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.

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 (30%):
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 (25%):
There will be an in-class exam covering the theories and concepts that have 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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Engaged participation</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study Tour Reflection Paper</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In-class exam</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group presentation</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Course Summary:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Tue Jun 12, 2018 13:30-16:30 | **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**  
  **Newspaper:**  
| Wed Jun 13, 2018 9-10:30 | **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:**  
### Visual/Youtube clip:

### 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 has a meeting with a Swedish MP.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Session</th>
<th>Required Readings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Friday, Jun 15, 2018 9-10.00 | Session 4: Motivated reasoning from an evolutionary perspective  
- Cultural cognition theory  
- Identity-protective cognition  | **Text:**  

**Canvas:**  
| 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:**  
- Visual/YouTube clip:  
| 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  
<p>| June 17-21 | Study tour Berlin |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Session</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Required Readings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mon, Jun 25</td>
<td>9.00-10.00</td>
<td>Session 5</td>
<td>The political psychology of groups</td>
<td><strong>Required Readings</strong>&lt;br&gt;&lt;br&gt;<strong>Text:</strong>&lt;br&gt;- Cottam, M. L., Mastors, E., Preston, T., &amp; Dietz, B. (2015). Chapter 3: Cognition, Social identity, Emotions (pp. 57-62) in Introduction to Political Psychology. Routledge.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Mon, Jun 25 | 10.00-11.00| Session 7 | Personality, Genes, and Politics                                     | **Required readigns**<br><br>**Text:**<br>- Haidt, J. (2012). The righteous mind: Why good people are divided by politics and religion. Vintage. Chapter 12: “Can’t we all disagree more productively?”: pages 319-330.  
| Mon, Jun 25 | 11.00-12.00|          | Seminar discussion regarding reflection papers                        |                                                                                  |
| Tues, Jun 26 | 9-11.15    |          | In class exam                                                          |                                                                                  |
| Tues, Jun 26 | 12.15-13.30| Session 8 | Mass Politics, persuasion and media                                   | **Session 8: Mass Politics, persuasion and media**<br>- 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:

Field study

Wed, Jun 27, 2018 9-11

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.

Wed, Jun 27, 2018 12.00-14.00

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
Required Readings

Canvas:

Newspaper:

Visual/Youtube clip:

Thur, Jun 28, 2018 9-12.00

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:

Study tour reflection paper due Thursday June 28th
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Friday, June 29&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
<th>Student Group Presentations and Wrap up</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9-11.30</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Required readings

Book

Articles


Other media
