Psychology 682: Advanced Social Psychology

Course Description

This course is a graduate-level introduction to the field of social psychology with an emphasis on theoretical foundations. We will read both classic and contemporary work. For me one of the primary contributions of social psychology to the social sciences is its unique framework for thinking about research problems. So, conveying the intellectual style of social psychology is a major goal of this course.

Texts

The assigned articles will be available on the class website (http://ctools.umich.edu). Most of the articles, along with other articles from “682 courses past”, are located at the university reserves (http://www.lib.umich.edu/reserves/ures/, also accessible through the ctools site). There are many classic books in social psychology. I won’t require them in the class, but list a few of the classic books below. These convey, to different audiences from undergraduates to researchers, the social psychological way of approaching research problems.

The Robbers Cave Experiment by M. Sherif et al.
A Theory of Cognitive Dissonance by L. Festinger.
When Prophecy Fails by S. Schachter, L. Festinger, and K. Back.
Human Inference: R. Nisbett and L. Ross.
The Social Animal by E. Aronson.
Influence by R. Cialdini.

Weekly Assignments

There will be a weekly assignment due at 9am every tue morning before class. The assignment will be posted on the ctools site so that students in the class can read the questions and we can use them as a basis for class discussion.

These weekly assignments will be 25% of your grade. You will be permitted to miss one without penalty. They will be graded as credit/no credit. So, if you submit the required number of assignments, then 25% of your grade will be an A.

Each weekly assignment is limited to a (maximum) one page, single-spaced document with reasonable font size and margins. Your task each week is to generate one short essay
question that you then answer. Your question & answer must incorporate at least one of the readings for that week. Articles must be clearly cited. There is no need to do additional reading for this assignment, though this is encouraged if you are excited by the topic.

You can assume that the reader is familiar with the articles you cite. You must also be concise. An example of how not to write: “In 2002, Smith and Jones conducted a study on 100 college students to see whether their grades were influenced by the number of romantic partners the students had during the academic quarter and anxiety experienced in upcoming midterm examinations. They analyzed their data using ANOVAs with posthoc tests to check on multiple comparisons. Their results supported their hypothesis.” Those are a bunch of empty words in light of the page limit. Instead, get right to the point: “Smith and Jones showed that academic grades are related to the number of romantic partners and pre-test anxiety.” Talk about methodology only when it is relevant to make your point (e.g., your are criticizing the methodology or are comparing several different methodological approaches).

Aside from the requirement to write concisely, the assignment is quite flexible. You are free to generate an essay question at any level or on any issue just as long as your answer incorporates at least one of the readings for that week.

Final Exam

The final exam will consist of a combination of short answer questions and long essays. The latter will be selected from a set of questions that will be distributed before the final. The short answer questions will be developed from the essay questions I accumulate from the weekly assignments. Material from both the lecture and the readings will be covered.

The final will be 40% of your grade.

Class Paper

There will be a class paper due at the end of the term. This will be a relatively short (maximum of 20 page, double spaced) proposal for a research study. You will outline your hypothesis, provide theoretical justification for the hypothesis, describe the study in usual method format (design, participants, procedure, materials), and outline the predictions you make (e.g., provide a graph of ideal data). It would be great if this serves as the preliminary version of a study you run next semester or for your 619.

The class paper will be 35% of your grade.

Class Format

Each week I will present an overview of the week’s topic. My presentation will not focus on the details of the assigned articles. Each week a group of at least two students will be responsible for leading a discussion around the assigned articles. It is fine to use the weekly assignments (i.e., your submitted essay questions) as a vehicle to start the discussion.
Prerequisites

An introductory course in social psychology. It is important that you review your notes/textbook from that course because I will assume that you remember that introductory material.

Weekly Topics and Reading Assignments

**Week #1: Sept 2nd** Introduction, review topics, select later topics

**Week #2: Sept 9th** Early History. Methods, and Interpreting Experiments

- Ellsworth, P. & Gonzalez, R. Chapter on research methods.

**Week #3: Sept 16th** Groups and Group Dynamics

- Blascovich et al, Social “facilitation” as challenge and threat. JPSP, 77, 58-77.

**Week #4: Sept 23th** Compliance and Social Pressure


Week #5: Sept 30th  Social Comparison, Emotion, Affiliation


Week #6: Oct 7th  Attraction and Preference


Week #7: Oct 14th  No class

Week #8: Oct 21  Fall Break
**Week #9: Oct 28** Conformity, Cooperation, and Social Dilemmas


**Week #10: Nov 4 (VOTE TODAY)** Attitudes, Attitude Change, Stereotyping and Prejudice


**Week #11: Nov 11** Dissonance and Consistency Theories


Week #12: Nov 18 Attribution, Self-Perception, and Judgment Errors


Week #13: Nov 25 Culture, Self, and Aging


**Week #14: Dec 2** Subjective Construal, Positive Psychology, Judgment and Decision Making.


**Week #15: Dec 9** TOPICS TBA

TBA