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PSYC 105-03, Topics in Political Psychology, Spring 2007

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Topics in Political Psychology - Spring, 2007

Dr. David A. Houston

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Office Hours: Tuesday & Thursday, 3:00-3:30, or by appointment

This class will not be an exhaustive overview of Political Psychology. Rather, the class will explore selected topics within this area in depth, via lecture, readings and discussion. The topics for later class sessions will be left open and student input will be solicited in determining the topics for those classes. Class Format will be lecture and discussion. The course will use **Groupthink** by Irving Janis (2nd edition, 1982) supplemented by articles.

Class Preparation.

Please read all assigned materials before class. Some information may be redundant with the text but we will use class time to reiterate and explain difficult material in the readings, as well as providing additional information.

Evaluation

(i) **Exams:** There will be three non-cumulative exams. All exams will be a mix of short answer and essay questions. Each exam will count as 25% of the final course grade. **Should you need to miss an exam due to illness or emergency, All make-up exams will be scheduled to immediately follow the third exam.**

(ii) **Paper:** A library research paper on a subject related to one of the course topics will be due, in class, on **Tuesday, April 17, 2007**. A hard copy of the paper must be handed in – e-mail submission is **not** sufficient. The paper should be a double-spaced, typewritten document consisting of a **maximum** of eight (8) pages of text. Sources should be referenced in either MLA or APA style. The paper will count as 25% of the final course grade.

The purpose of the paper is to give you a chance to explore some topic related to the course that you find especially interesting. The "ideal paper" will be thoughtful, written clearly and with correct grammar. Multiple sources should be consulted and referenced. Having **only** internet materials as Sources is **not** acceptable.

Paper Proposal: A proposal of your paper topic is due on **Thursday, March 1**, in class. The proposal should include a one-to-two paragraph description and **justification** of your paper topic, with at least two references (in APA style). To justify your topic, explain: **why you chose** the topic; **why are you interested** in the topic; and how the topic **fits within the scope** of this course. You are encouraged to see me about your ideas for paper topics **before** the proposals are due. **Those who provide a properly constructed paper proposal by the date specified may earn up to 4 extra-credit points which may be added to any test score.**

Note the due date and time for the final paper -- do not ask for extensions! For every business day the proposal or the paper is late a full letter grade will be deducted (e.g., an A would become a B).

Course Grading Scale

A+	97-100 %
A	93-96
A-	90-92
B+	87-89
B	83-86
B-	80-82
C+	77-79
C	73-76
C-	70-72
D+	67-69
D	63-66
D-	60-62
F	0 - 59

Students with Disability:

If you have a disability which may require assistance or accommodations, or you have questions related to any accommodations for testing, note takers, readers, etc., please speak with me as soon as possible. All disabilities need to be documented through the office of disabilities services. They are more than willing to have you tested and document any disabilities you may have. Please make use of this resource here at Rhodes if you believe a disability is interfering with your school work.

Honor Code

As students at Rhodes College, you have all signed an Honor Code. This is a precious tradition here at Rhodes College and one that needs to be respected and maintained. A violation of this code would include looking at assignments from others (past or present), taking material off the Internet (i.e., papers), plagiarizing the work of others, etc. I would like you to pledge all work turned in for credit in this course. You may write out the pledge (“I have neither given or received help on this assignment/test”) or you may simply write the word “Pledged”. Then sign your name below this. I trust students to uphold the Honor Code and think signing each assignment is an important reminder of the ethical standard in which we believe.

Experiment Participation.

Students are encouraged to participate in ongoing research in the department by volunteering for three hours to be subjects in experiments conducted by students in advanced psychology classes. The Human Subjects Review committee will approve all such research first, and participants will be given an opportunity to learn about the findings of the research at the end of the project. We believe that participation as a subject is an excellent way to gain first-hand knowledge and deeper understanding about how psychological research is conducted. Students who participate in an experiment will write a short report describing (1) what they did and how they felt during the experiment and (2) what the research question and the researchers’ hypotheses were. These reports are due by April 30. An alternative to the experiment participation requirement is offered to those students who do not wish to be a research subject or are unable to schedule an experiment. This will involve a comparable amount of writing about research that the student will read.

1/11	Introduction and Overview.
1/16	Psychological Analysis of Political Phenomena.
1/18-23	Ideology.
1/25-30	Political Deviance.
2/1	Social Influence I – Compliance, Conformity & Obedience.
2/6	Social Influence II – Propaganda. Review for First Exam.
2/8	First Exam.
2/13-27	The Psychology of Totalitarianism. Reading: Osherow, <i>Making sense of the nonsensical: An analysis of Jonestown</i> (pp. 71-88) excerpted in Aronson (Ed.) (1999), Readings about the Social Animal (8 th Edition). New York: Freeman.
3/1	Terror, Fanaticism & Lives on the edge. NOTE: Paper Proposal Due on 3/1.
3/6-8	War & Genocide: The Psychology of Mass Violence
3/13-15	No Class; Spring Break
3/20	Summary & Review for Second Exam.
3/22	Second Exam.
3/27	Introduction to Groupthink: Psychologically-informed analysis of “Real World” Phenomena Reading: Janis: Preface, Chapter 1.
3/29-4/3	Groupthink in Action I: The Bay of Pigs, the Korean War, & Pearl Harbor Reading: Janis: Chapters 2, 3, 4 and 6.
4/5	No Class; Easter Break
4/10-17	Groupthink in Action II: Vietnam, Watergate & the Groupthink Syndrome. Reading: Janis: Chapters 5, 7, 8, 10 and 11. NOTE: Research Paper due 4/17.
4/19	Beyond Groupthink: The Psychology of Political Group Decision Making Demoralization & Manipulation: The Fall of France (1940); Collective Madness: Hitler in the Bunker (1945) Reading: Tetlock, Peterson, McGuire, Chang, & Feld (1992). <i>Assessing political group dynamics: A test of the groupthink model.</i> JPSP, 63, 403-425.
4/24	Summary and review for the Third Exam.
4/26	Third Exam.