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## POLS-Y490 Political Ideology

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Mondays, 12:45pm - 3:15pm

### Course Overview

This seminar is dedicated to exploring the origins, meanings, and significance of political ideology. We will investigate ideology as both a system of ideas about how societies should be governed, and as a summary of the political preferences of ordinary citizens and politicians. We will introduce debates about where ideology comes from, and consider how political ideologies explain a range of outcomes that span domestic and international politics.

### Instructor

Jason Wu  
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Office Hours: Please sign up at <https://calendly.com/jasonywu/meeting>

### Requirements and Grading

Students are expected to regularly attend class, actively contribute to class discussions, and complete the reading assignments.

Six times during the semester, students will write a brief reading response in class. The lowest grade will be dropped, but no make-ups are allowed.

For the writing component of this course, students will be required to write two op-eds, a book review, and a review essay.

Each of the op-eds will be circulated with the rest of the class (under a pen name). Students will submit the first op-ed, which analyzes a development in political ideology, on February 4 (750 words). Then students will write a second op-ed (750 words) in response to one of the op-eds written by their classmates; this second op-ed will be due on February 18.

The book review (1500 words) will be due on March 11 and will focus on one recently published book - I will circulate a list to choose from. After receiving feedback on their book review, students will either revise that essay into a review essay that covers 2-4 books, or draft a new review essay (2000 words), which will be due on May 1.

- Participation: 20%
- In-Class Reading Responses: 15%

- Op Ed 1: 10%
- Op Ed 2: 10%
- Book Review (1500 words): 20%
- Review Essay (2000 words): 25%

## **Course Policies**

### **Academic Integrity**

You are expected to abide by the guidelines of the IU Code of Student Rights, Responsibilities, and Conduct (<http://studentcode.iu.edu/responsibilities/academic-misconduct.html>) regarding cheating and plagiarism. Any ideas or materials taken from another source must be fully acknowledged and cited.

### **Disability Accommodation**

Please contact me if you require assistance or academic accommodations for a disability. You should establish your eligibility for disability support services through the Office of Disability Services for Students in Wells Library W302, 812-855-7578.

### **Generative Artificial Intelligence**

You may use AI programs e.g. ChatGPT to help generate ideas, brainstorm, collect or clean data, code, and get feedback on your work. However, you should note that the material generated by these programs may be inaccurate, incomplete, or otherwise problematic.

You may not submit any work generated by an AI program as your own. If you include material generated by an AI program, it should be cited like any other reference material. In general, however, your citations should be to peer-reviewed articles and books.

### **Technology Policy**

Please put away electronic devices such as phones, tablets, laptops, or earbuds/headphones when we are in class. Plan to take notes by hand, and bring hard copies of the readings to class. Note: If you have accommodation needs around technology that have been registered with Accessible Educational Services, please let me know.

### **Late Policy**

Late assignments will be penalized by one grade (e.g. A- to B+) every twenty-four hours, with a maximum penalty of 20 %.

## Note: Syllabus Subject to Change

I may make adjustments to the syllabus as we move through the semester - if I make a change, I will post a revised version on Canvas.

### *Week 1: What is ideology, and why does it matter?*

January 12

- John Gerring. Ideology: A Definitional Analysis. *Political Research Quarterly*, 50(4):957–994, 1997
- Michael Freeden. *Ideology: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford University Press, New York, 2003, Chapters 1-3.

Discussion Questions: Why do we have ideologies? Is ideology a guiding vision for society or merely a mask for power interests? In what sense, if any, do people choose to believe in an ideology?

### *Week 2: No Class - Martin Luther King Day*

### *Week 3: How do rituals, practices, and culture figure into ideology?*

January 26

- Lisa Wedeen. *Ambiguities of Domination: Politics, Rhetoric, and Symbols in Contemporary Syria*. University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1999, Chapters 1, 2.
- Alexei Yurchak. *Everything Was Forever, Until It Was No More: The Last Soviet Generation*. Princeton University Press, Princeton, 2005, Chapters 1, 2.

Discussion Questions: Do ideas exist in actions? What is the difference between culture and ideology?

### *Week 4: What is the structure of an ideology?*

February 2

- Michael Freeden. *Ideology: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford University Press, New York, 2003, Chapter 4.
- Philip Warncke. What Explains Country-Level Differences in Political Belief System Coherence? *Political Behavior*, February 2025.

- Jon Green. The Rhetorical “What Goes with What”: Political Pundits and the Discursive Superstructure of Ideology in US Politics. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, February 2025.
- Cas Mudde. The Populist Zeitgeist. *Government and Opposition*, 39(4):541–563, 2004.

Discussion Questions: What are the parts of a belief system, and how do they fit together? Why are some ideologies thick and others are thin?

### Op-Ed 1 due February 4.

*Week 5: Do ordinary citizens hold coherent ideological belief systems?*

February 9

- Philip E Converse. The Nature of Belief Systems in Mass Publics. In David Apter, editor, *Ideology and Discontent*, pages 206–261. Free Press, New York, 1964.
- Robert Edwards Lane. *Political Ideology: Why the American Common Man Believes What He Does*. The Free Press, New York, 1962, Introduction and Chapters 1, 4, 22.

Discussion Questions: What is the difference between the belief systems of ordinary people and political elites? How well-organized or sophisticated is our thinking about politics?

*Week 6: How do ideologies exercise power?*

February 16

- Hannah Arendt. *The Origins of Totalitarianism*. Harcourt, Brace, and Company, New York, 1973, Chapter 13.
- Antonio Gramsci. *Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci*. International Publishers, New York, 1971, pages TBA.
- James C. Scott. *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts*. Yale University Press, New Haven, 1990, Chapters 1, 3, 4.

Discussion Questions: How do ideologies order our social world, direct it towards certain activities, and legitimize or delegitimize its practices? How do ideologies create a framework within which decisions can be taken and make sense?

### Op-Ed 2 due February 18.

*Week 7: What are the alternatives to ideology?*

February 23

- Donald E Stokes. Spatial models of party competition. *American Political Science Review*, 57(02):368–377, June 1963.
- Aleksandar Matovski. *Popular Dictatorships: Crises, Mass Opinion, and the Rise of Electoral Authoritarianism*. Cambridge University Press, New York, November 2021, Chapters 2 & 5.
- Michael Oakeshott. On Being Conservative. In *Rationalism in Politics, and Other Essays*, pages 168–197. Basic Books, New York, 1962.

Discussion Questions: Could we do without ideology? Should politics be driven by clear ideological principles or by pragmatic, traditional approaches?

*Week 8: How can we measure ideology?*

March 2

- Adam Bonica and Maya Sen. Estimating Judicial Ideology. *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 35(1):97–118, February 2021.
- David E. Broockman, Gregory Ferenstein, and Neil Malhotra. Predispositions and the Political Behavior of American Economic Elites: Evidence from Technology Entrepreneurs. *American Journal of Political Science*, 63(1):212–233, 2019.
- Jason Y Wu. *The Pliant Public: Ideology and Public Opinion in China*. 2026, Chapter 2.

Discussion Questions: How can you measure a system of beliefs? What would a measurement mean, exactly? What aspects of ideology can you measure, and what aspects are excluded from these measures?

*Week 9: What kinds of ideological divisions do we find around the world?*

March 9

- Jonathan Haidt. *The Righteous Mind*. Random House, New York, 2012, Chapters 1, 7.
- Ariel Malka, Yphtach Lelkes, and Christopher J. Soto. Are Cultural and Economic Conservatism Positively Correlated? A Large-Scale Cross-National Test. *British Journal of Political Science*, 49(3):1045–1069, July 2019.
- Daniel A. Bell. *The China Model: Political Meritocracy and the Limits of Democracy*. Princeton University Press, Princeton, 2015, Chapters 2, 4.

Discussion Questions: Do all societies have political ideologies? What accounts for the variation that we find when we examine ideology in non-western or developing societies?

### **Book Review due March 11.**

*Week 10: Spring Break*

*Week 11: What are the factors that drive ideology?*

March 23

- John R Zaller. *The Nature and Origins of Mass Opinion*. Cambridge University Press, New York, 1992, Chapters 3, 6.
- John R Alford, Carolyn L Funk, and John R Hibbing. Are Political Orientations Genetically Transmitted? *American Political Science Review*, 99(2):153–167, 2005.
- John T. Jost. *Left and Right: The Psychological Significance of a Political Distinction*. Oxford University Press, New York, 2021, Chapter 3.

Discussion Questions: How do political elites and parties give structure to ideology? Are individuals psychologically predisposed to favor certain ideologies? Do biological factors - such as genetics or physiology - shape our political ideologies? How do life experiences and social environments shape ideological beliefs?

*Week 12: What is the relationship between ideology and social stratification?*

March 30

- Amory Gethin, Clara Martínez-Toledano, and Thomas Piketty. Brahmin left versus merchant right: Changing political cleavages in 21 western democracies, 1948–2020. *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 137(1):1–48, 2022.
- Herbert Kitschelt. The Formation of Party Systems in East Central Europe. *Politics and Society*, 20(1):7–50, March 1992.
- Jason Y Wu. *The Pliant Public: Ideology and Public Opinion in China*. 2026, Chapter 4.

Discussion Questions: What is the relationship between material conditions and political ideology? How do classes or identities intersect with ideology?

*Week 13: How do ideologies change over time?*

April 6

- Edward G. Carmines and James A. Stimson. *Issue Evolution: Race and the Transformation of American Politics*. Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1989, Chapters 1, 2, 5.
- Hans Noel. *Political Ideologies and Political Parties in America*. Cambridge University Press, New York, 2013, Chapters 1, 3, 5.

Discussion Questions: What drives changes in political ideology over time? How can we account for the rise and fall of an ideology?

*Week 14: How does ideology relate to political behavior?*

April 13

- Anthony Downs. *An Economic Theory of Democracy*. Harper Row, New York, 1957, Chapter 8.
- Pierre Bourdieu. *Outline of a Theory of Practice*. Cambridge University Press, New York, June 1977, Chapter 4.
- Alexei Yurchak. *Everything Was Forever, Until It Was No More: The Last Soviet Generation*. Princeton University Press, Princeton, 2005, Chapter 3.

Discussion Questions: What are the ways in which ideology changes how people engage in politics? Does ideology play a primary role in motivating action, or is it more of a secondary consideration?

*Week 15: How does ideology shape the conduct of states?*

April 20

- James C Scott. *Seeing like a State*. Yale University Press, New Haven, 1998, Introduction, Chapters 2, 3.
- Jonathan Leader Maynard. *Ideology and Mass Killing: The Radicalized Security Politics of Genocides and Deadly Atrocities*. Oxford University Press, New York, 2022, Chapters 3, 4.
- Mark L. Haas. When Do Ideological Enemies Ally? *International Security*, 46(1):104–146, July 2021.

Discussion Questions: How do ideologies shape the conduct of states, at home and abroad? Does ideology cause political violence, or are violent conflicts driven by other factors?

*Week 16: How do advances in technology affect political ideologies?*

April 27

- Benedict Anderson. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. Verso, New York, 2006, Chapters 1-3.
- Levin Brinkmann, Fabian Baumann, Jean-François Bonnefon, Maxime Derex, Thomas F. Müller, Anne-Marie Nussberger, Agnieszka Czaplicka, Alberto Acerbi, Thomas Griffiths, and Joseph Henrich. Machine Culture. *Nature Human Behaviour*, 7(11):1855–1868, 2023
- Henry Farrell, Alison Gopnik, Cosma Shalizi, and James Evans. Large AI Models are Cultural and Social Technologies. *Science*, March 2025

Discussion Questions: Are ideologies downstream of communication technologies? How do you think the spread of AI will reshape the belief systems of elites and the mass public?

**Review essay due May 1.**