Seminar in the Psychology of Political Leadership and Decision Making

Political Science 533b

Instructor: Dr. Thomas Preston                Spring Semester 2015
Office: 810 Johnson Tower
Office Hours: Fridays 1:00-2:00p.m.
            or by appointment (335-5225 or tpreston@wsu.edu)
Class Time: Friday, 2:10-5p.m.; WILS 4

Course Description and Objectives
This seminar is designed to provide graduate students with a solid overview of the psychological theories of political leadership and decision making, as well as to acquaint them with a variety of methodological approaches useful in its study. The opening section of the course will explore many of the competing definitions and theories of political leadership - with an eye towards providing students with an overview of the fields of study ahead. The second section of the course will provide in-depth reviews of a variety of methodological approaches (e.g., personality assessment-at-a-distance profiling techniques; operational codes; cognitive mapping; psychobiography) currently used in the discipline to study political leadership. These competing approaches will be examined and critiqued by students. The course will examine how political leaders are selected and socialized, what factors affect the character of their leadership, and the ways in which leader personalities, or individual characteristics, affect their leadership or decision making styles. The final section of the course involves an overview of the decision making literature and the impact of problem representation, group dynamics, bureaucratic politics, and stress upon the decision process. It is hoped that this seminar in political psychology will demonstrate to the student the value of multi-disciplinary work – and the fact that concepts, theories, and methodological approaches of use in one field can often be employed profitably in others. Students will also take part in a simulation during the semester in which they take on the role of professional leader analysts in the U.S. intelligence community. Each student will select a different world leader for analysis and, over the course of the semester, produce an assessment-at-a-distance profile of this leader.

Course Requirements
This seminar has been carefully designed to provide students with a comprehensive overview of the most important debates and literature on the psychology of political leadership and decision making. Unfortunately, this requires an extensive reading load in order to accomplish your training. Taking this into account, this seminar places a substantial amount (20%) of the final grade on the active participation and demonstration by students during seminar discussions that they have read the assigned course materials. Although challenging, it is only through such extensive coverage of the literature that you will attain the competency required to develop a specialization in this field and be able to successfully market yourself as qualified to do either research or teaching in this area, or work as a professional leader analyst within government. It is expected that students regularly attend seminar sessions, read the assigned weekly materials in advance, and actively participate in class discussions. In addition, each week, two students will be responsible for leading class discussions on the assigned readings. If there is a particular section you would be interested in focusing upon, please sign up for the discussant role for that week in advance with the instructor. Given the heavy reading load, it is strongly recommended that students read ahead whenever possible.

In terms of written assignments, there is one main paper project (a 25 to 30 page leader profile using assessment-at-a-distance techniques) and one mini-paper (10 pages) required for this seminar. These form the basis of a simulation in which students take on the role of professional leader analysts in the U.S. intelligence community. Each student will select a different world leader (non-U.S.) for analysis and, over the course of the semester, develop a detailed leader profile through completion of these two written assignments. Beginning in the second week of class, all students will choose a political leader about whom they would like to
learn more. This leader will be the subject of both written projects. The selected leader MUST be a CURRENT foreign (non-U.S.) leader, but he or she does not have to be the head of government. Thus, leaders of opposition political parties, rebel groups, terror organizations, international organizations, military or religious institutions, etc. may be selected, as well as normal heads of state. The most important criteria in choosing your leader are to select one: (1) for whom there are readily accessible biographical and/or autobiographical materials; (2) for whom there is, with proper digging, enough material about them for you to do the three projects; and (3) for whom you would be able to find available speeches and/or interviews with the press. The following are the topics for the projects and the dates they are due:

1. **Background Study of a Political Leader** - (30% of final grade, 10 pages, double-spaced minimum) Collecting psychobiographical information on your leader. Guide to writing this mini-paper is at back of this syllabus. **Mini-paper due in class on March 13th.**

2. **Completed Leader Profile and Analysis** - (50% of final grade, 25-30 pages minimum, double-spaced) Adopt one or more profiling technique(s) covered in class to provide a more in-depth overview of your leader. Guidelines and outline of the basic structure of this profile are provided at the back of the syllabus. This profile represents your expert analysis of your leader and what behaviors we might reasonably expect to see from them in different policy contexts (i.e., based upon your research about them, any applications of the psychological or decision-making literature you judge appropriate, or other coding you have done). **Leader Profile (LP) due on last day of class, May 1st.**

**Seminar Participation Grading Index** - *(used to evaluate student participation during each class session throughout the semester).*

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Student Performance in Seminar Session</th>
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<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Active participation in seminar discussions PLUS substantial demonstration of having read the readings PLUS substantive demonstration of theoretical and/or critical thinking regarding the readings.</td>
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<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>Active participation in seminar discussions PLUS demonstration of having read and understood the readings.</td>
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<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>Limited participation in seminar discussions PLUS limited demonstration of having read and understood the readings.</td>
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<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>Limited participation in seminar discussions PLUS no effective demonstration of having read or understood the readings.</td>
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<td>C</td>
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**Late papers are heavily penalized (10% per day late beyond the deadline) and are not accepted at all if more than 4 days late.** Of course, if you have extenuating circumstances (such as a prolonged illness or other personal problem), extensions may be granted, but only at the instructor's discretion. **Extensions will not be given for those who put off writing their papers until close to the deadline and run out of time.** Schedule your time well and work ahead so that you do not find yourself in a bind.

**Code of Conduct**

The University Student Handbook states that students have the right to freedom of expression but that disruptive behavior in classes will not be permitted. You are expected to participate in classroom activities in a professional manner. Private discussions with other students, passing notes, reading newspapers, disruptive eating, sleeping, or persistently arriving late or leaving early constitute inappropriate classroom behavior. If you demonstrate such behavior, you will be verbally warned in class to cease. If you persist in disruptive or distracting behavior, formal action, in accordance with WSU policy,
will be taken. Expectations for student assignments and participation are set by the course syllabus and are not negotiable. Students who decline to fulfill those expectations should select another course.

**Statement of Disability Policy**
Reasonable accommodations are available for students who have a documented disability. Please notify the instructor during the first week of class of any accommodations needed for the course. Late notification may mean that requested accommodations might not be available. All accommodations must be approved through the Disability Resource Center located in the Administration Annex Room 205, 335-3417. The student must complete and sign an Accommodation Form with a DRC staff member and take it to each instructor for signature.

**Academic Dishonesty: WAC 504-25-015 and WAC 504-25-315**
Academic Dishonesty includes cheating, plagiarism, and fabrication in the process of completing academic work. The University expects that student organizations will accept these standards and that their members will conduct themselves as responsible members of the academic community. These standards should be interpreted by students as general notice of prohibited conduct. They should be read broadly, and are not designed to define misconduct in exhaustive forms. All clear instances of academic dishonesty shall be reported to the Office of Student Affairs. The first reported instance at WSU of academic dishonesty by a student will be treated as purely an academic matter unless, in the judgment of the responsible instructor, more serious action should be taken through the disciplinary process. Any allegation of subsequent academic dishonesty will be treated as a matter to be referred to the Office of Student Affairs.

**Required Texts & Readings**
This seminar requires six books, listed below, which are available at the university bookstore. These should all be in paperback - do not buy hardbacks from the bookstore unless they are used and cheap! *Readings denoted by an (*) next to the citation in your list of weekly readings in the syllabi are available online at the WSU Angel website* ([https://lms.wsu.edu/](https://lms.wsu.edu/)), which you can access as students by clicking onto the course. There are also optional, "suggested" readings listed for some weeks on your syllabi. You are NOT responsible for these in either seminar discussions or literature reviews. I have provided these optional readings purely in the spirit of providing those students interested in a particular topic additional materials of relevance. I have also, where possible, included the coding workbooks for some of the methods discussed (these are optional readings as well).


Because of my affiliation with the Maxwell School at Syracuse, graduate students in this course have available to them the ability to download the Profiler Plus automated content analysis coding system to assist them in developing leader profiles. The following license code is good for one year: ProfilerPlus50JR-3237-ZI-yhLcR13E5

In addition, Hanneke Derksen at the Maxwell School at Syracuse University has agreed to provide my students with assistance with any difficulties encountered in running the program. His email is hderksen@maxwell.syr.edu.
The Psychology of Political Leadership And Decision Making

I. What is Political Leadership?: Competing Definitions, Concepts, and Theories of Leadership.

Week 1 (1/16): Overview of the Course.

Required Readings:
George, Alexander L. and Andrew Bennett. Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2005. (all) (start reading this book now, apply to materials over the next few weeks.)

Week 2 (1/23): What is Political Leadership & Why Should We Study It?: An Introduction to the Concept and Literature.

Required Readings:

Suggested Optional Readings:
All of the following from Cottam, Dietz-Uhler, Mastors, and Preston. (2010) Introduction to Political Psychology:
II. Methodological Approaches for the Study of Leadership:

Psychobiography (depth psychology); Personality Assessment-at-a-Distance (trait psychology) techniques; Operational Codes; Motive Profiling, Cognitive Mapping; Selection and Socialization of Leaders; Trait vs. State Debate.

Week 3 (1/30): Theory-Building and Methodological Challenges to the Study of Leadership and Decision Making.

Required Readings:


“The Bridge Between Knowledge and Action,” pp.105-145.


*All of the following from Heuer, Jr., Richard J. (1999). Psychology of Intelligence Analysis:

“Improving Intelligence Analysis at CIA: Dick Heuer’s Contribution to Intelligence Analysis,” pp.xiii-xxvi;

“Thinking About Thinking,” pp.1-6;

“Perception: Why Can’t We See What Is There To Be Seen?,” pp.7-16;

“Strategies for Analytical Judgment: Transcending the Limits of Incomplete Information,” pp.31-49;

“Keeping an Open Mind,” pp.65-84;

“Analysis of Competing Hypotheses,” pp.95-109;


Suggested Optional Readings:


Week 4 (2/6): The Use of Psychobiography and Depth Psychology to Study Leadership.

**Required Readings:** Applications of Psychobiography and Depth Psychology to the Study of Political Leaders.


*All of the following from George, Alexander L. and George, Juliette L. (1998). Presidential Personality and Performance:


**Suggested Optional Readings:**


Hargrove, Erwin C. (1988). Jimmy Carter as President: Leadership and the Politics of the Public Good. Foreword, Chapters 1-2; 5-6 (pp.xii-xxv; 1-32; 111-193).

Week 5 (2/13):  The Use of Leadership Trait Analysis (LTA) to Study Leadership.

Required Readings: Applications of LTA to the Study of Political Leaders.

All of the following from Post, Jerrold (ed.) (2003). *The Psychological Assessment of Political Leaders:*
Preston, Thomas (2001). *The President and His Inner Circle: Leadership Style and the Advisory Process in Foreign Policy Making.* New York: Columbia University Press. (all)
*Hermann, Margaret G. “Assessing Leadership Style: A Trait Analysis.”* (Handout).

Suggested Optional Readings:
Week 6 (2/20) - No Class - (ISA Conference)

Week 7 (2/27): The Use of Operational Codes to Study Leadership.

**Required Readings:** Applications of Operational Code to the Study of Political Leaders – the traditional Georgian op-code versus the automated VICS op-code.


All of the following from Post, Jerrold (ed.) (2003). *The Psychological Assessment of Political Leaders: Methods and Applications of Operational Code Analysis*:


*All of the following from M. Schafer and S.G. Walker (eds.) (2006). *Beliefs and Leadership in World Politics: Methods and Applications of Operational Code Analysis*:


**Suggested Optional Readings:**


Required Readings: Applications of Motive Profiling and Integrative/Conceptual Complexity to the Study of Political Leaders.

All of the following from Post, Jerrold (ed.) (2003). The Psychological Assessment of Political Leaders:


All of the following from Post, Jerrold (ed.) (2003). The Psychological Assessment of Political Leaders:


Suggested Optional Readings:

*Winter, David G. Workbook for Determining Motive Scores of Leaders. (Coding Manual)


Week 9 (3/13 - TBA alternative date): The Selection & Political Socialization of Leaders, Political Culture, Generation Effects, and Birth Order.

Required Readings:
* Central Intelligence Agency. (2003). The Next Generation of World Leaders: Emerging Traits and Tendencies. (all)

Suggested Optional Readings:

SPRING BREAK 3/16-3/20 – (NO CLASSES!!!!)

Week 10 (3/27): Overview of the Decision Making Literature

Required Readings:


Suggested Optional Readings:


(Fantastic resource providing overviews of psychological concepts & explanations of social psychology literature – a MUST read for those specializing in Political Psychology!)


Week 11 (4/3): **Problem Representation, Counterfactuals, and the Use of Analogy in Decision Making.**

**Required Readings:**


*Sylvan, Donald A. and Voss, James F.  (1998).  *Problem Representation in Foreign Policy Decision Making*.  Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.  Read all of the following:  


Week 12 (4/10): **Group Dynamics and the Decision Making Process.**

**Required Readings:**


**Suggested Optional Readings:**


Week 13 (4/17): **The Impact of Bureaucratic and Organizational Dynamics on Decision Making.**

**Required Readings:**


Week 14 (4/24): **The Impact of Crises, Stress, and Health Upon Decision Making.**

**Required Readings:**


**Required Readings:**


**Suggested Optional Readings:**


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**Final Leader Profile Due Friday, May 1st**
Project #1 – Background Study of a Political Leader  
(Due in class on March 13th)

Who becomes a political leader? What kinds of backgrounds do political leaders come from? How representative are they of the people they lead? What is their route to power; how do they come to hold the positions they do? These are some of the questions we will consider in completing this first class project -- it involves examining the background of the political leader you have chosen to study this semester.

The following are four ways that you can go about examining the background of your political leader. Choose **two of them**. Base your choice on the kinds of information that are available on your leader. Search for information to answer the questions that are listed below the method you have selected. Then write your mini-paper using the questions as a guide to what to report. Remember the mini-papers should be 10 double-spaced pages in length.

**Method 1: Effects of Childhood and Family Relationships**

Historians and biographers following in the Freudian tradition have made a lot of the effects of childhood and adolescent experiences on the formation of personality and what leaders do later in life. What kind of family was your leader born into; what was its socioeconomic status; what was the father's occupation; how large was the family; were any grandparents important to what happened in the family? What was your leader's relationship with his or her mother and father; how was your leader treated vis-a-vis other siblings? What was your leader's relationships with his or her brothers and sisters; where did he or she fall in birth order? Were there any unusual experiences that your leader had in growing up that might have had implications for what he or she did later politically? What might be generational effects of any major event that happened between the ages of 16-27? Speculate on how the answers to these questions could have an effect on what your leader did in his or her leadership position.

**Method 2: Effects of First Independent Political Success**

Leaders must begin their careers somewhere. Some argue that how leaders achieve their first leadership position and what happens in that position affect what they do throughout their career. If you choose this method of exploring your leader's background, consider what the first political leadership position was that your leader held. This position may not be a formal political position but one where political skills are required to be effective. For instance, Ronald Reagan's first political position was as president of the Screen Actor's Guild; some other leader's may have been as President of the Student Government in high school or college, or head of the Law Review. Examine what your leader did to get this position and what he or she did while holding the position. Did working for this position involve certain kinds of personality traits or certain kinds of behavior? Who was instrumental in helping your leader get the position? What kinds of experiences did your leader have in this position; what kinds of problems did he or she face; how did he or she deal with these problems? Under what circumstances did he or she leave this position? Speculate about the implications of your answers for what your leader will do in other leadership positions. It is also worth considering their first political failure as well if you feel that is more appropriate.

**Method 3: Route to Leadership Position**

Leaders do not usually spring full-blown from the head of Zeus! They generally come up through the ranks to their position -- they pay their dues. There is a growing interest among political scientists studying political leadership in examining leaders' paths to power. Consider how your leader got the position he or she is holding. When did he or she first become interested in holding a political position? Was anyone responsible for fostering this interest and how did they foster it? Follow your leader through the various steps on the ladder to his or her last leadership position. See who helped him or her get where they did; how did he or she come to know these people; what did they require of your leader in return for their help? Do you see your leader adopting any styles of behavior to enable him or her to move up the ladder? Speculate about the effects of the route to power on what your leader did while in power and how the route to power might have influenced his or her personality.
Method 4: Religious, Ethnic, Cultural, Generational, and Situational Effects on Choice of Leader

The "match" theory of leadership suggests that leaders are chosen who fit or match the demands of the context at a particular point in time and that leaders select positions which match or fit their personalities. Consider what was happening in your leader's political group when he or she came to power. Also consider the religious, ethnic, generational, and cultural background of your leader and of those he leads. Did your leader have unique experiences that especially qualified him or her for assuming leadership? Were there reasons that his or her political constituents would have seen your leader as particularly qualified for the position? How close a match is there between what these political constituents expected of your leader and what he or she could deliver? Is your leader of the same political generation or cohort as others in the leadership or of the majority of his or her constituents? Speculate on how the match between your leader and the context affects what he or she can do in the position.

Project #2 – Overall Profile of Your Leader
(Due in class on Friday, May 1st)

The overall leader profile and analysis paper (25 pages in length minimum) represents your expert analysis of your leader and what behaviors we might reasonably expect to see from them across differing policy contexts. You should apply to your analysis whatever materials from the seminar readings on leadership and decision-making you feel might be helpful in analyzing your leader, as well as materials you may find on their personal backgrounds, prior experience and expertise, any identifiable ‘patterns’ of previous behavior, or insights into their leadership styles, how they might organize their advisors, make decisions, or respond to stress (crisis or risky decision contexts).

In the real world, leader analysts would prepare reports on not only leaders, but also on other key officials in foreign governments (such as the Minister of Foreign Affairs, senior military leaders, etc.). Policymakers (your consumers of this information) will want answers to many key questions they have in dealing with these foreign officials and deciding upon their policy approaches to these countries. Your job as an analyst is to provide briefing materials (profiles) that will give them feedback on what these foreign officials are like, what backgrounds they have, and how they are likely to behave policy-wise in the future. Real profile materials produced in intelligence agencies are much briefer than those you will produce in this simulation exercise (i.e., real bios average 1-2 pages in length; longer papers on foreign officials only 5-7 pages!). However, by producing this longer profile in this seminar, you will gain the ‘hands-on’ experience of actually ‘profiling leaders’ that will enable you to begin to develop the skills required to generate the briefer, more concise reports required of the leader analyst.

The following list of questions are some of the ones you should be mindful of trying to answer in the analysis section of your foreign leader profile. Not all of them will be appropriate to your analysis or you may find you lack information to answer them given the materials you have access to in open sources. Feel free to add additional
questions to your analysis if you feel you have the information available on your leader. The list of questions below are actually used in producing real-life leader profiles in government.

- Assess the personal strengths, weaknesses, or vulnerabilities of the leader.
- What motivates the leader?
- How can U.S. officials influence the leader?
  For example, if the U.S. does “x”, can we expect the leader or minister to do “y”?
- Can we forecast reasonable expectations of future behavior?
- Does the head of state rely on his minister’s advice or does he try to be his own foreign minister?
- What is the relationship between the minister and the head of state (government)?
- Integrate characteristics of the minister or leader with the political, cultural, and social dimensions of his behavior.
- How does the leader or minister delegate responsibility?
- Is he a micromanager?
- Do other staffers feel they have opportunities to freely offer advice?
- Who does the leader or minister listen to for advice?
- What is the effectiveness of the leader?
- What is the leader or minister’s opinion of the U.S.?
- Any other leader characteristics (based on LTA, OpCode, or other analysis you have done) that you see as important to their behavior.
- Are there any health or age-related factors likely to impact the leader?

Include in your profile a brief section summarizing basic vita material, which should include: date and place of birth; educational background; vocational experience; visits to the U.S.; marital status and number of children; and English and other language capabilities. ( roughly a paragraph or two in length)

- Note: You may not be able to find a lot of this material, but do the best you can. Often, biographical material for leaders and officials can be found on a government’s web site.