

Psychology 456/556: Social Psychology

Fall 2010, Lillis 112, T/R 10:00 – 11:20

Instructor Information

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Course overview

Welcome to what I hope will be one of the most enjoyable educational experiences of your college career. Social psychology is the scientific study of the way in which people's thoughts, feelings, and behaviors are influenced by the social context, real or imagined. Social psychology seeks to understand individuals' subjective experiences and the way those experiences impact our behavior. One of the greatest things about studying social psychology is that it is relevant – it pertains to things you are probably already thinking about in your daily life. After this course you should have answers to questions such as “Why did so many people suddenly start wearing skinny jeans?” and “Why do women tend to underperform in comparison to men in math and science?” and “Do opposites really attract?” Be prepared to think. Be prepared to challenge some of your long-held assumptions about human behavior.

This course has several goals:

1. To inform you about important theories and research findings in social psychology
2. To help you become better a consumer of research in your daily life
3. To give you a forum to develop as a critical thinker and writer

Required Texts

- Aronson, E., Wilson, T.D., & Akert, R.M. (2010). *Social psychology* (7th edition). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Selected articles to be distributed on the course webpage at: <http://blackboard.uoregon.edu>

Course Organization and Requirements

Lectures

In general, the material in the lectures will not exactly match the material in the text, as I will be incorporating findings from more recent research. That being said, the topics I cover will generally mirror those in the text. I recommend that you read the assigned textbook chapter *before* class, as it will give you a solid introduction and framework to understand the lecture material.

In addition to lectures, there will occasionally be a film or in-class demonstration to help illustrate the social psychological theories we will be studying.

I strongly encourage discussion and questions. You are encouraged to participate in course discussions and to interrupt me when I lecture in order to ask a question or to share an insight.

Exams

There will be 2 exams in this course: 1 midterm and 1 final. The exams will involve multiple-choice questions. The exams will only cover material since the previous exam. As we delve into the material, I will shed some light on the types of questions that I will ask on the exams. Prior to the first exam, I will distribute a couple sample questions to give you a feel for what I will likely ask. Make-up exams will be scheduled only in exceptional circumstances, for students with documented medical problems or emergencies.

Paper

Being able to clearly articulate in writing what you are thinking is critical both in the academic and non-academic worlds. Because of this, we will spend time in this class focusing on the writing process.

Each of you will be required to write a 4-page paper. To give you a taste of the academic writing process, the paper will be written as a series of draft with feedback in between. You'll hand in a first draft after the midterm, receive feedback on the draft, and then revise and resubmit your paper in final form before the final. I will say more about the particulars of the paper later in the quarter. For now, know that the first draft will be due **Thursday, November 11th** and the final draft will be due **Tuesday, December 2nd**.

Extra credit

The process of empirical research is at the core of social psychology. To give you first-hand experience of how the research process works, I am offering **up to 2% extra credit** by participating in two hours of research through the subject pool. Alternatively, you can earn the same credit by writing a two-page critical summary of an empirical research paper from a social psychology journal (contact me for a list of approved journals).

You should choose one or the other option, as I am offering a **maximum** of 2% extra credit. Note that the determination of grades (see below) is done *after* extra credit points are included.

The posting and scheduling of experiments is handled via the Psychology Department Subject Pool system at <https://uopsych.sona-systems.com>. More information on how to use the system can be found at https://uopsych.sona-systems.com/student_new_user.asp.

Grading

Midterm	35%
Final	35%
Paper – first draft	10%
Paper – final draft	20%

Your scores will be combined and weighted to yield one score out of 100%. I will average the top 10 scores from class, and use that number to determine the cutoff for letter grades. To get an A- you will need to get 90% of the average top score, to get a B- you will need to get 80% of the top score, and so on. This system has the advantage of a curve in that if everyone does poorly on the exams because they are too hard, nobody suffers, but it is also possible for every single person to get an A (since you could all do as well as 90% of the average of the top 10 students).

Policies

Late/missed assignments. Due dates for each assignment are listed in the “Lecture/Assignment Schedule.” All assignments are due at the beginning of class. Late assignments will not be accepted.

Cheating/plagiarism. Don’t do it! You’re missing the point of college if you do. Enough said.

Students with special needs. The UO works to create inclusive learning environments. If there are aspects of the instruction or design of this course that result in disability-related barriers to your participation, please notify me as soon as possible. You may also wish to contact Disability Services in 164 Oregon Hall at 346-1155 or disabsrv@uoregon.edu.

Lecture/Assignment Schedule

Month	Day	Topic	Reading	Assignment due
September	28	Syllabus/Introduction	Chapter 1	
	30	Methods in social psychology	Chapter 2	
October	5	What is the self? (Part 1)	Chapter 5	
	7	What is the self? (Part 2)		
	12	Attribution	Chapter 4	
			Online 1*	
	14	Non-verbal behavior	pp. 2-7, 12-18	Paper assigned
	19	Attitudes & Attitude change	Chapter 7	
	21	Persuasion & Conformity	Chapter 8	
	26	Groups: Group cognition	Chapter 9	
November	28	Groups: Intergroup relations		
	2	Midterm: In class		
	4	Prejudice: The perpetrator	Chapter 13	
			Online 2*	
	9	Prejudice: The target	pp. 31-59	
	11	Aggression	Chapter 12	Paper due
	16	Automaticity & Control	Chapter 3	
	18	Judgment & Decision making	SPA 3	
	23	Health psychology	SPA 2	
	25	Happy Thanksgiving!		
	30	Helping & Altruism	Chapter 11	
December	2	Close relationships	Chapter 10	Final draft due
	6	[Finals week]		Extra credit due
	8	Final: 8am location TBA		

*Online papers are posted on the course webpage as follows:

Online 1: Bem, D. J. (2000). Writing an Empirical Article. In R. J. Sternberg (Ed.), *Guide to publishing in psychology journals*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.

Online 2: Sidanius, J. & Pratto, F. (2001). *Social Dominance*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.