Political Psychology

Lecturer: Professor Fathali M. Moghaddam
Department of Psychology and Interdisciplinary Program in Cognitive Science
Georgetown University, USA

Main disciplines: Psychology, Political Science
Dates: 31 July - 4 August 2017
Course Credits: 10 pts (ECTS)
Limitation: 25 participants

Course Objective and learning Goals
The objective of this course is to educate and encourage students to understand and evaluate (1) the role of psychological theories and empirical research in understanding political behavior (2) the psychological processes underlying democracy and dictatorship (3) the nature of citizenship and the psychological citizen (4) psychology of decision making and leadership (5) the impact of globalization on security, radicalization and political behavior (6) policies for managing cultural, linguistic, ethnic, religious and other forms of diversity.

Main Sources for discussions:
COURSE OUTLINE

Lecture 1: Review of Course outline
The goal of the introductory lecture is to review the scope, objectives, contents, and requirements of the course. The basic concepts and methods of political psychology are reviewed, and the relationship between political psychology, mainstream psychology, and some other branches of psychological, political, social, and biological research are clarified.

Topics in detail:

- Political behavior: What is it?
- Socialization of the ‘psychological citizen' and normative political behavior
- What is political psychology? Varieties of approaches to the field
- The history of political psychology and some classic research studies
- The application of political psychology
- The politics of political psychology
- Micro, meso, and macro approaches to understanding political behavior
- The range of research methods and political psychology
- The range of theories in political psychology

Readings:

- Oxford Handbook, ch.1,
- Moghaddam 2008, ch. 1
Lecture 2: **Cultural evolution and the psychological foundations of Democracy and Dictatorship**

Lecture two begins with an evolutionary account of political behavior and leadership. The question of ‘human nature’ is examined in relation to political behavior ‘as is’ and ‘as it might be’. The role of culture is examined, together with the question of possible universals in human behavior, as well as important cross-cultural variations and ‘behavioral plasticity’. The role of the ‘new globalization’ is explored, particularly in relation to identity development and collective identity threat. Topics in detail:

- What can we learn from animal behavior? Leadership, decision making, stratification, fairness
- Early humans, surplus, and the evolution of more complex, stratified societies
- Causal and normative accounts of behavior
- The evolving social contract and ‘ideal’ citizenship
- The challenge of explaining change; varieties of change
- Plasticity, from neural plasticity to ‘political plasticity’
- Radical change and revolutions! A psychological perspective on the possibilities and limitations of political revolutions
- The ‘new globalization’: How is it new?
- Globalization and threatened identities
- Globalization and political behavior
- Globalization, individual processes, and political behavior
- Globalization, group processes, and political behavior
- Globalization, inter-group processes, and political behavior
- Emics and Etics in political behavior

Readings:

- Moghaddam 2008, ch. 2.
- Moghaddam 2013, Introduction;
- Moghaddam 2016, Introduction;
- Oxford Handbook chs. 7, 8, 19
Lecture 3 and 4: **Major psychological themes, human nature, and political behavior**

Political behavior is examined through the conceptual lens and empirical research of four major research traditions: materialism, irrationality, justice, and identity. The major theories in each of the four research traditions are critically examined, and examples of supporting empirical research are introduced and discussed. The strengths and weaknesses of each tradition are explored, as are their overlapping and differing features.

Topics in detail:

A. Materialist/realist theories and empirical research
   - Marx and Pareto; realistic conflict theory; system justification theory, resource mobilization theory; sociobiology
   - Assessing materialist theories and empirical research

B. Irrationality and empirical research
   - The Freudian model; libidinal ties; leader-follower relations; displacement of aggression; Freud on war; 21st century research on implicit processes, system 1/system 2 thinking
   - Assessing irrationalist theories and empirical research

C. Justice theories and empirical
   - Normative/subjective justice (also referred to as ‘commonsense’ justice)
   - Power and justice; culture and justice; claimed universals and justice
   - Human rights; human duties; relationship between rights and duties
   - Cycle of rights and duties, related to majority/minority status
   - UN Declaration of Human Rights; International Criminal Court
   - Justice motive; just world hypothesis
   - Equity theory; equity ratio
   - Relative deprivation theory; egoistical and fraternal deprivation
   - Assessing justice theories and empirical research

D. Identity theories and empirical research
   - Globalization, culture and identity
   - Role and identity’ gender role; ethnicity; social class
   - Personal identity; collective identity
   - Minimal group paradigm; social identity theory
• Self-categorization theory; optimal distinctiveness theory
• Assessing identity theories and empirical research
• The competing theories and political behavior

Readings:
• Moghaddam, 2008 chs. 3-6;
• Moghaddam, 2013 chs. 1,2,3;
• Moghaddam, 2016 ch. 1;
• Oxford Handbook chs. 19, 20
Lecture 5: **Personality and politics**

The personality characteristics of political leaders has attracted a great deal of interest, both from researchers and from the lay public. This lecture critically examines the main structured and projective personality assessment instruments, as well as the theoretical perspectives, used to better understand political leaders. Research on the personality characteristics of followers is also explored. The relationship between personality and group membership, particularly gender, ethnicity, and age, is also discussed.

Topics in detail:

The personality approach to political behavior and its critics; reductionism; the long tradition of case study/idiographic methodology; the person vs. context debate

- Major structured personality assessment methods
- Major projective personality assessment methods
- Reliability, validity, and personality models and measures
- The particular challenges of studying political leaders
- Personality and followership
- Personality and gender; personality and ethnicity

Readings:

- Oxford Handbook chs. 2, 3, 14, 15, 25, 27;
- Moghaddam 2013, ch.8;
- Moghaddam 2016, ch. 2
Lecture 6: **Political decision-making and participation**

This lecture explores the issues of how political decisions are made and who participates in decision-making. The discussion begins with varieties of decision-making procedures in animal societies, then reviews varieties of decision-making procedures in human societies – from elitist to participatory. The issue of decision-making and implicit cognitive processes I examined, in relation to research on central and peripheral routes to persuasion. Finally, decision-making is discussed in relation to two apparently universal trends: increasing wealth inequality and stagnant productivity.

Topics in detail:

- Trust: Why is it important? Why has it declined?
- Participation, rights and duties: variations across time and cultures
- The evolution of decision making among animals and humans
- Psychology and the question of ‘who should decide?’
- Political decision making and system 1/system 2
- Political decision making and models of persuasion
- Political decision making and modern technology
- Political decision making and varieties of inequality
- Political decision making and two dilemmas: increasing wealth inequality (Piketty) and stagnant productivity (Gordon)

Readings:

- Oxford Handbook chs. 4, 5, 6, 17, 18, 21, 22
- Moghaddam, 2013, ch. 6;
- Moghaddam 2016, ch. 3
Lecture 7: **Varieties of political leadership**

This lecture explores the psychological foundations of various kinds of leadership-followership relationship. The evolution of leadership is examined, as is the relationship between leadership and gender and age in particular. Cross-cultural variations in leadership styles is reviewed. The issue of power, corruption, and leadership is given special attention, with reference to evidence concerning the conditions in which power corrupts.

Topics in detail:

- Evolution and political leadership
- Gender, age, race/ethnicity, social class and political leadership
- Culture and political leadership
- Different political ideals and political leadership
- Culture, justice, and ‘rewards’ for leadership
- Leadership and followership as interdependent
- Leadership, power distribution, and corruption
- Back to ‘human nature’: Does power corrupt?
- Under what conditions is power less likely to corrupt?

Readings:

- Oxford handbook chs. 14, 15;
- Moghaddam 2013, ch. 8;
- Moghaddam 2016, chs. 4,
Lecture 8: **Psychology and political systems**

The psychological foundations of dictatorship and democracy are explored, with particular focus on the psychological citizens capable of functioning and sustaining different types of political systems. Assumptions underlying the ‘inevitability’ of political development are examined. The socialization of democratic citizenship is a particular focus, in relation to the prevailing group-based inequalities, including social class inequalities.

Topics in detail:

- Left-wing and right-wing models of ‘inevitable’ historical development
- Varieties of ‘democracies’ and ‘dictatorships’
- ‘Human nature’, motivation, and political systems:
- What political system matches ‘natural’ human motivation?
- Behavioral plasticity: Contexts for social loafing and social laboring
- The dictatorship-democracy continuum
- The ‘springboard model’ of dictatorship
- Historic examples of the springboard to dictatorship
- The psychological conditions for democracy
- Socialization of the democratic citizen: Identifying goals
- The psychological basis of group-based inequalities: social class and politics; rights and duties; inter-group conflict
- Gender, religion, race/ethnicity and politics

Readings:

- Oxford Handbook chs. 10, 11, 12, 16, 28;
- Moghaddam 2013, chs. 6, 7;
- Moghaddam 2016, chs. 7, 8, 9, 10, 12
Lecture 9: **Culture and politics**

This lecture begins by examining why culture has not been a major focus in the study of political behavior, either in political psychology or political science. The role of culture in political behavior is examined, particularly through the concept of ‘contextualized democracy’, and the relationship between religion and politics. The impact of globalization of political behavior is examined, with a focus on radicalization and processes underlying ‘fractured globalization’. The possibilities of women changing the culture of politics are discussed.

Topics in detail:

- Defining culture; cultural psychology and the normative model
- The central role of narratives
- The basic elements of positioning theory
- The ‘new globalization’ and political behavior
- Globalization, identity, and radicalization
- New global political movements
- The ‘new populism’; identity politics
- Religion and politics; religion as state foundation
- Varieties of radicalization, terrorism and ‘reactive security’
- ‘Contextualized democracy’ and the role of culture
- Culture, gender, and political behavior: What will women change?

Readings:

- Oxford Handbook ch.18;
- Moghaddam 2013, chs. 6, 7;
- Moghaddam 2016, chs. 7, 8, 9, 10, 12
Lecture 10: Concluding discussion
The last lecture begins by examining the psychological foundations of the varieties of utopias put forward by the great thinkers. Next, the discussion turns to the enormous challenge of managing diversity in our 21st century world – a challenge made far more difficult by large-scale movements of refugees. Psychological research is applied to critically examine the strengths and weaknesses of the currently dominant policies for managing diversity, multiculturalism and assimilation, as well as a new policy, omniculturalism. The course ends by raising research questions for the future of political psychology.

Topics in detail:
- The psychology of utopia and the political imagination
- Varieties of utopias
- Utopia and ownership; utopia and types of justice
- Psychological end goal: Diversity as utopia
- Psychological end goal: ‘One world’ as utopia
- Psychological foundations of policies for managing diversity:
  - Psychological foundations of assimilation
  - Psychological foundations of multiculturalism
  - Psychological foundations of omniculturalism
- Looking ahead: Continuing questions in political psychology

Readings:
- Oxford Handbook ch.26;
- Moghaddam 2008, chs. 7, 8;
- Moghaddam 2013, chs. 9, 10;
- Moghaddam 2016, ch. 13
The Lecturer

Fathali M. Moghaddam is Professor, Department of Psychology, and Director of the Interdisciplinary Program in Cognitive Science, Georgetown University, Washington D.C., U.S.A. He is Editor-in-Chief of PEACE AND CONFLICT: JOURNAL OF PEACE PSYCHOLOGY (a journal of the American Psychological Association). Professor Moghaddam was born in Iran, educated in England, and worked for the United Nations and McGill University, before joining Georgetown University in 1990. He has published dozens of books and hundreds of papers, and received important academic awards for his scholarship. His ongoing book projects include MUTUAL RADICALIZATION: The psychology of how groups and nations radicalize each other (to be published by American Psychological Association Press), and he is also editing THE ENCYCLOPEDIA OF POLITICAL BEHAVIOR (two volumes, to be published by Sage).

Professor Fathali M. Moghaddam’s website and presentation at the Georgetown University, USA.