



**Government 404**  
**The Political Psychology of International Security**

**Dr. Marcus Holmes**  
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Tuesdays, 7pm-9:30pm  
Room: TBD

Office: Morton 24  
Office Hours: Monday and Wednesday, 12-1:30pm  
(and by appointment; also open door policy)

**Course description:** This seminar looks at the ways in which scholars in the field of international relations generally, and international security in particular, have drawn upon the field of psychology as a means to enhance their theories of the human actor in world politics. Some have sought to amend rationalist models of belief formation and decision-making by introducing psychological insights into the effects of biases, learning, and heuristics. Others have even challenged the very conception of human rationality by citing recent advances in neuroscience. But all share the idea that a better understanding of how the human mind works can benefit the study of international relations. The goal of this seminar is to critically investigate the various ways diverse findings in psychology – including social psychology, affective psychology, and social neuroscience - have been imported into the field of IR to help make sense of important international security puzzles. Substantive topics include emotions, memory, face-to-face diplomacy, risk assessment, the role of metaphors and analogies in war, and belief formation, among others. No background knowledge in psychology or neuroscience is assumed or required.

**Requirements:** First, each student is required to regularly attend class and contribute to class discussions and intellectual exploration. Half of the participation grade is based on attendance. Seminars only work if students are there! Second, early in the semester you will complete a leadership assessment of a current political figure (due **February 24**). You are also required to hand in 3 short (two to three pages) response papers over the course of the semester. In addition, each student will be required to formally present both critiques of readings during the semester as well as their paper at the end of the semester. Finally, each student will complete a theoretical or research paper (~25vpages). Ideally the paper will serve as a stepping-stone to an outside publication. Specifics for each of these assignments will be provided in class. The final paper is due on **May 10**.

Grades: The course grade will be determined as follows:

Class participation: 40%  
Research paper: 25%  
Response papers: 15%  
Class presentations: 10%  
Personality assessment: 10%

**Leader Personality Assessment:** Each student will conduct a personality assessment of a political leader of their choosing, similar to the examples we will read in week 3. More details will be provided in class.

**Paper:** Students may write on any topic they wish, so long as that topic falls within the boundaries of international security and political psychology broadly understood. I encourage students to consider writing both empirical papers—those that seek to explain some outcome or set of outcomes in international politics—as well as papers that contribute exclusively to conceptual or theoretical debates in international relations scholarship.

The production of the papers will proceed in five phases:

1. Provisional paper topics. Each student must email me a short (maximum of one page) paper topic. This write-up should include a brief discussion of what you intend to write about, why the topic is significant, and the methodology of the paper. I will email you brief comments and alert you to any potential problems or pitfalls. You may want to discuss my comments in greater detail either over email or during my office hours. This should be done no later than **March 3**.
2. Research proposal. Each student must email me a short one-page synopsis of his or her core argument, causal schematic, overview of related empirical and conceptual literatures, and discussion of methods. An example will be handed out in class. This should be completed by **March 17**.
3. Preliminary discussions. Each student will present their research in progress at an assigned class meeting during the semester. The aim of these sessions is to have the idea explored by the class with helpful suggestions provided during discussions. These presentations will begin on **March 17** and will be assigned on a volunteer basis.
4. Final presentation. Each student will formally present their paper in a 10 minute professional presentations with Powerpoint and answer questions from fellow students afterward. Students will be graded both on the presentation as well as the quality of comments and questions to fellow students. These will take place during the final two class sessions, **April 21** and **April 28**.
5. Final paper submission. Your final paper is due noon (12pm) **May 10**. You must email me a copy of the paper by that time, as well as provide a hard copy of the paper in my box by 5pm on May 10h.

All of this means that students should start thinking about what you want to write about fairly early on. Students may, however, change your topic at any time prior to the submission of your longer research proposal.

Students who fail to complete each of these steps will lose points on the final paper, e.g., failure to hand in a research proposal will result in a loss of a 1/3 of a grade.

**Response Papers:** You are required to write 3 short (2-3 page) responses to the readings over the course of the semester. You can do these for any weeks that you like but I will not accept late papers. The papers must be turned in by 2pm on the day of class via email as I will use your

questions/comments in the class discussion. You are asked to give your thoughts about the arguments presented in the readings; this should involve creative and critical engagement. For instance, you can discuss the readings in terms of their benefits, pitfalls, implications, applications, or possibilities for improvement. Response papers will be graded according to 10-point format. I recommend doing response papers on the weeks that you present the readings, though this is not mandatory.

**Readings:** It is highly recommended that you do the readings in the order they are listed on the syllabus. Many of the readings represent parts of debates that will not make sense if read out of sequence. Note that there is not textbook to buy for this course.

**Course Policies:** You are expected to turn in your assignments on time. Late work will be penalized, and extensions will only be granted for emergency cases.

All students are expected to arrive to class on time, silence cell phones, iPhones, etc.

All students are responsible for understanding W&M's academic integrity rules and the honor process. These can be reviewed at:  
<http://www.wm.edu/offices/deanofstudents/services/studentconduct/>

Students are required to read these rules by the end of the first week of classes. Ignorance of the rules is not an excuse if violations occur. Cheating and plagiarism will not be tolerated. Good research requires combining your own thoughts and analysis with the thoughts and analysis of others. Documenting your sources is critical. When in doubt as to whether you should cite something, cite it! If you use an idea that belongs to someone else without attribution, you are plagiarizing their work. Papers will be automatically submitted to plagiarism detection websites such as turnitin.com. If you have any questions about the guidelines, please see me or the Swem librarians, who provide excellent support.

Students should use the "author-date" Chicago Manual of Style citation system for all written work. More information is available at the following link and further instructions will be provided in class: [http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools\\_citationguide.html](http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide.html)

Some students may wish to take part in religious observances that occur during this academic term. If you have a religious observance that conflicts with your participation in the course, please meet with me before the end of the second week of the term to discuss appropriate accommodations.

Any student who feels s/he may need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact the disability office directly:  
<http://www.wm.edu/offices/deanofstudents/services/disabilityservices/>

**Please note that the syllabus is subject to change over the course of the semester. Changes will be announced in class or via e-mail.**

*Tentative Course Schedule (Subject to change based on class interests and discussions)*

**1/27 Week 1: Concepts and Course Introduction**

- 1) Vanderwicken, Peter. (1995). "Why the News is Not the Truth," *HBR*, May-June. BB
- 2) Valentino, Benjamin. (2012). YouGov Poll Results from April 26-May 2 BB
- 3) Wendt, Alexander and Duvall, Raymond. (2008). "Sovereignty and the UFO," *Political Theory* 36(4). (BB)

**2/3 Week 2: "The Rational Baseline"**

- 1) Snidal, Duncan. "Rational Choice and International Relations," In *Handbook of International Relations*, edited by Walter Carlsnaes, Thomas Risse-Kappen and Beth A. Simmons, Thousand Oaks, Calif.: SAGE Publications. pp. 73-94. BB
- 2) Fearon, James. (1995). "Rationalist Explanations for War." *International Organization* 49, no. 3: 379-414. Library
- 3) Mercer, J. (2005). "Rationality and psychology in international politics." *International Organization*, 59(1):77-106. Library

**2/10 Week 3: Leaders as Individuals in IR**

- 1) Henry A. Murray, "Analysis of the Personality of Adolph Hitler: With Predictions of His Future Behavior and Suggestions for Dealing with Him." BB
- 2) Glad, B. 1983. "Black-and-white thinking: Ronald Reagan's approach to foreign policy." *Political Psychology*, 4(1):33-76. Library
- 3) Byman, DL, and KM Pollack. 2001." Let Us Now Praise Great Men: Bringing the Statesman Back In." *International Security* 25(4): 107-46. Library.
- 4) Greenstein, F. I. 1992. "Can personality and politics be studied systematically?" *Political Psychology*, 13(1):105-128. Library

## **2/17 Week 4: Doing Political Psychology "Scientifically"**

- 1) Mintz, A., Yang, Y., and McDermott, R. 2011. "Experimental approaches to international relations." *International Studies Quarterly*, 55(2): 493–501. Library
- 2) Mintz, A., Redd, S., and Vedlitz, A. 2006. "Can we generalize from student experiments to the real world in political science, military affairs, and international relations?" *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 50(5): 757–776. Library
- 3) Renshon, J. 2009. "When public statements reveal private beliefs: Assessing operational codes at a distance." *Political Psychology*, 30(4):649–661. Library

## **2/24 Week 5: Learning and Analogies**

### *Personality Assessments Due in Class (Hard copy in class)*

- 1) Jervis, Robert. 1976. *Perception and Misperception in International Politics*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. Chapters 4-5. BB.
- 2) Khong, YF. 1992. *Analogies at War: Korea, Munich, Dien Bien Phu, and the Vietnam Decisions of 1965*: Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. Chapters 1-2, 7-9. BB

## **3/3 Week 6: Prospect Theory and IR**

- 1) McDermott, R. "Prospect Theory in International Relations: The Iranian Hostage Rescue Mission." *Political Psychology* (1992): 237-63. Library
- 2) Haas, M.L. "Prospect Theory and the Cuban Missile Crisis." *International Studies Quarterly* 45, no. 2 (2001): 241-70. Library
- 3) Levy, Jack. 1992. Prospect Theory and International Relations: Theoretical Applications and Analytical Problems. *Political Psychology* 13(2): 283-310. Library

## **3/10 - Spring Break No Class**

### **3/17 Week 7: Social Identity Theory and IR**

#### *In-Progress Presentations Begin*

- 1) Mercer, Jonathan. 1995. "Anarchy and Identity." *International Organization* 49(2): 229-52. Library
- 2) Gries, Peter. H. 2005. "Social Psychology and the Identity-Conflict Debate: Is a 'China Threat' Inevitable?" *European Journal of International Relations* 11(2): 235-65. Library
- 3) Clunan, A.L. 2009. *The Social Construction of Russia's Resurgence*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press. Chapter 1. BB
- 4) Jacques Hymans 2006. *The Psychology of Nuclear Proliferation*. Chapter 1. BB

### **3/24 Week 8: Foreign Policy Decision Making**

- 1) Holsti, Ole. 1989. "Crisis Decision Making." *Behavior, Society, and Nuclear War*, New York: Oxford University Press, Chapter 1. BB
- 2) Lebow, Richard. 1981. *Between Peace and War*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press. Chapters 5, 8. BB

### **3/31 Week 9: Emotions in IR (I)**

- 1) Crawford, N. 2000. The Passion of World Politics. *International Security* 24( 4): 116-54. Library
- 2) Saurette, Paul. 2006. You Dissin Me? Humiliation and Post 9/11 Global Politics. *Review of International Studies* 32(3): 495-522. Library
- 3) Löwenheim, Oded, and Gadi Heimann. 2008. Revenge in International Politics. *Security Studies* 17: 685-724. Library
- 4) Mercer Group Emotions reading TBD

#### **4/7 Week 10: Emotions in IR (II)**

- 1) Mercer, Jonathan. 2010. Emotional Beliefs. *International Organization* 64(Winter): 1-31. Library
- 2) Ross, A. A. (2006). Coming in from the cold: Constructivism and emotions. *European Journal of International Relations*, 12(2):197–222. Library
- 3) Holmes, Marcus. Believing this and Alieving that: Belief Discordant Behavior in International Politics. BB

#### **4/14 Week 11: Conclusions and Catch-Up Material**

- 1) Wendt, Alex. 2010. Flatland: Quantum Mind and the International Hologram. Library
- 2) Holmes, Marcus. 2013. The Force of Face-to-Face Diplomacy: Mirror Neurons and the Problem of Intentions. *International Organization*. Library
- 3) Other readings TBD/catchup material

#### **4/21: Final Presentation of Papers (I)**

#### **4/28: Final Presentation of Papers (II)**