**POSC 449: Political Psychology**

Taught by Professor Dennis Chong
Department of Political Science

**Description:** Political Psychology examines how individual and social psychology influences political thinking, decisions, and behavior. This class will introduce students to psychological concepts and theories that help us understand and explain decision-making, political socialization, partisanship and polarization, ideology, extremism, group conflict, political activism, and voting. We will examine all of these topics in the context of contemporary and historical political events and developments in U.S. politics. All of our discussions of political psychology will be connected to contemporary debates in American politics over foreign policy, health care, race and ethnicity, social class divisions, immigration, and other issues.

Much research in political psychology employs the methodology of surveys and experiments to study political attitudes. We will examine the logic and procedures of survey and experimental research in political science and discuss how scientific methodology is employed in the study of politics.

This course fulfills the distribution requirement for Political Science majors, and counts toward the Practical Politics minor. Students majoring in other social science fields or in programs outside of Dornsife are welcome. There are no prerequisites for the class other than interest in the topic and a desire to understand more systematically the psychological underpinnings of the dominant social and political issues and conflicts in American politics.

**List of Class Topics:**

1. Information and its Implications for Political Decisions
2. Motivated Reasoning in Politics
3. Psychology of Rumor and Misinformation and its Correction
4. Generational Changes of Opinion and Values
5. Social vs. Economic Motivations in Politics
6. Prejudice, Tolerance, and Ethnocentrism
7. Political Ideology
8. Political Extremism
9. The Decline of Political Trust
10. Political Participation and Social Protest
11. Politics and Psychology of Life Satisfaction and Happiness

**Note about the instructor:** Dennis Chong is Chair and Professor of the Department of Political Science at the University of Southern California. He studies American national politics and has published extensively on issues of decision-making, political psychology, and collective action. He is the author of *Rational Lives*, a study of values, group identification, and conflict over social change. He also wrote *Collective Action and the Civil Rights Movement*, a theoretical study of the dynamics of collective action as well as a substantial study of the American civil rights movement and the local and national politics that surrounded it. Professor Chong’s current
research on the influence of information and framing in competitive democratic contexts has received several national awards, including the APSA’s Franklin L. Burdette/Pi Sigma Alpha Prize. An active member of the profession, Professor Chong has been elected to the Executive Council of the American Political Science Association, and he is co-editor of *Cambridge Studies in Public Opinion and Political Psychology*, a book series published by Cambridge University Press.