do politically corresponds to their genetic heritage which has its own rational calculus.
Together, these four approaches enable students to reflect in a more profound way on how their own decision-making processes operate and how they arrive at their own personal loyalties. As a result, they become better equipped to become professional practitioners of politics.

**Grading Scheme:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Weight</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Class presentation, with slides and notes</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Term test 1</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Term test 2</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Essay</td>
<td>30%</td>
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**Oral presentation:** You will have access to a classroom computer with powerpoint software and a projector. You must use visual aids, if not slides, then overhead transparencies or dramatic props. Your presentation will be graded on its ability to communicate intellectually interesting and politically astute insights, not its technical artistry.

The *.ppt file is submitted as part of the assignment. Submit written text to accompany presentation. Text need not be in formal essay format; it consists of presentation notes, provided that they are coherent, logical, cleaned up and properly formatted. Most students save the ppt file in “note” format to submit, but it is also possible to submit notes in a separate file.

One hour of class time is given over to your presentation. Be prepared to speak for approximately 30 minutes. You will address questions and comments from the class for the remainder of the time. The instructor chairs all presentations.

A sign-up sheet will be distributed on the first day. The sign-up sheet corresponds to topics on the syllabus, and you choose to present on a topic scheduled for that day. Students are not responsible for presenting all the material assigned for that day, but you are expected to be familiar with the assigned readings, and to be able to address questions as to how they relate to what you present. Much of the material is quite difficult and explaining the concepts and results accurately to your classmates will take time and effort.

The evaluation rubric for the class presentation is appended to this syllabus.

**Term tests** are written in class. Critical-analysis assignment based on assigned readings. No additional research beyond the syllabus is required. Questions may be posted on BLS beforehand under “assignments.”

The **essay** assignment asks you to pursue a particular topic in greater detail. This is not a massive research project, but it must go beyond the material presented in class. It may be on the same topic as your oral presentation, provided that you build on and expand on that material presented in class.
I. INTRODUCTION

A. The synthesis of reason and passion in political speech 5 January

Guest lecture: Kiloran German, strategic communications consultant; political strategist and campaign organizer; speechwriter for federal, provincial and municipal candidates.

See OWL file for url links to video and text for following speeches
- Mark Antony from Shakespeare
- Stephen Lewis, Eulogy for Jack Layton, 2011, 14 minutes
- John F.Kennedy inauguration, 1961, 14 minutes
- Sojourner Truth, Ain’t I a woman? 1851, 3 minutes
- Winston Churchill, outbreak of World War 2, May 1940
- Martin Luther King, I have a dream
- Leni Riefenstahl, Triumph of the Will, 1934, part 3, 9 minutes

B. The academic lineage of reason and passion synthesized 12 January


II. RATIONAL BEHAVIOR

A. Theory of rational behaviour 19 January


KEEP FLANAGAN ABOVE BECAUSE IT UPDATES, AND INTRODUCES MEDIAN THEOREM. NEED TO DO THIS CULTURE WARS MATERIAL ON POLARIZATION.


B. (Ir)Rational culture wars of North America: class dimension 26 January


C. (Ir)Rational culture wars of North America: intimate dimension 2 February


Editor. 2007. “The frayed knot: As the divorce rate plummets at the top of American society and rises at the bottom, the widening “marriage gap” is breeding inequality,” Economist.


II. STRUCTURAL THEORIES: (POST) MODERNIZATION  
9 February

Guest lecture: Dr. Peter Butler is professor emeritus of Sociology and Public Administration at Dalhousie. Professor Butler has been a consultant for provincial and federal governments, and has done research and polling for political parties.

World Values Survey http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/


GENDER AND MODERNIZATION THEORY  
16 February


Kang, Alice, “Studying oil, Islam, and women as if political institutions mattered.”
Ross, Michael, “Does oil wealth hurt women? A reply to Caraway, Charrad, Kang, and Norris.”

READING WEEK, NO CLASS 23 February

TEST 1 March

III. POLITICAL PSYCHOLOGY

A. Theory  
1 March


B. Psychology in action as political marketing 8 March


C. Canadian campaign marketing 15 March


IV. Biology & Politics

A. Genetic components to political ideology

Exchange in *Perspectives on Politics* 6(2) June 2008.

Charney, Evan. “Genes and ideologies.”
Alford, John, Carolyn Funk, John Hibbing. “Beyond liberals and conservatives to political genotypes and phenotypes.”
Hannagan, Rebecca, and Peter Hatemi. “The threat of genes: A comment on Evan Charney’s ‘Genes and ideologies’.”


B. An evolutionary legacy of altruism?


Peter Loewen, "Affinity, antipathy, and political participation: How our concern for others makes us vote,"* CJPS 43:3 (September, 2010), 661-87.


Or an evolutionary legacy of violence? 5 April


**UNIVERSITY REGULATIONS**

- From the University Calendar: "Students are expected to complete class work by the prescribed deadlines. Only in special circumstances ... may an instructor extend such deadlines."

- Late papers will be assessed a late penalty at the instructor's discretion. Students who miss a deadline on account of illness are expected to hand in the assignment within one week of their return to class, with a medical certificate, per academic regulations of the Dalhousie Calendar.

- Papers should be submitted directly to the instructor, or the teaching assistant, or in person to the Political Science office between 8:30 am and 4:30 pm on weekdays only. The instructor cannot assume responsibility for papers otherwise submitted.

- Students may request accommodation as a result of barriers related to disability, religious obligation, or any characteristic under the Nova Scotia Human Rights Act. Students who require academic accommodation for either classroom participation or the writing of tests, quizzes and exams should make their request to the Office of Student Accessibility & Accommodation (OSAA) prior to or at the outset of each academic term (with the exception of X/Y courses). Please see [www.studentaccessibility.dal.ca](http://www.studentaccessibility.dal.ca) for more information and to obtain Form A: Request for Accommodation.

- A note taker may be required to assist a classmate. There is an honorarium of $75/course/term. If you are interested, please contact OSAA at 494-2836 for more information.

- Please note that your classroom may contain specialized accessible furniture and equipment. It is important that these items remain in the classroom so that students who require their usage will be able to participate in the class.

**INFORMATION ON PLAGIARISM**

Proper documentation is required on all writing assignments. Failure to document sources constitutes plagiarism and can result in severe academic penalty. You should keep your rough notes and be prepared to defend your work orally. Consult a writing/style manual for acceptable citation styles.

Any paper submitted by a student at Dalhousie University may be checked for originality to confirm that the student has not plagiarized from other sources. Plagiarism is considered a serious academic offence which may lead to loss of credit, suspension or expulsion from the University, or even to the revocation of a degree. It is essential that there be correct attribution of authorities from which facts and opinions have been derived.

At Dalhousie there are University Regulations which deal with plagiarism and, prior to submitting any paper in a course; students should read the Policy on Intellectual Honesty contained in the Calendar or
on the Online Dalhousie website. As a student in this class, you are to keep an electronic copy of any paper you submit, and the course instructor may require you to submit that electronic copy on demand.

**Additional Information for Graduate Students**

As this is a cross-listed class, the requirements for graduate students are somewhat different from those for undergraduates. The number of and types of assignments are the same, but the expectations for these assignments are considerably higher:

1. In all assignments, graduate students are expected to evince a deeper analytical ability when evaluating readings; to show familiarity with a wider variety of sources; and to articulate a greater complexity of thought, in both verbal and written forms.

2. The writing style for graduate students should illustrate greater sophistication, both in the construction of the argument and in the clarity and lucidity of the writing.

3. Graduate students are expected to be prepared for each seminar; and to read beyond the minimal expectations set out for undergraduates (ie, more than one primary reading, secondary text, one online/PDF article, one student paper). Attendance is crucial. Graduate students should be willing to participate actively in the discussions, rather than waiting to be called upon to speak.

4. At the graduate level, students should show an understanding of the nuances of criticism, ie, how to accomplish an intellectually incisive criticism in a respectful and constructive manner.

5. Research papers for graduate students are generally longer (around 20 pages). They should show evidence of good research skills; of the capacity for revision; and of the analytical capability noted in (1) above. Graduate students may choose to tailor their research papers to their thesis work; but please discuss this with me in advance.

6. Graduate students should enjoy their work more thoroughly.