Oslo Summer School in Comparative Social Science Studies 2011

Political Psychology: Citizen Behaviors and Opinions

Lecturer: Associate Professor Patrick Fournier,
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Main disciplines: Political Science, Psychology

Dates: 25 - 29 July 2011
Course Credits: 10 pts (ECTS)
Limitation: 30 participants

Website: patrick-fournier.com/f/oslo.html

Objectives

Political actions can be examined from a variety of perspectives: economically, sociologically, historically, anthropologically, legally, etc. This course examines the relevance of psychological approaches for our understanding of the political behaviors and opinions of ordinary citizens. One day will be devoted to each of the four most important approaches in recent decades: personality, cognition, emotion, and biopolitics.

This course will not systematically compare the psychological perspective to all other alternatives. Rather, it will present and critically analyze the contributions that political psychology can offer to better comprehend political participation, public opinion, and vote choice.

Although many of the readings tackle the most studied case (the USA), the lectures will strive to emphasize the findings that are pertinent for citizenship empirical research in all democracies.

Books needed for the course:

- Participants should obtain and read these two books in advance of the lectures. All other course readings will be included in the compendium supplied to participants.

Lecture outline

Lecture 1 - Political psychology

What is political psychology? What will this course cover and not cover?

Readings:


Lecture 2 - Responses to authority

How do people react to directives from superiors in hierarchies?

Readings:


Lecture 3 - Personality 1: Authoritarianism

Emergence and evolution of research on the central political personality trait.

Readings:


Lecture 4 - Personality 2: Other traits

The effects of other personality traits on electoral turnout and vote choice.

Readings:


Lecture 5    -    Cognition 1: Three models of opinion formation

How do people make up their mind about politics?

Readings:


Lecture 6    -    Cognition 2: The quality of opinions

Do people reach the right decisions? And what does this tell us about the validity of the models?

Readings:


Lecture 7    -    Emotions 1: Affective intelligence

Examination of the main theory about emotions and politics.

Readings:

Lecture 8  -  Emotions 2: Other models

Other indications that affect has an impact on political decision-making.

Readings:


Lecture 9  -  Biopolitics 1: The role of genes

Does genetic background affect political behaviors and opinions?

Readings:


Lecture 10  -  Biopolitics 2: Physiological responses

Are political reactions hard-wired into our brains?

Readings:


Complete reading list


• Lodge, Milton, Marco Steenbergen, & Shawn Brau. 1995. “The Responsive Voter:


The lecturer

Patrick Fournier is the principal investigator of the Canadian Election Study for the next two Canadian federal elections. He was a co-investigator on the CES teams for the 2004, 2006 and 2008 elections. His research interests include political participation, public opinion, voting behavior, citizen competence, opinion change, and survey methodology. His work has been published in journals such as Acta Politica, Canadian Journal of Political Science, Electoral Studies, European Journal of Political Research, Journal of Politics, Political Behavior, Political
Psychology, and Public Opinion Quarterly. His latest project, the study of Citizens’ Assemblies on Electoral Reform, has resulted in a book examining the potential and limits of citizens’ political capabilities: *When Citizens Decide.*