Overview of the Course

Through a series of lectures, readings and discussions, this class will examine the major topics and theories of both classic and contemporary interest in social psychology, including multiple forms of social influence; attribution theory; cognitive dissonance theory and its relation to the self-concept; core social and self-motives; the social self; social cognition; stereotyping, prejudice, and stigma; intergroup processes; attitudes and persuasion; attraction and close relationships; and group processes. We will also consider applications of social psychology to education, health, business, and law.

Time & Location of Course


Required Readings

Required weekly readings are available at no cost for individual educational use on the class website (see below). Each week's readings will appear in a separate folder under "Files." A detailed schedule of topics and readings begins on page 8 of this syllabus.

Class WebSite

Course materials (including class readings) may be found on the course website, which may be accessed through your Campus Information Systems (CIS) page or through www.uonline.utah.edu/canvas. The readings are in the “Files” tab in folders for each topic.
Requirements of the Course & Grading

- Thought papers (every other week* for a total of 5), 25%
- Class participation, 5%
- Sharing 1 research article with class via 15-min presentation, 5%
- Midterm, 30%
- Final Paper & Presentation, 35%

*We will create a rotating schedule in which students will complete thought papers every other week.

Bi-weekly Thought Papers

Every other week, students are required to prepare a 2-page thought paper based on the assigned readings. A total of 5 thought papers is required. In this paper, you should develop some idea sparked by the readings and with reference to one or more of the assigned readings. This paper could develop a theoretical point, an idea for research, an integration across the readings, and/or an integration with material we have already discussed. The paper could also discuss ideas and examples that do not seem to fit the points made in the weekly readings. For the purposes of this assignment, it is much better to develop one or, at most, two points rather than to list several points that are less developed. Make sure also that you are developing an idea, rather than providing a summary of the points made in the articles.

These materials are due by Tuesday (or Thursday) 10 a.m. Please e-mail your paper to me at lisa.aspinwall@utah.edu. Your paper should be in 12-point type, with double spacing and 1-inch margins all around. Please create a unique filename that incorporates your last name, course number, and thought paper number (e.g., Smith. 6410.Thought paper1)

Bi-weekly papers will be graded on a check (satisfactory), check-plus (outstanding), and check-minus (unsatisfactory) basis. Comments will be provided most weeks, either by e-mailed comments within 1 week or in the course of class discussion.

Thought paper grading system:
- Check = satisfactory for advanced class, 3.5, B+/A-
- Check/check plus = really good, 3.8, A-
- Check plus = outstanding, 4.1, above A
- Check/check minus = not so good, 2.85, B/B-
- Check minus = unsatisfactory, 2.5, C+/B-
- Improvement will definitely be taken into account!

Please note: In recognition of students' busy schedules, there is an option to skip the thought paper for one week during the semester without penalty. If you elect to skip a scheduled thought paper, please let Angela Newman and me know by e-mail, so that we can update our grading records. Please be sure to complete the readings for that week, however, so that you may participate in class discussion. If you elect not to use your "free" week, the extra thought paper will be considered as extra credit.
Class Participation

This will be an active, discussion-focused class. Asking questions and offering comments and examples improve the learning experience for everyone.

Participation counts. Although no attendance will be taken, participation is part of your course grade (5%), and consistent thoughtful participation during class may be recognized with a few extra points in cases where a student is very close to a higher grade.

Research Article to Share with the Class

Social psychology is a huge and active field. To ensure that we are covering contemporary issues and to focus class discussion on students' interests, we will have brief presentations that are based on articles selected by students. These articles should have been published within the last 10 years (see me to discuss exceptions). On most weeks, 1-2 students will be asked to select and bring in for discussion an article related to their own research or other professional interests (or that is otherwise interesting) that is related to the week’s readings. Students should be prepared to describe the rationale for and findings of this article in sufficient detail that those of us who have not read the article will be able to understand it and learn from their presentation. Students will also prepare 2 discussion questions that follow from their article. A sign-up sheet for these presentations will be made available early in the semester. A list of academic social psychology journals appropriate for this assignment appears on page 5.

Midterm Exam

A take-home midterm examination will be distributed at the end of class on Thursday, October 9 and due by e-mail at 5 PM on Friday, October 24. The exam will be in essay format, with two questions requiring 3-4 page answers each. More information about the midterm will be provided in class.
Final Paper & Presentation

1. Starting with a topic of contemporary interest, trace its history backward with reference to major social psychological issues of the past 5-6 decades or more.

   Examples: Implicit attitudes. Ways to reduce prejudice and discrimination. The social self.

2. Alternatively, start with a topic of "classic" or early interest in social psychology and trace it forward in time to see how it has been studied and how it is currently studied in contemporary social psychology.


3. Or start in the 1980s and do both, going forward and backward.

   Example: Attributions and adjustment to serious illness. Ingroup favoritism.

Sample issues to address in your paper (more detail will be provided in class):

   What was the impetus for doing this research? What theories and alternative accounts were being tested? Did the conceptual or methodological approach represent something new in this area? In what way has this paper or topic been influential? Why do you suppose it has been? What were its historical origins? Can you see its influence today? Where and in what way?

   Alternative topics, such as detailed reviews of classic debates or controversies in the field, are also possible.

   Note: You could interview a member of the psychology faculty who studies a related field and get his or her suggestions for articles to read, as long as you're the one who reads those articles and provides an analysis of them.

   Bonus points: Describe the social and political issues of the day that may have influenced this work (why it was conducted in the first place, how it was received). That is, what social context gave rise to this work?

Please clear your paper topic with me by Tuesday November 25, either by meeting with me to discuss your paper topic or by sending a half page description of it to me by e-mail. With sufficient advance notice, I would be happy to provide comments on a draft of your final paper and/or to meet with you to discuss your paper and to suggest references that might be useful to you.

The final paper is due by e-mail on Tuesday December 16, 5 p.m.

Requirements for students enrolled in Psychology 5410. A 6-8 page paper (double-spaced, with one-inch margins all around, 11- or 12-point font) is required. The paper must be based on at least 5 original source journal articles. These journal articles may be reviews of the literature or new empirical contributions.
Final Paper & Presentation, contd.

Requirements for students enrolled in Psychology 6410. An 8-10 page paper (double-spaced, with one-inch margins all around, 11-or 12-point font) is required. The paper must be based on at least 8 original source journal articles. These journal articles may be reviews of the literature or new empirical contributions.

Presentation based on final project. A major requirement of the course for students enrolled in both Psychology 5410 and 6410 is a presentation based on student final projects during class time during our last three class meetings, December 4, 9, and 11. In order to avoid having to meet during the final exam time scheduled by the university (Tuesday December 16, 1-3 PM), we may have to extend class time during the last week of the semester. Presentations will be approximately 15-20 minutes each, followed by class discussion.

General Notes about Class Assignments

There are many ways to approach a core course. It presents an opportunity to examine how the major theories of social psychology may be related to your own research and professional interests. It is perfectly OK for your article presentation, thought papers, and final paper to be related. That is, if you have a particular interest in one or more topics, you may develop that interest in different ways in each assignment. Such an approach would allow you to pursue your interests in depth across the themes of the course. It is also perfectly OK to use the assignments to develop your understanding of multiple areas, without necessarily drawing connections across assignments.

List of Recommended Journals for Class Assignments

Journal of Personality and Social Psychology
Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin
Journal of Experimental Social Psychology
Psychological Science

Psychological Bulletin
Psychological Review
American Psychologist
Personality and Social Psychology Review
Social and Personality Psychology Compass

Note: if you select an article from one of above journals that typically feature comprehensive reviews, try to focus on the details of 1 or 2 empirical studies, rather than presenting the scope of the entire review.

Health Psychology
Motivation & Emotion
Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology
Journal of Social Issues
Social Cognition
Journal of Applied Social Psychology
Self and Identity
**Important Administrative Details**

**NOTE:** The following rules are presented in the interest of fairness for all students.

**Policy on Late Papers & Extensions**

Graduate students (advanced undergraduates, too) are often some of the busiest people on the planet, responsible for juggling multiple responsibilities for teaching, research, and their own coursework, as well as other personal responsibilities. If, after you look over your other obligations for the semester, you see that you may need an extension for any assignment, please ask me for one in advance of the due date. Late papers and other assignments will be penalized one half of a letter grade per business day late if no prior arrangements have been made.

**Grading Reviews**

You have a maximum of 2 weeks after the return of any graded assignment or exam to ask me to review your grade. Delays beyond 2 weeks must be accompanied by written documentation. Questions about final grades must be addressed in writing by January 30, 2015.

**Missing Class to Observe Religious Holidays**

Every effort will be made to ensure that students observing religious holidays are not placed at a disadvantage. With advance notice, we will tape lectures or ask another student to take notes. You can facilitate this process by giving the professor written notice of days on which you will be unable to attend by the end of the second week of class.

**Accommodations for Students with Disabilities**

The University of Utah seeks to provide equal access to its programs, services and activities for people with disabilities. If you will need accommodations in this class, reasonable prior notice needs to be given to the Center for Disability Services, 162 Olpin Union Building, 581-5020 (V/TDD). CDS will work with you and the instructor to make arrangements for accommodations. All written information in this course can be made available in alternative format with prior notification to the Center for Disability Services.

If you qualify for accommodations in classroom seating or other aspects of the course, we encourage you to use them, starting with the first class. Please see the professor as soon as possible so that we can make arrangements.

**Other Accommodations**

Students wishing to discuss potential accommodations for religious or other personal reasons should plan to meet with Dr. Aspinwall during the first two weeks of the semester.
Academic Dishonesty

Department of Psychology Academic Misconduct Policy

The Department of Psychology has a zero tolerance policy for academic misconduct. Academic misconduct includes cheating, plagiarizing, research misconduct, misrepresenting one’s work, and inappropriately collaborating. This applies to any work students turn in for evaluation or course credit. Definitions can be found in the Student Code at http://www.regulations.utah.edu/academics/6-400.html.

If you are suspected of academic misconduct, the process proceeds according to the rules found in the Student Code, University Policy 6-400(V). If you are found responsible for misconduct, consequences range from failure on the assignment to dismissal from the program, consistent with both University and Psychology Department Policy. The Psychology Department Policy can be found at: https://www.psych.utah.edu/undergraduate/files/acad_misconduct_policy.pdf. Information pertaining to graduate students may be found in the department’s graduate handbook.

The grade you earn in this course should reflect your own effort and accomplishment. Get help in office hours, ask for an extension, do anything but cheat.

Although it is often helpful to discuss the paper assignments and course materials with other students, no group projects are allowed: your papers (and, of course, your take-home midterm exam) must represent your own individual and original work. Papers that have substantial overlap in text with other submitted papers or with papers and other materials available on the Internet will be referred to the university as potential instances of plagiarism.

It is your responsibility as a student to understand how to discuss other authors' work in an appropriate way. It is my responsibility to answer any questions you may have about such issues. If you have any questions about appropriate ways in which to use and discuss another author’s work in your own papers, please ask.

As a student, it is in your best interest to try to prevent plagiarism and other forms of cheating. Please be attentive to such issues when you are preparing papers for this class.

Other Details

Withdrawals: The last day for course withdrawal without instructor permission is September 3. Following this period, instructor approval for course withdrawal up until the deadline of October 24 will only be given for medical or personal emergencies and will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Incompletes: Incompletes are given only for extraordinary circumstances. For an incomplete to be given, the student must be passing the course and have completed the majority of the assignments. Please see your registration guide for more detailed information about university policies governing the approval of incomplete grades.
Schedule of Weekly Topics & Readings

Note: Articles appear in suggested reading order. Readings may be revised with advance notice to reflect student interests and new work. Please attend class and check the announcement section of the class website for up-to-date information.

August 26          Introduction I

August 28          Introduction II


September 2          Social Comparison Theory I/Normative Influence


September 4          Social Comparison Theory II


September 9  Social Influence: Norms, Conformity, & Compliance


September 11  Attribution Theory I: Person Perception, Emotion & Motivation, Errors & Biases


September 16  Attribution Theory II: Applications


September 18  Attribution Theory III: Universality & Temporality


September 23  Cognitive Dissonance & the Self I


September 25  Cognitive Dissonance & the Self II


September 30  Self-Motives I


October 2  Positive Illusions Debate


*Students should be prepared to debate the points raised in the above articles. Instead of thought papers for this topic, an option is to find and share an article relevant to this debate.*

October 7  Self-Motives II


October 9  The Social Self I


October 9  Take-home midterm handed out in class, due October 24, 5 PM

October 14 & 16  Fall Break

October 21  The Social Self II


October 23  Take-home midterm due, Friday October 24, 5 PM; no formal class meeting on October 23, though there will be extended office hours during class time; no new readings; no short papers are due.

October 28  Social Cognition (with a focus on stereotyping)


October 30  Stratification, Social Goals, & Stereotyping


November 4  Stereotyping & Prejudice I


*Please be ready to discuss your ideas about contemporary forms of prejudice and discrimination.*

November 6  Stereotyping & Prejudice II: Stigma; Effects on Targets


November 11  Intergroup Processes I


November 13       Intergroup Processes II


November 18       Attitudes & Persuasion I


November 20       Attitudes & Persuasion II


November 25  Attraction, Attachment, & Interdependence:
From Liking to Close Relationships


Reminder: *Today is the deadline for clearing your final paper topic with the instructor.*

November 27  Thanksgiving Holiday

December 2  Group Processes


December 4  Project presentations (6)

December 9  Project presentations (6)

December 11  Project presentations (6)

December 16  Final papers due by e-mail at 5 pm. (There is no final exam.)