

# Psy 221H: Honors Social Psychology

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Psy 221H, Section A, CRN 66041  
Class meets in 204 Psychology Building,  
on Mondays and Wednesdays, 11:30 a.m. - 12:50 p.m.

## Readings

- Cialdini, R. B. (2009). *Influence: Science and practice* (5th edition). Boston: Pearson Education.
- Dalai Lama (1999). *Ethics for the new millennium*. New York: Riverhead Books.
- Dunn, E., & Norton, M. (2013). *Happy money: The science of happier spending*. New York: Simon & Schuster.
- Gladwell, M. (2005). *Blink: The power of thinking without thinking*. New York: Back Bay Books.
- PDF readings (and other course materials) available from the course's Niihka site.

## Course overview

This is an honors seminar providing 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.

Social psychologists conduct research that has provided considerable societal impact at a theoretical level (e.g., theories about how people's behaviors are shaped by invisible social forces) and at a practical level (e.g., how people can improve their own happiness). Although sometimes social psychologist seem to study "the obvious" (e.g., more attractive people are more persuasive), often they find that laypeople's intuitions are wrong (e.g., one is more likely to get help with fewer, rather than more, people around during an emergency). In such cases, the contributions of social psychology are especially striking.

This honors seminar is quite different from non-honors sections of introductory social psychology.

- Readings come from scientific sources (e.g., primary research articles, scholarly chapters) and from four popular press books that examine social psychological principles rather than from a textbook. The readings have been chosen to be accessible and interesting, but at times they will be challenging!
- Most of our class time will focus on discussing and critiquing course materials, not on instructor lecturing.
- In our seminar, we will focus on a few key themes in social psychology and "drill down deep" on them rather than attempt to survey a broad summary of topics in social psychology. For example, we will examine how nonconscious processes affect our behavior, how people can maximize their happiness through social means, how social justice and interconnection produce positive social outcomes, and how people impact others through social influence processes.
- Writing is a significant component of our seminar. For example, students will submit several written assignments during the semester. Also, exams are all-essay in format.
- Students will give an oral presentation during the last week of class to report on their semester-long analysis of a unique real-world issue of their choosing to the entire class.
- Course exams focus on student mastery of relevant and important social psychology research and theory, whereas student papers and activities focus on applying these principles to understanding real-world events. Historically, social psychology has featured an interplay of "theory informing the world" and "real-world events setting the agenda for social psychology," and the structure of our seminar reflects it.

## Grades

Source	Points
Two exams (250 points each)	500 points
Analysis project topic approval	20 points
Two analysis project report papers (150 points each)	300 points
One oral presentation of class project	100 points
Social explorations activities (SEAs)	
Everyday observations (SEA #1)	40 points
Analysis of automaticity in everyday life (SEA #2)	50 points
Project to maximize one's own happiness (SEA #3)	50 points
Analysis of advertising strategies (SEA #4)	50 points
13 pop quizzes on readings (10 points each)	130 points
Class participation points (5 points per class)	100 points
<b>Total Points</b>	<b>1340 points</b>

Final grades will be determined by total points accumulated during the semester applied to this scale, which is based on 1300 total points (i.e., there are 40 points of “extra credit” built in):

Points	Percentages	Letter
1202 - 1340	93% - 103%	A
1163 - 1201	90% - 92%	A-
1124 - 1162	87% - 89%	B+
1072 - 1123	83% - 86%	B
1033 - 1071	80% - 82%	B-
994 - 1032	77% - 79%	C+
942 - 993	73% - 76%	C
903 - 941	70% - 72%	C-
864 - 902	67% - 69%	D+
812 - 863	63% - 66%	D
773 - 811	60% - 62%	D-
0 - 772	0% - 59%	F

The professor reserves the right to adjust the grading scale. If modifications occur, changes will only make it easier for students to get a better grade (i.e., the scale will never be adjusted against students). However, it would be unwise to anticipate that an adjustment will occur. Final grades are based on the final number of points earned as applied to the above grading scale, no exceptions. There is no end-of-semester negotiation period where students plea and barter for a better grade. If students are dissatisfied with their performance in the class, they should discuss the situation with the professor early -- don't wait until it's too late.

Assignments are due at the beginning of each class period (11:30 a.m., on the dates identified on the page 6). **Late assignments** receive a 10% deduction for each 24-hour period they are late, beginning at 11:31 a.m. For example, if a student uploads Analysis Paper 1 to Niihka at 12:30 p.m. on its due date (October 17), it will lose 15 points (10% of assignment) because it is an hour late (additional 10% deductions will occur for each 24-hour period that it is late). Please submit work on time (and early submissions are always encouraged)!

## Exams

Two essay exams will be administered during the course. Each exam will only cover the material presented since the previous exam (i.e., they are not cumulative). Also, there is no final exam; however, there are end-of-semester oral presentations that serve as a capstone evaluation for the course. The exams focus primarily on the readings, course discussions, and content presented covered class. Although the exam material will primarily reflect what is discussed in class, reading material that is assigned but not discussed in class is fair game. However, exams will *never* assess trivial aspects of the readings. The exams assess how well students are mastering and integrating the readings and class discussions. Their focus is on research findings and theories more so than on applications.

## Analysis projects

Each student will identify a topic of interest and, throughout the course, analyze how the principles of social psychology covered in our readings and class discussions help illuminate it. Students are allowed to pick any topic for their class project that they want (but once chosen, it cannot be changed), and it can be anything in current events (e.g., conflict in the Middle East), pop culture (e.g., people's inexplicable interest in Michael Bay movies), or issues that transcend any particular moment (e.g., antisemitism). Each student in the class must have a *unique* topic for their analysis project, and the topic must have the instructor's approval (confirmed by email) no later than the beginning of class on Monday, September 8th (unapproved topics beyond this deadline receive a 10% deduction on Paper I for *each* 24-hour period that they are late). Once a student has chosen a topic that has been approved by the instructor, it is no longer available for other students to select (thus, getting early approval is beneficial to secure a desired topic).

Twice during the semester, students will prepare written analysis reports (each 4-5 pages, double-spaced, normal fonts and margins) that analyze how concepts discussed in class can be applied to understand the class project topic. In other words, students are to integrate theories and research findings discussed in class to explain people's behavior in relation to the topic the selected. These analysis reports are uploaded to Niihka (details will be provided), and they are subject to a 10% penalty for each day they are late. During the last week of the semester, each student will present a short (approximately 5 minute) oral presentation about their project to the class and explain how principles covered in the entire course shed important light on it.

## Social explorations 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). These four SEAs are designed to be short written reports (each no more than one page), which are each to be uploaded to the class's Niihka site before the beginning of class (11:30 a.m.) on the assigned due date (see page 6). Late submissions, regardless of circumstances, earn 0 points. Because they are *self-paced activities*, there is plenty of time to complete them. Students are free to submit them early, and they are encouraged to do so.

SEA #1 (everyday observations) asks students to walk around campus in public places (quietly and in an unplugged fashion), observe what they see, and generate 10 questions related to social psychology (at least one question should engage one of the five senses: sight, hearing, taste, smell, and touch.) SEA #2 asks students to consider the role of automaticity in everyday life and to examine how aspects of their life may be less deliberate and thoughtful than they might realize. Next, SEA #3 asks students to develop a concrete plan to improve their own personal happiness by leveraging relevant theory and findings on happiness covered in class. Finally, SEA #4 asks students to engage in an analysis of advertising strategies involving their favorite consumer product. Details explaining social exploration activity assignments will be provided on the Niihka site.

## Quizzes

Throughout the semester, short pop quizzes (13 total) on assigned readings will be periodically administered to reward students for keeping up with readings. They will not be difficult. If students complete the readings, this will be the easiest 10% of the course grade. They will be administered at the very beginning of class. If students are late to class or miss class, they cannot make them up (even with a documented excuse).

## Class participation

Class participation and attendance will be assessed each class (exam days excluded). Missing class will cost students 5 points per day (even if the absence is excused). Students who habitually say nothing will lose points even if they attend class (they will receive a warning from the professor to speak up). Because much of this class is discussion oriented, participating is essential.

## 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

**Assignments:** Assignment due dates are posted in the syllabus. 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. Alterations to the class will be announced in class, and it is each student's responsibility to attend to these announcements.

**Special considerations:** In situations where special and documented circumstances require that a student not take an exam during a scheduled time (e.g., learning disabilities, an official university obligation, religious observances), special arrangements can be made with the professor. However, students must make these arrangements at the beginning of the semester and provide documentation for them.

**Course materials, recordings, and legal disclaimers:** Attending class, obtaining course materials, and taking notes are each student's responsibility. The professor will lend out notes or books under any circumstances. If students miss a class, they should ask classmates to borrow notes to catch up on what was missed. Students may lend notes to fellow students in the same course as long as they do not financially profit from doing so (i.e., the commercialization of class notes is strictly prohibited).

*Uploads and electronically-submitted assignments:* All written assignments in class (e.g., class project analysis papers, social exploration activities) require that students upload documents to Niihka. All documents should be uploaded in one of three formats: PDF (Acrobat's Portable Document Format), DOC (Microsoft Word's Document format), or RTF (Rich Text Format). All uploaded documents will be subjected to plagiarism scans and other forms of analysis to ensure the authenticity of scholarship. Students with any questions (e.g., how to upload documents to Niihka, confusion about file formats, questions about academic integrity issues) should consult with the professor long before any assignment is due (i.e., technical issues with computer equipment or uncertainty about using course-related software will not be accepted as an excuse for late or incomplete assignments). If Niihka is unavailable right before a deadline, email your assignment to the professor (but only do this if Niihka is down).

*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 disrespectful behavior is unacceptable.

Relatedly, disruptive conduct (e.g., distracting texting, 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 their photos, watching videos, playing games, talking to friends, catching up on the internet, 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 Callahan 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 telephone.

*Reading pop quizzes:* Periodically, unannounced reading quizzes will be administered at the beginning of class. These quizzes will be brief (i.e., 2-3 sentence answers) and cover very basic aspects of the readings assigned for that day. Pop quizzes are graded as all or nothing (i.e., no partial credit) and will be returned to students at the next class session. Students who miss class (even for an excused reason) or arrive late for class cannot make up quizzes. Each quiz is less than 1% of the total points, so missing any particular quiz will have little impact on one's overall grade (missing several, on the other hand, will have a greater impact; however, missing several quizzes reflects broader responsibility issues beyond missing quizzes).

*Class participation:* Students are expected to actively participate in each and every class. For each of the 20 regular class periods (i.e., classes without exams or oral presentations), class participation will be assessed by the professor in an all or nothing fashion. Class participation points cannot be made up if students miss class (even if for an excused reason -- you cannot participate in class if you are not in class).

*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, and he will answer e-mail questions promptly. Moreover, there are 40 "extra" points available to students (i.e., 1340 points total, but the grading scale is based on 1300 points), giving students "bonus points." Deadlines for dropping classes and withdrawals are provided by the Office of the Registrar. Students who miss or neglect these deadlines assume responsibility for the consequences. For more details, consult Miami's official publications regarding deadlines and university policies.

## Semester schedule

Assignments are due on the day indicated, with assignments due before 11:30 a.m. Reading assignments are entire chapters from books (i.e., Gladwell, Dunn & Norton, Dalai Lama, Cialdini) or are PDFs of scientific papers (listed by author and publication year), which are available for download from the course Niihka site.

	Date		Topic	Assignment
Week 1	M	8/25	Introduction to seminar	
	W	8/27	Social psychology primer	<b>SEA #1</b>
Week 2	<b>M</b>	<b>9/1</b>	<b>No class (Labor Day)</b>	
	W	9/3	Social perception	Snyder et al. (1977)
Week 3	M	9/8	Being members of social groups	Bernstein et al. (2007); <b>topic approval</b>
	W	9/10	Role of the self in social psych	Dutton & Aron (1974)
Week 4	M	9/15	How well do we know ourselves?	Nisbett & Wilson (1977)
	W	9/17	Nonconscious influences	McConnell et al. (2011)
Week 5	M	9/22	Automaticity	Bargh & Chartrand (1999)
	W	9/24	Thin slices and fast judgments	Gladwell (chapters 1-2)
Week 6	M	9/29	Associative reasoning	Gladwell (chapters 3-4)
	<b>W</b>	<b>10/1</b>	<b>No class (work on projects)</b>	
Week 7	M	10/6	Thinking too much	Wilson & Schooler (1991)
	W	10/8	Poor outcomes and their causes	Gladwell (chapters 5-6); <b>SEA #2</b>
Week 8	M	10/13	Not always black and white	Correll et al. (2007)
	<b>W</b>	<b>10/15</b>	<b>Exam 1</b>	<b>Analysis 1 (due by Friday, 10/17)</b>
Week 9	M	10/20	Does money buy happiness?	Dunn & Norton (chapters 1-3)
	W	10/22	Happiness and its sources	Dunn et al. (2008)
Week 10	M	10/27	Ways to increase happiness	Dunn & Norton (chapters 4-5, epilogue)
	W	10/29	Foundations of ethics	Dalai Lama (chapters 1-5)
Week 11	M	11/3	Ethics and the individual	Dalai Lama (chapters 6-10)
	W	11/5	Empathy and helping	Galinsky & Moskowitz (2000); <b>SEA #3</b>
Week 12	M	11/10	Social influence	Cialdini (chapters 1-3)
	W	11/12	Interpersonal influence	Cialdini (chapters 4, 5, 7)
Week 13	M	11/17	Obedience	Cialdini (chapter 6); <b>SEA #4</b>
	<b>W</b>	<b>11/19</b>	<b>Exam 2</b>	
Week 14	<b>M</b>	<b>11/24</b>	<b>No class (work on projects)</b>	<b>Analysis 2 (due by Monday, 11/24)</b>
	<b>W</b>	<b>11/26</b>	<b>No class (Thanksgiving)</b>	
Week 15	<b>M</b>	<b>12/1</b>	<b>Oral Presentations Day #1</b>	
	<b>W</b>	<b>12/3</b>	<b>Oral Presentations Day #2</b>	