Social Psychology

Course Number
Psych-UA 9032 D01

Fall 2018
Syllabus last updated on: 04-September- 2018

Lecturer Contact Information
Bianca von Wurzbach
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Course Details
Wednesdays, 10:00am to 12:45pm
Location: Rooms will be posted in Albert before your first class.

Prerequisites
Prerequisite for NYU Students: PSYCH-UA 9001/Introduction to Psychology

Units earned
4 points

Course Description
The science of social psychology is concerned with understanding how others – be they actual or imagined – influence our affects, cognitions, and behavior. In this class we will learn about social psychology as a science, its methods, core concepts, current problems, and challenges. We will do so by covering theories and research in the broad range of topics social psychology has to offer. These include how people perceive themselves and others, as well as how people explain their own and others' behavior. We will learn about the role of cognitions and emotions in our social life, how we form attitudes, when attitudes predict behavior, and under which circumstances we conform to the opinion of others. We will explore why and when we form relationships, help other individuals, or cooperate with them. Another important topic will be the nature and consequences of stereotypes and prejudice in situations in which more than one social group is present and salient. Finally, we will learn how the social-psychological concept of social justice contributes to the understanding of the aforementioned topics. Throughout the class, renowned experts will share their knowledge and recent research with you on core topics.
Course Objective
The Social Psychology course is designed to introduce you to essential theories and research in the field of social psychology and to develop your skills as sophisticated learners of psychological science. By the end of this course, you will not only be acquainted with the major theories and topics of social psychology, but also be more adept in critically examining claims people make and be able to apply your social-psychological knowledge to understanding psychological phenomena in the real world. We will practice efficiently summarizing research from social-psychological authors. Renowned guest speakers will give you insights into their latest social-psychological research activities.

Assessment Components
15% Class Participation (see Attendance Policy)
15% Reading Response Papers (ON TIME!)
15% In-class Quizzes (10 min; drop the lowest, double the highest)
20% Midterm Exam (50 min)
35% Final Exam (90 min)

Class Participation. Class participation counts 15% of the total grade; see the NYU Attendance Policy below. You can expect to receive 100% of the score when you participate regularly in discussions, ask questions, complete different individual tasks, and participate actively in group work.

Reading Response Paper. 1 (single-spaced) page max. In this assignment, you are asked to react to the chapter and journal article due for the upcoming class. In these reading response papers, you can improve or master your ability to critically evaluate research or systematically interconnect material previously covered in the course with current research studies.

1. The response paper should start with a brief summary of the relevant passage in the chapter or article.
2. Which finding do you find most fascinating, intriguing, or perplexing?
3. Write about the way the result has been obtained.
4. Put yourself in the shoes of a reviewer. Constructively critique the finding and answer questions like “What are the author’s presumptions and theses? [Why] Is the finding seminal or important? What are strengths and weaknesses? How does it relate to previous findings? Do the findings hold only for a particular group of people or culture or are they generalizable?”
5. Formulate a precise and apt example from “real life” that further illustrates or contradicts the finding. You can reflect on a personal or vicarious experience and explain how the experience relates to the reading. In this way, the reading response paper is more than a summary of what you have read.
6. Identify what research step you would like to see next.
7. If you wish, draw a connection to another topic previously covered in class.
8. Formulate a question that you would like to discuss with the class.

Be prepared to present the gist of your reading response in the classroom (5 min).
I strongly encourage working in groups to discuss your response papers (and the course material generally to prepare for exams). However, you should write and hand in your own response papers separately.

All response papers should be typed and handed in via NYU Classes to the instructor by Monday 4pm of the respective week, i.e., two days before the actual class. Work submitted late receives a penalty of 2 points on the 100-point scale for each day it is late. The reading response papers count 15% of the total grade.

**Quizzes.** When there is no reading response due, a short in-class quiz will be given at the beginning of class (10 min duration). The quizzes refer to the essential reading of the respective week. They come in the formats True/False, Fill in the Blank, and Short Answer. Your highest quiz grade will be doubled and your lowest quiz grade will be dropped from your course average, which means you can miss one quiz (and only one quiz) without penalty. If you know in advance that you must miss a quiz for some reason, notify me as soon as possible. The quizzes count 15% of the total grade.

**Exams.** The midterm exam counts as 20% of the total grade (50 min duration). The final exam counts as 35% of the total grade (90 min duration). The midterm and final exam are tests with several formats (Fill in the Blank, Multiple Choice, Short Answer, True/False etc.). They are cumulative, i.e., they will cover all topics (addressed by then). Like the quizzes, the exams include questions about the essential readings, but not about the optional ones. Make-up exams will only be granted in cases where an absence was unavoidable and excused. Reasonable excuses include a serious family emergency (e.g., death) or illness with a doctor's note – please inform me in advance, if possible.

*Failure to submit or fulfill any required component may result in failure of the class, regardless of grades achieved in other assignments.*

**Required Text(s)**

*No need to purchase. Your professor will provide loan copies that you need to return at the end of the semester.*

The book will be complemented by current or classic social psychology articles of peer-reviewed journals or books.

**NYU Classes** has most materials for this class. You can access Classes through your NYU Home web site. On NYU Classes you will have access to:

1. The class syllabus (i.e., this document), as a pdf-document, under “Syllabus”.
2. The PowerPoint version of each lecture, under “Resources”.
3. Essential (other than the book) and most optional readings, as pdf-files under “Resources”.
4. Announcements about the course, as needed.
5. Various other resources.
6. Your grades on papers and exams.
7. Anything else we discover we want to use it for.

NYU Berlin Library Catalogue or follow the link on NYU Berlin’s website (Academics/Facilities & Services).

Internet Research Guidelines

The Web for Research: Generally, “information” available on the web is not more reliable than “information” in The National Enquirer. You have to know something about the source’s reliability. Part of learning to be a critical thinker is learning to tell the difference between reliable and unreliable sources. Some sources, such as scholarly references accessed through PsycInfo, a database on the Bobst Library website, or through Google Scholar can be assessed as reliable. Others, like Wikipedia, are adequate if you really do not care if all the information provided is accurate, but you just want to know something about the topic. The information retrieved from Wikipedia is often right but sometimes wrong. So do not use Wikipedia for research for this course.

W.W. Norton (the textbook publisher) Websites have several useful features. is a free website with review materials, quizzes, and video podcasts for each chapter. There are links to current news items and book reviews, and other material designed to connect the chapter materials to things of interest. We encourage you to use this stuff, because it will consolidate your learning and raise interesting questions.

You can also find this textbook online as an e-book, at about a third of the price!

Additional Required Equipment

n/a
TIME TABLE: SESSIONS AND TOPICS, QUIZZES, READINGS

RR indicates that a reading response is due
Q indicates that a quiz will be given at the beginning of class

Session 1 – Wed, 05 Sep 2018: Introduction to Social Psychology
Syllabus, classroom culture (feedback, discussions), introducing ourselves and social psychology.

Session 2 – Wed, 12 Sep 2018: Introduction to Social Psychology II / Methods of Social Psychology I (Q)
Why research? How to conduct research with different research designs?

Essential Reading:
Ch. 1 (An Invitation to Social Psychology)
Ch. 2 (The Methods of Social Psychology)


Optional Reading:


Session 3 – Wed, 19 Sep 2018: Methods of Social Psychology II
Developing and presenting your own research hypothesis (incl. operationalization) in groups.

Session 4 – Wed, 26 Sep 2018: The Social Self (RR)
How do we see ourselves? How is what we think about ourselves related to others in our social environment?

Essential Reading:
Ch. 3 (The Social Self)

**Optional Reading:**

**Wednesday, 03 October 2018 – Public Holiday (no class)**

**Session 5 – Friday, 05 Oct 2018 (Make-Up Day) – Social Cognition (Q)**
How do we think about others and the social world around us? And how do we arrive at judgments that help us interpret the past, understand the present, and predict the future?

**Essential Reading:**
Ch. 4 (Social Cognition)


**Optional Reading:**

**Video of the Nobel Prize Lecture.**

**Session 6 – Wed, 10 Oct 2018 – Emotion (RR)**
Are emotions universal? What are basic emotions? How do they affect our social relations (and vice versa)? What is the nature of happiness?

**Attendance of guest speaker (Dr. Axel Burger, University of Mannheim, Germany)**

**Essential Reading:**
Ch. 6 (Emotion)

Optional Reading:


Session 7 – Wed, 17 Oct 2018 – Midterm Exam and Preview Attitudes and Persuasion

Oct 20 – Oct 28 2018: Fall Break / No Class

Session 8 – Wed, 31 Oct 2018 – Attitudes and Persuasion (Q)
What are attitudes? How do we form attitudes? Is it possible to measure attitudes? How are we persuaded and how can we persuade others? How can we resist persuasion?

Essential Reading:
Ch. 8 (Persuasion)


Optional Reading:


Session 9 – Wed, 7 Nov 2018 – Attitudes and Behavior (RR)
Do attitudes predict behavior? How do we deal with inconsistencies between different attitudes or between attitudes and behavior?

Essential Reading:
Ch. 7 (Attitudes, Behavior, and Rationalization)

Optional Reading:


Session 10 – Wed, 14 Nov 2018 – Social Influence (Q)
What is social influence? Are there different forms of social influence? What is the function of conformity? Under which circumstances are we most likely to obey the commands of an authority?

Essential Reading:
Ch. 9 (Social Influence)


Optional Reading:


Session 11 – Wed, 21 Nov 2018 – Relationships and Attraction (RR)
Why are relationships so important to us? What do we find attractive in others? How do we become attached to others? What is love?

Essential Reading:
Ch. 10 (Relationships and Attraction)


Optional Reading:

Session 12 – Wed, 28 Nov 2018 – Altruism and Cooperation (Q)

When and why do we help? What are the benefits of helping? Are there negative consequences of helping? When and why do we cooperate with others?

Attendance of guest speaker (Dr. Claudia Sassenrath, Ulm University, Germany)

Essential Reading:
Ch. 14 (Altruism and Cooperation)


Optional Reading:

Session 13 – Wed, 5 Dec 2018 – Stereotypes, Prejudice, and Intergroup Relations (RR)

What is modern racism? How can we explain persistent stereotypes towards minorities? How can stereotype, prejudice and discrimination be measured? Can it be changed?

Essential Reading:
Ch. 11 (Stereotypes, Prejudice, and Intergroup Relations)


Optional Activity:
Go to Understanding Prejudice and check out the videos, reading, etc. on major kinds of prejudice.

STUDENT EVALUATION

Session 14 – Wed, 12 Dec 2018 – Social Justice (Q)

How do we define justice? Why and when do we care about justice? How do we think about and respond to an experienced or observed injustice? How does a concern with justice manifest itself in our lives?

Essential Reading:

Optional Reading:


Session 15 – Wed, 19 Dec 2018 – Final Exam
After: Wrap up – What did we learn?

Classroom Etiquette
Please turn off your mobile phone during class. Do not forget to turn on your mobile phone after class. Also, laptops are not generally required. If we will work with laptops, I will make an announcement.
Lively, well-informed classroom discussions are an essential means to gain a deeper, more complex and applied understanding of the learning material. Diverging positions in discussions are vital for scientific progress – respectfully responding to each other, as well. Kant’s [categorical imperative](#) should be the guideline.

Suggested Co-Curricular Activities
n/a

Your Instructor
Bianca von Wurzbach studied Social Sciences at the University of Mannheim, Germany, and the University of Melbourne, Australia. After obtaining her diploma, she taught different courses in social psychology at the University of Mannheim. During her doctoral training, she worked as a visiting scholar in the Social Justice Lab of the Department of Psychology at Brock University, St. Catharines, Canada. In June 2018, she received her doctoral degree in Psychology at the University of Mannheim.
In her research, Bianca von Wurzbach investigates effects of threatening so called just-world beliefs on thinking, feeling, and behavior. In another research venue on animal equality, Bianca von Wurzbach uncovers effects of species-specific system justification on the attitude regarding disenchantment.
Academic Policies

Assessment Expectations
Grade A: The student makes excellent use of empirical and theoretical material and offers well-structured arguments in their work. The student writes comprehensive essays/answers to exam questions and their work shows strong evidence of critical thought and extensive reading.

Grade B: The candidate shows a good understanding of the problem and has demonstrated the ability to formulate and execute a coherent research strategy.

Grade C: The work is acceptable and shows a basic grasp of the research problem. However, the work fails to organize findings coherently and is in need of improvement.

Grade D: The work passes because some relevant points are made. However, there may be a problem of poor definition, lack of critical awareness, poor research.

Grade F: The work shows that the research problem is not understood; there is little or no critical awareness and the research is clearly negligible.

Grade Conversion
Your lecturer may use one of the following scales of numerical equivalents to letter grades:

A = 94-100 or 4.0
A- = 90-93 or 3.7
B+ = 87-89 or 3.3
B = 84-86 or 3.0
B- = 80-83 or 2.7
C+ = 77-79 or 2.3
C = 74-76 or 2.0
C- = 70-73 or 1.7
D+ = 67-69 or 1.3
D = 65-66 or 1.0
F = below 65 or 0

Attendance Policy
Participation in all classes is essential for your academic success, especially in courses that meet only once per week. Your attendance in both content and language courses is required and will be checked at each class meeting. As soon as it becomes clear that you cannot attend a class, you must inform your professor by e-mail immediately (i.e. before the start of your class). Absences are only excused if they are due to illness, religious observance or emergencies. Your professor or NYU Berlin's administration may ask you to present a doctor's note or an exceptional permission from NYU Berlin's Director or Wellness Counselor as proof. Emergencies or other exceptional circumstances must be presented to the Director. Doctor's notes need to be submitted to the Academics Office, who will inform your professors. Doctor's notes need to be from a local doctor and carry a signature and a stamp. If you want the reasons for your absence to be treated confidentially, please approach NYU Berlin's Director or Wellness Counselor.
Unexcused absences affect students’ grades: In content courses each unexcused absence (equaling one week's worth of classes) leads to a deduction of 2% of the overall grade and may negatively affect your class participation grade. In German Language classes two or three (consecutive or non-consecutive) unexcused absences (equaling one week's worth of classes) lead to a 2% deduction of the overall grade. Three unexcused absences in one content course and five unexcused absences in your German language course may lead to a Fail in that course. Being more than 15 minutes late counts as an unexcused absence. Furthermore, your professor is entitled to deduct points for frequent late arrival or late arrival back from in-class breaks. Please note that for classes involving a field trip, transportation difficulties are never grounds for an excused absence. It is the student's responsibility to arrive in time at the announced meeting point.

Exams, tests, quizzes, deadlines, and oral presentations that are missed due to illness always require a doctor's note as documentation. It is the student's responsibility to produce this doctor's note and submit it to the Academics Office; until this doctor's note is produced the missed assessment is graded with an F and no make-up assessment is scheduled. In content classes, an F in one assignment may lead to failure of the entire class.

Regardless of whether an absence is excused or not, it is the student's responsibility to catch up with the work that was missed.

**Attendance Rules on Religious Holidays**
Members of any religious group may, without penalty, excuse themselves from classes when required in compliance with their religious obligations. Students who anticipate being absent due to religious observance should notify their lecturer AND NYU Berlin's Academics Office in writing via e-mail one week in advance. If examinations or assignment deadlines are scheduled on the day the student will be absent, the Academics Office will schedule a make-up examination or extend the deadline for assignments. Please note that an absence is only excused for the holiday but not for any days of travel that may come before and/or after the holiday. See also [University Calendar Policy on Religious Holidays](#).

**Late Submission of Work**
(1) Written work due in class must be submitted during the class time to the professor.
(2) Late work should be submitted in person to the lecturer or to the Academics Office, who will write on the essay or other work the date and time of submission, in the presence of the student. Another member of the administrative staff may also personally accept the work and will write the date and time of submission on the work, as above.
(3) Work submitted late receives a penalty of 2 points on the 100 point scale for each day it is late (excluding weekends and public or religious holidays), unless an extension has been approved (with a doctor's note or by approval of NYU Berlin's administration), in which case the 2 points per day deductions start counting from the day the extended deadline has passed.
(4) Without an approved extension, written work submitted more than 5 days (excluding weekends and public or religious holidays) following the submission date receives an F.
(5) End of semester essays must be submitted on time.
(6) Students who are late for a written exam have no automatic right to take extra time or to write the exam on another day.
(7) Please remember that university computers do not keep your essays - you must save them elsewhere. Having lost parts of your essay on the university computer is no excuse for a late submission.

Provisions for Students with Disabilities
Academic accommodations are available for students with documented disabilities. Please contact the Moses Center for Students with Disabilities at 212-998-4980 or see their website for further information.

Plagiarism Policy
The presentation of another person’s words, ideas, judgment, images or data as though they were your own, whether intentionally or unintentionally, constitutes an act of plagiarism. Proper referencing of your sources avoids plagiarism (see as one possible help the NYU library guide to referencing styles.

NYU Berlin takes plagiarism very seriously; penalties follow and may exceed those set out by your home school. Your lecturer may ask you to sign a declaration of authorship form.

It is also an offense to submit work for assignments from two different courses that is substantially the same (be it oral presentations or written work). If there is an overlap of the subject of your assignment with one that you produced for another course (either in the current or any previous semester), you MUST inform your professor.

For a summary of NYU Global's academic policies.