

## SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY (PSYC 2606, section 800), Spring 2002

<http://psych.colorado.edu/~iblair/home.html>

TR 11:00 – 12:15, MCOL E158

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Tue., 2:00 – 4:00 PM, and by appointment

Social psychology examines our attitudes, perceptions, emotions, and behaviors, and how our social environment influences each of these. We will begin the course with an overview of research methods in social psychology, and then spend the first part of the semester assessing the ways in which we perceive ourselves, other individuals, and groups. We will then explore attitudes, group behavior, and the direct influence that other people can have on us. We end the course by considering the social factors that influence helping, aggression, and health.

### READINGS

- Textbook: Brehm, S., Kassin, S., & Fein, S. (2002). *Social psychology (5<sup>th</sup> ed.)*. NY: Houghton Mifflin.
- Readings: Fein, S., & Spencer, S. (1996). *Readings in Social Psychology: The Art and Science of Research*. NY: Houghton Mifflin.
- Additional readings are listed by authors and will be on reserve at the Norlin Library circulation desk.

### ORGANIZATION

Class meetings will consist of lectures as well as various activities. Lectures will either expand upon the text by considering some topics in greater detail, or include new material not discussed in the text. Other activities offer students the opportunity to apply the class material in innovative ways. The readings that you should do for each class meeting are noted on the attached class schedule. *All reading and writing assignments should be completed by the dates under which they are listed in the attached schedule.* Grades will be based on class participation (20%), performance on class projects (20%), and exams (20% for each of three).

#### **Class Participation (20% of Grade)**

Your class participation grade will be based on contribution to class discussions and performance in class activities (including the short essay you will write about your work in these activities). It is expected that you will attend *all* class meetings. Failure to attend without a legitimate excuse will lead to reductions in your course grade. A pattern of absenteeism may also lead to a grade of *F*, regardless of your performance in other areas of the course.

Class discussions: You will have a variety of opportunities to participate in class. One is by contributing to class discussions. This does not translate to “say something bright every time” or “say as many things as you can.” What it does mean is that you participate by contributing when you have something to add, by responding to others’ remarks with those of your own, and by generally sharing your perspective with the rest of the class. No two of you are alike, and sometimes there are no right answers! You will not receive a favorable grade if you fail to contribute to (or are clearly unprepared for) class discussions.

Class activities: There are four activities during the term in which students will have an opportunity to apply the course material to a specific problem. Each member of the class will play a major role in one of the activities. I will pass around a sign-up sheet during the second class meeting of the semester. All class members are responsible for related readings.

I will meet in advance with each activity team to provide instructions. Each team is required to appoint a representative to let me know of the team's progress at least once prior to the activity date. For some activities you may need AV equipment. Make sure you let me know in advance if you need equipment that is not already in the classroom. The activities and associated roles are as follows:

- 1) Debate on the adaptiveness of optimism and self-esteem: Two teams of students will be randomly assigned to take one of two positions -- that optimism and self-esteem are beneficial to personal and societal advancement, or that they lead to undesirable decisions and other behaviors that are ultimately detrimental. (Tuesday, February 12)
- 2) Social problem grant presentations: An agency is prepared to give a large sum of money to a team of researchers to solve a social problem related to prejudice. Students will be randomly assigned to groups that aim to use the money for different social problems. There is only enough money for one research group, so each must convince the agency (other students and myself) that their own efforts are worthwhile and potentially influential, and more so than those of the other group(s). (Thursday, March 14)
- 3) Mock hearing on TV/Film Violence: Students who sign up for this activity will be randomly assigned to play roles in a mock senate hearing on TV/Film violence (e.g., American Psychological Association, Network/Film industry, Parents). The students playing each role will represent that perspective in the debate. (Thursday, April 25)
- 4) Mock trial: We will hold a mock trial during the last two class periods. In this trial, a woman is being charged by her husband with desertion. Eight members of the class will play major roles (prosecuting and defense attorneys, plaintiff and defendant, expert witnesses). Other students will play minor roles including jurors, the judge, the bailiff, and minor witnesses. Biographical sketches of the characters will be distributed to the students playing trial characters in advance, as will facts about the case. On the final day, we will discuss the jury's verdict and the case. (Tuesday, April 30, & Thursday, May 2)

Following participation as a major player in an activity, the next step is to prepare a brief 1-page essay explaining what social psychological principles were applied during the activity, and how the principles were applied. This essay is due in class, no more than one week following completion of the activity. Earlier essays are encouraged.

You will receive a grade based on the essay as well as on your performance in the activity. Because the emphasis in these activities is to help one to integrate the course material and to apply one's creativity in doing so, grading will be fairly lenient. Students will, however, receive a low grade in this area if they are unprepared to serve adequately in their roles or turn in a poor essay.

### **Projects (20% of Grade)**

Throughout the course you will be asked to complete three projects. For the most part, these projects serve as an opportunity to apply broadly what you have learned in the course. All of these assignments are posted on the Web, and must be handed to me in class on the day they are due. Given that they are available well in advance, and that you know when they are due (see attached schedule), it is imperative that you hand them in on time. Late projects will be marked down one letter grade for each day past the deadline.

All projects must be typed and double-spaced. It is important to ensure that your writing is free of typographical, spelling errors, and the like; sloppy writing is unacceptable. Proof-read your writing carefully and show it to a friend if necessary.

Please note that Project 3, which gives you the opportunity to put together an advertisement that applies material learned in the course, will be due in class on Tuesday, April 16. We will be having an advertising

convention that day so all students can present their work. In order to receive credit for this project, you *must* attend class on that day.

Grading of these projects is based on the following criteria:

- A **C** project is one that addresses the topic adequately, without being particularly innovative. A project receiving this grade may not properly draw on social psychological concepts, nor integrate them in a logical fashion. Projects that are not well-thought out, do not reflect a great deal of effort, are not well-written, and/or include noticeable carelessness, will receive this grade. Projects that seem to “take the easy way out” are more likely to receive this grade.
- A **B** project addresses the topic in an interesting, logical manner. Concepts and relevant research are applied accurately and cleverly integrated. Such projects are well-written and reflect a fair amount of thought and effort. Novel approaches are not necessarily taken, but the project satisfactorily addresses the question in a thoughtful way.
- An **A** project is one that approaches the question in a creative, innovative manner. Several social psychological concepts are clearly and logically integrated, and links (in some cases, novel links) are made to current research on the topic. Such projects reflect extremely careful attention to detail, are very well-written, and often offer interesting new approaches to the problem at hand. Projects earning this grade usually reflect an impressive amount of thought and rigor.

### **Examinations (60% of Grade)**

We will have three exams, two during the semester and a “final” exam. Each exam will cover approximately 1/3 of the course. Exams will include a combination of multiple choice, short answers, and short essays. Each exam will contribute 20% to your grade. *The general rule is no makeup exams!* However, I recognize that there are some situations in which you simply cannot make it to an exam (e.g., serious illness, emergency, religious observance, university sponsored event). If you have a university sponsored event or religious constraint, you must let me know well in advance of the listed exam date and we will arrange for you to take an exam before you leave. If you have a serious illness or an emergency, you must let me know ASAP and we will make arrangements for a make-up.

### **COMPUTERS**

E-mail will sometimes be used to communicate information about the course, and may be used by other students to ask questions or provoke a discussion about a topic. All students are expected to check their e-mail at least every other day. Moreover, the course has a dedicated World Wide Web page that can be accessed from my university homepage (see above). The page includes this syllabus and other information you will need to complete the assignments. You may access the Web from most computers on campus. If you are using your computer at home, make sure you have “Adobe Acrobat Reader” software installed on your computer.

### **GRADING**

It is important to understand that all exams (as well as activities and projects) are graded on an absolute scale. This scale is based on two criteria: (1) what an undergraduate at a top institution is generally expected to know about social psychology, and (2) how other classes taking similarly constructed exams have fared. Thus, if all students grasp all of the material in a given section, they will all receive A’s, but if there are no such students, there will be no A’s. There are two reasons for using an absolute scale. The first is that it is important to understand the content area and be able to apply it to everyday life, regardless of how one’s performance compares with that of other students (i.e., scoring higher than average does not necessarily suggest complete understanding of the material, because “average” depends on other students). The second is that an absolute grading standard makes students colleagues rather than competitors in class. You are strongly encouraged to

work together, because that is generally the best way to learn. Your final letter grade for the course will be assigned based on the following scores.

A	=93.3%	B+	=86.6%	B-	=80.0%	C	=73.3%	D+	=66.6%	D-	=60.0%
A-	=90.0%	B	=83.3%	C+	=76.6%	C-	=70.0%	D	=63.3%	F	<60.0%

**NOTE**

If you have a physical, psychiatric, or learning disability, and require accommodations, please let me know within the first two weeks of the semester so that your learning needs may be appropriately met. It is very difficult to accommodate last minute requests. You will need to provide documentation of your disability to the Disability Services Office in Willard 322, (303) 492-8671.

<b>Date</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Readings and Assignments</b>
Jan 15	Introduction to social psychology	- Ch. 1
Jan 17	Library Research	- Meet in Central Reference, Norlin Library
Jan 22	The scientific study of social phenomena	- Ch. 2
Jan 24	Evaluating research	- “Note to Students” in Reader
Jan 29	Knowing the self	- Ch. 3; Reading 2; Comments & questions.
<b>Jan 31</b>	<b>NO CLASS MEETING</b>	
Feb 5	Self-enhancement & self-verification	
Feb 7	Snap Judgments	- Ch. 4
<b>Feb 12</b>	<b>DEBATE ON POSITIVE ILLUSIONS</b>	<b>- GROUP ACTIVITY 1</b>
Feb 14	Attributions	- Read Rosenhan (1973)
Feb 19	Biases in judgment	- Reading 1; Reading 5
<b>Feb 21</b>	<b>EXAM 1</b>	
Feb 26	Stereotypes	- Ch. 5
<b>Feb 28</b>	Prejudice and racism	<b>- PROJECT 1 DUE</b>
Mar 5	Reducing stereotypes & prejudice	- Reading 4; Sherif (1956).
Mar 7	Attitudes	- Ch. 6
<b>Mar 12</b>	<b>SOCIAL PROBLEM GRANT PRES.</b>	<b>- GROUP ACTIVITY 2</b>
Mar 14	Persuasion & Compliance	- Add pp. 234 – 240 in textbook.
<b>Mar 19</b>	Cognitive dissonance	<b>- PROJECT 2 DUE</b>
Mar 21	Group processes	- Ch. 8
<b>Mar 26/28</b>	<b>SPRING BREAK</b>	
<b>Apr 2</b>	<b>EXAM 2</b>	
Apr 4	Social norms & conformity	- Ch. 7
Apr 9	Obedience to authority	- Reading 9
Apr 11	Conformity & Obedience	- Debate, “Could it happen again?”
<b>Apr 16</b>	<b>ADVERTISING CONVENTION</b>	<b>- PROJECT 3 DUE</b>
Apr 18	Aggression	- Ch. 11
Apr 23	Helping	- Ch. 10
<b>Apr 25</b>	<b>TV/FILM VIOLENCE HEARINGS</b>	<b>- GROUP ACTIVITY 3</b>
<b>Apr 30</b>	<b>MOCK TRIAL, PART I</b>	<b>- GROUP ACTIVITY 4</b>
<b>May 2</b>	<b>MOCK TRIAL, PART II</b>	<b>- GROUP ACTIVITY 4</b>
<b>May 7</b>	<b>EXAM 3, 1:30 – 4:00 PM</b>	