**Psychology 275**

**The Psychology of Politics—and the Politics of Psychology**

Spring 2012

Class Meetings: Tuesday 4:30 to 7:30 pm

Class Location: Stiteler B6

Professor: Philip E. Tetlock

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Office Hours: Thursday 2:20-3 :50 pm

**Overview:** This course will explore psychological approaches to understanding political worldviews—and the diverse opinions people hold about what constitutes good political judgment (Who has it—in your view? And why do you think so?).  It will also explore the possibility that psychological science itself is not immune to the political debates swirling around it. Specific topics will include: the workings of belief systems and their power to shape what we “see,” cognitive biases and their power to cause miscalculations, sacred values and their role in stabilizing belief systems and social systems, personality, ideology and the linkages between the personal and the political, and clashing conceptions of morality and both distributive and corrective justice (striking variations in what people consider to be fair). We shall also explore topics that have sparked controversy in the psychological research literature and that polarize opinion along political lines, including work on unconscious bias.

A distinctive feature of this course is the opportunity to participate in an unprecedented political-forecasting tournament that pits a number of university-based research teams against each other. The goal of each team is to assign realistic probabilities or odds to possible political outcomes around the world. The theory underlying the tournament is straightforward: teams are likely to do best to the degree they learn to put aside their ideological (cognitive and emotional) biases and cultivate the self-critical skills needed for "seeing the world as it really is."

**Course Grade:** The course grade will be based equally on exam performance and a research project (that will involve opportunities to test your wits against the vicissitudes of fortune in the forecasting tournament). Specifically, your grade will be 50% based on exam performance (20% midterm on week 6 and 30% take home final exam) and 50% based on the research project (project grade breakdown: 25% the quality of your written analyses and your forecasts and 25% the quality of the your team report and your team forecasts).

**Communications**: Address all correspondences concerning course logistics to Dahlia Mukherjee (dahliam@psych.upenn.edu). Dahlia will respond to all emails within 48 hours. Address all questions on course content – concepts and methods – to Professor Phil Tetlock who will respond to all e-mails within 48 hours.

**Books of Possible Interest**

I recommend the following books for those with a deep interest in the subject (not required). The required readings will be posted under the relevant weeks/class sessions at the 275 blackboard site. .

Caplan, B. (2007). The myth of the rational voter. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Fiske, S. & Taylor, S. (2010). Social Cognition: From Brains to Culture. New York: McGraw Hill.

Jost, J. & Sidanius, J. (1999). Political Psychology. Duke University Press.

Kahneman, D. (2011). Thinking, fast and slow. New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux.

Tetlock, P. E. 2005. *Expert Political Judgment.* Princeton University Press.

Zaller, J. 1992. *The Nature and Origins of Mass Opinion*. Cambridge University Press

**Readings**

**Week 1(1/17): Overview of field. What do we mean when we say someone has good (political) judgment? Who, in your view, has it? How do you know?**

Read: Chapter 1 of "Expert political judgment: who has it? How can we know?" Princeton University Press.

Class Preparation Assignment (page limit of one page):

1. Come to class prepared to argue for a political position in which you genuinely believe (on taxes or national health insurance or capital punishment or civil liberties/terrorism,…)—*and also prepared to argue against that position*. Draw up a list of the best three pro arguments and of the best three anti arguments—then clearly label which arguments are pro or anti. (these materials will become part of your team participation/class participation file which you will submit at the end of the term for grading).
2. Come to class prepared to identify a political viewpoint that you hold in contempt—and to answer the question: Under what conditions, might an intelligent/otherwise-moral human being embrace such a perspective? Try stating that perspective in a way that proponents of it would find acceptable (not feel caricatured). Again, retain these records and make them part of your team participation/class participation file).
3. Complete short survey online by Sunday 5pm.().

**Week 2(1/24): Psychology of expert judgment--and rising to the challenge of learning how to distinguish expertise from pseudo-expertise?**

Caplan, B. (2007). The myth of the rational voter. Princeton Press. Chapters 1 and 2.

Kahneman, D. and Klein, G. (2009) Conditions for Intuitive Expertise: A Failure to Disagree. American Psychologist

Tetlock, P.E. (2010). Experts all the way down. The National Interest.

**Week 3(1/31): Learning to explore the interplay of two mental systems: I and II.**

Chapters 1, 2, 7 and 10 of Kahneman, D. (2011), Thinking, fast and slow. Farrar, Straus, and Giroux.

Keil, F. Folkscience: Coarse interpretations of a complex reality. Trends in Cognitive Science

***Optional:***

**Chapters 14 and 15 of** Kahneman, D. (2011), Thinking, fast and slow.

**Week 4(2/7): Personality and Ideology: What is ideology? Which types of people tend to be attracted to which ideological positions? And why?**

*Proponents of the rigidity of the right*

Jost, J. (2006). The end of ideology. American Psychologist.

Block, J. & Block, J.H.(2005) Nursery school personality and political orientation two decades later. Journal of Research in Personality

*Proponents of ideologue hypothesis:*

Tetlock, P. (1984). Cognitive styles and political belief systems in the British House of Commons. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology.

***Optional:***

Brown, R. (1965). The authoritarian personality. In Social Psychology: Free Press.

**Week 5(2/14): Are you a fanatic? Or just principled? Is one man's terrorist another's freedom fighter?**

Olson, J. (2007). The Freshness of Fanaticism. Perspectives on Politics

Tetlock, P. et al. (1994). The slavery debate in antebellum America: Cognitive style and the limits of compromise. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology.

 Chapters 1, 2, 3, 4 & 14 of McCauley, C., Maskalenko, S. Friction: how radicalization happens to them and us.

**Week 6 (2/21) Slippery standards of evidence and proof in political psychology.**

Lord, C., Ross, L. & Lepper, M. R. (1979) Biased Assimilation and Attitude Polarization: The Effects of Prior Theories on Subsequently Considered

Evidence. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology37(11): 2098–2109.

Robinson, R.J., Keltner, D., Ward, A., & Ross, L. (1995). Actual versus assumed differences in construal: “Naïve Realism” in intergroup perception conflict. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 68(3), 404-417.

Chapter 4 on “belief updating” from “Expert political judgment” book.

**Week 7 (2/28) Part A: Midterm**

**Part B: Why is it so hard to learn anything from history that we were not already ideologically predisposed to learn? Why do historical counterfactuals have any persuasive power at all?**

Tetlock, P.E., & Parker, G. (2006). Counterfactual thought experiments: Why we can’t live with them and how we must learn to live with them. In P.E. Tetlock, R.N. Lebow & G. Parker (Eds.) (2006). Unmaking the West: What-if scenarios that rewrite world history. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press.

Chapter 5 from Expert Political Judgment.

**Week 8(3/13)**: **Almost Everybody Holds Something Sacred.**

Haidt, J. (2007). The new synthesis in moral psychology. Science

Bartels, D. & Pizzaro, D.A. (2011) The mismeasure of morals: Antisocial personality traits predict. Cognition

Tetlock, P. (2003). Thinking the unthinkable. Trends in Cognitive Science.

Schoemaker, P. & Tetlock, P. E. (2012). Taboo scenarios. California Management Review

**Week 9 (3/20): Thinking about what is—and is not—fair. The psychology of distributive justice.**

 Mitchell, P.G., Tetlock, P.E., Newman, D., & Lerner, J. (2003). Experiments behind the veil: A hypothetical societies approach to the study of social justice. Political Psychology, 24, 519-547.

Tetlock, P.E., & Mitchell, P.G. (1993). Liberal and conservative approaches to justice: Conflicting psychological portraits. In B. Mellers & J. Baron (Eds.), Psychological perspectives on justice. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Singer, P. (1973) Famine, Affluence and Morality. Philosophy & Public Affairs

Cowen, T. (2011). The Inequality That Matters. The American Interest.

**Week 10 (3/27): Can One Be Both A Real Psychologist and A Retributivist? Is it possible to be morally outraged by the conduct of automatons to whom one does not attribute "free will"?**

Milgram, S. Obedience to Authority. Chapter 1, 2 and 5

**Morse, S.** Lost in Translation: An Essay on Law and Neuroscience, Law and Neuroscience, 13 Current Legal Issues 529 (Michael Freeman, ed., 2011).

Zimbardo. A Situationist Perspective on the Psychology of Evil: Understanding How Good People Are Transformed into Perpetrators. The Social Psychology of Good and Evil.

**Week 11 (4/3):  Psychology of punitiveness and forgiveness: What we prepared to do to wrong-doers? Why any limits? What are we prepared to forgive?**

Fincher, K. & Tetlock, P. E. (under review). Symbolic punitiveness: Covert retributivism under cover of attributional ambiguity.

Pinker, S. The Better Angels of Our Nature: Why Violence Has Declined. Chapters 8.

Goldberg, J.H., Lerner, J.S., & Tetlock, P.E. (1999). Rage and reason: The psychology of the intuitive prosecutor. European Journal of Social Psychology, *29*, 781-795.

**Week 12 (4/10): Claims About Prejudice—and Their Political Implications.**  **Nearly 50 years after the passage of the Civil Rights Act, how pervasive and potent a force is prejudice in American life today? Is it possible to over-estimate as well as under-estimate prejudice?**

 Kang, J., & Banaji, M. R. (2006). Fair measures: A behavioral realist revision of "affirmative action." California Law Review*, 94,* 1063-1118.

Tetlock, P.E., & Mitchell, G. (2009). Implicit bias and accountability systems: What must organizations do to prevent discrimination? In B.M. Staw & A. Brief (Eds.), Research in organizational behavior (vol. 29). New York: Elsevier. Pp. 3-38.

**Week 13 (4/17): Class Participation Exercise in Designing the Take-Home Exam.**

**No readings assigned—just think hard about themes cutting across topics already covered**

**Week 14 (4/24): The Great Ideological-Bias Debate.**

 **Teams will be randomly assigned to one of four positions in the debate. presentations.**

Distribution of take home final (due 4/30, 4 pm)