Psy 620: Topics in Social Psychology
SUNY Stony Brook, Spring 2008

Time: Tues and Thurs: 9:50 am – 11:10 am
Location: Psych B 248

Faculty: Antonio Freitas
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Faculty Office & Office Hours 203 Psych B
Monday 12 – 2 PM

Course Aims

This core graduate course will examine basic principles of social psychology, a field of study examining how people feel about, think about, and interact with others. We will consider theory and research bearing on psychological mechanisms underlying attitudes, motivation, social judgments, self and person perception, and interpersonal behaviors. In class, our primary aim will be creative, scholarly discussion of each week’s articles, with the explicit aim of identifying basic, generative principles that transcend particular content domains. Toward these ends, students will be responsible for leading class discussion of individual papers and for developing grant proposals that build conceptually on the research literatures reviewed here.

Readings

Readings will consist of empirical and theoretical research articles available for download via a SUNY Stony Brook library database called “psycINFO,” at:

http://sunysb.edu/~library/eresources/databases/p.html

An easy way to find a listed article is to search by author(s) while restricting your search to the year in which the article was published (e.g., “festinger and carlsmith” while limiting search to 1959). I recommend that you print the .pdf versions of the articles and bring them to class with your insightful notes scribbled throughout the margins.

If you haven’t yet done many literature searches, this a great time for you to acclimate yourself to this indispensable activity. The reference staff at the main campus library can offer any needed assistance in this vein.
General Policies

ACCOMMODATIONS FOR STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS:

If you have a physical, psychological, medical, or learning disability that may impact your course work, please contact Disability Support Services (631) 632-6748. They will determine with you what accommodations are necessary and appropriate. All information and documentation is confidential. Students who require assistance during emergency evacuation are encouraged to discuss their needs with their professors and Disability Support Services. For procedures and information go to the following website: http://www.ehs.sunysb.edu and search Fire Safety and Evacuation and Disabilities.

Your final grade in this course will reflect (in the percentages given below) three components:

**Leading class discussions**
Throughout the semester, each student will be responsible for leading class discussion of several readings (on the first class meeting, we will work out the particular papers for which each student will be responsible). Discussion leaders will have four goals: Before class, (1) read articles particularly thoroughly, in order to (2) draw out interesting implications and unresolved issues of a particular research program. In class, (3) summarize the main findings and conceptual issues at stake in a particular reading, and (4) facilitate extensive class discussion (and hopefully some resolution) of the issues raised. Relating particular readings to broader literatures (including those discussed in separate parts of this course) can be an effective means of achieving some of these aims.

**Class Participation**
*Class participation is vital to the success of this course.*
Your grade will reflect how much you participate in class discussion in ways demonstrating your preparation to discuss the assigned readings.

**Research Proposal**
This paper should propose new empirical work testing ideas directly relevant to course content. Your primary aim is to come up with an original idea for an experiment (or series of experiments) that would provide interesting, informative results no matter how they turn out. The best case would be one in which you provide a good test of competing theories, such that your result will support either one theory or the other. This assignment has three components:

3/4/08 →
1) Submit a brief (2 – 3 page) “letter of intent” broadly outlining your proposal. Please bring this to class (in hard copy) on 3/4/08. I will return these on 3/6/08 with suggestions for improvement.

3/11/08 →
2) Present proposal to class, in form of a 15 min PowerPoint presentation, on 3/11/08.

5/8/08 →
3) Submit final proposal on 5/8/08 (please bring to class in hard copy). Following the general structure of a grant proposal, state (a) the nature of the question you intend to investigate, (b) why this question is important, (c) what are your hypotheses, and (d) what methods you will use. This paper should be approximately 10 pages of text (not including references, figures, tables, and abstract), single spaced, with margins no smaller than 1” and font no smaller than 11 point. Include a 150-word abstract. Use APA style.
Jan. 29th: Introduction
Introduction to the domains of inquiry in social psychology (no readings assigned).

Jan. 31th: Theory Building in Social Psychology


Feb 5th: Experimental Methods in Social Psychology


Feb. 7th: The Self Concept in Social Psychology


Feb. 12th: The Self Concept (cont’d)


Feb. 14th: Structure and Functions of Self-Esteem


Feb. 19th: Attitude Structure


Feb. 21st: Attitude Change


Feb. 26th: Attitude Change (cont’d)


Feb. 28th: Social Psychology of Self-Regulation

Mar. 4th Person Perception


Mar. 6th Person Perception (cont’d)


Mar. 11th Class Presentations of Research Proposals (no readings assigned)

Mar. 13th Social Psychology of Language


Mar. 18th - 20th Spring Recess (no class)

Mar. 25th Feeling and Thinking


Mar. 27th Social Belonging and Its Affective Implications


April 1st Social Interaction


**April 3rd Social Interaction (cont’d)**


**April 8th Aggression**


**April 10th Aggression (cont’d)**


**April 15th Inter-Group Processes**


**April 17th Social Reasoning**


**April 22nd Social Reasoning (continued)**


April 24th Interpersonal Relationships


April 29th: Interpersonal Relationships (cont’d)


May 1st: Social Psychological Processes in Cultural Contexts


May 6th: Culture (cont’d)


May 8th Automaticity in Social Life

