

Social Psychology, Psy 456/556

Mon, Wed 2:00-3:20 p.m., Straub 142
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Straub Hall 305. Phone: 346-0475.
Office hours: Mon 1:00-2:00pm and by appointment
Teaching assistant (from week 3 on):
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Syllabus

- How do people's self-perceptions influence social behavior?
- How do people form impressions of each other and make sense of human behavior?
- What are the roots of aggression, stereotypes, and prejudice?
- What factors govern attraction and relationships?
- How do social situations influence human thinking and behavior?

In this course you will learn about research and theories in social psychology that help answer these questions. More important, you will learn to think carefully about important social phenomena, and thus about yourself and other people.

You will work hard in this course. This is not a threat but a promise. In return for a considerable amount of reading, thinking, and writing, you will gain insight into social psychology as a science, excitement about the complexities of social behavior, and increased self-awareness of the mechanisms that guide your own behavior and experience.

Course Format

1. *Lectures and seminars.* This course combines two formats. For one, we will review the field of social psychology in textbook chapters, lectures, handouts, and original research literature. In addition, we will have three seminars in which we discuss in more depth a selection of classic and contemporary social-psychological topics.
2. *Readings.* The course relies on a textbook (*Social Psychology*, Gilovich, Keltner, & Nisbett) and a collection of original research articles available electronically on Blackboard. Most of the articles are taken from prime research journals and will challenge you with both theory and methodology. It is essential that you keep up with the readings in order to benefit from the lectures, contribute to seminars, succeed in exams, and write creative and thoughtful response papers.
3. *Reading Groups.* To facilitate your understanding of the readings, you will be part of a reading group. The groups get together in person or electronically to exchange ideas about the readings and prepare for the seminar sessions. In the seminars, groups are picked at random to briefly introduce and comment on the papers. Group members should also serve as editors of each student's initial paper drafts (see below). Your group contributions are assessed by your group members and are part of your grade.

4. *Response Pages.* In addition to learning, thinking about, and discussing social phenomena, you will also write about them. However, you won't compose long papers but six concise and precise responses to individual research articles. (For more information, see below).
5. *Participation.* You are expected to attend class sessions, especially seminar sessions, and contribute with questions, comments, analysis. I will learn your names and thus be able to identify your contributions. You are also encouraged to use Blackboard or E-mail to submit your thoughts on the readings or course topics.
6. *Resources.* The course encourages active use of electronic resources. A variety of material is available on the Blackboard course page (and some amount of it will be mirrored on the course web page <http://www.uoregon.edu/~bfmalle/456.html>): syllabus, schedule overview, detailed schedule and reading list, lecture handouts, tips on writing papers, questions and answers emerging during the term, and many links to web resources.

Exams

All three exams cover material from lectures, lecture handouts, textbook, required research articles, and seminar discussions. The exams contain multiple-choice items and short-answer questions. (See Schedule for exam dates.)

The exams themselves will not be returned. However, you are encouraged to come to office hours to look at the questions you got right and the questions you got wrong.

We do not write make-up exams, so you will need to take the exams at the scheduled times. Athletes traveling to official events or students who have a death in the family **must** speak to us in advance and arrange remote exam administration. If you are a foreign language speaker, please talk with me about accommodations you might need (e.g., dictionary).

Response Pages

Over the next 10 weeks you will make many new observations and have many new ideas about social behavior. I want you to develop these ideas and communicate them. Therefore you will write 6 short "response pages" to some of the assigned readings throughout the term. This way, you continuously monitor and document your thinking and learn to communicate it. We will give you detailed feedback on the first few responses to help you improve as you go along.

Format. Each response page must have a **cover sheet** that shows your student ID (no names, please) and an APA-style **reference** for the article you are responding to. The actual response is one page in length, at least 350 words, but no more than 550 words. It has three parts.

- (1) One paragraph **summarizes** the main point of the article or, if it is a complex article, the point that you are responding to.
- (2) One or two paragraphs develops a **constructive** thought that the article stimulated in you. For example, use the article's concepts or findings to analyze an everyday situation; to develop a possible application in education, business, clinical, law, etc.; or to propose an additional experiment or direction of research.
- (3) One or two paragraphs develops a **critical** thought the article provoked in you. For example, critique the clarity of the theory, the logic of the argument; the adequateness of the methods (if the article is empirical); or the support for the interpretation or conclusion.

Writing quality. You will need to write clearly and concisely. Every sentence must be understandable grammatically and in content, and sentences should be logically connected to each other. Begin each paragraph with a one-sentence précis of what you will say in more detail in the paragraph. Whenever you make a claim (e.g., that the article can be applied to a certain domain or has a certain problem), you must back up your claim—with evidence in the paper or in other literature, with logic, or with a compelling example. Don't be vague but precise. Re-read and edit your paper multiple times. And don't forget to spell-check.

Response Page Grading. Each paper earns up to 60 points. Points are awarded as follows: Paper is turned in on time (+3); is within the length requirement (+3); has a correct reference on the cover page (+3); has no major spelling errors (+3); has no major or repeated grammatical errors*, including the ones listed in my handout on "Common writing errors" (+6); individual sentences and sentence transitions are understandable (+6). In addition, you earn up to 12 points for each of the three response parts, and we look here at clarity, relevance, backing of claims, and creativity.

* Second-language English speakers are graded more leniently on grammar. Please alert us by sending an E-mail.

Late papers. Your response pages are due at class time in weeks 3, 5, 6, 7, 9, and 10, and the exact dates are noted on the schedule. Electronic format is preferred (.doc or .rtf files). Turning in a paper late leads to point deductions. Within 24 hours of the due date, the on-time point from the points scheme will be deducted; for each day beyond that, additional 2 points will be deducted. There is one exception: You have a 1-day grace period for *one* of your papers (because perhaps sometimes pet dogs really do eat papers). If you face serious personal challenges (health, death of close one) or are traveling for intercollegiate athletic events, you need to talk with us *before* the due date to arrange for a new due date. If you have a documented disability and anticipate needing accommodations for the response paper assignment, please contact me soon and bring your verification letter from Disability Services.

Challenges (and how to overcome them). If you have little practice in writing (especially writing short responses), you will find this assignment difficult at first. Make use of the Academic Learning Center or exchange papers and feedback with other students in class. Also look at the writing resources on our Blackboard page and on www.uoregon.edu/~bfmalle/456.html. Read and edit your papers repeatedly. Put yourself in a reader's perspective and keep asking yourself: Is this clear? Would they know what I mean? And heed our feedback on early papers.

The last of the three parts, the critique, is the hardest. Keep these guidelines in mind: Never attack the authors; instead, critique the theory, argument, data, or interpretation that the article presents. Do not merely suggest that more data should be collected; say what kind of studies would address your criticism. Do not critique the size of the study sample unless it created real problems for the statistical analysis. Do not critique the composition of the sample unless it seriously undermines the paper's main conclusion. Do not vaguely refer to possible personality differences; describe how such differences provide an alternative explanation of the findings. Do not simply say: This finding is not true of me (every finding in psychology is true of many but not all people); if you think that the finding is not true of *most* people, describe your evidence or how one could collect such evidence.

6th paper. If you would like to, you can pick a film as the object of your response on your *last* paper. This can be fun but is not easy. You still have to follow all the guidelines—in particular, include all three main parts (summary, constructive idea, critique). Note that you must analyze the film from a social-psychological perspective, not from an artistic or experiential perspective.

This can be done convincingly for films that are primarily about a social-psychological phenomenon (e.g., aggression, relationships) or for scenes or parts of movies that clearly speak to a social-psychological topic.

You need to think deeply about your response topics. Inspirations and ideas that are not your own must be acknowledged by source, and all quotes must be referenced. All writing assignments will be checked with **anti-plagiarism software** (which includes, for the film analysis, checks against movie databases and discussion forums).

Reading Groups

During week 1 you will join a group of about 6 students who work together during the whole quarter, meeting at least once before each seminar. The group functions primarily as a reading and discussion forum, fostering the exchange of questions and ideas about assigned readings before seminar sessions and preparing starting points for discussion. Groups should meet in person, but if that is difficult, Blackboard offers electronic meeting opportunities.

At the beginning of each seminar session, 2-3 groups will be picked at random to start off the discussion by presenting the important questions that arose for them when discussing the readings. All other students have plenty of opportunities to contribute their own questions, comments, and critiques during the seminar session.

To monitor group activities, a group “speaker” is elected by each group during the first week (the speaker role can rotate among members). Speakers report to Adam, the TA, by way of a **weekly E-mail update** (adik@uoregon.edu), documenting group meetings and other activities.

The first E-mail report is due Wednesday, **October 3**. Thus, you should meet at least briefly with your group this week or weekend to exchange schedules, find a meeting time, and elect your speaker, who then sends Adam the first E-mail about these activities.

Each student can earn up to 100 points for group participation. These points are based on (a) the group’s activities as a whole, including E-mail updates to Adam and level of preparation shown in seminars, and (b) each individual student’s attendance and contributions to the group (as judged by all other members of the group in a round-robin assessment at term’s end).

Grading

A perfect grade consists of 1000 points. You can earn points the following way:

Exam 1	150 points
Exam 2	150 points
Exam 3	200 points
6 response pages	6 × 60 points
Reading group	70 points
Individual class participation	70 points

The translation of points into grades will be *approximately* as follows: A > 900, B > 800, C > 700, D > 550. I always look for fair cut-offs that separate groups of scores from one another. A typical grade distribution consists of 20% As and 40% Bs.

I do not tolerate any form of cheating and have failed students who have cheated in the past (e.g., copied somebody else’s paper, plagiarized paper content).

Communication

Because this course is work-intensive from the first week on, it is important that we communicate effectively with each other inside and outside the classroom. Come to class and contribute; see me or Adam in our offices; make sure you check Blackboard and your E-mail several times a week. In my experience, there are few problems that cannot be solved by open and effective communication.

Students with Disabilities

If you have a documented disability and anticipate needing accommodations in this course, please meet with me soon and bring your verification letter from Disability Services.

Schedule Overview

M 9/24		Orientation: Syllabus, Overview
W 9/26		Lecture 1: Self-awareness and self-concept
M 10/1		Lecture 2: Dissonance and self-enhancement
W 10/3		Lecture 3: Theory of Mind and (Critique of) Attribution
M 10/8	#1 due	Lecture 4: Personality Judgments
W 10/10		Seminar: Perceiving Self and Others
M 10/15		Lecture 5: Stereotypes
W 10/17		Exam 1
M 10/22	#2 due	Lecture 6: Prejudice
W 10/24		Lecture 7: Intergroup perception and conflict
M 10/29		Lecture 8: Interpersonal Aggression
W 10/31	#3 due	Seminar: Violence Today
M 11/5		Lecture 9: Prosocial Behavior
W 11/7	#4 due	Lecture 10: Morality
M 11/12		Exam 2
W 11/14		Lecture 11: Conformity
M 11/19	#5 due	Lecture 12: Obedience
W 11/21		Lecture 13: Attraction
M 11/26	#6 due	Lecture 14: Relationships
W 11/28		Seminar: Social Relating
F 11/30		Voluntary review session
W 12/5	10:15am	Exam 3