

# PSY 340. Social Psychology

Thierry Devos

SDSU – Spring 2009

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? 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? Are we all prejudiced? 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? Does playing “Mortal Kombat” really lead to violent behavior? 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 relate to one another.

## **Format**

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

## **Blackboard**

You can access the course website on Blackboard:

- <https://blackboard.sdsu.edu> [Course: PSY340-02-Spring2009]

**Slide shows** presented in class will be made available on line **before the lecture** (“Course Documents” menu). In addition, you will find important announcements and useful resources on the website. You should log on to Blackboard at least twice a week.

## Readings

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

- Myers, D. G. (2009). *Exploring social psychology* (5<sup>th</sup> ed.). New York: McGraw Hill.

The textbook can be purchased at the SDSU Bookstore (Aztec Shops) or at KB Books (5187 College Avenue).

Students are strongly encouraged to visit the textbook website regularly:

- [www.mhhe.com/myersesp5](http://www.mhhe.com/myersesp5)

On this website, you will find useful **tools and resources to learn the material** covered in class and in the textbook (activities, exercises, quizzes, etc.). This website can be accessed through Blackboard as well ("External Links" menu).

## Grading

Your final grade will be based on the following components:

### Tests & final exam (80% = 4 x 20 pts)

Four tests will be given in class (see *Schedule of Topics and Examinations*). Each test covers about 6 lectures and 7 textbook modules. The final exam covers all the lectures and assigned modules (comprehensive exam). The tests and final exam are worth 20 pts each and will consist of 40 multiple choice questions (1 correct answer = ½ pt). Only the 4 best scores will be taken into account for the final grade. No make-up tests or exams will be given. If you miss a test, your grade will be based on the 3 remaining tests and the final exam. For each test, a review sheet with key concepts will be provided (the week prior to the test). If you took the 4 tests, the final exam is optional.

### Activities (20% = 20 pts maximum)

You will be asked to complete class activities (demonstrations, exercises, discussions, etc.). These activities will either be individual or group assignments. These activities will be worth 1 or 2 points and will be graded using a Credit / Non Credit scale. There will be 10 activities worth 1 pt and 5 activities worth 2 pts. If you earn 20 pts or more (adding those up), you will receive the maximum for this component of the grading (20 pts).

### Extra credit (2 pts)

As part of your coursework, you will be asked to complete two questionnaires and an online task. These tasks are part of a project I am doing in collaboration with colleagues who are teaching social psychology at a CSU campus. Our goal is to learn more about undergraduate students' opinions and attitudes about relations between members of different social groups and to understand how this material can be taught effectively. For us to be able to use the responses that you will provide we need to obtain your permission. Only responses from students who agree to participate in the study and sign the consent form will be included in the research. Your identity will not be associated with research findings in any way. For completing these assignments, you will receive 2 pts (extra credit) that can count toward your overall grade. More details and instructions about these assignments will be provided in class.

## **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 = score1 + score2 + score3 + score4 + activities (20 pts max.) + extra credit (2 pts)

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

## **Attendance**

The class will meet on Tuesdays & Thursdays from 2:00 PM to 3:15 PM in room AL-101. Each student is expected to attend all classes. **Class attendance is essential to learning the material of this course.** Lectures 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. I expect everyone to show **respect** for each other and to **refrain from actions that might reduce the quality of students' learning experiences.** Beepers and cell phones should be turned off.

## **Academic Dishonesty**

**Cheating** on examinations will result in disciplinary actions. **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 1:00 PM – 2:00 PM or by appointment

### **Schedule of Topics and Examinations**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Lecture</b>	<b>Reading / Module</b>
January	22 What is social psychology? (1)	2
	27 Asking & answering research questions (2)	1
	29 Impression formation (3)	8
February	3 Lay explanations (4)	6
	5 <b>No class meeting</b>	7
	10 The self in a social world (5)	3
	12 Self & social identity: Motivational aspects (6)	4 & 5
	17 <b>TEST 1 (Lectures 1-6; Modules 1-8)</b>	
	19 Us vs. them: Social categorization (7)	22
	24 Stereotyping (8)	23
	26 Implicit prejudice (9)	28
March	3 Intergroup hostility & harmony (10)	29
	5 Cognitive dissonance: Changing attitudes with actions (11)	9
	10 A new look at cognitive dissonance (12)	
	12 <b>TEST 2 (Lectures 7-12; Modules 9, 22, 23, 28, &amp; 29)</b>	
	17 Gender differences: Culture vs. evolution (13)	12 & 13
	19 Conformity (14)	20
	24 Obedience to authority (15)	14
	26 Persuasion (16)	15
		<b>SPRING BREAK (No class meeting)</b>
April	7 Minority influence (17)	16
	9 The art of making requests (18)	21
	14 <b>TEST 3 (Lectures 13-18; Modules 12-16, 20, &amp; 21)</b>	
	16 The presence of others (19)	17, 18, & 19
	21 Aggression (20)	24 & 25
	23 Attraction & close relationship (21)	26
	28 Helping others (22)	27
30 Bystander apathy (23)	30	
May	5 <b>TEST 4 (Lectures 19-23; Modules 17-19, 24-27, 30)</b>	
	7 Review session	
	12 <b>FINAL EXAM</b>	