

POLS4490 Midterm Paper

Instructions: Choose ONE of the following prompts and write an 8-10 page paper on that subject. These 8-10 pages should be double-spaced and should include references cited in either APSA, APA, MLA, Chicago/Turabian format. Title pages are not necessary. The prompts I've provided are broad and can be addressed in several ways. As such, I am not looking for a right or wrong answer to the question but rather for you to think critically about the field of political psychology as a whole. Each question is multi-faceted, which means that students have the opportunity to write in both an *expository* and a *persuasive* manner. This paper should not primarily be a reflection of your own opinion. Show me that you understand the concepts we've discussed by synthesizing the required readings into a coherent argument. The best papers will include material from the required readings, from lectures and from current and/or historical events. Paper formatting should be in the standard 12 point Times New Roman font, double-spaced and with normal margins. **Papers should be uploaded to the D2L Dropbox by 11:59pm Wednesday, October 11, 2017.**

1. Festinger's theory of cognitive dissonance is well-documented in the field of political psychology. Citing examples, explain what mental tactics this theory involves and why. Is cognitive dissonance theory driven to a greater extent by 'the rider' or 'the elephant'? Justify your position. What criticisms might behaviorist B.F. Skinner have of biopolitics researchers, such as Drew Westen, James Fowler, John Alford, Carolyn Funk, and John Hibbing? What criticisms might biopolitics researchers have of behaviorists? Which approach places more limitations on an individual's free will: behaviorism or biopolitics? Why? Are dispositional or situational explanations of political behavior emphasized by today's mainstream media? Provide relevant examples and speculate as to why this is the case.
2. Does the 'bad apple' vs. the 'bad barrel' metaphor have any merit within the field of evolutionary psychology? Why or why not? To which of these metaphors- the apple or the barrel- does the concept of authoritarianism fall within? Explain your rationale. Are authoritarian traits among the American electorate ultimately beneficial or harmful to societal cohesion? Consider both evolutionary and social psychological perspectives in your response. Chapter 6 provides several historical examples of presidential administrations falling victim to groupthink. Which of Barber's presidential typologies lend themselves most easily to groupthink? Justify your response with examples.
3. Imagine Stanley Milgram and George Lakoff sat down to talk about their life's work. What human psychological tendencies or phenomena would they agree upon? What would they disagree upon? Why? Research has attempted to identify differences in the cognitive styles of liberals and conservatives, specifically as it relates to mental rigidity and intolerance of ambiguity. Are the Nurturant Parent and Strict Father models responsible for shaping one's cognitive structure first and foremost? Or are these belief systems adopted later in order to justify or support one's cognitive tendencies? Defend your position. What does this imply about the stability of political attitudes over the lifespan? Explain your rationale.

Note: To avoid plagiarism, students should rephrase information in their own words and students should cite all sources used. Students may not collaborate with one another on this assignment. Be aware that I will be checking for plagiarism as it applies to both outside sources and to within-class collaboration. Refer to the syllabus for more information about plagiarism and its consequences.

Grading Rubric

Critical Thought (45 points)	Arguments within the paper display a great deal of thought by the student, student has contemplated the issues and has provided deep insight to the questions raised, inclusion of required and supplemental material is well-balanced with the student's personal arguments
Amount and quality of information provided (30 points)	Sources used are appropriate and relevant towards the student's arguments, supplemental information provided is well incorporated into the overall position, direct quotations do not compromise the length of the paper
Organization (10 points)	Addresses all relevant questions raised, presents material in a way which is easy to comprehend, arguments of the paper flow and build upon one another
Mechanics/Linguistics (10 points)	Paper contains few grammatical errors, formatting guidelines are followed, student avoids the use of slang/abbreviations
Citation of sources (5 points)	Sources are properly cited, student has been careful to avoid plagiarism