

Instructor: Larry White, professor of psychology
Class Meetings: MWF 10:00 – 11:05 in Science Center 245
Office Hours: MWF 11:15 – 12:00 and MF 3:00 – 4:00 in SC 236 or by appointment
Phones: 608-363-2282 (office) or 608-365-0275 (home)
E-mail: WhiteLT@beloit.edu

Course Objectives

Social psychology is the branch of psychological science that examines social cognition and social influence—that is, how other people affect our thoughts, feelings, and actions. People often use social psychological principles—knowingly or unknowingly—when they explain someone else’s behavior, try to influence others, or justify their own behavior.

In this course, you’ll learn about the essential themes and key concepts in social psychology. You’ll become familiar with prominent persons in the field and with classic and contemporary studies known to all social psychologists. You’ll also learn how social psychological principles operate in everyday life and how you can use social psychology to solve problems and make positive contributions to society. In short, you’ll learn how to think like a social psychologist, which is a very cool thing to know how to do. (*This course satisfies the Domain 3B requirement: Social Analysis of Human Behavior.*)

Readings

We’ll read all of *Social Psychology* (3rd edition, 2013), written by eminent social psychologists Thomas Gilovich, Dacher Keltner, Serena Chen, and Richard Nisbett. We’ll also read the articles listed below, which I’ll distribute via e-mail throughout the semester.

1. Spiegel, A. (2012, January). What Vietnam taught us about breaking bad habits. *National Public Radio*. At <http://www.npr.org/blogs/health/2012/01/02/144431794/what-vietnam-taught-us-about-breaking-bad-habits>
2. “News Stories that Illustrate Social Perception” (compiled by yours truly) and “Nation of Second Guesses” by social psychologist Barry Schwartz (to accompany his TED talk).
3. Stannard, M. B. (2004, May). Stanford experiment foretold Iraq scandal. *San Francisco Chronicle*.
4. Carnahan, T., & McFarland, S. (2007). Revisiting the Stanford Prison Experiment: Could participant self-selection have led to the cruelty? *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 33(5), 603-614.
5. Cohen, F., & Solomon, S. (2011). The politics of mortal terror. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 20(5), 316-320.

6. Cialdini, R. (2003). Crafting normative messages to protect the environment. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 12(4), 105-109.
7. Milgram, S. (1974). The perils of obedience. *Harper's Magazine*.
8. Eibach, R. P., & Mock, S. E. (2011). Idealizing parenthood to rationalize parental investments. *Psychological Science*, 22(2), 203-208.
9. Pettigrew, T. F., Tropp, L., Wagner, U., & Christ, O. (2011). Recent advances in intergroup contact theory. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 35, 271-280.
10. Mesoudi, A. (2013, February). Mass shooting and mass media: Does media coverage of mass shootings inspire copycat crimes? *International Human Press*. Retrieved from <http://www.ithp.org/articles/mediacopycatshootings.html>

The reading load in this course is fairly light (50-55 pages per week, on average), but you'll need to study the material closely. Spend quality time with each chapter and article, pose questions while you read, make connections with other things you know, and test yourself at the end of each section. If you read in this way, using mental elaboration, you'll understand everything better. You'll also remember it longer (and do well on quizzes and exams).

Week of	Topic	Assigned Readings
Aug. 25	Introduction to the course	Chapter 1
Sept. 1	Key ideas in social psychology	Chapter 2 & Reading 1
Sept. 8	The socially constructed and activated "self"	Chapter 3
Sept. 15	Social perception and cognition	Chapter 4 & Reading 2
Sept. 22	Attribution theory: Explaining behavior	Chapter 5
Sept. 29	Social aspects of emotions and the SPE	Chapter 6 & Readings 3-4
Oct. 6	Attitudes and cognitive dissonance	Chapter 7 & Reading 5
* * * <i>Midterm Break – a good time to do research for your second paper</i> 😊 * * *		
Oct. 20	How we persuade and are persuaded	Chapter 8 & Reading 6
Oct. 27	The power of social influence	Chapter 9 & Reading 7

Nov. 3	Relationships and interpersonal attraction	Chapter 10 & Reading 8
Nov. 10	Effects of groups on individuals	Chapter <u>12</u> (!)
Nov. 17	Stereotyping, prejudice, and discrimination	Chapter 11 & Reading 9
Nov. 24	Helping people, hurting people (part I)	Chapter 13 & Reading 10
Dec. 1	Helping people, hurting people (part II)	Chapter 14
Dec. 8	Using social psychology for the common good	Application modules 1-4

If you can't attend class or complete an assignment because of an upcoming event (e.g., a religious holiday), please talk with me as soon as possible so we can make alternate arrangements.

Free peer tutoring is available for this class. To get a tutor, go to your Portal, click on the Student Life tab, and apply using the Tutoring Forms (on left) and Request a Tutor. If you have questions, contact Learning Enrichment and Disability Services (LEADS) on the second floor of Pearsons.

If you have a disability and would like to speak to someone about possible accommodations, please visit LEADS. You will need to provide appropriate documentation of your disability to the Director of LEADS. If you wish to receive accommodations in this course, you must obtain an Accommodation Verification Letter from the Director, dated for this semester.

How your performance in this course is evaluated is negotiable. Based on feedback from former students and my experience as a teacher, I recommend that your performance be evaluated along four dimensions.

1. Weekly Quizzes

I propose that we have a quiz (worth 20 points) every Friday. Each quiz will test your knowledge and understanding of the readings assigned for that week and any lectures I present that week. There will be 12 quizzes altogether. You can't take a missed quiz at a later date, but you can drop your lowest quiz score.

2. Two Papers

I propose that you write a paper (worth 50 points) titled "Social Psychology in Everyday Life." This paper will be approximately 4 double-spaced pages in length and is due in class on **Monday, September 22**. In this paper, you will describe and analyze 3-4 incidents, each of which illustrates

at least two principles of social psychology in action. The incidents can be of any sort—something you read about or saw in a movie, something you observed, or something that happened to you—as long as they can be analyzed and understood using social psychological concepts and terms. To earn the maximum number of points, submit a clearly written, polished paper that thoroughly demonstrates your ability to identify and explain social psychological principles as they operate in everyday life.

I propose that you write a second paper (worth 100 points altogether) that describes how social psychological concepts and principles can be used to address a social problem. Examples of social problems include the overconsumption of material goods and resources, underutilization of public transit, discrimination against gays and lesbians, high dropout rates in high schools, bullying, alcohol poisonings on a college campus, and unsafe sex. (Sadly, we can think of many more.)

This paper will be 7-8 double-spaced pages in length. You should list at least 10 scholarly references (i.e., sources) on a separate page. (Journal articles and reputable books are scholarly references; popular magazines and commercial websites are not.) Format your references according to APA style, which you can find at www.library.cornell.edu/resrch/citmanage/apa.

You will submit an abstract and list of sources (worth 20 points) to me in class on **Monday, November 17**. The abstract will be one page in length and consist of three paragraphs. The first paragraph will describe the social problem, the second will identify likely causes of the problem, and the third will list five strategies/solutions that make use of social psychological principles.

The paper itself (worth 80 points) is due in class on **Monday, December 1**. To earn the maximum number of points, submit a thoughtful, clearly written, well informed paper that describes what can be done to address the problem and explains, in social psychological terms, why it should work. Start thinking about this paper immediately and develop your ideas as we go along. Please feel free to ask me for advice. I am here to help.

3. Two Essay Exams

I propose two 5/3/2 exams (worth 60 points each). I'll give you five essay questions a week before each exam. Three of the questions will appear on the exam and you'll answer two of your choice. These exams will give you an opportunity to think carefully and innovatively about concepts, evidence, and issues in social psychology. Here's a sample question:

Imagine you are a member of a jury that is about to deliberate in a murder case. The jury must reach a unanimous decision about the defendant's guilt or innocence. Before the deliberations begin, you suspect many of the jurors do not agree with your opinion. Given what social psychologists have learned about group dynamics and attitude change, what can you do to increase the likelihood that the entire jury will eventually vote the same way you do?

The midterm exam is scheduled for **Friday, October 10**, at our regular class time. The final exam is scheduled for **Saturday, December 13, at 10:00 a.m.**

4. Class Membership

I propose that a substantial part of your course grade (60 points) be based on your full and responsible membership in the class. To be a full and responsible member means you attend all class meetings, complete all assigned readings, participate frequently and thoughtfully in class discussions, take exams when they are scheduled, and turn in papers when they are due. A late paper will be docked 5 points for each day (or part of a day) it is late. A rescheduled exam will be docked 10 points.

Electronic devices can be socially disruptive and personally distracting. Please turn off all electronic devices before entering our classroom and leave them off until you exit the room.

I recommend you NOT use a laptop in class. Students who use laptops often transcribe lectures verbatim instead of paraphrasing the information in their own words (Mueller & Oppenheimer, 2014). This strategy has an adverse effect on learning because shallow processing leads to poorer comprehension, whereas deeper processing leads to better comprehension and higher test scores.

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There are 550 possible points in this course. If you earn 90% or more (495+) of the possible points, you'll receive at least an A-. If you earn 80% or more (440+), you'll receive at least a B- and so forth.

This course is a challenging one. To earn an A, you must be fully engaged and consistently demonstrate mastery of the material via quizzes, exams, and papers. I invite you to make this course a priority in your life. If you do, you'll learn lots of fascinating and useful ideas. You'll also earn a really good grade. 😊

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