

Psy 221A: Introductory Social Psychology

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Location details

- Class meets on Tuesdays and Thursdays, 11:30 a.m. - 12:50 p.m., in 131 Psychology (CRN 22477)
- Podcasts, assignments, course grades, and other materials posted on Canvas

Required text

Smith, E. R., Mackie, D. M., & Claypool, H. M. (2015). *Social psychology* (4th edition). New York: Psychology Press.

Course overview

This course provides an introduction to the discipline of social psychology, which is the scientific study of how people come to understand individuals, groups, and themselves as social entities. Social psychological processes influence how we perceive, judge, remember, and behave toward people. These processes shape, and are shaped by, our social expectations, social roles, social goals, and social interactions.

Although it may seem that social psychologists merely study “the obvious” (e.g., attractive people are more persuasive than unattractive people), the field has made a significant impact both theoretically (e.g., theories about the formation of stereotypes and prejudice) and practically (e.g., how juries can make better decisions). Sometimes the research is based on observable phenomena and everyday intuition, but even in these cases, understanding the processes and limitations of lay knowledge is very important. Moreover, social psychologists often find that laypeople’s intuitions are wrong (e.g., you are more likely to get help with fewer, rather than with more, people around you). In such cases, the contributions of social psychology are especially striking.

This course has several goals...

- Students should learn social psychology’s concepts, research findings, and theoretical frameworks.
- Also, students should understand the methods social psychologists use in their research and their rationale.
- Mastering the above will not only help students appreciate social psychology but should underscore the value of applying the scientific method and evidence-based reasoning for understanding our social world.
- Finally, students should be able to apply the lessons of social psychology to everyday life. Social psychology is *always* operating in the real world. Why are some people more popular than others? How do corporations craft advertising campaigns to sell products? Why is a person more likely to sabotage their best friend, relative to a complete stranger, in certain situations? Do subliminal cues affect our behavior? Do people really treat others differently because of their age, sex, or race, and if so under what conditions? How do political candidates use persuasion to earn votes? At the end of the course, students should be able to recognize these processes as they unfold in the world around them, to understand why they happen, and to appreciate their implications. In addition to reading about social psychology in our textbook and discussing it in our lectures, each week students will listen to a podcast and participate in a structured on-line discussion to further connect social psychology research and understanding “the real world.”

Grades

Source	Points
Three in-term exams (250 points each)	750 points
Final exam (350 points)	350 points
Thirteen podcasts with discussion question (15 points each)	195 points
Social explorations activities	
Everyday observations (SEA 1)	25 points
Advertisements analysis project (SEA 2)	40 points
Question and method study proposal (SEA 3)	40 points
Social exploration study report (SEA 4)	100 points
Total Points	1500 points

Points	Percent	Grade
1388 - 1500	93% - 100%	A
1343 - 1387	90% - 92%	A-
1298 - 1342	87% - 89%	B+
1238 - 1297	83% - 86%	B
1193 - 1237	80% - 82%	B-
1148 - 1192	77% - 79%	C+
1088 - 1147	73% - 76%	C
1043 - 1087	70% - 72%	C-
998 - 1042	67% - 69%	D+
938 - 997	63% - 66%	D
893 - 937	60% - 62%	D-
0 - 892	0% - 59%	F

The professor reserves the right to adjust the grading scale, and if this occurs, changes will only make it easier to get a better grade (i.e., the scale will never be adjusted against students). Final grades are based on the final number of points earned applied to the above scale, no exceptions. There is no end-of-semester negotiation period where students can plea and barter for a better grade in the class. Students who wish to perform better should meet with the professor early in the semester — don't wait until it's too late!

Exams

Three in-term exams are administered during the term and one final exam is administered during finals week. Each in-term exam only covers material presented since the previous exam (i.e., they are not cumulative), whereas the final exam is cumulative and covers material presented after Exam 3. Each in-term exam, typically, is composed of 50 multiple-choice questions. The final exam has more questions and is worth more points because it is cumulative and covers the last two weeks of class (note, final exam is scheduled for two hours).

Because students can have a “bad day” (especially early in the course), each student's lowest in-term exam grade will be replaced by the average (i.e., statistical mean) of the student's best and worst in-term exams. For example, if a student gets a 150, 180, and 250 on the three in-term exams, the 150 will be replaced with a 200 (the mean of 150 and 250). Grade replacement only applies to in-term exams and cannot be applied to the final exam. Also, a missed exam is scored as a 0. For instance, if a student missed the first exam (got a 0) and got a 100 and 200 on the other two in-term exams, the 0 would be replaced with a 100 (the mean of 0 and 200).

Preparing for exams

In general (though these percentages are rough averages), question content will reflect 30% unique lecture material, 40% lecture-book overlap, and 30% unique book and podcast material. Questions will cover basic definitions, research findings, theory, and applications of social psychology. Thus, for any topic in the course, students should be able to (1) *define* the topic, (2) *describe an experiment* conducted to understand the topic, (3) *discuss what the topic says about social psychology theories*, and (4) *describe or identify a real-world phenomenon* that illustrates it. Sample questions reflecting these four exam question themes are available on Canvas.

Performing well on exams requires that students read book assignments and listen to podcasts as scheduled in the syllabus, take notes on those materials, attend class and take good notes, ask questions in class or by email about things they do not understand, seek help during office hours, and proactively address questions and shortcomings early in the semester. Being successful in this class requires being an active learner who can acquire, digest, organize, elaborate, critique, and reflect on new information. Therefore, there aren't review sessions or posting notes or lecture slides in the course. It is each student's responsibility to engage and master course material, which is best accomplished by *active* involvement with the material (reading, taking one's own notes, applying the material to the real world). The professor is available to meet with students to help them develop those abilities not only to "get a good grade" in class, but to develop skills essential for life. Students who adopt a lackadaisical approach to class (e.g., do not keep up with readings and podcasts, miss classes, are inattentive *while* in class) tend to do very poorly (i.e., they get Fs not Cs). In the two decades that the professor has taught this class, about 10-12% of students earn Fs (even though *far more* earn As). Please engage the class in a serious fashion and avoid lazy strategies (e.g., "*I'll get serious if I don't do well on Exam 1*").

Podcasts and on-line discussion assignments

During the semester (see 🎧 on last page of syllabus), students will listen to 13 podcasts (free and available on Canvas, under *Discussions*) and respond to a discussion question for each one. Student responses, posted on Canvas, are graded in an all or nothing fashion (15 points). Podcasts are assigned work, and exam questions will come from the podcasts and can include content not discussed in class (just like book material that can appear on exams but not discussed in class). Thus, students are strongly encouraged to listen to podcasts closely and to take notes on them (just like one would take notes on book readings). Students are encouraged to read other students' comments (and offer comments on them) to enhance collaborative learning. The professor will periodically post feedback on-line, but this forum is designed for student-led learning. Student responses must be posted before 11:30 a.m. on the due date to receive credit (see last page of this syllabus).

Social exploration activities (SEAs)

To further engage students outside of the classroom in reflecting on social psychology and its relevance, each student will complete *independent* social explorations activities (SEAs). There are four SEAs, with each one requiring a written document submitted to Canvas (see *Assignments*) before the beginning of class (11:30 a.m.) on the assigned due date (last page). Late submissions, regardless of circumstances, earn 0 points. Because SEAs are self-paced assignments, there is plenty of time to complete them (also class release time is provided).

SEA 1 (observations) asks students to walk around campus and generate 10 social psychology questions. SEA 2 involves an analysis of two student-selected advertisements. Finally SEAs 3 and 4 relate to, and build upon, each other. In SEA 3, students will propose a social psychology question and describe a suitable methodology for answering it. Once approved, SEA 3 becomes the basis for SEA 4, where students actually conduct a real observational study and write a report of it. SEAs require extra time and work (especially SEAs 2-4), which is why two days of class are set aside to provide additional time for completing these activities and for writing. Further, because SEA 4 requires approval of SEA 3, it is mandatory that students complete SEA 3 to be eligible for completing SEA 4 (even if they fail to complete SEA 4 on time and earn a zero on it). Details explaining the SEA assignments are provided on the course's Canvas site. Early submissions of SEAs are encouraged!

Academic integrity

Both Miami University and the Department of Psychology are dedicated to providing a learning environment based not only on academic excellence but on academic integrity as well. In this course, it is expected that students will adhere to all Miami University guidelines regarding academic misconduct (see Chapter 5 of the *Miami Student Handbook: Academic Integrity* for details). Academic misconduct includes, but is not limited to:

- Submitting work (homework, papers, etc.) conducted for another course without professor approval
- Submitting the work of another individual or party (whether in part or in whole) as one's own, including work from another student, a website, a book, or failing to provide appropriate citations for others' ideas
- Allowing other students to submit one's work as their own
- Possessing prohibited materials during a test or quiz in any form (e.g., notes, internet access, texting)
- Providing or receiving assistance from another student without the professor's permission

Engaging in academic misconduct can result in penalties ranging from a *minimum* of an F on the assignment to an F in the course, an "AD" signifying academic dishonesty on Miami transcripts, academic suspension, and expulsion from Miami University. Misunderstanding appropriate academic conduct will not be accepted as an excuse for academic misconduct (see *Miami Student Handbook*, Chapter 5, Section 1.5.A). Please see the professor for clarification regarding any of the above policies. Students are strongly encouraged to meet with the professor if they suspect another student has engaged in academic misconduct.

Class policies

RTFS: Countless hours have gone into crafting this very detailed syllabus. Before asking, read the syllabus!

Assignments: Assignment due dates are posted in this syllabus (last page). The professor reserves the right to alter the syllabus; however, any such revisions will be announced at least one week ahead of a particular due date if it entails making assignments due at an earlier date. Occasionally, modifications of assignments may be necessary (e.g., bad weather, tech snafus), and these changes will be announced in class and on Canvas. It is each student's responsibility to be aware of modifications, even if they contradict the syllabus.

Unique needs: In situations where documented circumstances require that a student not take an exam during a scheduled time (e.g., learning disabilities, official university obligations), special arrangements can be made. However, students must make these arrangements at the beginning of the semester and provide official documentation (e.g., Office of Disability Resources, Rinella Learning Center, Athletic Department).

Course materials, recordings, and legal disclaimers: Attending class, obtaining the textbook, and taking notes are student responsibilities. The professor will not lend out his notes or books -- students are adults and must manage their work responsibilities. Thus, students who miss class should ask classmates to borrow notes to catch up (to learn how to persuade others to do your bidding, please read Chapters 7-10 right now).

The contents of this course are the intellectual property of the professor and covered by copyright law. Podcasts used in this class are for educational use only, and thus fall under fair use doctrine (they are the property of their owners, see their websites for details). Lecture content, exam questions, and other professor-produced work are copyrighted, and distribution of these professor-produced materials violates U.S. Copyright Law, and any parties (e.g., students, companies) involved in such illegal activities are subject to both criminal and civil prosecution. Students may lend notes to fellow students as long as they do not profit from doing so. Thus, the commercialization of class notes and lectures is strictly prohibited. The professor gives students the right to record the audio content of class for personal study purposes only. Students do not have the right to retransmit, post, share, or disseminate such recordings (e.g., upload to YouTube) without the professor's express approval. At no time is any student allowed to capture videos or images from class (doing so violates both copyright law and fellow student privacy).

Classroom conduct: While in class, people are expected to conduct themselves in a respectful and civil manner. Students are encouraged to express their opinions and beliefs. It is quite another thing, however, to be disrespectful or rude to students or to the professor. It is fine to disagree with others and to express non-politically-correct or non-mainstream views. However, bigotry or disrespect is unacceptable.

Disruptive conduct (e.g., distracting texting and laptop use, conversations in class) is unacceptable and students who disrupt class (either for their fellow students or for the professor) will be asked to leave class. Students who want to spend classroom time texting, tagging photos of themselves, watching movies, playing videogames, talking to friends, reading the paper, or sleeping should stay at home.

Exams and make-ups: There are no make-ups for missing an exam for an unexcused reason. An unexcused absence occurs when a student (1) did not obtain prior permission from the professor concerning the absence or (2) did not provide documented evidence justifying the absence. Valid documented evidence can be one of three things: (1) a signed note from a health care professional stating that the student was sick and unable to attend class, (2) a letter from a funeral home or clergy on their letterhead indicating that one attended a memorial service, or (3) a letter from Dean Makaroff supporting one's absence. There are no exceptions to this policy. If students miss an exam, contact the professor as soon as possible to address the situation, and use *multiple* methods, including e-mail and phoning (see page 1 for contact info).

If students miss an exam *for an excused reason*, they will take a make-up exam at a time to be scheduled by the student and the professor. This make-up exam will be an all-essay exam. The multiple-choice version of the exam is only administered once, at the prescribed class time. There is no make-up for the final exam (missing it results in a zero for the final exam -- no exceptions).

If students miss any exam, they will receive a zero for it (and keep in mind that a student's lowest in-term exam score is replaced by the average of one's lowest and highest in-term exam grades).

All exams are closed book and closed notes. Students must bring identification cards and be prepared to present them to exam proctors upon request to verify their identity. Students must bring their own pencils (soft lead, #2) for the answer sheets. Students who wear hats, wear sunglasses, use personal electronic devices (e.g., smart phones, headphones, laptops), use devices capable of receiving and transmitting information, or operate mobile phones or other communications devices will not be permitted to take the exam. Students must stay in the classroom during the exam. Students who leave the auditorium must submit their exam as completed; they will not be permitted to re-enter and continue with the exam. Students who anticipate using the restroom or needing a soda should do so before starting the test. Yes, these are all silly rules, but they are listed because of silly stunts tried in the past.

Final exam: The final exam will be administered on Tuesday, May 9, from 12:45-2:45 p.m. in 131 PSYC (our regular classroom). If this poses a scheduling conflict with another final exam, students must notify the professor and provide documentation, which should be addressed at the beginning of the semester. Miami protocol is for deference to larger classes (i.e., if a conflict exists, smaller classes typically accommodate larger classes). Students who do not address scheduling conflicts with the professor before the final exam will receive a zero if they fail to take the final exam, even if a legitimate conflict exists.

Incompletes: Except for cases of documented medical or family emergencies, incompletes will not be given. There is no need for students to do badly in this class: the professor will be available for meetings during office hours or by appointment, he will answer e-mail questions promptly, and students' lowest in-term exam is replaced by the average of their lowest and highest in-term exams. Deadlines for dropping classes and withdrawals are provided in the General Bulletin and the Academic Calendar information published by the Office of the Registrar (adhering to these policies is the responsibility of each student).

Semester schedule

Assignments are due on the day listed. All reading assignments are from the Smith et al. textbook (the entire chapter is assigned unless a subset of page numbers are listed). Audio podcast (🔊) assignments are available through the course's Canvas site. Key dates (e.g., exams, SEAs, days without class) are presented in boldface.

Date		Topic	Assignment
Week 1	Tu	1/24	Orientation to the course
	Th	1/26	Introduction to social psychology Chapter 1; 🔊 99% Invisible's <i>Episode 181: Milk Carton Kids</i>
Week 2	Tu	1/31	Social psychology methods Chapter 2; Social Explorations Activity 1 due
	Th	2/2	Replicability and ethics 🔊 Planet Money's <i>Episode 677: The Experiment Experiment</i>
Week 3	Tu	2/7	Perceiving individuals Chapter 3
	Th	2/9	Attributions 🔊 Revisionist History's <i>Episode #8: Blame Game</i>
Week 4	Tu	2/14	Forming self-concepts Chapter 4 (95-107)
	Th	2/16	The motivated self Chapter 4 (107-140); 🔊 Ted Radio Hour's <i>Nudge</i>
Week 5	Tu	2/21	Exam 1
	Th	2/23	Perceiving groups Chapter 5 (141-161); 🔊 Hidden Brain's <i>Men: 44, Women: 0</i>
Week 6	Tu	2/28	Group stereotyping Chapter 5 (162-189)
	Th	3/2	Social identity Chapter 6; 🔊 Hidden Brain's <i>Stereotype Threat</i>
Week 7	Tu	3/7	Attitudes Chapter 7 (230-240)
	Th	3/9	Persuasion Chapter 7 (241-273); 🔊 Harvard Business Review's <i>Changing Someone's Behavior...</i>
Week 8	Tu	3/14	Exam 2
	Th	3/16	No class • Complete SEAs 2 & 3 Social Explorations Activities 2 & 3 due
Week 9	Tu	3/21	No class • Spring Break
	Th	3/23	No class • Spring Break
Week 10	Tu	3/28	Attitudes and behavior Chapter 8; 🔊 Hidden Brain's <i>Decide Already!</i>
	Th	3/30	Norms and conformity Chapter 9
Week 11	Tu	4/4	Social influence Chapter 10 (351-369); 🔊 Invisibilia's <i>The New Norm</i>
	Th	4/6	Obedience and resistance Chapter 10 (370-395)
Week 12	Tu	4/11	Group performance Chapter 11 (396-409)
	Th	4/13	Social inclusion, power, and leadership Chapter 11 (409-437); 🔊 Harvard Business Review's <i>Power Corrupts but It Doesn't...</i>
Week 13	Tu	4/18	Exam 3
	Th	4/20	No class • Complete SEA4 Social Explorations Activity 4 due
Week 14	Tu	4/25	Interpersonal attraction Chapter 12 (438-453); 🔊 Physical Attractiveness Podcast's <i>Do opposites attract?</i>
	Th	4/27	Love, sex, and breakups Chapter 12 (453-481); 🔊 Northwestern Univ.'s <i>Eli Finkel</i>
Week 15	Tu	5/2	Aggression and conflict Chapter 13
	Th	5/4	Prosocial behavior Chapter 14; 🔊 Ted Radio Hour's <i>The Money Paradox</i>
Finals Week	Tu	5/9	Final Exam is administered on Tuesday, 12:45 - 2:45 p.m., in 131 PSYC