

# PSYCHOLOGY 323 - SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY

## Spring, 2006

Professor: Chris Wetzel Office hrs: MWF 10 –11 1-2; TTH 9–11, 2:30 – 3:30

Office: 115 Clough

### PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES

Besides teaching you about the discipline of social psychology, the purpose of this course is to provide you with alternative ways in perceiving and thinking about social phenomena around you. I suspect that a few weeks after you take the final, you will forget 90% of the theories, experiments, and names presented to you in this course. Hopefully, your new "perceptual, cognitive" framework will stick with you.

What exactly will you learn from this course? Will it be THE truth? Probably not. The one truth you will learn is that the world is terribly complex and that there are no simple answers or universal truths. Will you learn more about yourself? Probably not; instead you will come to "doubt yourself" even more. Will you be more confident about figuring out how other people tick? Probably not, instead you should learn to see more possible causes for people's behavior. In sum, you should come away from this course with increased skepticism for simplistic statements such as, "This causes that," or "Person X is like that because of Y."

In terms of the 12 course objectives that the IDEA form assesses, the following objectives are essential: #22 Learning fundamental principles, generalizations, or theories; #23 Learning to apply course material (to improve thinking, problem solving, and decisions, and #31 Learning to analyze and critically evaluate ideas, arguments, and points of view. The following are important: #24 Developing specific skills, competencies, and points of view needed by professionals in the field of this course; and #21 Gaining factual knowledge (terminology, classifications, methods, trends). The remaining objectives are important but are not formally assessed in the course, so they are not used for course evaluation.

Your text is Social Psychology: the Heart and the Mind (5th Ed). by E. Aronson, T. Wilson, and R. Akert. There is also a study guide, by B. Lee, which might be worth buying but see the website below first. You also need to be "webliterate" as much of this course is administered by WEBCT. You also should make use of the textbook homepage: [http://wps.prenhall.com/hss\\_aronson\\_socpsych\\_5](http://wps.prenhall.com/hss_aronson_socpsych_5). [Select a chapter by clicking on the appropriate number in the "chapter bar."]

Class time will be a combination of lecture, discussion, and demonstrations. Active involvement with the material is necessary to earn a good grade and to change your perceptual framework and thinking style!

### COURSE REQUIREMENTS

1. Class attendance is important, but class engagement—contribution— is more important. If you miss a class, you are still responsible for any announcements, information, handouts, etc. from that class.
2. By the date that each chapter is to be read (usually a Friday), there will be a WEBCT quiz on the chapter. The quiz will generally consist of 2-3 multiple choice questions and/or a short answer, and you will need to complete this quiz by noon, the day of the class. The chapter quiz will be opened 24 hours earlier. Since there are 14 reading assignments, you will have 14 quizzes. Your total comprises 14% of your total grade.
3. Course Projects/Activities. For most chapters, there is an associated course project. These frequently involve web exercises, experiments, and questionnaires (called "try it" in the text or on the course

webpage), or they involve class demonstrations. Besides doing the projects, you will answer specific questions associated with that "try it." There will be given a "tryit" assignment list on WEBCT with these questions. Your top 10 of roughly 13 projects will count 26% of your grade.

4. Take two exams, counting a total of 40% of your grade. The exams will consist of 20-30 multiple choice questions and one essay. The multiple choice will not generally require the regurgitation of names, facts, etc. Instead you will be required to apply theories or concepts to novel situations. Before each exam, I will give you 2-3 essay questions, and you will write one essay that is due when you take the multiple choice part. Make-up exams will be given with the final (last exam).
5. The quality of your class engagement (worth 10% of the grade) will be judged by how often you challenge or critically comment on a statement made by the professor, or how often you answer a fellow student's question or follow up on another student's contribution either in class or on the WEBCT discussions. Answering a question posed by the professor, asking for a clarification of either reading or lecture material, or asking an "applied" question (eg., what would theory X say about phenomena Y?) can also count.
6. The Research Proposal/Literature Review/Webproject

During the semester, you will read on a specialized or a popularized topic of social psychology (eg., are automatic inferences more resistant to change than controlled, intentional inferences; are males more aggressive than women; are two-person groups more productive than individuals working alone, etc.) You will use your detailed knowledge to make either: 1) a research proposal where you test a social psychology research hypothesis (7-15 pages), 2) a literature review (10-20 pages), or 3) a webpage (1-3 pages plus many links). This proposal/review/webpage will be written the style of an APA journal article, and it will count 10% of your grade. The late penalty is one letter grade for every class day the project is late.

For your research proposal, you can assume that you have a large research budget with plenty of help from graduate students to help you collect data, but you must design an ethical research method to test your question. Your introduction (2-5 pages) will include a literature review of your question; this entails reading original sources, i.e., journal articles, professional books, etc. Your method (1-3 pages) needs to include appropriate controls and/or comparisons and enough detail so I could replicate your study. Be careful to operationalize your IV and DV's clearly. Your results section (1-2 pages) will present your predicted results (include tables of hypothetical means). Your discussion (1-3 pages) will discuss how your expected results would change or improve our understanding of the literature in your area. It will also describe any limitations, possible rival hypotheses and problems with your research project. Remember, you do not actually carry out your research project.

The purpose of the literature review is to inform the reader about what the corpus of research says about a particular phenomenon and to point out limitations, shortcomings and gaps in our knowledge. In other words, you want to give the big picture, but point out blank spaces on the canvas, where the color isn't quite right, or where there are distortions. This is not easy to do because most research is chaotic; you have to put some order to it! In your introduction, you should present the conceptual scheme you will use to make sense of the literature. You classify studies into meaningful groups and present the classification system. There are many ways to classify: by type of DV, IV, some procedural or methodological factor, subject population, consistency of results to a dominant theory, and theoretical mechanisms (explanations) for the effect. The more abstract or theoretically based the classification, the more useful it will be. When you describe research, do not go into excessive details on particular experiments; give just enough information so that the reader can make sense of the description. Remember, the reader has not read the study. When you summarize a study, make sure that you

represent the results correctly. Try to describe studies in groups as opposed to individually such as: "Fromkin (1968), Wicklund (1967), and Shaffer & Hendrick (1971) showed that...."

Because a review is supposed to critically evaluate a research area, it is important to present methodological flaws or problems (for example, maybe there are no control groups), alternative explanations for results, competing theories (and how well they explain the data), and the limiting conditions (the situations where the usual effects don't occur). You also need to interpret results and come to a conclusion about the validity of the phenomenon. Do not leave the reader hanging! Finally, you need to give future directions; what you think the researchers should investigate next and why.

A third alternative to produce a web-project, which reviews an applied area (eg. handgun control and crime rates, pornography and aggression, etc). The web presentation will require library research in order to present the most recent information on the topic as well as collecting web materials on the topic. Your web project should include both scholarly information and links to other (less scholarly) web sites as well as summary conclusions about how you interpret the material. My homepage has some previous webprojects: <http://wetzelspsych.rhodes.edu/>. Also see <http://www.apa.org/pubinfo/answers.html> for an example of what you could produce.

7. Extra Credit-- 2 ways

Interacting with a social psychologist. As you read about social psychology theories and experiments, you may want to know more about the theory/experiment or the psychologist authors. If they are still alive, you may be able to email them questions you would like answered. [Before you can do this, I must approve the person you pick as well as approve the questions you wish to ask him/her.] You will do some background reading, locate the person's webpage or email address (a collection of them is at: <http://www.socialpsychology.org/>), pose a series of questions (which I will screen), correspond with them electronically, and then write a brief report (1-2 pages) on what the person says and what you have learned.

You may participate in psychology experiments either here or at the University of Memphis. For each hour of participation, you will receive one-half point extra credit, for a maximum of 1.5 points. For each experiment, you must briefly describe what the experiment was about (identify research question, Independent and dependent variables, etc), what your role was in it, and any flaws or problems you noticed.

The maximum extra credit (added to your course grade) is 5 points.

**Schedule**

#	Day	Date	Reading	Topic	Assignment Due or Class Activity
1	W	1/11	-	Sex, Lies and Videotapes	Activity: Deception part 1
2	F	1/13	Chap 1	The Power and Paradox of Social Psychological interventions	course info materials & App #1 Activity: Common Sense
MLK Day observance					
3	W	1/18	Chap 2	Research methods	ChapQuiz:1 + 2
4	F	1/20		Tryit p.29, p. 40	Making judgments; App#2
5	M	1/23	Chap 3	Social Cognition	ChapQuiz #3
6	W	1/25		Tryit p.80	App #3; randomness exercise
7	F	1/27	Chap 4	Social Perception	ChapQuiz #4 + App #4
8	M	1/30			In-Class: detecting deception
9	W	2/1		Tryit p. 96	App #5
10	F	2/3	Chap 5	Self-knowledge	ChapQuiz #5
11	M	2/6			App #6
12	W	2/8			In-Class: self-consciousness, self-reports, and "E" test

13	F	2/10	Chap 6	Self-justification esteem maintenance	ChapQuiz #6
14	M	2/13			
15	W	2/15			In-class: Assessing people's values
16	F	2/17	Chap 7	Attitudes and Attitude change	ChapQuiz #7
17	M	2/20			
18	W	2/22		APP#7 + Tryit, p. 204 and 213	
19	F	2/24			MIDTERM: chapters 1-7
20	M	2/27	Chap 8	Conformity	ChapQuiz #8
21	W	3/1		App#8: Milgram's boast	
22	F	3/3	Chap 9	Group Processes	ChapQuiz #9
23	M	3/6			Paper/project topic due
24	W	3/8		#9: Tryit, web chap 9: prisoner's dilemma	In-class: loving, let me count the ways
25	F	3/10	Chap 10	Interpersonal Attraction	ChapQuiz #10
Spring Break					
26	M	3/20			In-Class: unusual ways to assess personality
27	W	3/22			
28	F	3/24	Chap 11	Prosocial Behavior	ChapQuiz #11
29	M	3/27			In-class: Projective measures of personality
30	W	3/29			In-class: loving those we help
31	F	3/31			Paper computer literature search due
32	M	4/3		Apps #10 + 11 due	
33	W	4/5	Chap 12	Aggression	ChapQuiz #12
34	F	4/7			Paper/project bibliography due
35	M	4/10			
36	W	4/12	Chap 13	Prejudice	ChapQuiz #13
Easter Recess					
37	M	4/17			Paper outline due
38	W	4/19		App #12: IAT	In-class: the power of prejudice (IAT)
39	F	4/21	SPA:2 +3	Social psych in action: law and environment	ChapQuiz #14
40	M	4/24		In-class: harvesting extra-credit	Paper due
41	W	4/26			
<b>Monday, May 1st, 2:00 pm.</b>					<b>Final Exam : Chapters 8 – SPA2,3</b>

\* This syllabus schedule is only a rough guideline. There will be many changes, and they will be announced at least 24 hours before the day on which an assignment is due.