

PSYCHOLOGY 485 – Senior Seminar on Privilege Spring, 2008

Professor: Chris Wetzel Office hrs: MWF 9 – 9:30, MF 2-2:30; TTH 9 –11, 1:30 – 2:30 Office: 115 Clough

PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES

This course is designed to give students the opportunity to integrate skills and understanding critical to the discipline of psychology. Students will complete a major project which will require the application of work they have done in methods and content area courses in psychology. We will work in teams, consistent with the collaborative model that dominates contemporary psychological research.

Knowledge Objectives: You will review a body of literature on different types of privilege: gender, sexual orientation, social class, race, age, beauty, and disability. You will become fully conversant with the research and theory that is relevant to your project. The level of expertise that you gain by the completion of your senior papers should prepare you to communicate effectively with professionals in your area of study.

Personal Values/Commitment/Application Objectives: It is my hope that this course will open your eyes to the subtle ways in which you may have been privileged as well as disadvantaged. This awareness should impact your views about social and educational policy. It may even impact your sexual, racial, etc. identity.

Student Skills Objectives: In this class I hope to exercise and improve a set of skills used by professionals in psychology and in many other related fields. Most notably, these will include:

- ◆ research skills: You will conduct a literature review and write a research report in APA format, and disseminate results to appropriate audiences.
- ◆ collaboration skills: almost all psychological research is done in a collaboration model. You will gain experience working as part of a team and you will gain experience providing and receiving critical peer feedback on all aspects of the work.
- ◆ professional communication skills: You will have opportunities to enhance communication skills in two areas: the ability to make formal presentations to professional audiences and the ability to contribute to conversations (in-class, and in out-of-class informal meetings) that encourage the thoughtful expression of different points of view and that deepen our mutual understanding of the work we are doing.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

1. Working with a partner. The class will pair up, and each pair becomes a “student unit” for grading purposes. At the end of the semester, the partners will evaluate each other’s contributions. If both partners agree that one partner contributed substantially more than the other, then that partner’s grade will be boosted on letter step above the pair’s grade (e.g. a B+ goes to an A-), and the less involved partner will receive a grade that is one letter step below the pair’s grade (e.g., a B+ goes to a B).
2. Required reading for the class. Each pair will be responsible for assigning one reading to the class. This article should be carefully selected to facilitate discussion about critical issues and interesting findings in the area of the student’s research paper. Readings must not exceed 50 pages, and the assigning students will be responsible for making the reading available to classmates electronically or on reserve in the library.

3. Reading Guides and Discussion Facilitation (10% of the grade). Each pair will prepare a Reading Guide for the reading he or she assigns to the class. This may include brief background information about the context in which the article appeared, or about the impact it has had on the field. It may include suggestions for orienting the reader to the text, or initial questions that will help them read text thoughtfully. Reading Guides must be posted electronically for the class at least two classes before the reading is to be discussed in class. On the day the reading is to be discussed, the pair is responsible for leading class discussion. Discussion leaders should:
- elicit from the class a summary or exposition of the main ideas and findings in the readings, to ascertain that the reading was understood.
 - work with the Engaged Reading Questions (ERQ) submitted by classmates (see below). The discussion leader should organize these so that similar questions are taken up together. We will not have time to address all of the questions, so it will be the responsibility of the discussion leader to select those most fruitful for discussion. If there is misunderstanding or confusion revealed in the ERQ's, those should be addressed.
 - prepare an activity or topic for discussion that will engage classmates deeply with the ideas in the reading. This may involve applying the ideas or findings from the article to a particular research problem or contemporary issue. It may involve relating the reading to classmates' research projects or to ideas raised in other disciplines. Students are encouraged to be creative and integrative in leading this part of the discussion.
4. Engaged Reading Questions and Discussion Participation (10% of the grade). For each assigned reading, each student will formulate one or two ERQs to be posted for the class no later than midnight before the reading is to be discussed in class. Good reading involves being in an imaginary conversation with the author. Being part of a community of readers means that as we read, we are also in an imaginary conversation with one another. The Engaged Reading Questions assignment should help us bring some of that imaginary conversation to life. Engaged reading requires an active and thoughtful approach to the material. Intellectual engagement involved one or more of the following:
- evaluating the author's arguments, questioning the methods, searching for underlying assumptions, and considering the validity of the ideas. Critical Evaluation questions arise from this kind of engagement.
 - considering the implications of the author's ideas for of the research findings for social policy, for further research or theory, for your personal life. Implication/Application questions arise from this kind of engagement.
 - relating the ideas presented to other material you have encountered in this course or to ideas you have been exposed to in other courses or in other readings, thinking about conflicts between different approaches, trying to resolve them. This kind of reading provokes Integration/Synthesis questions.

Over the course of the term, make an effort to do all three of these kinds of intellectual work. Monitor your own intellectual development, and make sure that you challenge yourself to create all three kinds of engaged reading questions

5. Class Contribution/Attendance (10% of the grade). Your participation in class discussions will be critical to the success of the class. My assessment of your participation in discussion classes will be based not only on how clearly you express your own ideas, but also on how well you elicit, encourage, and help develop the ideas of your classmates. Be attentive to opportunities to ask follow-up questions, and to respond to or elaborate on the ideas expressed by others in class. We will sometimes be discussing controversial issues of considerable importance to us all. Please remember that a good discussion is not necessarily an argument. We certainly may have arguments in class, but our overriding goal is to increase our mutual understanding of the issues, not to prove one another right or wrong.

Missing more than three classes will lower your this grade by one whole letter grade per class that you miss. So if you miss 7 classes, your class contribution grade is an F no matter how much you participate in the other classes.

Sometimes you may find that you are unable to express your ideas on a topic during a class discussion. The course of the discussion may move on before you have had enough time to formulate your thoughts, or you may be especially interested in discussing an aspect of the reading that we never get to in class. Sometimes you just need to contemplate your reactions and to explore your own ideas on the topic after the class session has ended. When this happens, you are encouraged to contribute your remarks to the class electronically at our Moodle website. The 'afterthoughts' you enter in Moodle will be considered equally with in-class discussion as part of the class participation grade. Students are required to read the contributions that have been submitted by their classmates before each class session. Failing to do this will hurt the class participation grade. Just as with in-class discussions, you are encouraged to respond to one another, and to encourage the expression, clarification, and development of ideas.

If you must be absent from class for any reason (including illness or other excused absence), you are required to contribute your thoughts on the reading by Moodle in the "Missed Classes" forum. Missed-class essays should be about 500 words, and should be posted as soon after the absence as possible. (For absences caused by illness, you may wait until you have recovered; for absences due to graduate school or job interviews, or other scheduled events, you should try to contribute your essays in advance of the class session.) All students are required to read the 'missed class' essays submitted by their classmates, and responses are encouraged. Each absence diminishes our class discussion, so this is a way to recover what we miss. Absences not made up with missed-class essays will lower the class participation grade by one letter step.

6. Final Senior Research Paper (30% of grade). Each pair will submit a final paper based on their work. Papers must be written according to APA style (5th edition of the Publication Manual). Each member of the pair will be expected to edit and revise each section of the paper, although different individuals will make the first draft of various sections. The topics of the paper can be quite varied and could include:
 - how different subgroups are privileged or disadvantaged (e.g., are homosexuals, bisexuals, transgendered, and intersex individuals disadvantaged in similar ways?)
 - are there domains where which category is privileged is reversed (e.g., are non-whites privileged in the arts or sports?)
 - historical changes in privilege (e.g., is gender privilege no longer present?)
 - classifications of the forms of privilege (e.g., subtle versus blatant forms),
 - the mechanisms by which privilege is maintained (e.g., structural/institutional, psychological [prejudice & stereotyping], cultural)
 - why awareness of privilege is minimal (e.g., how gender, racial and sexual identities are tied into privilege).
7. Oral Presentation of Research Paper to the class (30% of grade). The pair will make a 15 minute presentation (not necessarily Powerpoint) of their research project (paper).
8. Professional Presentation of Research Project (10% of the grade). Each pair is required to present their work at URCAS. This can be in the form of either an oral presentation or a poster.

Schedule

1	W	1/9	Course Introduction; rank order preferences for topics
2	F	1/11	Pair UP
3	M	1/14	Begin literature Search
4	W	1/16	
5	F	1/22	Meet with me if having problems with the search
MLK day			
6	W	1/23	Finish up literature search
7	F	1/25	Submit electronic bibliography
8	M	1/28	
9	W	1/30	Honors #1 topic discussion of reading: Jones
10	F	2/1	No Class
11	M	2/4	Topic #1 discussion of reading: King
12	W	2/6	Honors #2 topic discussion of reading: Copeland
13	F	2/8	Submit Topic #1 annotated bibliography
14	M	2/11	Topic #2 discussion of reading: Sealand & Dutton
15	W	2/13	Topic #3 discussion of reading: Davis
16	F	2/15	Submit Topic #2 & #3 annotated bibliography
17	M	2/18	Topic #4 discussion of reading: Spencer & Sadtler
18	W	2/20	Honors #3 topic discussion of reading: Lehman
19	F	2/22	Submit Topic #4 annotated bibliography
20	M	2/25	Topic #5 discussion of reading: Shores
21	W	2/27	Catch up
22	F	2/29	Submit Topic #5 annotated bibliography
Spring Break			
23	M	3/10	Topic #6 discussion of reading: Jackson & Lippoff
24	W	3/12	Topic #7 discussion of reading: Kimbrough & Reilly
25	F	3/14	Submit Topic #6 annotated bibliography
26	M	3/17	Topic #8 discussion of reading: Sturtevant & Kilpatrick
27	W	3/19	Submit Topics #7 & #8 annotated bibliography
Easter Break			
28	M	3/24	1 honors oral presentation
29	W	3/26	2 oral presentations
30	F	3/28	2 papers due
31	M	3/31	1 honors oral presentation
32	W	4/2	2 oral presentations
33	F	4/4	2 papers due
34	M	4/7	1 honors oral presentation
35	W	4/9	2 oral presentations
36	F	4/11	2 papers due
37	M	4/14	1 oral presentation
38	W	4/16	2 papers due
39	F	4/18	Meet with me to assess partner
40	M	4/21	Wrap up
41	W	4/23	Prepare for URCAS
42	F	4/25	Present At URCAS

* 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.

Here are the teams:

Gender: Lauren Kimbrough & Laura Reilly
 Social class: Meredith Spencer & Emily Sadtler
 Racial: Justin Sealand & Ryan Dutton
 Ablebodied: Daniel Sturtevant & Kevin Kilpatrick
 Beauty: Emily Jackson & Courtney Lippoff

Here are the "independent contractors"

Logan Jones: Campus climate around GLBT issues
 Jessica Copeland: Increasing racial & gender privilege by playing a game
 Blair Lehman: Emotions and Tutoring?
 Francesca Davis: Multicultural relations?
 Kasharah King: Adolescent Mothers?
 Lucy Shores: Virtual Environments?