Psychology 74600: Graduate Social Psychology

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Course Description

This seminar provides a broad overview of social psychology, both classic and current. The field is far too broad for meaningful comprehensive coverage, so selected topics will be addressed in a two-tiered format. First, foundational material will address such basic topics as the processes of attitude change; social influences on conformity, compliance, and obedience; the self and the pursuit of self-esteem; person perception and attribution; stereotyping and prejudice; attraction and mate selection; and group influences on performance. Each week, the readings will consist of a textbook chapter for background and 3 or 4 research articles that will serve as the basis for discussion. Next, individual students will present their own reviews of contemporary research on the more specific, current topics they have chosen for their final paper. Topics include the determinants of subjective well-being; the Implicit Association Test (IAT); cultural differences in cognition and behavior; evolutionary theories of beauty and attraction; self deception effects on health; social perception on juries; and social influences on performance in sports. For these classes, each student will present a 10-min. summary of the literature and proposal for research.

Background Text


Research Articles

There are forty-plus required articles listed in the syllabus. Readings in brackets are for reference purposes and will be presented by individual students assigned to cover special aspects of the topic.

Evaluation

Grades will be based on the following components:

(1) 50% = final 4,000-word literature review, in APA style; (2) 25% = team presentation and individual 3-4 page paper on a selected topic in the syllabus, (3) 25% = general class participation, which requires regular attendance, reading, and contribution to discussions.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Speaker and Institution</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>January 30</td>
<td>Introduction to the Field and the Course</td>
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<tr>
<td>February 6</td>
<td>Foundations and Controversies</td>
<td><em>(Phil Zimbardo, Stanford University)</em></td>
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<td>February 13</td>
<td>Milgram’s Obedience to Authority</td>
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<td>February 20</td>
<td>Conformity and Compliance</td>
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<td>February 27</td>
<td>Attitudes and Persuasion</td>
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<td>March 6</td>
<td>Pursuit of Self-Esteem</td>
<td><em>(Sheldon Solomon, Skidmore College)</em></td>
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<td>March 13</td>
<td>Confirmation Biases in Social Perception</td>
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<td>March 20</td>
<td>Stereotypes and Prejudice: Origins, Measurement, Content</td>
<td><em>(Mahzarin Banaji, Harvard University)</em></td>
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<td>March 27</td>
<td>Stereotypes and Prejudice: Consequences</td>
<td><em>(Phillip Atiba Goff, John Jay College)</em></td>
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<td>April 3</td>
<td>Group Influences on Behavior</td>
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<td>April 10</td>
<td>Attraction, Evolution, and Mate Selection</td>
<td><em>(Eli Finkel, Northwestern University)</em></td>
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<td>April 17</td>
<td>The Cultural Equation</td>
<td><em>(Hazel Markus, Stanford University)</em></td>
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<td>April 24</td>
<td>SPRING BREAK: NO CLASS</td>
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<td>May 1</td>
<td>Health and Subjective Well-Being</td>
<td><em>(Martin Seligman, University of Pennsylvania)</em></td>
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<td>May 8</td>
<td>Presentations of Current Research*</td>
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<tr>
<td>May 15</td>
<td>Presentations of Current Research*</td>
<td>[NO CLASSES ]</td>
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* Current research topics are to be selected from the list appearing on the following page (students will devise their own reading lists in coordination with Prof. Kassin; students may also propose topics not on the list).
1. Foundations and Controversies


2. Milgram’s Obedience to Authority (text chapter 7)


3. Conformity and Compliance (text chapter 7)


4. Attitudes and Persuasion (text chapter 6)


5. Pursuit of Self-Esteem (text chapter 3)


**6. Confirmation Biases in Social Perception** (text chapter 4)


**7. Stereotypes and Prejudice – Origins, Measurement, and Content** (text chapter 5)


Jost, J. (2018). The IAT is dead, long live the IAT: Context-sensitive measures of implicit attitudes are indispensable to social and political psychology. *Current Directions in Psychological Science, 1*-10.


**8. Stereotyping and Prejudice – Consequences** (text chapter 5)


[ Correll, J., et al. (2014). The police officer's dilemma: A decade of research on racial bias in the decision to shoot. Social and Personality Psychology Compass, 8, 201-213.]


**9. Group Influences on Behavior** (text chapters 8, 10)


**10. Attraction, Evolution, and Mate Selection** (text chapter 9)


11. The Cultural Equation


12. Health and Subjective Well-Being (text chapter 14)


**Presentations of Current Research Topics**

1. The replication crisis: What is the problem and what are the solutions?
2. Overt racism: Is it back, and is it here to stay?
3. Subliminal influence: Fact, fiction, or something in between?
4. Men, women, sex, and relationships: Is there a gender divide?
5. Stereotyping and prejudice: Controllable, or inevitable by-products of human nature?
6. Self-deception: What is it, and is it adaptive?
7. Performance in sports: When do athletes rise to the occasion or choke under pressure?
8. Helping: Are human beings altruistic, or even capable of altruism?
9. Beauty: An objective attribute, or in the eye of the beholder?
10. Persuasion: What are the effects of negative ads in politics?
11. Guns and violence: How should social psychology weigh in on the debate?
12. Online attraction: Do the same principles of social interaction apply?
13. Can science be used to make people happier?
14. Social perception: Can people be trained to become better lie detectors?
15. Tribalism in the US: Same old ingroup-outgroup bias or something worse?
16. Other – Submit proposal idea