

PSY 340. Social Psychology – Honors Section

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Why did you spend more than you could afford on this used car? How are you so sure that this new job is a good fit for you? Does playing “Mortal Kombat” really lead to violent behavior? Do you think you did well on the test because you worked hard or because the test was easy? Why do we have a tendency to believe that we are less biased than other people? Why did these two hit it off as a couple? Why do people stay in a “bad relationship” or keep a “dead-end job”? Why do I still believe that “Asians are good at math” even though I found out that Emily Cheung did poorly on her stats exam? Why do my colleagues keep telling me that I am not like most gay people? Why did the witnesses fail to offer help to the victim of an assault? How do advertisements and political campaigns change our attitudes? Are the soldiers who are charged with abusing prisoners “a few bad apples” or are they just like the rest of us? Are we all prejudiced? Why did the experts fail to share crucial information with the executives and choose to endorse a decision that led to the company’s bankruptcy?

If you find these questions intriguing, social psychology might be of interest to you.

Course Objectives

The purpose of this course is, quite simply, to introduce you to the field of social psychology. As such, there are three major sub-goals:

- (1) To introduce you to the **ways in which social psychologists think about and approach their world.**
- (2) To introduce you to the body of **knowledge, research findings, and underlying principles** that currently exists in the field.
- (3) To stimulate you to think about the **implications** of this research **for situations we encounter daily.**

In sum, you should gain from this course a better understanding of the processes shaping how individuals think about, influence, and related to one another.

Format

Each class meeting will be devoted to a different topic (see *Schedule of Topics, Assignments, and Exams*). We will learn about these topics in several ways. Class meetings will include interactive lectures, discussions, exercises, demonstrations, videotapes, and examinations.

Blackboard

You can access the course website on Blackboard:

- <https://blackboard.sdsu.edu> [Course: PSY340-03-Fall2008]

Slide shows presented in class will be made available on line **before class meetings** (“Course Documents” menu). In addition, you will find important announcements and useful resources on the course website.

Readings

The following **textbook** is **required** for this course:

- Smith, E. R. & Mackie, D. M. (2007). *Social psychology* (3rd ed.). New York: Psychology Press.

The textbook can be purchased at the SDSU Bookstore (Aztec Shops).

Additional readings will be made available over the course of the semester (see *Debates*).

Grading

Your final grade will be based on the following components:

1. Exams (60% = 2 x 30 pts)

Two exams will be given in class (see *Schedule of Topics, Assignments, and Exams*). Each exam covers about 11 lectures and 7 chapters. The exams are worth 30 pts each and will consist of some combination of short answer (e.g., define & describe) and essay (1-page) questions. To study for the exams, you should focus on concepts, ideas, notions, processes, or theories (rather than on specific experiments or findings). For each major topic, you should be familiar with the terms listed on the review sheet. No makeup exams will be given unless I have been contacted in advance of the exam and an acceptable written excuse (such as a doctor’s note) is provided. No exceptions will be made to this policy. Students who do not take an exam and do not meet the conditions for taking a makeup exam will receive 0 points for that exam.

2. Papers (20% = 2 x 10 pts)

You will be asked to complete two papers. They will either be individual or group papers. The papers will be graded using the following scale: Excellent (10-9 pts), Good (8-7 pts), Fair (6-5 pts), Poor (4-3 pts), Unacceptable (2-1 pts), Not completed (0 pt). Each paper should be turned in at the beginning of class meeting on the due date (see *Schedule of Topics, Assignments, and Exams*). Late papers will be penalized 1 pt per day late.

3. Debates (10% = 10 pts)

You will be asked to participate in three debates (see *Schedule of Topics, Assignments, and Exams*). These debates will focus on controversial issues in social psychology. Prior to the debate, you will be asked to read a couple of papers relevant to the controversy. To

receive participation points, you must actively and meaningfully participate in class discussions, and demonstrate that you have done some thinking about the readings. Each student will sign up to facilitate class discussion for one debate. The facilitators can organize the discussion as they deem appropriate. The role of facilitators is to provide structure and direction (not to answer questions raised by others).

4. Class activities (10% = 10 pts)

You will be asked to complete class activities (demonstrations, exercises, discussions, response papers, etc.). These activities will either be individual or group assignments. Each activity will be worth 1 pt and will be graded using a Credit / Non Credit scale. There will be approximately 12 activities (each worth 1 pt). If you earn 10 pts or more (adding those up), you will receive the maximum for this component of the grading (10 pts).

Grading scale

In line with University Policies, grades are defined as follows: A (outstanding achievement; available for the highest accomplishment); B (praiseworthy performance; definitely above average); C (average; awarded for satisfactory performance; the most common undergraduate grade); D (minimally passing; less than the typical undergraduate achievement); F (failing). Plus/minus grading is utilized at the discretion of the instructor.

Final grades will be based on an absolute scale (not a curve). Thus your grade will not be affected by how well (or how poorly) other students perform in the course. To compute your percentage grade, you will apply the following formula:

Pct grade = exam #1 + exam #2 + paper #1 + paper #2 + debates + class activities

The grading scale will be provided mid-way through the semester.

Attendance

The class will meet on Tuesdays & Thursdays from 12:30 PM to 1:45 PM in room LS-244. Each student is expected to attend all classes. **Class attendance is essential to learning the material of this course.** During class meetings, we will often cover material not discussed in the textbook.

Classroom Atmosphere

We should work together to create a classroom atmosphere conducive to learning. I strongly encourage **active participation** in the classroom; you should feel comfortable asking questions and contributing to class discussions. Throughout this course, we will be discussing a variety of sensitive and controversial issues. Thus, it will be extremely important to keep an open mind, to listen to others' viewpoints, and to tolerate a different opinion than your own. I expect everyone to show **respect** for each other and to **refrain from actions that might reduce the quality of students' learning experiences.**

Academic Dishonesty

Cheating on examinations or **plagiarism** (representing someone else's work or ideas as your own) will result in disciplinary actions. I encourage students to discuss and exchange ideas about assignments. However, copying even portions of someone else's assignment is not acceptable. Each assignment submitted must reflect the creative effort of the student(s) turning in the assignment. **Claiming credit** for a class activity that you did not complete is also a form of academic dishonesty and will result in disciplinary actions.

Specific Accommodations

Students who need accommodation of their disabilities should **contact me privately** to discuss specific accommodations for which they have received authorization. If you have a disability, but have not contacted **Disabled Student Services** at 619-594-6473 (Calpulli Center - Suite 3100), please do so before making an appointment to see me.

Contact Information

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Office Hours: Tuesdays 2:00 PM – 3:00 PM or by appointment

Schedule of Topics, Assignments, and Exams

September	2	Introduction: What is social psychology? (1)
	4	Motivational & processing principles (2)
	9	Asking & answering research questions (3)
	11	Impression formation (4)
	16	Lay explanations (5)
	18	Self-concept & self-esteem (6)
	23	Stereotype, prejudice, and discrimination (7) [Paper #1 due]
	25	Stereotyping: Thinking categorically about others (8)
	30	Debate #1: Hidden biases: Are we all prejudiced?
October	2	Reducing stereotyping and prejudice (9)
	7	Social identity (10)
	9	Persuasion (11)
	14	Exam #1 (Lectures 1-11; Chapters 1-7)
	16	Cognitive dissonance (12)
	21	A new look at cognitive dissonance theory (13)
	23	Conformity (14)
	28	Minority influence (15)
30	Obedience to authority (16)	
November	4	Debate #2: Explaining the Abu Ghraib prison scandal
	6	Compliance: The art of making requests (17)
	11	Campus Holiday (Veteran's Day)
	13	Attraction and close relationship (18)
	18	Interpersonal aggression (19)
	20	Debate #3: Does media violence cause aggression?
	25	Intergroup conflict (20)
27	THANKSGIVING (No class meeting)	
December	2	Working on paper #2
	4	Working on paper #2
	9	Helping others (21) [Paper #2 due]
	11	Bystander apathy (22)
	18	Exam #2 (Lectures 12-22; Chapters 8-11, 13-14) 1-3 PM