

Social Psychology

Course Syllabus

Social Psychology

Social Psychology (3 Credits)

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Office Hours: Friday, 1330-1700, 805-01 central administrative building

Course Materials:

Textbook

- Myers, D. (2008) *Social Psychology* (9th ed.), McGraw-Hills.

Recommended readings

- Kahneman, D. (2011) *Thinking: Fast and Slow*, London: Penguin
- Dawkins, R. (2006) *The Selfish Gene*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Ariely, D. (2008) *Predictably Irrational*, New York: Harper
- Diener, E. and Biswas-Diener, R. (2008) *Happiness*, New York: Wiley-Blackwell
- Baumeister, R. and Tierney, J. (2011) *Willpower*, London: Penguin.

Course Description and Objectives:

This course aims to help students build up the ability and sensitivity to explain our social world with theories of social psychology.

To build up students' ability of using theories of social psychology, the main body of the course is structured around lectures. The course consists of 12 lectures. During each lecture, the lecturer presents students with a logically coherent story of how a social behaviour, for instance helping or hurting others, could be explained and predicted by a number of social psychological theories. The lecturer will try to cover the main body of the textbook chapter, but essentially, she/he wants students to bring home a manageable knowledge structure in which ideas are related to each other in logical ways. The lecturer uses rich empirical data collected from everyday lives in China and abroad to show how theories are capable of enlightening us on the not-so-obvious mechanisms that lie beneath the often taken-for-granted daily phenomena. Each lecture starts with a small quiz on the previous session. This is to force students to review their lectures after sessions.

To build up students' sensitivity to social phenomena, the course requires several assignments from students. First, during each lecture students take turn to make individual presentations on how an empirical case, either a real life story or a fictitious story, might be explained by a certain theory of social psychology. Second, during the course students will watch a film (this year it is *Die Welle*) and each is required to submit a 500-word English essay which analyzes how we might learn about a certain theory of social psychology from this film. Students are free to choose their own topics for individual presentation and film review. Finally, Dr. LV's class also asks students to do a group project on an issue that is closely related to students' lives on campus, for instance, how students might use theories of social psychology to increase individual psychological wellbeing.

The working language of the course is English and Chinese. Dr. Zhang and Dr. LV's classes use English as the only working language. Dr. Zhou's class uses Chinese as the working language. Where English is the working language, an unstated but implied objective of the course is to help students develop their foreign language skills. Essentially, this would include an ability to read English literature and to reason in English. Students who wish to take the English-taught courses, therefore, need to have acquired sufficient fluency in both English listening comprehension and oral expression. Thus said, however, developing language skills is not the primary objective of this course.

Apart from the main text, the course recommends to students some additional readings. These are well-versed texts by renowned researchers. Students would be able to benefit from these books if they are interested in pursuing social psychology beyond the scope of this course.

Course Outline

Introduction.

What is social psychology. How it is researched. What is a social psychological theory. How theories might help us to explain and to predict social realities.

Required reading: Chapter one of the textbook

Session 1: The self in the social world

The World is a world that the Self sees. The Self is a self that the World makes. How the Self is of primary importance to us, and in what ways. The search for the healthy self.

Required reading: Chapter two of the textbook

Session 2: Social beliefs and judgments (I)

The quick and the slow systems of the mind. How this layout affects our perception and judgment.

Required reading: Chapter three of the textbook

Session 3: Social beliefs and judgments (II)

How do we perceive and remember the social world. How do we judge the social world. How do we explain the social world. How do we make expectations about the social world.

Required reading: Chapter three of the textbook.

Session 4: Behaviours and attitude

What is attitude. How accurately attitude predicts behaviours. How behaviours change attitude. Cognitive dissonance and self-perception.

Required reading: Chapter four of the textbook.

Session 5: Gene, culture and gender

The selfish gene and the theory of evolutionary psychology. Culture. Gender differences as they are explained by the evolutionary theory and the cultural theory.

Required reading: Chapter five of the textbook

Session 6: Conformity and obedience

Norm. Norm formation. Conformity. Obedience. Informational and normative influences. Informational and normative influences in norm formation, conformity and obedience.

Required reading: Chapter six of the textbook

Session 7: Persuasion

Peripheral and central routes of persuasion and how they are related to the quick-and-slow system theory. Successful peripheral persuasion. Successful central persuasion.

Required reading: Chapter seven of the textbook

Session 8: Group influence

Social facilitation and arousal. Social loafing and diffused responsibility. De-individuation, self-awareness and self-regulation. Group polarization, informational influence, normative influence. Groupthink and group cohesion.

Required reading: Chapter eight of the textbook

Session 9: Prejudice

Prejudice. Intergroup relations. Mere categorization. Realistic conflict. Social identity theory. Ignoring the outgroup. Stereotypes and stereotypical social realities.

Required reading: Chapter nine of the textbook.

Session 10: Aggression

Aggression. Evolutionary explanation. Psychoanalytical explanation. Frustration-aggression. The cognitive model of aggression. The social learning explanation.

Required reading: Chapter ten of the textbook

Firm session

Session 11: Intimacy

The social exchange explanation. Physical distance, physical attractiveness, similarity, others' affect. Equity and the matching phenomenon. Theories of love.

Required reading: Chapter eleven of the textbook

Session 12: Helping

Helping. The bystander effect. The social exchange explanation. The evolutionary explanation. Altruism and empathy.

Required reading: Chapter twelve of the textbook

Revision session

The final exam consists of 60 multiple choices, five short questions and an open question. The revision session will provide students with 30 short questions. This would be the basis for the short-question part of the exam. The open question cannot be prepared. The revision session also outlines the main knowledge structure of the past 12 lectures to help students prepare for the multiple choice part of the exam.

Attached: the course plan of 2014 autumn-winter

Date	Lecture	Reading	Presentation	Note
24 Sept.	Introduction	Ch. 1	\	Get a textbook
8 Oct.	The self in a social world	Ch. 2	\	No way back now
15 Oct.	Social beliefs & judgment 1	Ch. 3	Group A on Ch. 2	Quiz on Ch. 1
22 Oct.	Social beliefs & judgment 2	Ch. 3	Group B on Ch. 3	Quiz on Ch. 2
29 Oct.	Behavior and attitude	Ch. 4	Group C on Ch. 3	Quiz on Ch. 3
5 Nov.	Genes, culture and gender	Ch. 5	Group D on Ch. 4	Quiz on Ch. 4
12 Nov.	Conformity and obedience	Ch. 6	Group E on Ch. 5	Quiz on Ch. 5
Exam week				
26 Nov.	Persuasion	Ch. 7	Group F on Ch. 6	Quiz on Ch. 6
3 Dec.	Group influence	Ch. 8	Group G on Ch. 7	Quiz on Ch. 7
10 Dec.	Prejudice: Disliking others	Ch. 9	Group H on Ch. 8	Quiz on Ch. 8
17 Dec.	Aggression: Hurting others	Ch. 10	Group I on Ch. 9	Quiz on Ch. 9
24 Dec.	Film week	\		
31 Dec.	Attraction and Intimacy	Ch. 11	Group J on Ch. 10	Quiz on Ch. 10
7 Jan.	Helping	Ch. 12	Group K on Ch. 11	Quiz on Ch. 11
14 Jan.	Revision		\	Quiz on Ch. 12
Submit your film review by 14 Jan. (one hard copy)				
Exam week				

Student Evaluation

- Attendance (12%)
- Quiz (20%)
- Film-review essay (5%)
- Individual presentation (3%)
- Final exam (60%)