INTR5449
The Psychology of Statecraft

Time: Tuesday & Thursday 10:50–12:30
Place: D-317
Instructor: Christopher David LaRoche

Xi, Putin, Erdogan, Trump — they dominate the headlines. Yet our social science theories tell us that structures and institutions, not individuals, matter.

This course asks: does personality matter in world politics? How do leaders make decisions? And what are the dangers of personalism? We will explore this question by examining a broad range of answers, from the mirror-for-princes genre to the psychology of decision-making.

We begin our journey with three traditional distinctions: between tyrants and legitimate rulers, practical and theoretical intelligence, and virtue and vice. We will then explore rival accounts of the psyche offered by contemporary psychology, drawing on cognitive empathy, expertise, personality traits, personalism, and charisma — with a view to their role in statecraft.

Throughout the course you will "adopt a leader," drawing on that leader's life in assignments and discussions.

Among other questions, we will ask: what do we expect of leaders, and how should we evaluate them? What tools do the mirror-of-princes genre or contemporary social science give us in this task? Is there more continuity or change in questions of leadership across place and time? Can leaders ultimately shape the world, or are they always shaped by it, and under what circumstances?

Aims
This course aims to provide you with understandings of:

- The role of the individuals in world politics, with a special focus on leaders.
- The cognitive heuristics, biases, and shortcuts that individuals use to assess situations and make decisions.
- The use of case studies and psychological theories in evaluating real world cases.
- Comprehensive efforts to evaluate the quality of leaders or leadership.
- Differences between modern and non-modern approaches to political judgment.

Assessment	Class attendance & participation:	15%
	Presentation:	15%
	Written assignment 1:	20%
	Written assignment 2:	20%
	Take-home task:	30%

Class participation: Participation will be graded by attendance and quality of participation (10%).

Presentation: You will deliver a brief* presentation on your adopted leader (15%).
**The delivery length with depend on enrollment numbers.*

Written assignments: The written assignments are short responses (5-10 pages, <1500 words) that address topics or debates in the class. I will circulate topic questions in the second week.

Take home task: Written in a 72-hour period, you will give advice to a leader of your choice based on the course materials and reflect on the choices you make in an appendix.

Note: assignments written in whole or in part by LLM AI (e.g., ChatGPT) are not permitted.

Conduct

According to one of Britain's most influential Machiavellians, Thomas Hobbes of Malmsbury, justice lies in the keeping of covenants and those who make covenants promise to obey them.[*] This syllabus is a covenant made between the instructor (me) and the students (you) in the spirit of learning. This class will discuss topics that are contentious or controversial. You are welcome to criticize each other's (and my) ideas, but not each other's characters. Personal attacks will not be tolerated.

Contact:
larochec@ceu.edu
Expect a 48-hour window for replies to emails during the week.

Absences, plagiarism, student needs, and other matters:
CEU maintains a robust set of policies governing student conduct and expectations (https://ir.ceu.edu/policies). These include policies on absences, plagiarism, and grading. Please review them! You can also contact me or visit my office hours for further clarification.

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[*] *Leviathan*, Book I, Chapters XIV & XV.

PROVISIONAL COURSE SCHEDULE

Week 1: the psychology of tyranny vs. virtuous rule.

- Adam E. Casey and Seva Gunitsky, "The Bully in the Bubble," *Foreign Affairs* (February 2022).
- Xenophon, *Hiero, or the Skilled Tyrant.* **[On Moodle.]**

- Alfarabi, *The Book of Religion* **OR**
- Christine de Pisan, *The Book of the Body Politic*.

Weeks 2-4: Virtù and effectiveness.

- Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince.* **[On Moodle.]**
- Francis Bacon, "Idols of the Mind," and "Of the True Greatness of Kingdoms and Estates," in *New Atlantis and the Great Instauration*, ed. Jerry Weinberger (Wiley, 2017). **[On Moodle.]**

Other old-school discussions of tyranny, available on Moodle:

- Xenophon, *The Education of Cyrus*.
- Plato, *The Republic* (especially Books VIII–X).
- Aristotle, *The Politics*
- Alfarabi, *The Book of Religion* and *The Political Regime*
- Christine de Pisan, *The Book of the Body Politic*.
- Deciderus Erasmus, *The Education of a Christian Prince*.

Supplementary [complete lists on Moodle]:

- Waller R. Newell, *Tyrants: Power, Injustice, and Terror* (Cambridge University Press 2019).
- Toivu Koivukoski & David Edward Tabachnick, *Confronting Tyranny: ancient lessons for global politics* (Rowan & Littlefield, 2005).
- Leo Strauss & Alexander Kojeve, *On Tyranny*.
- Catherine Zuckert, *Machiavelli's Politics* (University of Chicago Press, 2017), esp. chapter 1.
- Anna Becker, "Rethinking Masculinity and Femininity in Niccolò Machiavelli's Political Thought," *L'Homme* 23, no 2. (2012): 65-78.
- Michelle Tolman Clarke, "On the Woman Question in Machiavelli," *The Review of Politics* 67, no. 2 (Spring 2005): 229-255.
- Hannah Pitkin, *Fortune is a Woman: Gender and Politics in the Thought of Niccolò Machiavelli* (University of Chicago Press, 1989).
- Carnes Lord, *The Modern Prince: What Leaders Need to Know Now* (Yale University Press, 2018).
- Leo Strauss, *Thoughts on Machiavelli* (The Free Press, 1959).

- Alexander Orwin, "[Can Humankind deliberate on a Global Scale? Alfarabi and the politics of the inhabited world](#)." *American Political Science Review* 108, no. 4 (November 2014): 830-839.
- Christopher Colmo, "[Alfarabi on the Prudence of Founders](#)." *The Review of Politics* 60, no. 4 (Autumn 1998): 719-741.

Week 5: special guest visit from Michael Ignatieff

- Michael Ignatieff, "[Machiavelli was right](#)," *The Atlantic*, Decemeber 2013.

Week 5 & 6 DOUBLE-HEADER: When leaders matter, prudence & rationality.

- Daniel L. Byman and Kenneth M. Pollack, "[Let Us Now Praise Great Men: Bringing the Statesman Back In](#)," *International Security* 25, no. 4 (April 1, 2001): 107–46.
- Manali Kumar, "[Making decisions under uncertainty: the Prudent Judgment Approach](#)," *European Journal of International Security* (2022): 1-22.
- Brian Rathbun, "[The Rarity of Realpolitik: What Bismarck's Rationality Reveals about International Politics](#)," *International Security* 43, no. 1 (August 1, 2018): 7–55.

Supplementary:

- Michael C. Horowitz, Allan C. Stam, Cali M. Ellis, *[Why Leaders Fight](#)* (Cambridge University Press, 2015).
- Keren Yarhi-Milo, *[Who Fights for Reputation? The Psychology of Leaders in International Conflict](#)* (Princeton University Press, 2019).
- Daniel Kahneman & Amos Tversky, *[Thinking, Fast and Slow](#)* (Penguin, 2011).
- Francis Bacon, "Idols of the Mind," and "Of the True Greatness of Kingdoms and Estates," in *New Atlantis and the Great Instauration*, ed. Jerry Weinberger (Wiley, 2017). Reid B. C. Pauly and Rose McDermott. "[The Psychology of Nuclear Brinkmanship](#)," *International Security* 47, no. 3 (January 1, 2023): 9–51.
- Adam E. Casey and Seva Gunitsky, "[The Weakness of the Strongman](#)," *Foreign Affairs* (March 2020).
- Kenneth N. Waltz, *[Man, the State, and War: A Theoretical Analysis](#)* (Columbia University Press, 1959), Chapters 2 & 3.
- Michael Horowitz, "[Leaders, Leadership and International Security](#)," *Oxford Handbook of International Security*.
- Michael C. Horowitz, Allan C. Stam & Cali M. Ellis, *[Why Leaders Fight](#)* (Cambridge University Press, 2015).
- Susan D. Hyde and Elizabeth N. Saunders, "[Recapturing Regime Type in International Relations: Leaders, Institutions, and Agency Space](#)," *International Organization* 72, no. 2 (Spring 2020): 363-395.
- Jonas Schneider, "[The Study of Leaders in Nuclear Proliferation and How to Reinvigorate It](#)," *International Studies Review* 22, no. 1 (March 2020): 1-25.

- Richard J. Samuels, *Machiavelli's Children: Leaders and Their Legacies in Italy and Japan* (Cornell University Press, 2003).
- Keren Yarhi-Milo, *Who Fights for Reputation? The Psychology of Leaders in International Conflict* (Princeton University Press, 2019).
- Elizabeth N. Saunders, "No Substitute for Experience: Presidents, Advisers, and Information in Group Decision Making," *International Organization* 71, no. S1 (April 2017): S219–47.

Week 7: Analogies & risk.

- Rose McDermott, "Prospect Theory in International Relations: the Iranian Hostage Rescue Mission," *Political Psychology* 13, no. 2 (June 1992): 237-263.
- Kopper, Akos, and Tamas Peragovics. "Overcoming the Poverty of Western Historical Imagination: Alternative Analogies for Making Sense of the South China Sea Conflict." *European Journal of International Relations* 25, no. 2 (June 1, 2019): 360–82. **OR**
- Aidan Hehir, "The Impact of Analogical Reasoning on US Foreign Policy Towards Kosovo," *Journal of Peace Research* 43, no. 1 (July 2016): 61-87. **OR**
- Dominic Tierney, "'Pearl Harbor in Reverse': Moral Analogies in the Cuban Missile Crisis," *Journal of Cold War Studies* 9, no. 3 (Summer 2007): 49-77.

Supplementary:

- Yuen Foong Khong, *Analogies at War: Korea, Dien Bien Phu, and the Vietnam Decisions of 1965* (Princeton University Press, 1992).
- Keren Yarhi-Milo, "In the Eye of the Beholder: How Leaders and Intelligence Communities Assess the Intentions of Adversaries," *International Security* 38, no. 1 (July 2013): 7-51.
- Keren Yarhi-Milo, *Knowing the Adversary: Leaders, Intelligence, and Assessment of Intentions in International Relations* (Princeton University Press, 2014).
- Rose McDermott, *Risk-Taking in International Politics: risk-taking in American foreign policy* (University of Michigan Press, 1998), especially chapters 2 & 3.
- Lisa Hager, Oindrila Roy, Landon E. Hancock & Michael J. Easley, "Selling the Iran Nuclear Agreement: Prospect Theory and the Campaign to Frame the JCPOA," *Congress and the Presidency* 46, no. 3 (2019): 417-445.
- Yahya Kamali & Sedighe Sheikhzadeh Jooshani, "Reasoning in Foreign Policy Making from the Analogy Perspective: The Case Study of Iran's Nuclear Issue," *Asian Politics & Policy* 11, no. 2 (2019): 208-226.
- William Flanik, "Analogies and Metaphors and Foreign Policy Decision-Making," *Oxford Encyclopedia of Foreign Policy Analysis,* 2018.
- Robert Jervis, *How Statesmen Think: The Psychology of International Politics* (Princeton University Press, 2019).
- Janice Gross Stein & Lior Sheffer, "Prospect Theory and Political Decision-Making," *The Oxford Handbook of Behavioural Science* (March 2019).

- Huiyun Feng & Kai He, "Prospect theory, operational code analysis, and risk-taking behavior: a new model of China's crisis behavior," *Contemporary Politics* 24, no. 2 (2017): 173-190.
- Yves-Heng Lim, "The Future Instability of Cross-Strait Relations: Prospect Theory and Ma Ying-Jeou's Paradoxical Legacy," *Asian Security* 14, no. 3 (2018): 318-338
- Michael Poznansky, "The Psychology of Overt and Covert Intervention," *Security Studies* 30, no. 2 (2021): 325-353.

Week 8: Empathy and the adversary.

- Zachary Shore, *A Sense of the Enemy: The High Stakes History of Reading your Rival's Mind* (Oxford University Press, 2014): introduction, chapters 4-5, 8-9, conclusion. **[On Moodle]**
- Marcus Holmes and Keren Karhi-Milo, "The Psychological Logic of Peace Summits: How Empathy Shapes Outcomes of Diplomatic Summits," *International Studies Quarterly* 61, no. 1 (March 2017): 107-122.

Supplementary:

- Keren Yarhi-Milo, Joshua D. Kertzer & Jonathan Renshon, "Tying Hands, Sinking Costs, and Leader Attributes," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 62, no. 10 (October 2018): 2150-2179.
- Joshua D. Kertzer, Brian Rathbun & Nina Srinivasan Rathbun, "The Price of Peace: Motivated Reasoning and Costly Signaling in International Relations," *International Organization* 74, no. 1 (Winter 2020): 95-118.
- Paul Bloom, *Against Empathy: the case for rational compassion* (Harper Collins, 2016).
- Dominick P. Johnson, *Strategic Instincts: the Adaptive Advantages of Cognitive Biases in International Politics* (Princeton University Press, 2020).

Week 9: Sincerity, resolve, and face-to-face diplomacy.

- Todd Hall and Keren Yarhi-Milo, "The Personal Touch: Leaders' Impressions, Costly Signaling, and Assessments of Sincerity in International Affairs," *International Studies Quarterly* 56, no. 3 (September 2012): 550-573.
- Shahin Berenji, "Empathy, Risk-Taking, and Concession-Making: Gorbachev's Bold Proposals at Reykjavik to End the US-Soviet Arms Race," *Security Studies* 32, no. 2 (2023): 306-337.
- Seanon S. Wong, "Who Blinked? Performing Resolve (or Lack Thereof) in Face-to-Face Diplomacy," *Security Studies* 30, no. 3 (2021): 419-449.

Supplementary:

- Marcus Holmes, "The Force of Face-to-Face Diplomacy: Mirror Neurons and the Problem of Intentions," *International Organization* 67, no. 4 (Fall 2013): 829-861

- Todd Hall, _Emotional Diplomacy: Official Emotion on the International Stage_ (Cornell University Press, 2015).
- Marcus Holmes, _Face-to-Face Diplomacy: Social Neuroscience and International Relations_ (Cambridge University Press, 2019).
- Jeffrey A. Friedman, "Issue-Image Trade-Offs and the Politics of Foreign Policy: How Leaders Use Foreign Policy Positions to Shape Their Personal Images," _World Politics_ 75, no. 2 (2023): 280–315.
- Minseon Ku and Jennifer Mitzen, "The Dark Matter of World Politics: System Trust, Summits, and State Personhood." _International Organization_ 76, no. 4 (2022): 799–829.
- Joshua D. Kertzer, _Resolve in International Politics_ (Cornell University Press, 2016).

Week 10: Gender.
- Sylvia B. Bashevkin, _Women as Foreign Policy Leaders: National Security and Gender Politics in Superpower America_ (Oxford University Press, 2018), chapters 1-3, 7.

Supplementary:
- Bruce W. Jentleson, _The Peacemakers: Leadership Lessons from Twentieth-Century Statesmanship_ (Norton, 2018).
- Jean Bethke Elshtain, _Women and War_ (Chicago University Press, 1995).
- Dara Kay Cohen & Sabrina M. Karim, "Does more equality for women mean less war? Rethinking sex and gender inequality and political violence," _International Organization_ 76, no. 2 (Spring 2022): 414-444.
- Katie R. Place & Jennifer Vardeman-Winter, "Where are the women? An examination of research on women and leadership in public relations," _Public Relations Review_ 44, no. 1 (March 2018): 165-173.
- Mary Caprioli & Mark A. Boyer, "Gender, Violence, and International Crisis," _Journal of Conflict Resolution_ 45, no. 4 (August 2001): 503-518.
- Jana Krause, Werner Krause & Pila Bränfors, "Women's Participation in Peace Negotiations and the Durability of Peace," _International Interactions_ 44 (August 2018): 985-1016.

Week 11: Justice & beliefs.
- David A. Welch, "The Justice Motive in International Relations: Past, Present, and Future," _International Negotiation_ 19, no. 3 (October 2014): 410–25.
- Elizabeth N. Saunders, "Transformative Choices: Leaders and the Origins of Intervention Strategy," _International Security_ 32, no. 2 (2009): 119-161.

Supplementary:

- Catharine Lu, _Justice and Reconciliation in World Politics_ (Cambridge University Press, 2017).
- David A. Welch, "The Justice Motive in International Relations: Past, Present, and Future," _International Negotiation_ 19, no. 3 (October 2014): 410–25.
- David A. Welch, _Justice and the Genesis of War_ (Cambridge University Press, 1993): chapter 1.

- Elizabeth N. Saunders, *Leaders at War: How Presidents shape Military Interventions* (Cornell University Press, 2014).

Week 12: Personality and psychobiography.

- Stephen Kotkin, "When Stalin Faced Hitler," *Foreign Affairs* 96, no. 6 (November/December 2017): 48-71.
- Juliet Kaarbo, "New directions in foreign policy research: breaking bad in foreign policy," *International Affairs* 97, no 2 (March 2021): 423-441.
- Kenneth B. Dekleva, "Leadership Analysis and Political Psychology in the 21ˢᵗ Century," *The Journal of the American Academy of Psychiatry and the Law* 46, no. 3 (2018): 359-363.

Supplementary:

- Joseph G. Ponterotto, "Psychobiography in Psychology: past, present, and future," *Journal of Psychology in Africa* 25, no. 5 (2015): 379-389.
- Jessica L. Weeks, *Dictators at War and Peace* (Cornell University Press, 2014).
- Anders Wivel & Caroline Howard Grøn, "Charismatic Leadership in Foreign Policy," *International Affairs* 97, no. 2 (March 2021): 365-383.
- Stephen Benedict Dyson, "Origins of the Psychological Profiling of Politics Leaders: The US Office of Strategic Services and Adolf Hitler," *Intelligence and National Security* 29, no. 5 (2014): 654-674.
- Esra Cuhadar, Juliet Kaarbo, Baris Kesgin & Binnur Ozkececi-Taner, "Personality or Role? Comparisons of Turkish Leaders across Different Institutional Positions," *Political Psychology* 38, no. 1 (2017): 39-54.
- E. Kevin Kelloway & Stephanie Gilbert, "Does It Matter Who Leads Us?: The Study of Organizational Leadership," in Franco Fraccaroli & Magnus Sverke, eds., *An Introduction to Work and Organizational Psychology: An International Perspective, 3ʳᵈ edition* (Wiley, 2017): 192-211.
- Rory Burke & Steve Barron, "Leadership Theories and Styles," in *Project Management Leadership*: *Building Creative Teams, 2ⁿᵈ edition* (Wiley, 2014): 81-89.
- Nurcan Ensari, Patricia "Denise" Lopez & David Thiel, "Personality and Leadership," in Bernardo J. Carducci & Christopher S. Nave, eds., *The Wiley Encyclopedia of Personality and Individual Differences, Volume I: Models and Theories* (Wiley, 2020): 491-498.
- Joshua Thompson, James R. Camp, Joseph E. Trimble & Sara Langford, "Leadership Styles," in Bernardo J. Carducci & Christopher S. Nave, eds., *The Wiley Encyclopedia of Personality and Individual Differences, Volume I: Models and Theories* (Wiley, 2020): 499-504.