

PSYCHOLOGY 312- SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY

Fall Semester, 2001

University of Illinois at Chicago

LC-D2, TTh 11-12:15

Professor:

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Text

Required:

Aronson, E., Wilson, T. D., & Akert, R. M. (1998). Social Psychology (4^d Ed.). New York: Addison Wesley Longman.

Coats, E. J. & Feldman, R. S.(2001). Classic and contemporary readings in social psychology (3rd Ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education.

Course Description

Social psychology is the sub-discipline of psychology that studies human behavior and thought as it occurs in a social context. The class will cover a variety of topics that will apply to your everyday life. For example, what are the characteristics of couples who stay together? What strategies can I use to get a good deal when negotiating for a new car? How can I make the best impression in a job interview? Why are people so likely to be prejudiced against people different from themselves? How could something like the Holocaust ever happen?

Although the course will cover a broad survey of topics in social psychology, it would be wrong to assume that it will be superficial (i.e., "pop psychology"). Social psychology is a field marked by theory and rigorous adherence to the scientific method, and key concepts will be covered focusing on both. Students should also understand that there will be only a moderate degree of overlap between lectures and reading. Although the same basic topics will be covered, the lectures will typically focus on issues that are not emphasized in the readings. To do well in the course, you will need to master the material in both the readings and the lectures.

Requirements

1. Class participation. Even though this class is fairly large, class participation and attendance will be expected. Students who miss or are late for class for any reason are nonetheless responsible for all notes, announcements, and handouts, for that class. The professor will bring copies of handouts etc. to class once; if you miss important handouts, please either check the TA or professor's office doors (1055 or 3058 BSB) for envelopes that will generally have extras or get copies from other students in class.

2. Exams: All exams will consist of multiple choice, short answer, and essay questions. Questions will require that you have a good understanding of concepts and theory covered in the class, as well as evidence to support this understanding. There will be three mid term exams, and a cumulative final.

3. “Make up exam” policy. **NO MAKE UP EXAMS**. This does not mean that you are doomed to suffer a low grade in the course if you have a legitimate emergency or illness that prevents you from making an exam. If you miss an exam due to an extreme emergency, your grade will be based on your performance on your other three exams. In short, the missing grade will be “dropped.” If you miss two or more exams, however, the second, third, etc. missed exam will be averaged in as zeros.

If you fortunate enough to escape not missing any of the first 3 exams and you are satisfied with your grade based on those scores, you may skip the final. If you take all 4 exams, your final grade will be determined by dropping your lowest test score of the 4.

Keep in mind that this policy is designed to guard against legitimate emergencies and to replace make-up exams. Do not carelessly squander your one “drop.”

3. Projects: In addition to exams, you are required to complete a course project. Course projects can be turned in any time during the semester, although students should wait until the appropriate material has been covered before starting any specific project (material necessary to complete a given project varies). The goal of the project requirement in this course is to give you the opportunity to take the theories and ideas that we learn about in the class and to apply them to something concrete in your experience. That may be how you look at advertising, how you might understand the point of a film, or how to understand a current event reported in the news. The goal of the project is for you to demonstrate your independent understanding of the ideas covered in class by applying them to something in your everyday experience. Your project will be graded on your ability to demonstrate your understanding of at least three theories covered in course by discussing how they help explain or make sense of something else.

When doing your project, be sure to define any social psychological concepts you use— for example, yes, I know what “cognitive dissonance” means, but you need to communicate to me that you understand the concept of cognitive dissonance. Then provide a concrete description of how an event in a film, in current events, advertising or whatever is an example of cognitive dissonance or some of social psychological phenomena.

There are several ways in which project requirements can be met:

(a) Apply Social Psychological Theory to a News Event: Pick a current event and try to understand it by applying at least three different theoretical perspectives/concepts covered in the course (e.g. theories relating to altruism, the fundamental attribution error and aggression). What are similarities and differences in how these theories account for this event? Does one theory do a better job than the others do?

(b) Apply Social Psychological Theory to Advertising: Pick an advertisement or series of advertisements from the print media and analyze it/them in terms of theories related to attitudes and persuasion and social influence. What strategies are being used to persuade people to buy the product being advertised? From what you know about social psychological theorizing and research, how effective are these strategies likely to be? Based on what you know about social psychology, how could the ad be revised to make it more effective? Include a copy or copies of the advertisement or advertisements.

(c) Research Proposal: Take a theory described in class, and design a study that would successfully test a hypothesis derived from this theory using one of the research

methodologies discussed in lecture or the book (Chapter 1). The idea here is not to actually collect data, but to design a study that could be done to test some social psychological hypothesis. Your paper should be written like an APA style research paper (see The Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association), with an introduction and proposed method section. The introduction should make reference to original research not described in the book (at least 3 references). Be explicit in describing the independent and dependent variables, as well as how you expect your study would turn out. Briefly discuss the advantages of your design relative to other possible designs.

(d) Field Observation: Develop specific hypotheses from theories discussed in class and test them in a field observation (def: NON-OBTRUSIVE observation of natural on-going behavior). Your observations must be objective—that is, you must come up with a way to measure your observations in a systematic way. You need to discuss the theory you are testing and your hypotheses, how your observations relate to that theory, how you collected your observations, your results (no statistics necessary, but welcomed) and alternative ways in which you could address the same question. Paper should be written using APA style (see The Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association). ALL FIELD OBSERVATIONS MUST TO BE CLEARED IN ADVANCE WITH PROFESSOR; any project that has not been previously cleared before being conducted will be given a failing grade.

(e) Apply Social Psychological Theory to a Film or Novel: Many of the theories and phenomena that we will be covering in class also are demonstrated in stories about social life, such as in movies or novels. Some suggested films and themes are outlined below. Pick one, and analyze it in terms of theories relevant to the issues brought up in the film. Be sure and provide an adequate description of the film or novel so that we can evaluate the application of the theory to the context, and apply at least three theories covered in the course to help understand what happened in the story. By the way—you are not required to analyze a film on this list, but there be sure to briefly explain the plot of a film or novel that you use that is not on the list.

Some possibilities for films:

Defending Your Life (1991). Meryl Streep and Albert Brooks star in this comedy about two recently-deceased souls who are called upon to defend their lives in order to be sent to heaven. Attribution theory, social comparison, and interpersonal attraction are central social psychological principles in this film (Paramount: 112 minutes).

Europa, Europa (1983). A foreign film (based on a true story) about a 13-year-old Jewish boy's fight to escape from the Nazi's during World War II. Highly acclaimed. Prejudice and discrimination, attitude change, and cognitive dissonance are a few of the many relevant concepts (Orion: 115 minutes).

Guess Who's Coming to Dinner (1967). Spencer Tracy, Katherine Hepburn, Sydney Poitier, and Katherine Houghton star in this academy award-winning film about interracial dating. When an African-American man is invited by an upper class White woman to her politically liberal family home, her parents discover that it isn't always easy to "practice what you preach." Impression formation, attitude change, stereotypes, and prejudice play a central role in this film. (Columbia/Tristar: 108 minutes).

Lords of Discipline (1986). Davis Keith stars in this drama that chronicles the operations of a secret society within a young men's military academy. Conformity and obedience, hostility and aggression, and intergroup conflict are central social psychological principles in this film, among others (Paramount: 116 minutes).

Twelve Angry Men (1957). Henry Fonda stars in this tense, compelling courtroom drama in which jurors must decide the fate of a boy accused of murdering his father. As the lone not guilty vote in a seemingly cut-and-dried case, he gradually and methodologically builds a case to win over the other jurors. This film provides excellent coverage of conformity, attitude change, and group decision-making (MGM/UA; 93 minutes).

A few other possibilities include: *The War of the Buttons* (conflict escalation; in-group/out-group bias; conformity and obedience to authority; leadership); *Hard Promises* (theories of attraction; equity and exchange theory; attributional

models of relationships); *The Caine Mutiny* (obedience to authority; conformity and defiance); *Rosewood* (conflict escalation, prejudice, racism, sexism, social influence, contagion).

(e) Design your own project. Projects are designed to have students engage in the intellectual exercise of applying theory to "real life". If you have an idea that fits in with this goal, fine-- but get advance clearance from the professor.

Projects can be turned in any time before the final due date, but be sure and keep a copy for your own records. The latest date projects can be turned in will be

November 15, 2001 in class

Papers turned in later that day, rather than in class at the beginning of the class period, will be graded down 10% (essentially one letter grade). Papers turned in one day late will be graded down 20%; (2 letter grades); two days late 40% (4 letter grades), etc. In short, get the project done in advance of the due date—I am not very sympathetic with crashed hard drives, disk errors, printer problems as excuses for turning in papers late.

Note: All projects must be typewritten or word-processed, double-spaced, with careful attention to spelling, punctuation, etc. An "A" project will go beyond the minimum requirements listed above (e.g., number of theories applied).

4. Grades.

The lowest exam grade will be dropped

The remaining three exams will be weighted 26.68% each

The project will be worth 20% of the final grade

Miscellaneous:

1. The flexible deadline on the project requirement and the ability to drop one exam should cover most of the kinds of problems that could arise. I nonetheless recognize that extreme circumstances may arise for some students, such as medical problems or family emergencies that could interfere with regular work. Please e-mail, call, or see me in office hours as soon as possible in the case of any emergency that affects your ability to attend class, an exam, etc.
2. In fairness to the vast majority of students who take their college career seriously, no form of cheating will be tolerated on exams, project assignments, or any other work associated with this course. **Please understand that judicial charges will be filed against anyone suspected of academic dishonesty.**
3. University policy on incomplete grades is very strict. The professor will grant an incomplete grade only under the most extreme circumstances. Do not request an incomplete unless the following conditions apply (taken from the undergraduate catalogue):

Course work is incomplete when a student fails to submit all required assignments or is absent from the final examination; incomplete course work will normally result in a failing grade. The IN (incomplete) grade may be assigned in lieu of a grade only when all the following conditions are met: (a) the student has been making satisfactory progress in the course; (b) the student is unable to complete all course work due to unusual circumstances that are beyond personal control and are acceptable to the instructor; (c) the student presents these reasons prior to the time that

the final grade roster is due. The instructor must submit an Incomplete report with the final grade roster for the IN to be recorded. This report is a contract for the student to complete the course work with that instructor or one designated by the department executive officer in the way described and by the time indicated on the report. In resolving the IN, the student may not register for the course a second time, but must follow the procedures detailed on the report. An IN must be removed by the end of the student's first semester or summer session in residence subsequent to the occurrence, or, if not in residence, no, later than one calendar year after the occurrence. When the student submits the work, the instructor will grade it and change the IN to the appropriate grade. If an undergraduate fails to meet the stated conditions, the instructor will assign an E for the final grade.

4. If you have any problems or concerns throughout the class, the teaching assistant and professor are here to help you. Please come to see us in our office hours, **before** it is too late at the end of the semester. Please use office hours whenever possible, but we are willing to make appointments if your schedule makes it impossible to make either of our office hours.

Schedule of Class Topics

Week	Date	Chapters	Topics
1	8/21	AWM-1	Introduction to social psychology
	8/23	AWM-2	Research Methods
2	8/28	AWM-3	Social Cognition
	8/30	C&F Reading 4	
3	9/4	C&F Reading 3	Attribution theory cont.
	9/6	AWM-pp. 336-352 C&F Reading 11 & 12	From first impressions to attraction
4	9/11	AWM-pp. 353-379 C&F Reading 13	Close relationships
	9/13	C&F Reading 14	Close relationships (cont.)
5	9/18		EXAM 1
	9/20	AMW-7	Attitudes & Attitude change
6	9/25	C&F Reading 19	Attitudes & Attitude change cont
	9/27	AMW-pp. 250-288 C&F Reading 23	Conformity and compliance
7	10/2	AMW-pp. 289-297 C&F Reading 24	Obedience to authority
	10/4	AMW-12	Mi Lai
8	10/9	C&F Readings 17& 18	Aggression
	10/11		Exam 2
9	10/16	AMW-13 C& F Reading 6	Stereotyping & prejudice
	10/18		No class
10	10/23		“Do the Right Thing”
	10/25		Stereotyping & prejudice cont.
11	10/30	AMW-11	Prosocial behavior
	11/1	C & F Reading 8	
12	11/6	AMW-9	Group Processes
	11/8	C & F 27	
13	11/13	AMW-5	The self
	11/15		PAPER DUE IN CLASS

14	11/20 11/22	AMW-6	Self-justification & self-esteem THANKSGIVING BREAK
15	11/27 11/29		The "Big Picture" EXAM 3

FINAL EXAM: Thursday, December 6' 10:30 to 12:30