

# Psy 221B: Introductory Social Psychology

Professor: Allen McConnell  
E-mail: mconnar@miamioh.edu  
Office: 316 Psychology, 513.529.2407  
Hours: Tuesdays, 12N - 1 p.m., and at other times by appointment  
TA: Tyler Jacobs, jacobstp@miamioh.edu, 106 Psychology

## Location details

- Class meets on Tuesdays and Thursdays, 1:15 - 2:35 p.m., in 125 Psychology (CRN 80950)
- Podcasts, assignments, course grades, and other materials posted on Canvas

## Required text

Aronson, E., Wilson, T.D., Akert, R. M., & Sommers, S. R. (2016). *Social psychology* (9th edition). Boston, MA: Pearson.

## 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 its research is based on observable phenomena and everyday intuition, but even in these cases, understanding the processes and limitations of lay knowledge is 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 will underscore the value of applying the scientific method and evidence-based reasoning for understanding our world.
- Finally, students should be able to apply the lessons of social psychology to everyday life. Social psychology is *always* operating in the world. Why are some people more popular than others? How do corporations craft advertising campaigns to sell products? When will a person sabotage a best friend rather than a stranger? Do subliminal cues affect our behavior? How do political candidates use persuasion to get votes? Do people really treat others differently because of their age, sex, or race, and if so, under what conditions? 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 class, students will listen to supplemental podcasts to further connect social psychology to understanding “the real world.”
- Finally, students will complete written assignments to engage in critical thinking exercises that further connect class content with understanding the social world around them.

## Grades

Source	Points
Three in-term exams (250 points each)	750 points
Final exam (350 points)	350 points
Twelve podcasts (15 points each; some bonus podcasts available)	180 points
Social explorations activities	
Observations (SEA 1)	20 points
Research generation (SEA 2)	40 points
Analysis (SEA 3)	60 points
<b>Total Points</b>	<b>1400 points</b>

Points	Percent	Grade
1295 - 1400	93% - 100%	A
1253 - 1294	90% - 92%	A-
1211 - 1252	87% - 89%	B+
1155 - 1210	83% - 86%	B
1113 - 1154	80% - 82%	B-
1071 - 1112	77% - 79%	C+
1015 - 1070	73% - 76%	C
973 - 1014	70% - 72%	C-
931 - 972	67% - 69%	D+
875 - 930	63% - 66%	D
833 - 874	60% - 62%	D-
0 - 832	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 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 it also covers material presented after Exam 3. Each in-term exam 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 does not apply 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. Exam questions 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) *situate the topic among relevant 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 before exams. It is each student's responsibility to engage and master course material, which is best accomplished by *active* engagement 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 the course (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-plus decades that the professor has taught this class, about 10-12% of students earn Fs (though *far more* earn As). Please engage the class seriously and avoid lazy strategies that harm grades and learning (e.g., "*I'll get serious about studying if I don't do well on Exam 1*").

## Podcast assignments

During the semester, students will listen to podcasts (see 🎧 on page 6; URL links provided in Canvas under *Assignments*) and respond to discussion questions. Student responses, to be posted on Canvas, are graded in an all or nothing fashion (15 points) by either the professor or by the TA. 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. Podcast URLs are provided in Canvas but sometimes links can become broken (in these cases, simply search using the info provided in the syllabus, and the podcast can be found in any search engine). Responses must be posted before class (1:15 p.m.) on the due date to receive credit (see page 6 of this syllabus). Late submissions are not accepted, regardless of the circumstances. Students only need to complete 12 of the 13 posted podcasts to receive full credit (180 points) for podcasts, and completing additional podcasts provides bonus points.

## 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). SEAs are graded either by the professor or by the TA. Each SEA requires a written document to be uploaded to Canvas (see *Assignments*) before the beginning of class (1:15 p.m.) on the assigned due date (page 6). Late submissions, regardless of circumstances, earn 0 points. Because SEAs are self-paced activities, there is plenty of time to complete them.

Each SEA involves students reflecting on course materials, synthesizing and integrating their own insights with scientific principles, then translating those ideas into written products. SEA 1 (observations) asks students to walk around campus and generate 10 social psychology questions. SEA 2 (research generation) asks students to take one of their SEA1 questions and transform it into a study idea (highlighting important concepts such as independent and dependent variables, operationalizations, etc.). Finally, SEA3 (analysis) involves an analysis of two student-selected advertisements to translate principles into everyday understanding. 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*: Many hours went into crafting this detailed syllabus. Before asking a question, please read the syllabus!

*Assignments*: Assignment due dates are posted in this syllabus (page 6). Occasionally, syllabus changes may be necessary (e.g., bad weather, tech snafus), and these changes will be announced in class. However, it is each student's responsibility to be aware of changes or 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, university obligations), alternative arrangements can be made. However, students must make arrangements at the beginning of the semester and provide official documentation (e.g., Office of Disability Resources, Rinella Learning Center, Athletic Department). Unless receiving special permission from the professor, any testing center exams must be taken on the regularly scheduled exam day. PDF copies of course slides are posted on-line (see *Canvas Resources*) after each class, but these slides are skeletal in nature (i.e., not all slides appear, videos cannot be posted) and they may (1) include content not covered in class or (2) not include all covered content (classes are fluid!).

*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 7-8 right now).

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 their notes to fellow students as long as they do not profit from doing so, but the commercialization of class notes and lectures is expressly prohibited. The professor gives students the right to record the audio content of class for personal study only. Students do not have the right to retransmit, post, share, or disseminate such recordings without the professor's express approval. At no time is any student allowed to capture video from class.

*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 or to express non-politically-correct or non-mainstream views. However, bigotry, hostility, or disrespect is unacceptable.

The Department of Psychology is strongly committed to promoting diversity and inclusion, and classroom behavior is expected to affirm and support these important values (see department website for details).

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, shopping on-line, or sleeping should stay 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 and use *multiple* methods, including e-mail and telephone (see page 1 for professor 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 on it (please review the "lowest in-term exam grade replacement policy").

All exams are closed book and closed notes. Students must bring identification cards and be prepared to present them upon request to verify identity. Students must bring their own pencils (soft lead, #2) for the scantron sheets. Students who wear hats, wear sunglasses, use personal electronic devices (e.g., smart phones, laptops) or use devices capable of receiving and transmitting information will not be permitted to take the exam. Students must stay in the classroom during the exam. Students who leave the class 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, receiving a phone call, or needing a soda should do take care of these concerns before starting the test.

*Final exam:* The final exam will be administered on Tuesday, May 15, from 12:45-2:45 p.m. in 125 PSYC (our regular classroom, but *not* our regular time). If this poses a scheduling conflict with another final exam, students must notify the professor and provide documentation, and these conflicts should be addressed at the beginning of the semester. Miami protocol is for deference to larger classes (i.e., smaller classes typically accommodate larger classes). Students who do not address scheduling conflicts with the professor before the final 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, grades are based on many assignments (most of which are self-paced), 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 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. Reading assignments are from the Aronson et al. textbook (the entire chapter is assigned unless a subset of page numbers is listed). “Social Psychology in Action” chapters are the last three chapters in the book. Audio podcast (🔊) assignments are available on Canvas under Assignments.

Date		Topic	Assignment
Week 1	Tu	1/30	Orientation to the course
	Th	2/1	Introduction to social psychology
			Chapter 1; 🔊 Revisionist History's <i>A Good Walk Spoiled</i>
Week 2	Tu	2/6	Social psychology methods
	Th	2/8	Social cognition
			Chapter 2; <b>SEA 1 due</b>
Week 3	Tu	2/13	Judgment and decision making
	Th	2/15	High effort social thinking
			Chapter 3 (65-72); <b>SEA 2 due</b>
Week 4	Tu	2/20	Impression formation
	Th	2/22	Attributions
			Chapter 4 (84-96)
Week 5	Tu	2/27	<b>Exam 1</b>
	Th	3/1	The social self
			Chapter 5; 🔊 Hidden Brain's <i>Me, Myself, and IKEA</i>
Week 6	Tu	3/6	The motivated self
	Th	3/8	Attitudes
			Chapter 6; 🔊 Ted Radio Hour's <i>Nudge</i>
Week 7	Tu	3/13	Persuasion
	Th	3/15	Social Influence
			Chapter 7 (199-225); 🔊 Harvard Business Review's <i>Changing Someone's Behavior...</i>
Week 8	Tu	3/20	<b>No class • Spring Break</b>
	Th	3/22	<b>No class • Spring Break</b>
Week 9	Tu	3/27	Obedience and resistance
	Th	3/29	<b>Exam 2</b>
			Chapter 8 (256-268); <b>SEA 3 due</b>
Week 10	Tu	4/3	Interpersonal attraction
	Th	4/5	Love, sex, and breakups
			Chapter 10 (303-324); 🔊 Northwestern Catchat's <i>Eli Finkel</i>
Week 11	Tu	4/10	Helping others
	Th	4/12	<b>No class • Catch up day</b>
			Chapter 11; 🔊 Ted Radio Hour's <i>The Money Paradox</i>
Week 12	Tu	4/17	Hurting others
	Th	4/19	Group perceptions
			Chapter 12
Week 13	Tu	4/24	Reducing prejudice
	Th	4/26	<b>Exam 3</b>
			Chapter 13 (442-454); 🔊 Hidden Brain's <i>In the Air We...</i>
Week 14	Tu	5/1	Groups
	Th	5/3	Environmental sustainability
			Chapter 9; 🔊 Harvard Business Review's <i>Power Corrupts...</i>
Week 15	Tu	5/8	Social psychology and health
	Th	5/10	Social psychology and the law
			Social Psychology in Action 2
			Social Psychology in Action 3; 🔊 Hidden Brain's <i>Liar, Liar</i>
Finals Week	Tu	5/15	<b>The Final Exam is administered on Tuesday, 12:45 - 2:45 p.m., in 125 PSYC</b>