

Individual and Society
Sociology 245
T TH 10:00-11:15
321 Tarbutton Hall
Spring 2011

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DESCRIPTION OF THE COURSE:

This course provides an introduction to social psychology, an interdisciplinary field which systematically examines how the actual, imagined, or implied presence of other people influences a person's thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. The focus of the course is on how groups – ranging from friendship circles to ethnic groups – affect the life of an individual and how the individual affects the group. Thus, the course examines the reciprocal relationship between individual-level and group-level phenomena. The course has three parts:

I. Symbolic Interactionism, the Self, and Identity

What do we mean by saying that the “self” is a social process? How does the self develop and change over time? We will focus on a classic Sociological approach, symbolic interactionism, to examine how identities emerge and affect social interaction, and how context influences social dynamics. In addition, we will review the ways researchers attempt to accurately answer these questions.

II. Cognition, Perception, and Affect

What information do we use to form impressions of one another? How do we process that information and what kind of common errors do we make? How do we try to explain other people’s behavior? How do we experience and express emotions in various situations? How do cognitions affect our behavior towards others?

III. Group Processes

How do relationships develop? How does inequality in the larger society manifest in face-to-face interaction? How do cultural assumptions about gender, race, ethnicity, age, class, and sexual orientation affect interactions within groups? How does power operate in relationships? When do people sense unfairness and how do they respond?

The main objective of this course is to introduce you to the social psychological perspective on the individual and interaction and enable you to critically apply these perspectives. You will be asked to apply these concepts to the reading as well as to your own experiences. You will also be asked to attempt to test one or more of these concepts through empirical research. To meet these

objectives, I expect you to read all assigned materials prior to class, participate in class discussions, and, on your own, actively look for applications to the material outside of the classroom. Also, to facilitate this application, we will have in-class exercises on a regular basis that apply the material to everyday life.

REQUIRED TEXT:

The Social Animal by Elliot Aronson. 2008, Tenth Edition.

ADDITIONAL REQUIRED READINGS:

There are also additional **required** readings, which will be on the LIBRARY's ELECTRONIC RESERVE site. These will also be available as PDF files on our BLACKBOARD site.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

All assigned **readings** should be completed **before** class to ensure active participation in class discussions and activities. Class attendance will be used to improve on close grades. Attendance will be taken randomly throughout the semester.

Your grade will be based on three in-class exams and a research paper. Each exam will be worth 25% of your grade. The paper also will be worth 25% of your grade.

The **three exams** will consist of a combination of multiple choice, short answer, and short essay questions and will cover materials presented in readings, lectures, discussions, and films. Exams are not cumulative, but material presented in later sections of the course may draw on previous sections of the course.

A **6-8 page research paper** will provide you with the opportunity to examine a social psychological phenomenon that you have experienced or observed. More specifically, you will complete a mini empirical study of an issue that interests you. You will create a theoretical argument based on materials from the class and at least two additional published empirical studies, derive a hypothesis, formulate a means of testing this hypothesis, collect data, and analyze the data to determine if your hypothesis is supported or not supported.

A handout providing more details on the paper will be provided later in the course. You will submit this assignment in several parts. First, you will submit a proposal for your project due on **March 3**. I *must* approve this proposal before you can begin your research. In addition to this proposal, you must also create a consent document for participants in your study which must also be approved. While these documents are not graded, a failure to obtain approval will result in a penalty on the final paper grade.

(Do NOT send me your paper by email). For each day it is late, it will be marked down one letter grade (e.g., from A to A- after first day late).

January 20 - Charon, Joel M. 2010. "The Nature of the Self." Pp. 70-90 in *Symbolic Interactionism*. Boston, MA: Prentice Hall.

A1. Self, Identity, and Contexts

January 25 -Karp, David A, Lynda Lytle Holmstrom, and Paul S. Gray. 1998. "Leaving Home for College: Expectations for Selective Reconstruction of Self." *Symbolic Interaction* 21(3): 253-276.

January 27 -Lee, James David. 1998. "Which Kids Can "Become" Scientists?" *Social Psychology Quarterly* 61:99-119.

February 1 -Khanna, Nikki. 2004. "The Role of Reflected Appraisals in Racial Identity: The Case of Multiracial Asians." *Social Psychology Quarterly* 67:115-131.

Methods

February 3, 8 -Aronson, pp. 329-347

February 10 Review and wrap-up of Section I

February 15 **Exam 1**

II: Cognition, Perception, and Emotions

A. Social Cognition—Impression Formation and Attribution Processes

February 17 -Aronson, pp. 117-135

February 22 -Aronson, pp. 135-147 and 166-179

B. Attitudes and Self-Justification Processes

February 24 -Aronson, pp. 160-166
-Fiske, Susan T. 2010. "When and Why Attitudes Matter: Predicting Behavior via Understanding and Belonging." Pp. 265-273 in *Social Beings: Core Motives in Social Psychology*, 2nd Edition, Hoboken, NJ: Wiley.

February 29 -Aronson, pp. 181-236
-Dickerson et al. 1999. "Using Cognitive Dissonance to Encourage Water Conservation." Pp. 275-287 in *Readings about The Social Animal*, edited by Elliot Aronson. Eighth Edition, New York: Worth Publishers.

C. Stereotypes, Prejudice and Discrimination

March 1 -Aronson, pp. 301-337

D. Reducing Stereotyping, Prejudice and Discrimination

March 3 -Aronson, pp. 338-355
-paper proposals due

March 8, 10 Spring Break

E. Emotions in Interaction

March 15 -Hochschild, Arlie Russell. 1998. "Emotion Work and Feeling Rules." Pp. 59-66 in *Inside Social Life*, edited by S.E. Cahill. Los Angeles: Roxbury Publishing.

March 17 -Smith, Allen and Sheryl Kleinman. 1989. "Managing Emotions in Medical School: Students' Contacts with the Living and the Dead." *Social Psychology Quarterly* 52:59-69.

-Cahill, Spencer E. And Robin Eggleston. 1994. "Managing Emotions in Public: The Case of Wheelchair Users." *Social Psychology Quarterly* 57:300-312.

March 22 **Exam 2**

III. Group Processes

A. Interpersonal Attraction and Justice in Relationships

A1. Interpersonal Attraction

March 24 -Aronson, pp. 357-387

A2. Justice Processes in Relationships

March 29 -Freudenthaler, Heribert H. and Gerold Mikula. 1998. "From Unfulfilled Wants to the Experience of Injustice: Women's Sense of Injustice Regarding the Lopsided Division of Household Labor." *Social Science Research* 11: 289-312.

B. Group Conformity

March 31 -Aronson, pp. 13-47

April 5 -Osherow, Neal. 1999. "Making Sense of the Nonsensical: An Analysis of Jonestown." Pp. 71-88 in *Readings about The Social Animal*, edited by Elliot Aronson. Eighth Edition, New York: Worth Publishers.

C. Power and Dependence

April 7 Social Exchange Approach (no readings)

April 12 -Johnson, Cathryn, Rebecca Ford, and Joanne Kaufman. 2000. "Emotional Reactions to Conflict: Do Dependence and Legitimacy Matter?" *Social Forces* 79:107-137.

D. Status Processes in Groups

April 14 -Michener, Andrew and John DeLamater. 1999. Chapter 14, "Group Structure and Interaction," Pp. 336-348 in *Social Psychology*. Fourth Edition, Harcourt Brace.

April 19 -Carli, Linda L. 1990. "Gender, Language, and Influence." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 59:941-951.

April 21 Reducing Status Inequality (no readings)
-Papers due at beginning of class

April 28 **Final Exam (8:30-11:00 am) Thursday**