

Introduction to Social Psychology  
Syllabus for Summer 2008  
Instructor: Yi Zhang  
Meeting time: M.Tu.Th. 11:15 AM - 01:45 PM

**Course Description:**

This course offers a broad introduction to social psychology, the study of events and processes that comprise people's everyday lives. It is designed to provide an overview of social psychological theories, research and methodologies. Topics such as person perception, attitudes, persuasion, conformity, aggression, prejudice and interpersonal relationships will be covered. The goals of this course are 1) to help students understand and make sense of human behaviors; 2) to improve students' understanding of the research methodologies used by social psychologists.

**Required Text:**

Brehm, Kassin, & Fein. (2005). Social Psychology (6th edition). Houghton Mifflin Company.

**Course Requirements:**

- 1) Class Participation (10%)
- 2) Exercises (30%)
- 3) Quizzes (30%)
- 4) Final Exam (30%)

**Class Participation:**

Class participation includes regularly attending class, contributing to class discussion, and posing insightful questions. Periodically, students will hand in short response paper for the exercises or group discussions during class time. These responses are not graded but contribute to the class participation grade.

**Exercises:**

# 1: Social Norm Violation

The purpose of this exercise is to help student understand the underlying assumption of social behaviors. Students will be asked to first pick one social norm, think about the operating assumption, and then violate it. For the purpose of the exercise, students are only allowed to perform behaviors that are appropriate under certain circumstances but are not generally considered appropriate for the given circumstance. For instance, standing in an elevator but facing the wrong way. The behavior has to take place in a social context, which means there should be other people around. However, students can not perform any non-disruptive behavior, nor engage in any interaction with other people either verbally or physically.

Each student must meet with the instructor before they actually do the behavior. After they perform the behavior, they will turn in a one-page summary paper. In the summary,

students need to describe the social norm that they try to violate, how they violate it, and reflect on the lesson that they learn from this experience about social expectations.

## # 2: Attitude Survey

The purpose of this exercise is to give students a hand-on experience in designing a measure of attitudes toward a controversial topic. Students first choose a controversial topic that will appeal to the broader interests of fellow students, and then design a 5-item close-ended questionnaire to assess a person's opinion using the likert scale (strongly agree versus strongly disagree). The scores from the survey have to be able to distinguish among people who hold different beliefs on the matter. During class time, students will fill out each other's questionnaire anonymously. Afterwards, the student is responsible for collecting results from his/her survey, and needs to turn in a 1-2 page summary paper answering the following questions:

How did the questionnaire do assessing people's attitudes? Did everyone score the same, or did scores differ? What was the mean score, and what was the range of scores? What are the limitations of the questionnaire as a way of assessing attitudes? How would you construct the questionnaire differently in the future?

### **Quizzes and Exam:**

Two quizzes will be given during the semester. The quizzes cover materials discussed in class lectures, demonstrations, movies, as well as anything from the readings up till the last lecture before the quiz. Each quiz will have up to 40 questions and may be multiple-choice and short essay formats.

The final exam will take up similar format as the quizzes with the addition of extended essay questions. The extended essay questions are intended to give students an opportunity to apply social psychological concepts and theories to explain human behaviors. The final exam is cumulative and covers material from the entire semester.

### **Grading Scale:**

A = 93 and above; A- = 90-92; B+ = 89-87; B = 86-83; B- = 82-80; C+ = 79-77; C = 76-73; C- = 72-70; D = 69-60; below 60 = fail. All grades will be calculated to the second decimal point (e.g., 89.88). Final grades will be rounded using the typical < .5 to next lowest and >.5 to the next highest.

## Course Calendar

Date	Topic	Reading	Assignment/Quiz
July 7	Intro: what is social psychology	Ch. 1	
July 8	Methods	Ch. 2	Exercise 1 handed out
July 10	Social Cognition	Ch. 3	
July 14	Person Perception	Ch. 4	Exercise 1 due
July 15	Attributions about Behavior	Ch. 4	
July 17	Stereotypes and Prejudice	Ch. 5	Quiz #1
July 21	Cognitive Dissonance	Ch. 6	
July 22	Attitudes and Persuasion	Ch. 6	Exercise 2 handed out
July 24	Conformity	Ch. 7	
July 28	Self Representation	Ch. 3	Quiz #2 AND Survey
July 29	Group Dynamics	Ch. 8	
July 31	Attraction and Close Relationships	Ch. 9	Exercise 2 report due
Aug 4	Aggression	Ch. 11	
Aug 5	Helping Behavior	Ch. 10	
Aug 7	Final Exam		1pm-4pm