INTRODUCTORY SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY
SOC 530/PSY 530
Fall 2002

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You are responsible for all the information on this syllabus. If you lose it, another copy can be obtained from the course webpage.

OVERVIEW

As its title would imply, this course offers an introduction to the panoply of intellectual projects that are collected by the term “social psychology.” I believe that any earnest attempt to define social psychology is destined to fail: either the definition is too specific and excludes things that are recognized as social psychology, or it is too broad and includes things that are not recognized as social psychology. What social psychologists share, however, is an orienting conviction that what people do and think when they are in social situations is intriguing enough to warrant a career’s worth of close and careful study. This course is intended to acquaint you with some of the more tasty fruits of all this academic labor. In addition, we hope to increase your appreciation of why the puzzles offered by social psychology have been engaging enough to keep the attention of so many dedicated scholars for so long.

Reflecting the pace and breadth of social psychology itself, this course will proceed swiftly and cover many topics. We will sketch some of the different ways in which scholars have conceptualized the relationship between the individual and social contexts, as well as some of the methods that have been used to study this relationship systematically. We will examine social psychological approaches to “the self,” and demonstrate that many seemingly intrinsic features of the individual cannot be understood apart from that individual’s interaction in a social environment. We will take a closer look at social interaction, paying close attention to groups and their effect on individual behavior. Additionally, we will learn how social psychologists have applied principles of their craft to what are considered social problems; in particular, we will examine the social psychology of mental illness, interpersonal and group conflict, and collective behavior. At all points, in this course, students will be encouraged to develop a “social psychological imagination,” or a viewpoint which sees individuals as both creators and products of the social environments in which they participate.

COURSE READINGS

Books that should be available at University Book Store:


Also required: A reader containing additional articles used in the course is available for purchase at Bob’s
Copy Shop, in the Randall Tower, 1314 W. Johnson. These readings are also available through the Social
Science Reference Library’s electronic reserves.

Strictly optional: At the Social Science Copy Center (on the 6th floor of this building), you can buy a copy
of the abridged PowerPoint slides for the lectures, which also available on the course webpage. Some
students prefer to not use the abridged slides and just take their own notes; this is just fine. If you do want
the slides and choose to download and print them instead of buy them, note that all of the files work on my
machine and should work for you if you have Acrobat Reader Version 5 (or later), which is available for
free from Adobe’s website. Version 3 (or earlier) will not work; sometimes people think they have installed
Version 5 but Version 3 is actually still the program set up to open .pdf file types. Beyond this,
unfortunately, I do not have the technical expertise to be helpful if you are not able to get the slides to read
properly on your computer.

GRADING

Your grade for the course will be based on the three exams (20% each), the exercises (30%), and your
participation in section (10%). Letter grades will be assigned for the course according to the following
scale:

| 93-100 | A |
| 83-87  | B |
| 70-77  | C |
| <60    | F |

When letter grades are given on assignments, they will be converted to percentage scores as follows:
A+=100; A=96; AB=90; B=85; BC=80; C=75; D=65; F=instructor’s discretion. Please note that
incompletes for the course will be given only in the rarest and direst of circumstances.
Extra credit. A bonus question or two may appear on the exams. Otherwise, no opportunities for extra
credit will be offered.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Exams
There will be three examinations in this course (October 3rd, November 7th and December 17th). Each
exam will consist of a mixture of multiple choice and other types of questions, but there will not be any
essay questions (except perhaps in the case of make-ups, see below). All required course materials are fair
game for the exams, including material presented in lecture that is not covered in the readings and material
in the readings that is not covered in class. The likely bias here will be toward questions on lecture-only
material than on textbook-only material, and a review sheet will be provided to help you determine what
material from the book that was not presented in lecture is most worthy of your study time.
The final exam will not be cumulative, so for each of the midterms, if you manage to survive, you can forget
everything immediately thereafter.

Exercises
Several exercises will require you to collect data or to assess information that is relevant to various topics in
social psychology. Each exercise will require 1-4 hours to complete. Further information on the exercises
will be provided in lecture or discussion section. Note: Late exercises will only be accepted under the most
extenuating of circumstances and must be approved prior to the due date.
Participation in Lecture
Attendance will not be taken in lecture. Occasionally in lecture we will have participatory tasks that will require you write down and turn-in something on an index card or sheet of paper. These will never be any kind of “pop quiz.” Your conscientious participation in these tasks will count toward your final grade, either as bonus credit on an exam/exercise or as part of your participation grade.

Good participation. There will not be any formal rewards for those who ask questions or raise points of discussion during lecture, which is not to say that active participants do not impress themselves more favorably upon instructors than members of the silent masses. You are encouraged to raise questions, points of clarification, and points of discussion/elaboration as they arise. As you’ve already heard a million times by this point in your educational career, if there is something that you are finding confusing, there are probably others in the room confused about the same point as well.

Bad participation. If you attend lecture, you are obliged to be sufficiently quiet and well-mannered so as not to provide a distraction to me or to the others around you who are paying for their seats in the course. Failure to do this can and will result in deductions at least from your participation grade. Given that you are all adults, you are presumed to know that talking with your neighbor is distracting to others around you, and I am under no obligation to give you any kind of “warning” or even “notice” to impose an end-of-semester penalty for disruptive attendance. That is, if you are persistently discourteous in your classroom behavior, you may only find out how truly annoying you were when you receive a surprisingly low final grade for the course.

Participation in Discussion Sections
Active student participation is an essential component of effective higher education. The large lecture format of our Tuesday and Thursday meetings precludes the potential for inclusive class discussions there. For this reason we have discussion sections for this course, and your attendance at one of these sections is required. We will do a variety of things in these discussion sections, but the emphasis will be on discussion. Your informed and vigorous participation in these discussions will comprise one component of your final grade.

You may miss two discuss section meetings without direct penalty. If you miss more than two, we will deduct 3 points from your overall course grade for each absence. You will still be penalized if your third absence is an “excused” absence, except in extenuating circumstances that also account for your earlier absences.

Photo
Students often feel anonymous in large classes, and social psychological research on “de-individuation” and “anomie” would lead one to hypothesize that anonymity leads to students being less conscientious, less attentive, and less satisfied with the course than they would be if they did not feel so anonymous. Truth be told, instructors also enjoy lecturing more when they do not feel like they are talking to an anonymous mass. As one step toward reducing this anonymity, I am determined to learn every student’s name—yours included—and the way we are going to do this is by taking photographs of everyone during the discussion sections in the early part of the course. Obviously, your photograph will not be used for any other purpose. This is so important to me that if you are not willing to have your photograph taken, I would prefer that you drop the course.

ADDITIONAL EXPECTATIONS

On-Time Arrivals and Departures
We will begin and end all classes promptly at the scheduled time. Lateness is both a pet peeve of mine and a distraction to the class, so please do your best to be on time. If you must come in late, do so discreetly.
Similarly, while I would greatly prefer that you do not leave lecture early, if you must do so try to be as inconspicuous about it as possible.

Responsibility for Lecture Notes
As stated above, many exam questions will cover material that has been presented only in lecture. As you will see, the PowerPoint slides will be deliberately incomplete renditions of what is covered in the class and on the exams. If you miss class, it would probably be advantageous of you to attempt to convince one of your classmates to lend you their notes. Under no circumstances will either of us make our notes available to students.

Academic Integrity and Propriety
Section 14.03 of the University of Wisconsin System Administrative Code defines academic misconduct as “an act in which a student: (a) seeks to claim credit for the work or efforts of another without authorization or citation; (b) uses unauthorized materials or fabricated data in any academic exercise; (c) forges or falsifies academic documents or records; (d) intentionally impedes or damages the academic work of others; (e) engages in conduct aimed at making false representation of a student's academic performance; (f) assists other students in any of these acts.” If you have any questions about what constitutes academic misconduct generally, you must consult http://www.wisc.edu/students/amsum.htm before proceeding in this course. If you have questions about plagiarism specifically, you should also consult the handout “Quoting, Paraphrasing, and Acknowledging Sources” available at the Writing Center (6171 Helen C. White Hall). You are expected to be familiar with these guidelines before you submit any written work or take any exams in this course; put another way, lack of familiarity with these rules in no way constitutes an excuse for acts of misconduct. Any instance of cheating, plagiarism, or other misconduct will be dealt with strictly according to University policy, and the penalties that we will recommend to the Dean of Students will be severe.

COMMUNICATION

Electronic Mail
Students are presumed to have access to e-mail and to check it regularly. We will make a distribution list with all students’ addresses and use it to distribute information to the class.

Webpage
On the front page of this syllabus is the URL for the webpage we will use to distribute materials for the course. The webpage will contain the syllabus, reading guides, exam review sheet, copies of handouts for assignments, and abridgments of the lecture slides for the course. You are encouraged to check it regularly. Please notify me by e-mail if any links on the class webpage do not work as they should.

Office Hours
Please come talk to us if you have any questions or concerns about any issues related to the class. The scheduled office hours are the best time for us to meet with students, but we can make appointments for students who are unable to stop by during these hours.