

Political Science 350 | Emotion and Politics

(Issues in Biology, Psychology, and Politics)

University of Nebraska-Lincoln

Fall Semester 2025

Tuesdays & Thursdays 11:00am-12:15pm | Oldfather Hall 204

Instructor:	Dr. Ingrid Haas (Dr. Haas or Professor Haas; she/her)
Email:	ihaas2@unl.edu
Website:	http://polisci.unl.edu/person/ingrid-haas
Office:	Oldfather Hall 531
Office hours:	Tuesdays & Thursdays 1-2pm (schedule appointment at http://calendly.com/ingridjhaas/pols-350-office-hours)

COURSE DESCRIPTION AND GOALS

Course Description

The purpose of this course is to increase your understanding of the role of emotion in politics. Contrary to classic theories of political science suggesting that decisions are made based on rational cost-benefit analysis, recent work in the field of political psychology has shown that political decisions are not immune from the influence of emotion. Rather, that political decisions are subject to the same emotional and affective processes that guide all human behavior. We will discuss the interplay and relative influence of cognition and emotion as well as classic and contemporary theories of emotion. We will explore recent research on the impact of emotion on political attitudes and opinions, political behavior, political campaigns, and political advertising, and discuss current theories of the role that emotions play in politics. We will also consider the extent to which emotional experience and interpretation is influenced by identity (i.e., gender, race). Finally, we will consider the implications—what does this mean for candidates who are trying to get elected? Citizens who are trying to engage in political discourse? This course looks primarily at the impact of emotion at the individual level (how emotions influence individual thoughts about politics), but we will also talk a bit about emotion and politics at the group level (how emotion leads to shifts in American public opinion). To accomplish these goals, we will draw on theory and research from political science and several other disciplines, including psychology and neuroscience.

Course Format

We will meet for lecture and discussion two days a week (Tuesdays and Thursdays) at 11am. Sometimes I will give brief lectures to introduce you to new topic areas or situate readings in context, but much of our time in the classroom will be spent on discussion and in-class activities. For this reason, it is important that students do the reading in advance of each class period and come prepared to discuss the topic each week.

Course Goals

In successfully completing this course, students will:

1. Understand the relative influence of emotion and cognition on human decision making.
2. Analyze contemporary American political behavior through the lens of emotion and politics research.
3. Apply emotion and politics research to real-world political issues, making recommendations for how this research can be leveraged to effect positive change.

ACE Program Requirements

By passing this course, you will fulfill ACE Learning Outcome 6: “Use knowledge, theories, methods, and historical perspectives appropriate to the social sciences to understand and evaluate human behavior.”

Through this course, you will have several opportunities to acquire the knowledge and skills necessary to achieve the ACE Learning Outcome(s). Your work will be evaluated by the instructor according to the assessments described in this course syllabus, including exams and the final paper. Your work will be collected through Canvas for ACE assessment.

REQUIRED MATERIALS

Textbooks

Neuman, W. R., Marcus, G. E., Crigler, A. N., & MacKuen, M. (2007). *The Affect Effect: Dynamics of Emotion in Political Thinking and Behavior*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Phoenix, D. L. (2019). *The Anger Gap: How Race Shapes Emotion in Politics*. Cambridge University Press.

Westen, D. (2007). *The Political Brain: The Role of Emotion in Deciding the Fate of the Nation*. New York: Public Affairs.

Ebooks for Neuman et al. (2007) and Phoenix (2019) will be made available on Canvas through UNL Libraries.

Any additional readings will be made available through Canvas.

Technical Requirements

UNL email account (@huskers.unl.edu)
 Canvas (recommended browsers are Firefox or Google Chrome)
 Word processor (e.g., Microsoft Word, Pages)
 PDF reader (e.g., Adobe, Preview)
 Personal computer (desktop or laptop)

For more information on technology resources available to UNL students, check out UNL IT resources: <https://its.unl.edu/>. You can also contact them at support@nebraska.edu with problems/questions regarding any UNL-supported software (this includes UNL email, Canvas, Microsoft Office, Adobe).

ASSESSMENT AND GRADING

Assessments

Midterm Exams (25%). There will be two midterm exams in this course. The exams will test your knowledge of the course material and ability to think critically about the topics we cover and will contain primarily short answer and essay questions. Exams for this course will be taken under electronic supervision at the Digital Learning Center (<http://its.unl.edu/dlc/>) which is in the Adele Coryell Hall Learning Commons in Love Library. All testing times are pre-scheduled, and exams will be completed on a computer. Before you begin an exam, you must place your personal items in a locker and check in with Digital Learning Center staff at the front desk. You will need your NCard to check in. When you have completed your exam, you must check out at the front desk. For each exam, you will need to make an appointment at <https://dlc-reserve.unl.edu/>. More information on DLC student policies is available here: <https://its.unl.edu/dlc/student-policies/>

Reaction Papers (25%). To encourage critical analysis of the readings, you will be required to submit brief reaction papers approximately once a week for a total of ten papers. Each paper should be approximately 1-2 typed pages (double-spaced) and provide a bit of background or summary of the reading, describe your thoughts about the issue, and then introduce a question for class discussion. These questions could focus on something in the readings that was confusing, a critique of the research, implications, or really anything relevant that the readings suggest. Papers will be submitted through Canvas on a weekly basis, but there will

be more opportunities to submit (15) than required submissions (10), meaning that it is fine to miss a few of these deadlines and still get full credit for this assignment. For each reaction paper, you should submit a 1-2 page Word document or PDF file to the instructor through Canvas for grading. More detailed instructions will be posted on Canvas.

Final Presentation (12.5%). At the end of the semester, you will give a final presentation designed to help you synthesize what you've learned this semester. Students will present their ideas during the last two weeks of class. This assignment will serve as the basis for your final paper assignment, which will develop these ideas in greater detail. Details of the assignment will be posted on Canvas.

Final Research Paper (25%). The final paper assignment will require you to use what you have learned about emotion and politics and apply this information to contemporary political events. Details of the assignment will be posted on Canvas. The final product will be a paper that is 5-7 double-spaced pages. Final papers will be due Wednesday, 12/10, by 11:59pm CST, and should be submitted on Canvas.

Course Participation and Attendance (12.5%). Your participation will be based on attendance and active participation in discussion. I will focus on both the quantity and the quality of your contributions when determining participation grades. In other words, the goal should be to contribute often, but also to make sure that any contributions are valuable to the class discussion. Completion of in-class activities will also count toward your participation grade.

Grades

Final grades for this course will be calculated based on a possible 400 points and using the distribution and percentages below. I don't round up or assign extra points at the end of the semester, so it is your responsibility to earn your desired grade. If you have any questions or concerns about your grade, you should always feel free to talk to me--the earlier in the semester the better! Final grades will be curved up for everyone in the class *only* if the overall class average is below a B- (< 80%). I will use Canvas throughout the semester to post grades so that you can keep track of your progress, and you can also calculate your grade using the point distribution below. Incomplete grades will be given only under extreme circumstances, when a student has completed most of the course requirements, and at the sole discretion of the instructor.

Midterm Exams	100
Reaction Papers	100
Final Presentation	50
Final Research Paper	100
Course Participation and Attendance	50

Total	400 points

A+ = 97-100%
 A = 93-96.9%
 A- = 90-92.9%
 B+ = 87-89.9%
 B = 83-86.9%
 B- = 80-82.9%
 C+ = 77-79.9%
 C = 73-76.9%
 C- = 70-72.9%
 D+ = 67-69.9%
 D = 63-66.9%
 D- = 60-62.9%
 F = < 59.9%

COURSE POLICIES

Instructional Continuity

If in-person classes are canceled, you will be notified of the instructional continuity plan for this class through Canvas.

Attendance and Engagement

Students are expected to attend all lectures and recitations and engage with the course on a regular basis. Absences will be excused for illness, injury, hospitalization, military orders, university-sponsored activities, religious observation, and/or personal tragedy. Students should notify the instructor in advance of the absence (when possible), and students are responsible for material and content covered in the missed class(es).

Deadlines and Completion of Coursework

Regular engagement in the course is expected. In general, I do not accept late assignments or give make-up exams without a valid excuse. Should you miss any exam or assignment without approval from me, you will receive a zero grade for that exercise. That said, an exception may be granted to a student who contacts the instructor prior to the assignment due date or exam dates to request an extension. If you foresee being unable to turn in a paper or take an exam on the assigned dates, please contact me through Canvas or email and I will work with you.

Accommodations

Students must be registered with Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) to request accommodations in POLS 350. Please provide a copy of the accommodation plan to Dr. Haas at the start of the semester or as soon as possible thereafter. Accommodations are not retroactive and must be requested prior to exams or assignment deadlines.

Communication

I will communicate with students through Canvas, so please make sure that you check Canvas on a regular basis and set up your Canvas notifications to receive emails about any course announcements or updates. You should plan to use your official @huskers.unl.edu email address for class. In general, I will plan to send any weekly announcements on Mondays, so as not to flood your inbox with updates. But, you should feel free to contact me anytime with questions. The best way to contact me is by sending a message through Canvas, or email me directly with "POLS 350" in the subject line. I will do my best to respond to emails within 24 hours Monday-Friday during normal business hours. You are also welcome to set up a meeting during office hours (make an appointment at <https://calendly.com/ingridhaas/pols-350-office-hours>) or email me with your availability to meet if my posted meeting times don't work for you.

Generative Artificial Intelligence (A.I.)

The use of generative A.I. tools such as ChatGPT is allowed in this course under some circumstances. For homework and projects, you must clearly indicate any use of A.I. tools and provide appropriate citations or references for any A.I.-generated content or results produced. This should include full documentation of exactly how the tool was used. See this page for information on how to cite: <https://unl.libguides.com/citing-electronic-sources#s-lg-box-30669774>. A.I. should not replace your individual effort or original work but rather, should be used as supplemental resources to support your own analysis, critical thinking, and problem-solving. For quizzes and exams, use of any external resource (A.I., Google, your textbook, other students, etc.) is strictly prohibited. Any misuse or violation of the policy, including unauthorized or excessive use of A.I., will be considered a breach of academic integrity and subject to disciplinary actions as per the institution's policies and procedures on academic misconduct.

Plagiarism-Checking Software

Writing assignments in this course will be submitted online through Canvas and run through plagiarism-checking software (Turnitin). This software compares your work against previous papers and Internet sources to detect text copied from other authors. Further information about Turnitin can be found at <https://its.unl.edu/services/turnitin/> or www.turnitin.com.

UNIVERSITY POLICIES AND RESOURCES

All students at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln should be aware of the following university-wide course policies and resources (see <https://go.unl.edu/coursepolicies>):

- **Attendance Policy**
- **Academic Honesty Policy**
- **Services for Students with Disabilities**
- **Mental Health and Well-Being Resources**
- **Final Exam Schedule (15th Week Policy)**
- **Emergency Procedures (On Campus)**
- **Diversity & Inclusiveness**
- **Sexual Misconduct Policy**

Academic Integrity Statement

Academic integrity is a fundamental value of the University community. UNL students are expected to approach and complete their academic work with academic integrity. Students must read this syllabus and all other instructions carefully so that they know what is expected in terms of academic integrity. Students are expected to do their own work, to be honest in the statements they make, to refrain from harming others, to refrain from improperly helping others, and to follow the rules. The unauthorized use of artificial intelligence to complete coursework is a violation of the University of Nebraska Student Code of Conduct [Standards of Academic Integrity](#). Students who are unsure whether or not particular conduct is appropriate should ask the instructor.

Failing to act with academic integrity violates the [University of Nebraska Student Code of Conduct](#) and will be reported to the Office of Student Conduct & Community Standards. Students who violate academic integrity may receive academic sanctions, up to and including receiving a grade of “F” in the course.

Writing Center

The Writing Center can provide you with meaningful support as you write for this class, other classes, or for non-academic purposes. You are welcome to bring in everything from lab reports, presentations, and research papers to cover letters, application essays, and graduate theses and dissertations. Trained undergraduate and graduate peer consultants are available to talk with you as you plan, draft, and revise your writing, both in person and online. You don't need to have anything written yet: Writing Center Consultants are happy to sit down and brainstorm with you as soon as you get an assignment, as well as help you organize your ideas or polish a final draft.

There are **three** ways you can connect with a Consultant: **In Person**, **Online** (a real-time, video conversation), and **eTutoring** (email feedback). **In-person Writing Center appointments are held in Andrews Hall 102.** Writers may choose between **25-** and **50-minute** appointments. To learn more about online options and view video tutorials, visit <https://writing.unl.edu/online-writing-center-services/>.

The Writing Center also offers [accountability appointments](#), in which you can sit beside a Writing Center consultant and talk as much or as little as you like about your writing. You can indicate that this is what you're looking for when you sign up for an appointment.

Sign up any time by visiting unl.mywconline.com. For more information about the Writing Center, please visit <https://writing.unl.edu/>.

Recording of Class-Related Activity

I invite all of you to join me in actively creating and contributing to a positive, productive, and respectful classroom culture. Each student contributes to an environment that shapes the learning process. Any work and/or communication that you are privy to as a member of this course should be treated as the intellectual property of the speaker/creator, and is not to be shared outside the context of this course.

Students may not make or distribute screen captures, audio/video recordings of, or livestream, any class-related activity, including lectures and presentations, without express prior written consent from me or an approved accommodation from Services for Students with Disabilities. If you have (or think you may have) a disability such that you need to record or tape class-related activities, you should contact Services for Students with Disabilities. If you have an accommodation to record class-related activities, those recordings may not be shared with any other student, whether in this course or not, or with any other person or on any other platform. Failure to follow this policy on recording or distributing class-related activities may subject you to discipline under the Student Code of Conduct.

Trespass Policy (Regents' Policy 6.4.7)

The areas of University academic, research, public service, and administrative buildings of the University used for classrooms, laboratories, faculty and staff offices, and the areas of University student residence buildings used for student living quarters are not open to the general public. Any person not authorized to be or remain in any such building area will be deemed to be trespassing on University property and may be cited and subject to prosecution for criminal trespass in violation of Neb. Rev. Stat., § 28-520 or § 28-521.

POLS 350 | (TENTATIVE) COURSE SCHEDULE

Topics, readings, and assessments are listed below on the course schedule. All due dates are 11:59pm Central Standard Time (CST) unless otherwise specified below and all assessments must be submitted through Canvas. In general, readings should be completed prior to class meetings. Please note that this schedule represents a tentative plan and is subject to change at the instructor's discretion. Any changes will be announced through Canvas and reflected in updates to the Syllabus and Course Schedule.

Please note--reading assignments are labeled as follows:

- **Phoenix:** Phoenix, D. L. (2019). *The Anger Gap: How Race Shapes Emotion in Politics*. Cambridge University Press.
- **TAE:** Neuman, W. R., Marcus, G. E., Crigler, A. N., & MacKuen, M. (2007). *The Affect Effect: Dynamics of Emotion in Political Thinking and Behavior*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- **Westen:** Westen, D. (2007). *The Political Brain: The Role of Emotion in Deciding the Fate of the Nation*. New York: Public Affairs.

WEEK	DATES	TOPIC	READING	ASSESSMENTS
1	8/25-8/29	Syllabus and Course Introduction Introduction to Political Psychology	R: Westen Ch. 1-3	
2	9/1-9/5	The Political Brain: Emotion in Political Campaign Ads	T: Westen Ch. 4-6 R: Westen Ch. 7-9	Reaction Paper 1 due before noon M 9/1 Reaction Paper 2 due before noon W 9/3
3	9/8-9/12	NO CLASS MEETINGS (APSA Conference) The Political Brain: Emotion and Political Issues	T: Westen Ch. 10-12 R: Westen Ch. 13-15	Reaction Paper 3 due before noon M 9/8 Reaction Paper 4 due before noon W 9/10
4	9/15-9/19	Psychology of Emotion	TAE Ch. 5 Taber & Lodge (2006)	Reaction Paper 5 due before noon W 9/17
5	9/22-9/26	Neuroscience of Emotion	TAE Ch. 3-4 Lindquist et al. (2012) Barrett (2017)	Reaction Paper 6 due before noon W 9/24
6	9/29-10/3	NO CLASS T 9/30 (take exam 1) Emotion and Politics Overview	TAE Ch. 6-8 MacKuen et al. (2010)	Exam 1 available M 9/29 - T 9/30 Reaction Paper 7 due before noon W 10/1

WEEK	DATES	TOPIC	READING	ASSESSMENTS
7	10/6-10/10	Negative Emotions: Fear, Anxiety, Anger, Disgust	TAE Ch. 9 Clifford & Jerit (2018) Suhay & Erisen (2018)	Reaction Paper 8 due before noon W 10/8
8	10/13-10/17	Positive Emotions: Enthusiasm and Hope	TAE Ch. 10 Kosmidis & Theocharis (2020)	Reaction Paper 9 due before noon W 10/15
9	10/20-10/24	NO CLASS T 10/21 (Fall Break) NO CLASS R 10/23 (take exam 2)		Exam 2 available R 10/23-F 10/24
10	10/27-10/31	Gender, Emotion, and Politics	Barrett & Bliss-Moreau (2009) Boussalis et al. (2021)	Reaction Paper 10 due before noon W 10/29
11	11/3-11/7	(tentative) attend Hendricks Symposium on 11/4 Emotion in Political Campaigns	TAE Ch. 15 Carey (2012) Marantz (2020)	Reaction Paper 11 due before noon W 11/5
12	11/10-11/14	Race, Emotion, and Politics	T: Phoenix Preface & Ch. 1 R: Phoenix Ch. 2-3	Reaction Paper 12 due before noon M 11/10 Reaction Paper 13 due before noon W 11/12
13	11/17-11/21	Race, Emotion, and Politics	T: Phoenix Ch. 4-5 R: Phoenix Ch. 6-7	Reaction Paper 14 due before noon M 11/17 Reaction Paper 15 due before noon W 11/19
14	11/24-11/28	Final Project Work Time NO CLASS 11/27 (Thanksgiving Break)		
15	12/1-12/5	Final Presentations		
16	12/8-12/12	Work on Final Papers		Final Paper due W 12/10

Reading List

- Barrett, L. F. (2017). The theory of constructed emotion: an active inference account of interoception and categorization. *Soc Cogn Affect Neurosci*, 12(1), 1-23. <https://doi.org/10.1093/scan/nsw154>
- Barrett, L. F., & Bliss-Moreau, E. (2009). She's emotional. He's having a bad day: attributional explanations for emotion stereotypes. *Emotion*, 9(5), 649-658. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0016821>
- Boussalis, C., Coan, T. G., Holman, M. R., & Muller, S. (2021). Gender, Candidate Emotional Expression, and Voter Reactions During Televised Debates. *American Political Science Review*, 115(4), 1242-1257. <https://doi.org/10.1017/s0003055421000666>
- Carey, B. (2012, November 12). Academic 'dream team' helped Obama's effort. *The New York Times*.
- Clifford, S., & Jerit, J. (2018). Disgust, anxiety, and political learning in the face of threat. *American Journal of Political Science*, 62, 266-279.
- Lindquist, K. A., Wager, T. D., Kober, H., Bliss-Moreau, E., & Barrett, L. F. (2012). The brain basis of emotion: a meta-analytic review. *Behav Brain Sci*, 35(3), 121-143. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0140525X11000446>
- Mackuen, M., Wolak, J., Keele, L., & Marcus, G. E. (2010). Civic engagements: Resolute partisanship or reflective deliberation. *American Journal of Political Science*, 54, 440-458.
- Marantz, A. (2020, March 2). The man behind Trumps Facebook juggernaut. *The New Yorker*.
- Neuman, W. R., Marcus, G. E., Crigler, A. N., & MacKuen, M. (2007). *The Affect Effect: Dynamics of Emotion in Political Thinking and Behavior*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Phoenix, D. L. (2019). *The Anger Gap: How Race Shapes Emotion in Politics*. Cambridge University Press.
- Suhay, E., & Erisen, C. (2018). The Role of Anger in the Biased Assimilation of Political Information. *Political Psychology*. doi: 10.1111/pops.12463
- Taber, C. S., & Lodge, M. (2006). Motivated skepticism in the evaluation of political beliefs. *American Journal of Political Science*, 50, 755-769.
- Theocharis, Y., & Kosmidis, S. (2020). Can Social Media Incivility Induce Enthusiasm? *Public Opinion Quarterly*. doi: 10.1093/poq/nfaa014
- Westen, D. (2007). *The Political Brain: The Role of Emotion in Deciding The Fate of the Nation*. New York: Public Affairs.