PSYCHOLOGY 5606 SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY PROSEMINAR:
THE ART AND SCIENCE EXPERIMENTAL SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY
Fall 2006 (1st 5 Weeks)

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Description
This course is a brief introduction to some topics in experimental social psychology. We will discuss methodological, practical, ethical, and theoretical issues regarding social psychology experiments. The goals of this course are (a) to better understand (and avoid) some of the methodological challenges that impede scientific progress in social psychology, and (b) to contemplate how to adopt a purposeful stance toward the art of experimental social psychology.

Grading
Participation and Discussion Leader (50%)
All students are expected to read and discuss the readings. In addition, to facilitate class discussion, students will take turns leading discussions. The discussion should point up important/controversial issues, unresolved questions, and so on. Further, discussion leaders will select an article published in JPSP, JESP, or PSPB (the three preeminent journals in social psychology) in the last five years to illustrate that week’s topics.

Final Paper (50%)
The final paper is a methodological critique of a published article in JPSP, JESP, or PSPB. The objective of this assignment is to encourage you to think about how the methodological issues identified in this course are relevant to and present problems in contemporary social psychological research. The critiqued article should include one or more experiments and should have been published within the past five years. You should also try to find an article relevant to your research interests. You might also find a locally relevant article published by either the Judd (JPSP) or Park (JESP) editorial teams. Your paper should be not more than 10 double spaced pages.

In addition, to encourage your thinking about how scientific articles are structured, include a detailed outline of the article that makes clear its conceptual structure. To aid your thinking about how scientific articles are written in psychology, please see the chapters by Bem and Sternberg.

Final papers are due Friday 6 October.
Schedule

Session 1, 30 August: Course introduction and background readings


Please read these background readings before class.

Session 2, 06 September: External validity: Student samples and ethnic homogeneity


Background reading: For those of you interested in culture, Norenzayan and Heine discuss the topic extensively.


Session 3, 13 September: Self fulfilling studies: Demand characteristics and experimenter bias


Session 4, 20 September: Stimuli and simplicity


Session 5, 27 September: Deception and ethics


Background readings on writing


Sternberg, R. J. (1993). The psychologist’s companion: A guide to scientific writing for students and researchers (3rd Ed.). New York: Cambridge University Press. Chapters 4 (pp. 56-66), 5 (pp. 67-84), and 11 (pp. 174-180).