Description of Course

This course emphasizes the psychological mechanisms affecting political reasoning and behavior, such as how psychological biases affect our cognition, information-processing, and political behavior. Comparisons between U.S. and Swedish political contexts are explored, specifically examining how the political mind is embedded in social frameworks. This course is based on theory and research from the field of political psychology, an interdisciplinary academic field studying the relationships between psychological and political processes. The course also includes a study tour to Berlin, Germany. With its turbulent history from WWII, the Holocaust and the Cold War, Berlin has been the
center for extreme populist governments to the more Democratic forces of today. However, present challenges like Brexit, the refugee crisis and the rise of right wing populism in Europe is causing political shifts in the country with growing and diverse public reactions. On this study tour, we will analyze and discuss the historical and psychological mechanisms triggering the current political situation and behaviors. The academic visits will give you a forum to discuss and debate cultural differences, analyze the connection between policy and practice, and investigate the psychology of political behavior in a European context.

Learning Objectives
- To understand and describe principles and concepts related to political cognition such as information processing, decision-making, and perception.
- To apply theory and analyze political phenomena in daily life from a psychological perspective.
- To critically evaluate scientific methods and research within the field of political psychology.
- To contrast and consider cultural differences between American and European political contexts.
- To understand the dominant political ideologies in Sweden and how they differ from the US
- To engage with Swedish political groups to learn more about their underlying moral values and perspectives
- To gain a deeper understanding from a psychological perspective of historical and contemporary political issues in an European context

Faculty
Ebba Karlsson, M.Sc.
M.Sc. in Clinical Psychology (Stockholm University, 2015), B.A. in Philosophy (Stockholm University, 2013). Visiting student in Politics and Public Policy at New York University, and research internship at Corpus Christi College, Cambridge University. Founder of Poplar, a non-profit organization dedicated to improving political civility in society. Also working as a clinical psychologist and organizational consultant, focusing on leadership development, stress resilience and well-being. With DIS since 2016.

Readings
Books:

Selected chapters from:

Articles:


**Field Studies**

**Field Study 1 – Visiting the think tank Timbro**
- **Topic:** Understanding the Swedish political system and contemporary political context, outside of a governmental context.
- **Objective:** To learn about how a Swedish think tank operates and aims to influence public opinion and politicians. To identify and understand the differences between the political landscape and public opinion in a Swedish context compared to the US.
- **Description:** We will visit the Swedish think tank Timbro, where we will learn about their work and mission as well as the Swedish political system. More information about Timbro can be at www.timbro.se/en.

**Field Study 2 - Visiting the Swedish Parliament**
- **Topic:** Understanding Swedish political system and contemporary political context, focusing on government and the legal system.
- **Objective:** To learn how the Swedish government and parliamentary system works, with both historical and contemporary perspectives. To identify and understand cultural differences between the political system in Sweden and the US.
- **Description:** We will visit the Swedish parliament, where we will get a tour of the parliament building as well as meeting with a Swedish MP.

**Guest Lecturers**

**Robert Örell, Exit**

Robert Örell is the founder of Exit, a non-profit organization which aims to help and provide support to those who wish to leave a nationalistic/racist/nazi oriented groups and movements. Exit provide hands-on support for persons wanting to leave a neo nazi or racist environment by cooperating with various housing corporations, the police, social services, legal system and also with the client’s own family and friends. During this lecture the students will get first-hand experience and extensive
knowledge about real life application of theory related to extremism and radicalization processes.
More information about Exit can be found here: http://exit.fryshuset.se/english/

Approach to Teaching
A variety of teaching methods will be used, including lectures, class discussions, group presentations, interactive classroom activities and multi-media to facilitate the understanding of theory, research and their cultural implications. Psychological applications will be explored using case examples.

Expectations of the Students
Students are expected to have done the readings and come prepared with relevant questions and notes for each class. This will give us material to generate conversation. When responding to questions in class, make reference to our readings to support the points you are making. Students are expected to challenge themselves and their worldviews with an investigative mindset and curiosity, seeking to understand the topics at hand as well as how they relate to themselves as individuals and the world around them.

Evaluation

Engaged Participation (15%):
Your participation grade reflects the importance of being active in this course, which relies in great part on the reflections, discussions, and exercises in class. Students are expected to come prepared with relevant questions for discussion pertaining to the topic, as well as making contributions with relevant analytical insights and critical evaluations. The participation grade also takes into consideration punctuality.

Study tour reflection paper (35%):
After the study tour to Berlin you will write an individual paper where you incorporate one or more specific theories from the course with the experiences and learnings from the study tour. The paper should be around 6-7 pages 1.5 spaced (excluding references) and be conducted using APA style. The references should include class readings and independent sources. See Canvas for more detailed instructions.

In-class exam (20%)
There will be a re-cap quiz covering the theories and concepts that has been discussed during the course.

Group presentation (30%):
The course will conclude with group presentations (3-4 students) which should demonstrate an integration of course material, research findings and a topic of your choice. Students will search for an article connected to the course theme, which they will summarize and connect with a real life political phenomena (e.g. in terms of a certain study tour or field visit, a historical event, a contemporary political situation, or similar). Then they will present this to the class, and facilitate a group discussion. More information can be found on Canvas.

Grading
Course Summary:

Session 1: Introduction to political psychology and scientific methods within the field
- Information about the course
- What is political psychology – history and overview
- Scientific methods in political psychology
- Bias within social psychology

Required Readings

Canvas:

**Recommended readings**

**Text:**


**Newspaper:**


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**Session 2: Moral and political cognition, the moral matrix**

- Intuitionism and rationalism
- The evolution of morality
- The moral matrix
- Cultural differences between US and European moral values

**Required Readings**

**Text:**


**Recommended extramaterial**

**Visual/Youtube clip:**


**Recommended**

**Visual/Youtube clip:**


**Audio:**

**Session 3: Motivated Reasoning**

**Required Readings**

**Canvas:**

**Recommended extramaterial**

**Magazine:**

**Audio:**
- McRaney, David (Show host). (2015, November 9). Why you often believe people who see the world differently are wrong [Audio podcast].

**Field study**

**Location: Swedish Parliament**

**Time: 9-12.00**

**Topic:** Understanding Swedish political system and contemporary political context, focusing on government and the legal system.

**Objective:** To learn how the Swedish government and parliamentary system works, with both historical and contemporary perspectives. To identify and understand cultural differences between the political system in Sweden and the US.

**Description:** We will visit the Swedish parliament, where we will get a tour of the parliament building as well as a meeting with a Swedish MP.
| Date: Friday, Jun 15, 2018 9-10.00 | Session 4: Motivated reasoning from an evolutionary perspective  
- Cultural cognition theory  
- Identity-protective cognition  

**Required Readings**  
**Text:**  

**Canvas:**  

| Date: Friday, Jun 15, 2018 10.15-12.00 | Session 6: Authority and Obedience / Evil  
- Why do people commit evil acts?  
- How does situational factors influence human behavior?  

**Required Readings:**  
**Canvas:**  

**Recommended**  
**Visual/YouTube clip:**  

| Date: Friday, June 15 13-15.00 | Session 7: Authority and Obedience/Evil - continuing  
- We will watch and discuss the movie Hanna Arendt as preparation for Berlin study tour  

| Date: June 18-22 | Study tour Berlin  

| Date: Mon, Jun 25, 2018 9.00-10.00 | Session 5: The political psychology of groups  
- Social identity theory  
- Social categorization theory |
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<tr>
<td>Mon, June 25</td>
<td>10.00-11.00</td>
<td>Session 7: Personality, Genes, and Politics</td>
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<td>- What is personality?</td>
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<td>- Do our genes determine our politics?</td>
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<td>Required readings</td>
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<td>Text:</td>
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<td>Monday, June 25th</td>
<td>11.00-12.00</td>
<td>Seminar discussion regarding reflection papers</td>
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<td>Tues, June 26, 2018</td>
<td>9-11.15</td>
<td>In class exam</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tues, June 26, 2018</td>
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<td>Session 8: Mass Politics, persuasion and media</td>
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12.15-13.30

- Voting behavior
- What role does traditional and social media play in politics
- Cultural comparisons between US and Swedish media climate and voting behavior

Required Readings

**Newspaper:**

**Visual/Youtube:**

Recommended extramaterial

**Movie**
- “The War Room” (1993)  
  http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0108515/?ref_=nv_sr_1
- Wag the Dog (1997)  
  http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0120885/

Wed, Jun 27, 2018 9-11

**Field study**

**Topic:** Understanding the Swedish political system and contemporary political context, outside of a governmental context.

**Objective:** To learn about how a Swedish think tank operates and aims to influence public opinion and politicians. To identify and understand the differences between the political landscape and public opinion in a Swedish context compared to the US.
**Description:** We will visit the Swedish think tank Timbro, where we will learn about their work and mission as well as the Swedish political system. More information about Timbro can be at www.timbro.se/en.

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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
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<th>Session</th>
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| Wed, Jun 27, 2018 | 12.30-14.00 | Session 9: Political Polarization in the US | - Symptoms and causes of political polarization in the US  
- What can be done to improve the situation?  
- Cultural comparisons between polarization in the US and Sweden |
| Thurs, Jun 28, 2018 | 10:00-11:30 | Session 12: Extremism and radicalization | Guest lecture by Robert Örell from Exit  
Robert Örell is the founder of Exit, a non-profit organization which aims to help and provide support to those who wish to leave a nationalistic/racist/nazi oriented groups and movements. Exit provide hands-on support for persons wanting to leave a neo nazi or racist group. |

**Required Readings**

**Canvas:**

**Newspaper:**

**Visual/Youtube clip:**
environment by cooperating with various housing corporations, the police, social services, legal system and also with the client’s own family and friends. During this lecture the students will get first-hand experience and extensive knowledge about real life application of theory related to extremism and radicalization processes. More information about Exit can be found here: http://exit.fryshuset.se/english/

Thur, Jun 28, 2018
12.30-14.00

Session 12: Ending on a positive note – behavioral change

This class will focus on what can be done to change behaviors and attitudes and work towards less polarization and bias. You will get some insights from clinical psychology and Applied Behavior Analysis, a theory and intervention that can also be used outside of a clinical context. Summary and review before final paper.

Required Readings
Canvas:


Recommended readings


Study tour reflection paper due Thursday June 28th

Friday, June 29th
9-11.30

Student Group Presentations and Wrap up
Required readings

Book

Articles


Zimbardo, P. G. (2004). A situationist perspective on the psychology of evil: Understanding how good people are transformed into perpetrators. The social psychology of good and evil, 21-50.

Other media
