PSY 355: Research in Social Psychology (Spring 2012)

Syllabus

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Office hours: Monday 9:30-10:30, Tuesday 3:30-4:30, and by appointment

Days: Tuesday/Thursday
Time: 12:30 – 1:45
Location: Greene Hall 160
Course website: https://sakai.wfu.edu

Required Text
Course Reader (may be purchased at the University Bookstore).

Course Readings
The course readings will serve as a framework for the course. Please bring your Course Reader to each session of class. The quality of your work (i.e., Midterm Exam and Research Project Paper) is likely to reflect your record of attendance and the effort that you put into reviewing the course readings.

Other Recommended Reading
Although this course is designed to cover research methods in social psychology, there simply will not be enough time during the semester to delve into each and every issue. You may find other chapters from the following sources helpful:


Course Description
This course is designed to familiarize students with the process of doing research in social psychology. Topics include methods in several areas of study, such as attitudes, judgment and decision making, social cognition, social perception, attribution processes, group dynamics, stereotypes and prejudice, and emotions. We approach these topics from the perspective of a researcher who is taking a theoretical approach to understanding the dynamics of these areas. In addition, we explore the various methodological challenges that make the task of research in social psychology especially challenging (e.g., field vs. laboratory research, the nature of independent and dependent variables in social psychology research, ethics, and research settings).

This course is also designed to establish the "feel" of an active research lab. Doing so involves taking the process of research in social psychology from the germination of a research idea through the development of a method of testing this idea. Students form small groups and work together to develop testable research hypotheses, design studies to test these hypotheses, develop materials for the studies, conduct the studies, analyze the data, and write APA-style papers presenting the outcomes of their work. This component of the class provides the experience of being a social psychologist for at least one semester. Research Projects Required. Prerequisites: PSY 310 or PSY 311.

Course Design and Philosophy
This course offers you an opportunity to become familiar with research methods commonly used in experimental social psychology research and to develop your skills in critically evaluating social psychological claims. During this course you will be exposed to how collaborative social psychology research is typically designed, conducted, and reported in both written and oral presentations. You will be exposed to both classic and contemporary writings in social psychology (i.e., sometimes in the form of book chapters and other times in the form of experimental research reports). 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 and class discussion. The course will also be oriented towards a "learning by doing" approach. You should expect to devote considerable time to your research project: literature review, hypothesis development, design and materials, and the execution and reporting of actual research projects. You are expected to gain valuable insights and knowledge through your research experience. The work in this course may be challenging, and at times demanding, but hopefully interesting as well. 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 and ownership of their own project. This course was intentionally limited to a small group of people. In part, this was done to create an opportunity for a more one-on-one relationship between student and teacher. Please do not hesitate to utilize office hours or arrange other meetings as needed.

Course Objectives and Learning Outcomes
Social psychologists, proficient in experimental design and statistics, are skilled at asking interesting and useful questions, collecting data and providing valid and reliable answers (i.e., results). Awareness of the methods and statistical techniques presented in this course improve prediction, explanation, and control of behavior. Beyond understanding, computing, and interpreting the basic descriptive and inferential statistics commonly used in social psychology research, learning outcomes include:

- An understanding of empirical findings in social psychology and how major research designs address different questions and hypotheses
- 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 relevant theory/empirical evidence, and to use that synthesis to evaluate existing explanations and generate new ideas
- An ability to locate social psychological research information, to design and conduct research, to use statistical techniques to analyze information, to evaluate statistical information and quality of research
- An ability to use professional (APA) writing conventions and effective written communication skills
- An understanding and appreciation for ethical issues in research related to research participants and integrity of the researcher
- A familiarity with Institutional Review Board procedures (i.e., data collection with human subjects)
- An ability to recognize the relevance of social psychology to everyday life and appreciate the importance of social psychological science to answering fundamental questions
- An ability to critically evaluate claims made in social psychological research
- An understanding of how social psychologists form questions and design experiments in ways that can test their hypotheses statistically
- An ability to compute and interpret descriptive and inferential statistics commonly used in social psychology using a statistical software program (e.g., SPSS, Excel)

Student Responsibilities
Students are expected to attend each session of class and be prepared to participate. You will also participate as a research project group member (groups of three students). Students are expected to complete all course requirements, check Sakai regularly for updates on course matters, and complete a student course evaluation.

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 (550 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 seven ways:

- **Reaction Essays (10 points each; 10 x 10 = 100 points):** Most weeks of the semester will include a set of readings that we will discuss during class sessions. You will be assigned to write a Reaction Essay to the readings scheduled for each. Submit a one-page paper in reaction to all of the readings. 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). 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 describe in Smith’s (2002) article could be used to improve productivity in work groups by…”
  - “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:** Reaction Essays are not assigned during the first 3 weeks of the course. Beginning with week 4, you will be responsible for submitting a Reaction Essay at the beginning of each week. **Note:** See note under Paradigm Demonstration.

- **Class Discussion and Participation (50 points):** The learning experience in this course will involve sharing of thoughts during class discussions (focused on the required readings). Come to class willing and prepared to voice your thoughts and opinions; please ask questions during class. The Reaction Essays serve the goal of making you think about the readings before you come to class and prepare you for class discussion. As you are reviewing an assigned reading, writing your Reaction Essays, and thinking about upcoming class discussions, the following questions should help to guide you: What is the main research question of the article? What is the answer or conclusion that the article provides for this question? What evidence is used in support of this conclusion? Is this evidence sound? What questions do I still have about this paper? What aspects of the paper remain unclear? Are there weaknesses in the methodology, statistics or conclusions? Are there any other aspects of the article that draw criticism or cause concern?

- **Paradigm Demonstration (50 points):** This exercise will provide you with some presentation experience as well as an experiential way of learning more about experimental procedures used in social psychology research today. During one session of class (typically the last session of a particular week), you will be required to conduct a relatively informal, 15-20-minute demonstration/presentation of an experimental paradigm used by social psychologists. This paradigm must be published within a social psychology journal (such as JPSP, PSPB, or JESP). It is your responsibility to find the article. Please run the idea and the paper by me at least one week prior to your Paradigm Demonstration.

During your demonstration, you can use the entire class or a single volunteer (whichever is more feasible, given the time constraint). Focus on demonstrating the method/procedure. Afterwards, describe the hypothesis used by the researchers and a bit of background information (you do not have to use PowerPoint, but it is often helpful). Then you should briefly discuss what is typically found from the paradigm (the results). If at all possible (e.g., when the method-procedures take only a few minutes), tally and present the class results. Keep in mind that these demonstrations will be relatively informal. In the interest of time, the procedures used during class may be modified from what is described in the paper you select. In such cases, just inform the class of how the demonstration was modified from what the researchers employed. Also, make sure to have at least one or two discussion questions prepared.
**Note:** You are not required to submit a Reaction Essay during your Paradigm Demonstration week. Instead, submit a copy of the article you select as your Reaction Essay. You will receive full credit for your Reaction Essay during that week. Yes, this means that you are only required to submit 9 Reaction Essays during the semester.

**Institutional Review Board Application (50 points):** Your research project group is required to complete an application to the Wake Forest University Institutional Review Board (IRB). I will serve as the advisor for the application. Instructions can be found at the following website: [http://www.wfu.edu/rsp/irb/index.html](http://www.wfu.edu/rsp/irb/index.html). Application forms and a very helpful sample of an approved protocol can be found at: [http://www.wfu.edu/rsp/irb/forms.html](http://www.wfu.edu/rsp/irb/forms.html). Your research project group is required to ask each participant in your research study to complete an Informed Consent Form. This exercise simulates an important part of the process that researchers must be familiar with. We'll focus on keeping our designs rather simple. Keep in mind that when you describe your procedures to be used in this application, you are essentially writing the Method section of your Group Research Project Paper (see description below). As of July 2005, all investigators and other key personnel involved in research with human participants must complete the basic CITI (Collaborative IRB Training Initiative) program before IRB approval will be granted. To access the CITI modules, go to [http://www.citiprogram.org](http://www.citiprogram.org). Complete this within the first two weeks of the course. **The application for your group is due in week 11.**

**Midterm Exam (100 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. This will be a “take-home” exam.

**Research Project Paper (150 points):** By this point in your studies you should have some experience with writing research papers. Because this course is designed to simulate the work that experimental social psychologists actually do (which is typically collaborative), you are required to complete a Research Project Paper. It is your group’s responsibility to design, conduct, and report in standard written form (i.e., APA-style), an experimental research paper. The final paper should include all of the sections that a typical APA-style paper includes: 1) Title Page; 2) Abstract; 3) Introduction; 4) Method (Participants, Instruments, Procedure); 5) Results; 6) Discussion; 7) Conclusion; 8) References; and 9) Tables, Figures and Appendices. Your entire paper is likely to reach approximately 20 pages. Papers are due on our final exam period.

There are three resources that you may find particularly useful in this endeavor:


**You will have to turn in your own paper,** but I encourage you to work collaboratively. Although your paper may be quite similar to another group member’s paper, I do not want three exact copies of the same paper (with the exception of the Method section). Collaborate, but rely on your own writing-skills and understanding. Also, keep in mind that you will have an opportunity to evaluate the contributions of your group members and that they will have an opportunity to evaluate your own.

**DATA COLLECTION:** You will need to collect data for your research project. Under no circumstances may you recruit students enrolled in Introduction to Psychology courses for participation. These students are automatically enrolled in the SONA research participation pool and they are reserved for IRB approved studies (which our studies will not be). Students enrolled in PSY 311 or 312 are also not eligible to participate in our experiments. You will have to rely friends, family, roommates and/or acquaintances. If each member of your group gains 20 collects data from 20 participants each, you should have enough for your analysis.
• **Group Research Project Presentation (50 points):** After your paper is written and ready to submit for grading, work with your group to transform your project into a 15-minute oral presentation. It is best to use a PowerPoint presentation with a maximum of 10 slides. Make sure not to include too much information on each slide. Use bullet-points and describe your study to the audience (i.e., don’t simply read your presentation from the slides). If there are three members in your group, structure the presentation by splitting it into three parts, each to be presented by a single presenter. For instance, one member can describe the general idea and hypothesis, another member can describe the method/procedures, and another member can discuss the results and conclusions. No, you do not have to “dress-up.” I am more concerned about the development of your skills in presenting your hard work.

**Whiteboard Meetings**
I don’t expect you and your research project group to “figure” everything out on your own. In fact, some of the earlier issues/challenges that you will face in the process of the research project may not be covered until later in the semester. You should plan on meeting with me at least once a month as a group to plan, conduct and analyze your experiment. I will supervise you in this endeavor; a 20-minute meeting once a month can be very helpful. These meetings may be held during my office hours or during a time that we can all meet outside of class. I certainly do not mind answering questions at the end of our class time, but please do not try to “hold a meeting” as everyone is leaving at the end of class.

**Attendance**
Class attendance will not be monitored. However, due to the participatory and interactive nature of this course, consider your attendance mandatory. One approach that we will employ during the course is a “hands on” type of experience. If you are not present, then you will not have benefited from that particular learning experience, nor will you have contributed to the collective effort of the class. Consequently, your absence will be detrimental not only to your own progress in the course, but to that of your classmates as well. 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 (your classmates and Group Research Project members will expect it as well).

**Lecture Notes**
Lecture notes are not provided. Much of the lectures will be interactive, involving class-discussion related to the topic, presentations of computer software, thought experiments, statistical demonstrations, 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**
Cheating and/or plagiarism will not be tolerated. In my courses, I've had very few problems with plagiarism, and I don’t expect to. When you signed your application for admission to Wake Forest University, you agreed to live by the honor system at Wake Forest. As part of the honor system, you agreed to abstain from cheating, which includes plagiarism. You are accountable to the following from the Wake Forest University 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, 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.

Readings and Schedule

Week/Day(s): Topic(s) and Required Reading(s):

1 Jan 19: Introduction to Research in Social Psychology
   • Aronson et al. (1990) Chapter 1: An introduction to experiments.
   • Jordan & Zanna (1999). How to read a journal article in social psychology.

2 Jan 24: Research Design: Experiments in Social Psychology
   • Aronson et al. (1990) Chapter 4: Experimental design.
   • Baron & Kenny (1986). The moderator-mediator variable distinction.
   • NO CLASS Jan. 26 – SPSP Conference

3 Jan 31/Feb 2: Statistics Common to Social Psychology Research

4 Feb 7/9: Ethical Issues in Experimental Social Psychology Research
   • Aronson et al. (1990) Chapter 3: Ethical issues.
   • Edlund et al. (2009). Whatever happens in the lab.
   • NOTE: Reaction Essays begin this week – submit at beginning of each week.

5 Feb 14/16: Social Cognition Research
   • Lord et al. (1979). Biased assimilation and attitude polarization.
   • Salancik & Conway (1975). Attitude inferences from salient and relevant cognitive content about behavior.

6 Feb 21/23: Social Perception and Attribution Research
   • Gilbert et al. (1988). On cognitive busyness.
7 Feb 28/Mar 1: Judgment and Decision Making Research
- Winkielman & Schwarz (2001). How pleasant was your childhood? Beliefs about memory.

8 Mar 6/8: Attitude Research
- Midterm Exam Due
- NOTE: No Reaction Essay due for this week.

9 Mar 20/22: Attitude Research

10 Mar 27/29: Persuasion Research
- IRB Application Due

11 Apr 3/5: Stereotypes and Prejudice Research
- Snyder et al. (1977). Social perception and interpersonal behavior.

12 Apr 10/12: Automaticity, Implicit Association, and Response Time Research

13 Apr 17/19: Group-Based Processes Research
- Kerr et al. (2000). Methods of small group research.
- Brewer (1979). In-group bias in the minimal intergroup situation.

14 Apr 24/26: Group Research Project “Status Report” and Data Analysis
- NOTE: No Reaction Essay due for this week.

15 May 1: Emotions Research and Other Topics in Social Psychology Research

16 May 4: Group Research Project Presentations
Final Meeting: Friday May 4, 9:00am (Final Examination Period May 4-10)