



PSYC/SOC 360 Social Psychology: Science, Humans, and Society

Course Syllabus

Fall Semester 2024

Instructor: Filippo M. Sposini, PhD (he/him)

Credits: 3

Contact Hours: 45

Prerequisites: none

Class Meeting Days & Time: Mondays & Wednesdays, 4:15-5:45pm

Office Hours: By Appointment

Course Type: Standard Course

Course Fee: None

Course Description

Why do we do what we do? What factors play a role in shaping our personality? What biological, psychological and social elements help to configure a person's psychological, emotional, and moral character? What can we do about them? In this course, we examine landmark studies that shook standard beliefs about human nature. By analyzing these studies in their contexts, we explore their influence on contemporary views about humans and society. In addition to shaping our views about the human mind and behavior, many of these studies also had an impact on the epistemological and ethical criteria used by the scientific community and broader society to decide what counts as good science. Thus, we will also examine evolving views about scientific inquiry: How have ideas about what counts as good science changed? And why have they changed? Students will also have the chance to pick a topic of their choice and carry on a small research project.

Learning Outcomes

By the end of the course, students will be able to:

- *Identify* some of the main approaches used in social psychology;
- *Recognize* methodologies employed by social scientists;
- *Use* research tools for carrying out a literature analysis, particularly PsycNet;
- *Carry out* a small-scale social research project using questionnaires, interviews, or observation techniques;
- *Write* a short research article which includes a brief literature review, methods, results, and discussions.

Course Materials

Book chapters and articles.

Assessment

10%	Attendance
10%	Course Journal
20%	Participation
5%	Topics for Research
10%	Analysis of Literature
10%	Method and Research
10%	Analysis of Results
25%	Final Paper

Grading

Students are reminded that it is their responsibility to note the dates of exams and other assignments. No alternative exam dates will be offered and professors are not required to give partial credit for any late work (they do so at their discretion: the Institute's default policy is no extensions and a zero for any work turned in late). Students who book travel when they have an exam or other assessment will have to change their plans or accept a zero. Letter grades for student work are based on the following percentage scale:

Letter Grade Range	Numerical Score Equivalent	Student Performance
A A-	93% - 100% 90% - 92%	Exceptional Excellent
B+ B B-	87% - 89% 83% - 86% 80% - 82%	Superior
C+ C C-	77% - 79% 73% - 76% 70% - 72%	Satisfactory
D+ D D-	67% - 69% 63% - 66% 60% - 62%	Low Pass
F	59% or less	Fail (no credit)

Please note: decimal numerals between 1-4 are rounded down while 5-9 are rounded up: e.g., expect 89.4 to be 89.0 while 89.5 to round up to 90.

Course Requirements

Assignments will follow an incremental approach simulating a scientific investigation. Using research platforms and scientific papers, you will play the role of a social scientist. Once you have identified a topic interest, you will learn how to conduct a literature review, how to examine peer-review publications, and to critically evaluate their differences and similarities. Grades are based on the following criteria.

Attendance (12%)

Attendance is an important part of this course. You have two "sick days," per Institute policy. As long as you are at all the other meetings, you will receive the full 10% for this part of your grade. There are no make-ups offered for attendance.

Course Journal (10%)

Students will keep a digital Course Journal which they will use as a personal space to reflect on course material and ideas. At the end of each class, students will be given a question to answer in their course journal. Entries on your course journal will be graded twice throughout the semester, i.e., before the mid-semester break (Week 7) and at the end of the course (Week 12). Each of these checks is worth 4% of your grade, for a total of 8%.

Participation (20%)

Students will have the chance to actively participate in class discussion by asking questions and prompting up topics f.

Two Topics for Research (5%)

By week 4, students will submit a short paper describing two topics related to social psychology that they find particularly interesting. A detailed prompt will be available on Moodle.

Analysis of Current Literature (10%)

Building on the previous assignment, by Week 6 students will carry out an analysis of current literature focused

on a topic of their choice. A detailed prompt will be available on Moodle.

Method and Research (10%)

By week 8, students will select a method for carrying out a small-scale research project focused on a topic of their choice. Students should give reasons for choosing their method, how many subjects to involve in their study, and outline a series of questions. A detailed prompt will be available on Moodle.

Analysis of Results (10%)

Due by week 10. Drawing on their previous assignment, students will carry out their research on the field. Once collected their data, students should examine the main results of their investigation. A detailed prompt will be available on Moodle.

Final Paper (25%)

Due by the end of week 12. Having selected a research topic, performed a literature review, and applied their method, students will finally produce a paper summarizing their conclusions. This paper should resemble a research article as closely as possible, including introduction, literature analysis, method, results, discussions, and limitations. A detailed prompt will be available on Moodle.

Extension & Submitting Late Work

Work submitted after the deadline will receive a grade of zero, not partial credit. Each student is allowed one extension of 24 hours over the entire semester. This can be used for any assignment but the final project. Students need to email the instructor before the deadline and inform the instructor of their use of the extension. Any work submitted after the 24-hour extension will be marked zero.

As for all policies, exceptions can be made by the Director for students with special accommodations or in case of medical emergencies, etc.

Attendance Policy

Attendance is expected and mandatory for classroom times and co-curricular activities. The first two absences per course due to illness will be considered excused “sick days” and do not require medical documentation. To receive additional excused absences due to illness, students are required to see a local physician or request a letter from an Institute-approved doctor documenting they should be excused from class for illness.

Unexcused absences will adversely affect a student’s academic performance and will result in a reduction of the student’s final course grade by 2% per absence up to a maximum of 10%. Excessive unexcused absences may result in a failing grade or disciplinary action. It is the student’s responsibility to be aware of the number of absences or late arrivals for each course, and to ask the instructor when in doubt.

If students miss class, they are responsible for obtaining class notes from other students and/or for meeting the professor during office hours. Any work missed in class because of an excused absence may be made up within one week of the return to the class. Any work missed that was a quiz or other test must be made up outside of class time and will, in the interest of intellectual honesty, be a slightly different test than the one given in class.

Presence during mandatory field trips is especially important. Missing a mandatory field trip for a course, unless for a very serious reason that is communicated to Umbra staff in a timely manner, will lower the students’ grade by half a letter grade (i.e., a final grade of a B+ would be lowered to a B).

Legitimate reasons for an excused absence or tardiness include death in the immediate family, religious observances, illness or injury, local inclement weather, and medical appointments that cannot be rescheduled.

Absences relating to illness may be excused by the Director, but only if a medical certification is provided. Students who request an approved absence to observe a religious holiday must submit a formal request to the Institute’s Director within one week after the add/drop period when course schedules, including any field trips, are finalized. No exceptions will be made after this deadline.

Except in the case of medical emergencies, absences are not accepted when tests are scheduled; tests cannot be made up. Furthermore, scheduled times and dates indicated for exams, quizzes, oral presentations, and any other graded assignments cannot be changed for any reason. Even if more sections of the same class are activated, students may only take exams during the scheduled times and dates for the section they are enrolled in.

Tardiness Policy

Students are expected to attend all classes punctually. Any student arriving up to 15 minutes late or leaving up to 15 minutes earlier than the scheduled class end time will be marked as tardy. Each incident of tardiness (late

arrivals to or early departures from class) is 0.5% off the final grade. However, should a student arrive more than 15 minutes late or depart more than 15 minutes before the conclusion of the class, it will be recorded as an absence.

Students are also expected to remain in class during the time of instruction except for a reasonable amount of time to use the restroom. Students who leave class and do not return during the class session will receive an unexcused absence or late penalty.

Academic Integrity

All forms of cheating (i.e., copying during exam either from a fellow student or making unauthorized use of notes) and plagiarism (i.e., presenting the ideas or words of another person for academic evaluation without acknowledging the source) will be handled according to the Institute Academic Policy, which can be found in the Umbra Institute Academic Policies and Conduct Guidelines.

Classroom Policy

Students are expected to follow the policy of the Institute and demonstrate the appropriate respect for the historical premises that the school occupies. Please note that cell phones must be set on silent mode before the beginning of each class. Computers and other electronic devices cannot be used during class lectures and discussions for anything other than note-taking, unless there has been a specific academic accommodation.

Laptop/Smartphone Policy

I as an instructor and as a person am dependent on both my computer and my telephone. That said: An ever-increasing body of research shows that open laptops and telephones in the classroom create distraction (both visual and auditory) for those using them and those around them. You can type faster than you can write, and as a result you end up processing less when you're simply typing notes. For this reason, I have a physical notebook policy: I ask you to leave your computers in your bags and phones in your pockets and use a regular notebook. There are three exceptions: 1) if you have an accommodation related to your vision; 2) if you make an office hours appointment with me to discuss the use of a computer; 3) if we have an in-class tutorial about online research tools.

Schedule of Topics, Readings, and Assignments

WEEK 1

Introduction

Meeting 1 *Welcome to the Course: Making Sense of Social Sciences and Psychology*

Meeting 2 *Introduction to Science, Humans, and Society*

Readings:

Hewstone, M., Stroebe, W., & Jonas, K. (Eds.). (2008). *Introduction to Social Psychology* (4th ed.). Blackwell Publishing. Introduction.

WEEK 2

Social Behavior: Authority and Obedience

Meeting 1 *Social Pressure and Influence*

Readings:

S. E. Asch, "Opinions and social pressure," *Scientific American* 193 (1955), 31-35.

Franzen A, Mader S (2023) The power of social influence: A replication and extension of the Asch experiment. *PLoS ONE* 18(11): e0294325 (25 pages)

Meeting 2 *Stanley Milgram's Study on Authority*

Readings:

S. Milgram, "Behavioral study of obedience," *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology* 67 (1963), 371-378.

S. Milgram, *Obedience to Authority*, 1974, 165-168.

L. T. Benjamin Jr. & J. A. Simpson, "The power of the situation: the impact of Milgram's studies on personality and social psychology," *American Psychologist* 64 (2009), 12-19.

WEEK 3

Social Behavior: Conformity

Meeting 1 *Philip Zimbardo and the Study of Situational Factors*

Readings:

S. Drury, S. A. Hutchens, D. E. Shuttlesworth & C. L. White, "Philip G. Zimbardo on his career and the Stanford prison experiment's 40th birthday," *History of Psychology* 15 (2012), 161-170.

Le Texier T. (2019). Debunking the Stanford Prison Experiment. *The American psychologist*, 74(7), 823–839

Meeting 2 *The Stanford Prison Experiment*

Readings:

P. G. Zimbardo et al., "The mind is a formidable jailer: a Pirandellian prison," *New York Times Magazine*, April 8, 1973, 38 ff.

P. G. Zimbardo, *The Lucifer Effect: Understanding How Good People Turn Evil*, 2007, chapter 10.

WEEK 4

Social Thinking: Stereotypes and Prejudice

Meeting 1 *Stereotypes, Priming, and Behavior*

Readings:

M. Konnikova, "Revisiting Robbers cave: The early spontaneity of intergroup conflict." Blogs. *Scientific American*. September 5, 2012.

Bargh, J. A., Chen, M., & Burrows, L. (1996). Automaticity of social behavior: Direct effects of trait construct and stereotype activation on action. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 71(2), 230–244.

Meeting 2 *Kenneth and Mamie Clark's Study on Prejudice*

Readings:

K. B. Clark & M. P. Clark, "Racial identification and preference in Negro children," 169-178 in T. M. Newcomb & E. L. Hartley, eds., *Readings in Social Psychology*, 1947.

K. B. Clark, I. Chein & S. W. Cook, "The effects of segregation and the consequences of desegregation: a (September 1952) social science statement in the *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* Supreme Court case," *American Psychologist* 59 (2004), 495–501.

WEEK 5

Methods in Social Sciences

Meeting 1 *Methods*

Readings:

Hopkins, B., Barr, R. G., Michael, G. F., & Rochat, P. (Eds.). (2005). *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of Child Development*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. (Methods in Child Development Research), 45-59.

Meeting 2 *Tools for Literature Review, PsycNet*

Readings:

Barker, Meg (2014). Doing a literature review. In: Vossler, Andreas and Moller, Naomi eds. *The Counselling and Psychotherapy Research Handbook*. London: Sage, pp. 61–73.

WEEK 6

Social Thinking: Social Learning Theory

Meeting 1 *Albert Bandura and Social Learning Theory*

Readings:

Bandura, A. (2006). Autobiography. M. G. Lindzey & W. M. Runyan (Eds.), *A History of Psychology in Autobiography* (Vol. IX). Washington, D.C.: American Psychological Association.

Meeting 2 *Media and Aggression*

Readings:

Bandura, A., Ross, D., & Ross, S. A. (1961). Transmission of aggression through imitation of

aggressive models. *The Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology*, 63(3), 575–582.

Bandura, A. (1965). Influence of models' reinforcement contingencies on the acquisition of imitative responses. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 1(6), 589–595.

APA (2013). Violence in the media: Psychologists study potential harmful effects. Accessed December 20th, 2022. [Link](#)

Semester Break

WEEK 7

Social Behavior: Altruism

Meeting 1 *Big Cities, Crime, and Social Connections*

Readings:

M. Dowd, "The night that 38 stood by as a life was lost," *New York Times*, March 12, 1984, B1. J. Rasenberger, "Kitty, 40 Years Later," *New York Times*, Feb. 8, 2004.

R. Manning, M. Levine & A. Collins, "The Kitty Genovese murder and the social psychology of helping: the parable of the 38 witnesses," *American Psychologist* 62 (2007), 555–562.

M. Ganzberg, "Thirty-eight who saw murder didn't call the police," *New York Times*, March 27, 1964.

Meeting 2 *Darley and Latané's Study on Altruism*

Readings:

J. M. Darley & B. Latane, "Bystander intervention in emergencies: diffusion of responsibility," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 8 (1968), 377-383.

Hortensius, R., & de Gelder, B. (2018). From Empathy to Apathy: The Bystander Effect Revisited. *Current directions in psychological science*, 27(4), 249–256.

WEEK 8

Longitudinal Studies

Meeting 1 *Harvard Grant Study: Longitudinal Investigations*

Readings:

Shenk, J. W. (2009). What makes us happy? *The Atlantic*.

Vaillant, G. E. (1979). Natural History of Male Psychologic Health. *New England Journal of Medicine*, 301(23), 1249–1254.

Meeting 2 *Scientific Publishing and Writing*

Readings:

Öchsner, A. (2013). *Introduction to Scientific Publishing: Backgrounds, Concepts, Strategies*. Berlin: Springer. (Chapter 7).

Raff, J. (2014, June 18). How to Read and Understand a Scientific Paper. Retrieved December 22, 2022, from [Huffington Post](#) website.

Pain, E. (2016). How to (seriously) read a scientific paper. Retrieved December 22, 2022, from [Science](#) website.

WEEK 9

Ethology and Biology

Meeting 1 *Ethology and Instincts*

Readings:

- Shute, R. H., & Slee, P. T. (Eds.). (2015). *Child Development: Theories and Critical Perspectives*. London: Routledge. (Chapter 2).
Harlow, H. F. (1958). The nature of love. *American Psychologist*, 13(12), 673–685.

Meeting 2 *Writing Your Final Paper*

Readings:

- Scholz, F. (2022). Writing and publishing a scientific paper. *ChemTexts*, 8(8), 1-7.
Gewin, V. (2018). How to write a first-class paper. *Nature*, 555(7694), 129–130.

WEEK 10

Language, Social Construction, and Culture

Meeting 1 *Lev Vygotsky: Language and Culture*

Readings:

- Miller, P. H. (2002). *Theories of Developmental Psychology*. London: Worth Publishers. (Chapter 4), 137-158.

Meeting 2 *Social Construction and Culture*

Readings:

- Shute, R. H., & Slee, P. T. (Eds.). (2015). *Child Development: Theories and Critical Perspectives*. London: Routledge. (Chapter 7)
Esteban-Guitart, M. (2018). The biosocial foundation of the early Vygotsky: Educational psychology before the zone of proximal development. *History of Psychology*, 21(4), 384–401.

WEEK 11

Disorders and Society

Meeting 1 *Labels and Deviance*

Readings:

- Lisboa, M.S., Spink, M.J.P. (2016). The Process of Social Labelling of Mental Illness: An Analysis of Family Conversations. In: O'Reilly, M., Lester, J.N. (eds) *The Palgrave Handbook of Adult Mental Health*. Palgrave Macmillan, London.

Meeting 2 *Psychiatry and Diagnosis*

Readings:

- David L. Rosenhan, "On Being Sane in Insane Places," *Science*, 179 (1973), 250-258.

WEEK 12

Social Emotions: Staying Positive

Meeting 1 *Positive Psychology*

Readings:

E. Diener & M. E. P. Seligman, "Very happy people," *Psychological Science* 13 (2002), 81-84.

K. Dahlsgaard, C. Peterson, C., & M. E. P. Seligman, "Shared virtue: The convergence of valued human strengths across culture and history," *Review of General Psychology* 9 (2005), 203–213.

J. W. Shenk, "What Makes Us Happy?" *The Atlantic* (2009)

Meeting 2 *Making Sense of Science, Humans, and Society: A Recap*

WEEK 13

Final Classes, Final Exams, & Special Academic Events Week

No class