PSY 260: Social Psychology (Fall 2013)

Syllabus

Instructor: John V. Petrocelli  
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Office: 459 Greene Hall  
Office phone: (336)-758-4171  
Office hours: Monday 9:30-10:30, Tuesday 2:00-3:00, and by appointment

Days: Tuesday & Thursday  
Time: 9:30-10:45  
Location: Greene Hall 313  
Course website: https://sakai.wfu.edu

Required Text

Course Readings
Course readings will come primarily from the required textbook and will serve as a framework for the course (see the Readings and Schedule section below). Any additional readings outside of Aronson, Wilson, and Akert (2010) will be made available for download on the Sakai website. Please bring to class your textbook so that you can reference the material. Your performance in this course is likely to reflect your record of attendance and the effort that you put into reviewing the course readings.

Course Description
Social psychology involves the study of the ways in which human behavior, thought, and emotion are affected by the presence or actions of other people, as well as by the social context. Topics to be covered include social cognition, attitudes, social influence, aggression, interpersonal relationships, group behavior, and cultural influences, with an emphasis on the fundamental psychological processes that underlie these phenomena. In addition to examining theory and research in social psychology, the course will examine the methods that behavioral researchers use to study interpersonal processes. Prerequisite: PSY 151.

Course Design and Philosophy
This course offers you an opportunity to become familiar with the major theories and questions of the field of experimental social psychology. During this course you will be exposed to how social psychology research is typically designed, conducted, and reported. The required reading list serves as a global introduction to important issues as well as a set of specific examples that have put social psychology research methods to practical use. This model of learning will be complemented with lecture. However, the course will also be oriented towards a “learning by doing” approach. Successful students are those who review the required readings prior to lecture, come to every session of class, complete the assignments, and take an active role in their own learning. Please do not hesitate to utilize office hours or arrange other meetings as needed.

Course Objectives and Learning Outcomes
Social psychologists are skilled at asking interesting and useful questions and providing valid and reliable answers. Awareness of the social psychological research can improve prediction, explanation, and control of behavior. The course objectives and learning outcomes include:

• An understanding of core questions and major theoretical approaches in social psychology
• An understanding of empirical findings in social psychology and how major research designs address different questions and hypotheses
• An ability to critically evaluate social psychological research claims
• An ability to formulate social psychological problems/questions, to determine the degree to which an explanation is supported by reasoning/empirical evidence, to perceive alternative explanations and to determine what evidence is needed to choose between them, to synthesize empirical evidence and psychological concepts, and to critically evaluate existing explanations and generate new ideas
• Develop an attitude of thinking that includes persistence, open-mindedness, tolerance for ambiguity, and intellectual curiosity
• An ability to apply social psychological principles to personal, social, and organizational issues, recognize the relevance of social psychology to everyday life, and appreciate the importance of social psychological science to answering fundamental questions
Student Responsibilities
- Attend class and be prepared to participate (individually and as a group member)
- Complete all course requirements
- Check Sakai regularly for updates on course matters

Class Discussion
The learning experience in this course will involve sharing of thoughts during class discussions (focused on the required readings). I strongly encourage you to come to class willing and prepared to voice your thoughts and opinions. Please do ask questions in class.

Grading
Your letter grade for this course is determined by the percentage of total points (500 possible) earned throughout the semester. A letter grade will be assigned on the basis of the following scale:

- A+ 98 - 100%
- A 93 - 97%
- A- 90 - 92%
- B+ 88 - 89%
- B 83 - 87%
- B- 80 - 82%
- C+ 78 - 79%
- C 73 - 77%
- C- 70 - 72%
- D+ 68 - 69%
- D 63 - 67%
- D- 60 - 62%
- F <60%

Points are earned in three ways:

- **Reaction Essays (25 points each; 2 x 25 = 50 points):** Write two Reaction Essays in response to two articles that you find in any of the following journals: *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* (JPSP), *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology* (JESP), *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* (PSPB), *Social Psychological and Personality Science* (SPPS), *Basic and Applied Social Psychology* (BASP), and *Social Cognition* (SC). For each Reaction Essay, submit a one-page paper in reaction to an article. Essays may be single-spaced (approx. 500 words) or double-spaced (approx. 250 words), but are not to exceed one page (if you have more to say, reduce the font and/or margins). Include an APA-style citation at the top of your paper. Please understand that a Reaction Essay is not a simple re-wording of the Abstract of an article, or a summarization. The Reaction Essay is intended to serve as an intellectual exercise that may take the form of an agreement, disagreement, elaboration, contrast, parallel, or critical analysis of the work selected. Here are some examples of sentences to get you started:
  - "I see a contradiction between Smith’s (2002) article and the section we read about…"
  - "A possible experiment that could be conducted to test the hypothesis described in Smith’s (2002) article involves…”
  - "The theory described in Smith’s (2002) article could be used to …”
  - "The theory in Smith’s (2002) article helped me to analyze an experience that I once had in a group conflict situation that was hard for me to understand at the time…”
  - "I disagree with the interpretation of the findings described in Smith’s (2002) article…”

Note: You may submit your Reaction Essays at any point during the semester. However, you may decide to use one of the articles you review for a Reaction Essay to make some progress toward your Paradigm Demonstration requirement (see below).

- **Exams (100 points each; 4 x 100 = 400 points):** There are several conceptual, factual, and applied concepts that will be discussed in the assigned readings and during class time. I’ll need to know that you understand these concepts and can apply them. All exams will be non-cumulative. Exam items will be in the format of multiple-choice, fill-in-the-blank, and possibly short essay. The exam material will be drawn from both the lectures and the textbook.

- **Application Analysis Presentation (50 points):** One of the interesting things about social psychology is that its principles can be observed and applied everywhere: daily life, current events, television shows, books, movies, music, etc. The Application Analysis Presentation is designed to make course material more meaningful, memorable (and fun). Your task in the Application Analysis Presentation is to analyze the application of your target phenomenon in a movie, YouTube clip, song, news report etc. You should select something that you know illustrates your target phenomenon. Target phenomena may be definitions, theories, or experimental effects outlined by your textbook.
Highlight for the class how relevant social psychological phenomena are depicted in your selection. In your Application Analysis Presentation, you should:

- Take no more than 5 minutes
- Introduce the selection (e.g., movie clip) and briefly describe the relevant information (e.g., scene)
- Describe in detail the social psychological principle that you believe is relevant
- Elaborate on how the selection conforms or fails to conform to the social psychological principle you have identified
- Conclude with a short discussion to tie things together
- Select a topic that is interesting and worthwhile to you and the class (e.g., cognitive dissonance, mere exposure effect, self-perception) not something that will take less than a minute (e.g., construal, dependent variable)

**Attendance**

Class attendance will not be monitored. However, due to the participatory and interactive nature of this course, consider your attendance mandatory. Studies show that class time is the most efficient use of a student’s time when it comes to learning material. Unless by reason of extenuating circumstances or participation in religious or civic observances, your attendance is expected at all times.

**Lecture Notes**

Lecture notes are not provided. Much of the lectures will be interactive, involving class-discussion related to the topic, thought experiments, and experimental procedure demonstrations. If you must miss a lecture, please get notes from a classmate (if they are willing).

**Sakai**

You are expected to become familiar with the Sakai Academic Suite [https://sakai.wfu.edu](https://sakai.wfu.edu). Sakai is an online course environment that allows Wake Forest University faculty and students to create, integrate, and maintain web-based teaching and learning resources. Grades will be posted on Sakai. Announcements or changes will be announced on Sakai as well.

**Cheating and Plagiarism**

Although I don’t expect there to be any problems, cheating and/or plagiarism will not be tolerated. When you signed your application for admission to Wake Forest University, you agreed to live by the honor system. As part of the honor system, you agreed to abstain from cheating, which includes plagiarism. You are accountable to the following from the Student Handbook: “Plagiarism is a type of cheating. It includes: (a) the use, by paraphrase or direct quotation, of the published or unpublished work of another person without complete acknowledgment of the source; (b) the unacknowledged use of materials prepared by another agency or person providing term papers or other academic materials; (c) the non-attributed use of any portion of a computer algorithm or data file; or (d) the use, by paraphrase or direct quotation, of on-line material without complete acknowledgment of the source.”

**Pagers, Beepers, and Phones**

Please make sure that your pagers, beepers, cell phones, noise horns, cow-bells, and other equipment that are likely to be disruptive and counterproductive to learning experience, are turned off during class.

**Students with Special Needs**

Please let me know if you are a student with special needs such as visual impairment, hearing impairment, or a learning disability.

**Contingency Plan**

In the event that the university closes due to pandemic or other disaster, please review and study the required readings. Reading quizzes (distributed over Sakai, if the internet is available; or by postal mail if the internet is not available) must be completed to test your comprehension of the readings. Complete all required work (to be distributed either through Sakai, e-mail, or postal mail) listed on the schedule and send the solutions to: John Petrocelli (petrocjv@wfu.edu), if the internet is available; or if the internet is not available to: John Petrocelli, P.O. Box 7778, Winston-Salem, 27109. You will be mailed or e-mailed a
midterm and final examination that should be taken closed book, without access to papers, persons, or other resources. The return date for the examination will be specified in the mailing. If the internet is available, Professor Petrocelli will be available for normal office hours by e-mail.

**Disclaimer**
Consider this syllabus a binding contract of your responsibilities. As with most other courses, I do reserve the right to modify the schedule as deemed necessary. Any changes made to the schedule or policies within this syllabus will be announced in class and on Sakai.

**Course Readings and Schedule**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic / Reading</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tues. 8/27</td>
<td>Introduction to Course</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thur. 8/29</td>
<td>Introducing Social Psychology Chapter 1</td>
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<td>Tues. 9/3</td>
<td>Methodology Chapter 2</td>
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<td>Thur. 9/5</td>
<td>Methodology Chapter 2</td>
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<td>Tues. 9/10</td>
<td>Social Cognition Chapter 3</td>
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<td>Thur. 9/12</td>
<td>Social Cognition Chapter 3</td>
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<td>Tues. 9/17</td>
<td>Recap Chapters 1-3</td>
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<td>Thur. 9/19</td>
<td>EXAM 1</td>
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<td>Tues. 9/24</td>
<td>Social Perception Chapter 4</td>
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<td>Thur. 9/26</td>
<td>Social Perception Chapter 4</td>
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<td>Tues. 10/1</td>
<td>The Self Chapter 5</td>
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<td>Thur. 10/3</td>
<td>The Self Chapter 5</td>
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<td>Tues. 10/8</td>
<td>Dissonance and Justifying Actions Chapter 6</td>
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<td>Thur. 10/10</td>
<td>Dissonance and Justifying Actions Chapter 6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tues. 10/15</td>
<td>EXAM 2</td>
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<td>Thur. 10/17</td>
<td>Attitudes and Attitude Change Chapter 7</td>
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<td>Tues. 10/22</td>
<td>Attitudes and Attitude Change Chapter 7</td>
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<td>Thur. 10/24</td>
<td>Conformity Chapter 8</td>
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<td>Tues. 10/29</td>
<td>Conformity Chapter 8</td>
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<td>Thur. 10/31</td>
<td>Group Processes Chapter 9</td>
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<td>Tues. 11/5</td>
<td>Group Processes Chapter 9</td>
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<td>Thur. 11/7</td>
<td>EXAM 3</td>
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<td>Tues. 11/12</td>
<td>Interpersonal Attraction Chapter 10</td>
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<td>Thur. 11/14</td>
<td>Prosocial Behavior Chapter 11</td>
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<td>Tues. 11/19</td>
<td>Aggression Chapter 12</td>
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<td>Thur. 11/21</td>
<td>Prejudice Chapter 13</td>
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<td>Tues. 11/26</td>
<td>Prejudice Chapter 13</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thur. 11/29</td>
<td>NO CLASSES (THANKSGIVING BREAK)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tues. 12/3</td>
<td>Recap Chapters 10-13</td>
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<td>Thur. 12/5</td>
<td>EXAM 4</td>
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<td>Fri. 12/13</td>
<td>Final Meeting: Fri. Dec. 13, 2:00pm (Final Exam Period December 9-14)</td>
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