**POL 201 POLITICAL PSYCHOLOGY**

1. **What is Political Psychology?**

Political psychology emerged as an important field in both political science and psychology that enables us to explain many aspects of political behavior.

1. **Personality and Politics**

Personality not only affects how people think and behave in political arena, but it is also affected by life experiences of individuals.

There are different approaches to theories regarding personality, only some of which has been used in the study of personalities of political actors. Psychoanalytic approaches, trait theories, and motive theories are the most prominant ones.

1. **The Study of Political Leaders**

The examination of political leaders is an important topic in the studies of political psychology. There is a number of analytical fremaworks in the literature: types of leadership as transactional and transformational leadership; leadership management styles as Johnson’s formalistic, competitive, collegial management styles; George’s cognitive style, sense of efficacy, tolerance of political conflict; Preston’s typology and three style dimensions as leader need for control, prior policy experience/expertise and sensitivity to context.

1. **Voting, Role of the Media, and Tolerance**

Attitudes, beliefs, values, ideology and schemas are comonly used in the analysis of public opinion and voting behavior. The analysis of voting behavior is more thorough, looking at the Michigan school versus the Maximalist views of attitudes and political sophistication, ideology, information processing, emotions and voting, the impact of the media, and the issues of political socialization and political tolerance.

1. **The Politics of Race**

Some political conflicts may be produced by racism and ethnocentrism. There is a number of theories used to look at different aspects of race. These theories used to examine different takes on race relations included realistic conflict theory, social identity, social learning theory, and social dominance theory. Understanding racial relations requires us to go beyond explanations that rely upon competition for resources as causes of racial or ethnocentric conflicts. From the political psychological perspective, we can understand the intransigence of group conflict as the result of the continual human drive to form in-groups and out-groups and to compare their groups with others. Political psychology also turns our attention to the ways in which issues can be framed to produce particular anxieties in the minds of citizens. Stereotypes can be subtly or openly manipulated to produce stereotype-driven behaviors and attitudes.

1. **From Ethnic Conflicts to Genocide**

Although ethnic conflict has always existed, with the end of the Cold War the focus attention of the international community shifted from conflict between the superpowers to ethnic conflicts within countries. It is evident that ethnicity has an enormous impact upon group relations within countries and has resulted in atrocities being committed by one group against another. Rwanda, Bosnia, Democratic Republic of Congo, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Kosovo, and East Timor are only a few of the countries or regions that have experienced severe ethnic conflict and violence.

1. **The Political Psychology of Nationalism**

Political psychology also deals with the causes of nationalism and the impact of nationalism on political behavior. Several patterns of behavior occur in nation-states. From social identity theory, nations are groups and for nationalists, are a deeply important in-group. Central to in-group-out-group relations is the concept of social categorization. Nationalism involves very strong positive emotions associated with the nation and also a propensity for heightened negative emotions associated with the out-group.

1. **The Political Psychology of Terrorism**

There are both group-level and individual-level concepts that are relevant to the discussion of terrorism. At the individual level, specific personality attributes such as individual traits and also motivations for joining terrorist groups are often addressed. At the group level, intragroup –level factors such as recruitment, propaganda, conformity, obedience, group conflict, role, and social control are highlighted.

1. **The Political Psychology of International Security and Conflict**

Numerous political psychological approaches have been applied to the study of international security and conflict, ranging from the causes of war, the security dilemma, to deterrence, to the impact of group dynamics.

There have been many competing explanations for violence and war that have been proposed by scholars across numerous disciplines. Some looked to biology to suggest that mankind was genetically predisposed to be innately violent. Others suggested that human aggression was more of a socially learned response.

The role of perception and misperception between the leaders of states in causing or avoiding international conflict has been described at length across historical crisis cases. Similarly, problems of succesful crisis manegement, given leader psychology or organizational limitations as a factor in avoidance of war, have been disscussed by a number of scholars.

1. **Conflict Resolution and Reconciliation**

There is a number of studies on conflict resolution studies that can be used to reconcile groups engaged in various forms of conflict. Reconciliation can be defined as “mutually acceptence by groups of each other”. Reconciliation and forgiveness are interrelated. Forgiveness involves the restoration of a positive relationship between perpetrator and victim.

In postconflict situations, punishment for crimes against humanity has always been part of reconciliation process.

There are different techniques for recovering from violence. Two of these techniques are dialogue and the truth and reconciliation commision.

Over the long term, whether discussing racial or ethnic/national separation and conflict, integration and the elimination of inequalities and their causes have long been considered essential to conflict resolution and avoidance.