

Psy 221A: Introductory Social Psychology

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Professor in-person office hours: Thursdays 1:15-2:15 p.m. (316 PSYC), and at other times by appointment
Professor virtual office hours: Wednesdays 1-3 p.m. (20-minute blocks) using Google Meet ([sign up here](#))

TA office hours: Mondays, 11 a.m. - 12 noon (224 PSYC), and at other times by appointment

Meeting times and location, required text, and other course materials

- Class meets on Tuesdays and Thursdays, 11:40 a.m. – 1:00 p.m., in Upham Hall Room 001 (CRN 10954)
- Textbook is Aronson, E., Wilson, T.D., Sommers, S.R., Page-Gould, E., & Lewis, N. (2023). *Social psychology* (11th edition). Hoboken, NJ: Pearson (older editions are okay, but content and page numbers will differ)
- Social media and other assignments, course grades, and other course materials are posted on Canvas

Course overview

This course provides an introduction to social psychology, which is the scientific discipline that studies how people come to understand individuals, groups, and themselves as social entities. Social psychological processes influence people's perceptions, judgments, memories, and behavior. These processes shape, and are shaped by, cultural influences, social expectations, social roles, social goals, and social interactions.

Although it may seem that social psychologists often study “the obvious” (e.g., attractive people are more persuasive than unattractive people), the field has provided important theoretical (e.g., explanations about the formation of stereotypes and prejudice) and practical (e.g., how juries can make better decisions) insights. Sometimes its research is based on observable phenomena and everyday intuition, but even in these cases, understanding the processes (and limits) underlying lay knowledge is important. Moreover, social psychologists often find that lay intuitions are wrong (e.g., people are more likely to get help with fewer, rather than more, people around them). 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 it will underscore the value of applying the scientific method and evidence-based reasoning for understanding the social world.
- Students should be able to apply the lessons of social psychology to everyday life. Social psychology is *always* operating in the world. How do political candidates use persuasion to earn votes? Why are some people more popular than others? What makes people fall in love? When will a person sabotage a best friend rather than a stranger? Do subliminal cues affect human behavior? When do groups of people become mindless mobs? Do people treat others differently because of age, sex, or race, and if so, under what conditions? By the end of the course, students should be able to recognize these processes as they unfold in the world around them, understand why they happen, and anticipate their implications.
- In addition to learning about social psychology from the textbook and class discussions, students will engage with social media through assignments to further connect social psychology to understanding the world.
- Finally, students will complete three additional written assignments to build connections between class content and understanding the social world and how it works.

Grades

Source		Points each	Total points	Percent
3 In-term Exams		250	750	53%
Final Exam		350	350	25%
9 Social Media Assignments		25	225	16%
Social Explorations Activities				
Social observations and questions	(SEA 1)	25	25	2%
Election persuasion analysis	(SEA 2)	50	50	4%
Joy and well-being	(SEA 3)	50	50	4%
Totals			1450	104%

Points	Percent	Grade
1295 - 1450	93% - 104%	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

There are 1450 total points available, but the grading scale is based on 1400 points (i.e., 1400 points=100%), which means there are 50 “cushion points” available. Cushion points provide students with flexibility should they experience challenges or disruptions during the semester (e.g., being sick, technical snafus). Students should view cushion points as something to “save for a rainy day” to help meet potential challenges during the semester. Please note that late work, regardless of the circumstances, will not be accepted (there are 50 cushion points available). Work must be submitted on time, and students should work ahead so that meeting deadlines at the last minute is not an issue (waiting until the last minute to complete assignments increases self-induced and avoidable risks)!

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 few weeks of class (note, the final exam period is 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 scores of 150, 180, and 250 on the three in-term exams, the 150 will be replaced with a 200 (mean of 150 and 250). Grade replacement *only* applies to in-term exams and does not apply to the final exam. Missed exams are 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), exam question content reflects 35% unique lecture and podcast material, 40% lecture-book overlap, and 25% unique book 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 types of questions are available on Canvas.


Students perform best on exams when they read book assignments and reflect on social media content 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 in office hours when needed, and proactively address questions and areas for growth (especially early in the semester). Growth-oriented learners get the most out of the course when they by acquire, organize, elaborate, critique, and reflect on course content. It is each student's responsibility to master course material, which is best accomplished by *active* engagement with course material (reading, taking notes on everything, applying material to the real world). The professor and the TA are available and eager to meet with students to help them develop and improve on these scholarly abilities not only to get a good grade in class but to develop essential life skills. Students adopting lackadaisical approaches to the course (e.g., do not keep up with readings, 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 course, about 10-12% of students earn Fs (though *far more* earn As). Please take the class seriously and avoid lazy strategies that produce poor outcomes (e.g., "*I'll get serious about studying if I don't do well on Exam 1*").

Social exploration activities (SEAs)

To reflect on social psychology and its relevance outside of the classroom, students will complete *independent* Social Explorations Activities (SEAs). Each SEA requires a written document to be uploaded to Canvas (see *Assignments*) before 11:40 a.m. on the due date (page 7) unless otherwise noted. Late submissions, regardless of circumstances, earn 0 points. SEAs are self-paced activities, so there is *plenty* of time to submit them early.

Each SEA involves students reflecting on course materials, synthesizing and integrating their own insights with scientific principles, then translating their ideas into written products. SEA 1 asks students to walk around campus, observe social behavior, and generate social psychology questions that would be testable and worth testing. SEA 2 asks students to consider how principles of attitudes and persuasion are exhibited in this fall's presidential campaign. Finally, SEA 3 asks students to leverage positive psychology for improving their own happiness. Details for SEA assignments are provided on the course's Canvas site. Early submissions of SEAs are encouraged, and late submissions are not accepted!

Social media assignments

During the semester, students will listen to podcasts (see  on page 7; details in Canvas under *Assignments*) and respond to two prompts related to them. Student responses, to be posted on Canvas, are graded in an all or nothing fashion (25 points) by the TA. Social media activities are assigned work, and exam questions will come from social media content and can include content not discussed in class or in assignment prompts (just like book material not discussed in class can appear on exams). Thus, students are strongly encouraged to attend to social media assignments closely and to *take notes on them*, just like they would take notes on book chapters or class presentations. URLs for social media assignments are provided in Canvas. Social media assignment responses must be posted before 11:40 a.m. (when class begins) on the due date (page 7) to receive credit. Late submissions are not accepted, regardless of the circumstances. Students are encouraged to complete all nine social media assignments, but a student could only complete seven of them and still earn 100% of the grade in the class because of the 50 cushion points.

Academic integrity

Miami University and the Department of Psychology are dedicated to providing a learning environment based on academic excellence and academic integrity. Students must follow all Miami University guidelines regarding academic misconduct (see Miami's *Academic Integrity Policy*). Misconduct includes, but is not limited to:

- Submitting assignments conducted for another course without professor approval
- Submitting another party's work (in part or in whole) as one's own, including work from another student, artificial intelligence systems, websites, books, or failing to provide appropriate citations for others' ideas
- Allowing others to submit one's own work as their own (i.e., both parties are violating academic integrity)
- Using prohibited devices or materials during an exam (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 a zero 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 (please review Miami's *Academic Integrity Policy*). Please see the professor for clarification regarding any of the above policies. Any work suspected of violating academic integrity policies will be submitted to appropriate university officials for investigation (no exceptions). Students are encouraged to meet with the professor if they suspect that another student has engaged in academic misconduct.

Class policies

RTFS: Before asking a question, read the syllabus! Most questions (e.g., "Is the final exam cumulative?" [yes], "I know I missed the assignment deadline, but can I turn it in late and get some points?" [no], "Can material from a podcast appear on an exam?" [yes]) are easily answered by reading the syllabus.

Assignments: Assignment due dates are posted on page 7. Occasionally, syllabus changes may be necessary (e.g., adverse weather), and these changes will be announced in class. However, each student is responsible for being aware of changes or modifications, even if they alter the syllabus. Assignments (e.g., social media, SEAs) must be uploaded before 11:40 a.m. ET (i.e., Oxford Time), unless explicitly noted. All assignments submitted to Canvas must be uploaded in one of three formats: Rich Text Format (RTF), Microsoft Word (DOC), or Adobe Acrobat (PDF). Other file formats (e.g., Apple Pages) or Google Docs are not accepted!

Writing competency: Writing competency is expected in all assignments. Students needing assistance with their writing skills should contact the Howe Center for Writing Excellence (<http://miamioh.edu/hcwe>).

Accommodations: Students with a disability who feel that they may need a reasonable accommodation to fulfill the essential functions of the course listed in this syllabus, or students with physical, medical or psychiatric disabilities, or students with AD(H)D or specific learning disabilities are encouraged to contact the Miller Center for Student Disability Services (<https://miamioh.edu/student-life/sds/>). The professor is committed to supporting students who require accommodations, and it is each student's responsibility to document these circumstances with the Miller Center and to bring them to the professor's attention.

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 documentation (e.g., Miller Center, Athletic Department). Unless receiving advance permission from the professor, any testing center exams must be taken on the scheduled exam day. Copies of course slides are posted on-line (Canvas Resources) after each class, but slides are skeletal in nature (e.g., videos cannot be posted) and they may (1) include content not covered in class or (2) not include all covered content (lectures are fluid!).

Course materials, recordings, and legal disclaimers: Attending class, obtaining course materials, and taking notes (on class discussions, readings, social media assignments) are each student's responsibility. The professor will not lend out notes or materials under any circumstances. If students miss a class, they should get notes from a fellow student. Students who are uncertain about how to persuade others to loan them their notes should read Chapters 7-8 right now!

Podcasts and videos used in this class are for educational use only, and thus fall under fair use doctrine (they are the property of their owners). Lecture content, exam questions, and other professor-produced work are copyrighted, and unapproved distribution of these professor-produced materials violates U.S. Copyright Law, and any parties (e.g., students, note taking companies) involved in such 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 our class.

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 official letterhead indicating that one attended a memorial service, or (3) a letter from Dean Baernstein 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 (i.e., 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 day and 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 (exams are administered on paper, not by computer). Students are responsible for bringing their own pencils for exams (students should bring *backup* pencils too). The professor cannot and will not be responsible for supplying pencils for a class of 100+ students. Students who wear sunglasses, wear hats, or use electronic devices (e.g., phones, tablets, 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 beverage should do take care of these matters before starting an exam.

Final exam: The final exam will be administered on Thursday, December 12, from 12:45-2:45 p.m. in I Upham. (our regular classroom, but *not* our regular time). Students will not be allowed to "take the exam early" in order to leave campus sooner for break (so please, don't ask). If this exam time creates a final exam scheduling conflict or concern, students must notify the professor and provide documentation, and these conflicts must be noted *at least three weeks* before final exam week begins, per [university policy](#)). Students who do not address final exam scheduling issues with the professor before the final will receive a zero if they fail to take the final exam, even if a legitimate conflict exists that was not discussed in advance.

Proof of attendance headshot upload: Students are required to take a headshot of themselves with a designated slide in the classroom to confirm attendance during the first week of class. Failure to attend class in Week 1 may result in students being dropped from the course (see Office of the Registrar policies for attendance policies). Students must upload their headshot photo from class in Canvas by 5 p.m. on August 29, 2024.

Illnesses and significant health disruptions: Students who become seriously ill and are unable to complete assignments for a sizable portion of the course because of illness should contact the professor immediately to determine how alternative arrangements might be made. Students who fail to stay in contact with the professor assume the consequences for reduced options and remedies in the wake of these circumstances. Students are ultimately responsible for the material covered in class, regardless of whether they are absent or present. If student absences are of significant duration or severity, the professor can advise them about available options, including assigning an incomplete grade (see below) or requesting a medical withdrawal.

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 and TA are available for meetings during office hours or by appointment, they will answer e-mail questions promptly, grades are based on many assignments, there are 50 cushion points available, 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 each student's responsibility).

Classroom conduct, respecting others, and valuing diversity: Students are expected to conduct themselves in a respectful and civil manner in class while being encouraged to express their opinions and beliefs. However, disrespectful behavior toward students, university staff, or faculty is unacceptable. It is fine to disagree with others and to express non-politically-correct views, but bigotry or disrespectful behavior is unacceptable.

Disruptive conduct (e.g., distracting texting and computer use, conversations in class) is unacceptable and students who disrupt class (for students or for the professor) will be asked to leave class. Students must abide by all university health policies throughout the semester. Also, class norms of respect and decency extend beyond formal class meetings to on-line contexts as well even those such contexts may seem less formal (e.g., comments posted on-line should be viewed as "just as formal" as saying something aloud in class). Please be courteous and respectful in all forms of communication and interaction in our course.

The Miami University Department of Psychology is strongly committed to diversity, inclusion, and belongingness for all, and these values are reflected in its departmental governance:

We, members of the Department of Psychology, value diversity and inclusion because the goal of psychology is to improve understanding and outcomes for all individuals. We value persons of all identities, including dimensions such as age, culture, national origin, ability, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, language, race, religion, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, and others. As psychologists, we understand that diverse groups bring diverse perspectives; this diversity produces better outcomes in a variety of contexts, including learning and decision making, and our ability to work with one another. Consistent with these values, our department actively seeks opportunities to increase and improve understanding of diversity. These enduring efforts include conducting research with diverse populations on topics related to intergroup understanding and asking questions that are relevant to different groups. We promote the academic and professional development of students, faculty, and staff from different backgrounds and provide education to improve intercultural knowledge, skills, and attitudes for all members of our academic community. We endeavor to actively engage in positive behaviors in order to achieve these goals. In sum, we value diversity because multiple perspectives improve our ability to understand psychological processes and to understand and contribute to the communities we serve.

Semester schedule

Assignments are due on the day listed by 11:40 a.m. ET (unless otherwise noted). Readings are from the Aronson et al. text (the entire chapter is assigned unless a subset of pages is listed). Social Psychology in Action (SPA) chapters are the last three chapters in the book. Social media (📺) and SEA assignments are in Canvas.

Date		Topic	Assignment
Week 1	Tu	8/27	Orientation to the course
	Th	8/29	Introduction to social psychology Chapter 1; Upload attendance headshot by 5 p.m.
Week 2	Tu	9/3	Social psychology research methods Chapter 2; SEA 1 (observations) due by 11:40 a.m.
	Th	9/5	Social cognition Chapter 3 (45-55)
Week 3	Tu	9/10	Judgment and decision making Chapter 3 (55-61); 📺 Hidden Brain's <i>I'm Right, You're Wrong</i>
	Th	9/12	High effort social thinking Chapter 3 (61-71)
Week 4	Tu	9/17	Impression formation Chapter 4 (72-83)
	Th	9/19	Attributions Chapter 4 (84-102); 📺 Hidden Brain's <i>Growth Mindsets</i>
Week 5	Tu	9/24	Exam 1
	Th	9/26	The social self Chapter 5
Week 6	Tu	10/1	The motivated self Chapter 6;
	Th	10/3	Attitudes Chapter 7 (157-167); 📺 Ted Radio Hour's <i>Nudge</i>
Week 7	Tu	10/8	Persuasion Chapter 7 (167-187)
	Th	10/10	Social influence Chapter 8 (188-217); 📺 Hidden Brain's <i>Persuasion Part I</i>
Week 8	Tu	10/15	Obedience and resistance Chapter 8 (217-229)
	Th	10/17	No class SEA 2 (persuasion) due by 5 p.m.
Week 9	Tu	10/22	Exam 2
	Th	10/24	Interpersonal attraction Chapter 10 (259-276)
Week 10	Tu	10/29	Love, sex, and breakups Chapter 10 (276-292); 📺 Hidden Brain's <i>When Marriage...</i>
	Th	10/31	Helping others Chapter 11
Week 11	Tu	11/5	Hurting others Chapter 12; 📺 Ted Radio Hour's <i>The Money Paradox</i>
	Th	11/7	Group perceptions Chapter 13 (351-358)
Week 12	Tu	11/12	Reducing Prejudice Chapter 13 (358-385)
	Th	11/14	Positive emotions and well-being 📺 Hidden Brain's <i>In the Air We Breathe</i>
Week 13	Tu	11/19	Exam 3
	Th	11/21	Groups Chapter 9; SEA 3 (joy) due by 11:40 a.m.
Week 14	Tu	11/26	Sustainability SPA Unit #1; 📺 Harvard Business Review's <i>Power Corrupts...</i>
	Th	11/28	No class • Thanksgiving Day
Week 15	Tu	12/3	Health and well-being SPA Unit #2
	Th	12/5	Social psychology and the law SPA Unit #3; 📺 Ted Radio Hour's <i>Simply Happy</i>
Finals Week	Th	12/12	The Final Exam is administered on Thursday, 12:45 - 2:45 p.m., in 001 Upham