

**PSYCHOLOGY 2304:1 INTRODUCTION TO SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY
SPRING - 2015**

INSTRUCTOR:

Dr. James W. Downing
LH 208B, 837-8163(until 2/13/15)
FH 108, 837-8368 (from 2/16/15 until semester
ends)
Office Hours are by appointment.

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PREREQUISITE:

Enrollment in this course requires successful
completion of Introduction to Psychology or
consent of the instructor.

CLASS MEETINGS:

TR, 2:00 p.m.-3:15 p.m.
LH 300

REQUIRED TEXTS:

Aronson, E. (2012). The social animal (11th ed.).
New York: Worth Publishers/W.H. Freeman.

Memo to: Students in PSY 2304:1, Sul Ross State University

From: Jay Downing

This class has a simple title, "Introduction to Social Psychology." What a blasé title for such a potentially interesting course. Here is a concise definition of social psychology as given by Shaver (1987), "social psychology is the scientific study of the personal and situational factors that affect individual social behavior." This definition is helpful to me because we are focusing on more than mere everyday attempts at understanding human social behavior. We are going to be using the scientific method to study social phenomena. This might sound unimportant, maybe even boring or a bit frightening at first glance, but it is critical to helping us distinguish reality from mere wishful thinking and speculation. We can also learn that the scientific method is much more than seemingly artificial laboratory observation.

Fortunately, the title of the course and the definition of social psychology used above imply a chance to do anything we wish that will add significantly to our own learning about social psychology. It gives an opportunity for each of us to read about and think about such things as these: defining social psychology, conformity, propaganda and persuasion, social cognition, self-justification, aggression, prejudice, liking and loving others, communicating effectively, social psychology as a science, and the like. This is only a partial list based on the primary text for the course but it gives a notion of the broad range in which each can develop her or his own curriculum.

Here are some of my own thoughts for the course thus far. All of my plans are subject to change if you wish, within the limits of my own schedule and yours.

The First Meeting, Tuesday 1/20, 2:00 p.m. -3:15 p.m.

This should be a long enough session to enable us to get acquainted, to consider plans for the remainder of the course, and to go over the reading list. I want to let you know my expectations and hopes for the course and I want to hear your hopes and plans for the semester as well.

I would also like to use this time to draw out your own notions of other social psychological issues which may be of even greater concern to you than those previously mentioned. For example, I have said nothing about social psychology in education, the ways in which social psychology guides the development of a community (for good or bad), or how our attitudes are formed and influence or are influenced by, our behavior, or the social psychology of conflict and conflict resolution.

Reading List

The Aronson text is an enjoyable examination of many of the different areas of study that make up social psychology. Each chapter introduces you to the state of the research in the different fields that constitute social psychology. It is a good place to begin examining the heart of social psychology. This will be the base text for the course and I imagine the basis for your questions and our discussion and activities each time we meet in class.

Each of the chapters in our main text is further illustrated by actual articles that take findings to a new level of detail. I hope you will use the text and reading list I describe below to gain a new appreciation for the way to generate the knowledge that lets us make the statements about the social phenomena that impact our daily lives. It is critical in my view that you begin to think about psychology more deeply in this course. Instead of merely reading paragraph summaries of important findings you will gain skills in reading the actual nuts and bolts work that makes up research in social psychology. I think you will find it very useful to develop these skills as they will transfer to other sub-fields of psychology as well. Given the importance of knowing where and how social psychologists know what they know, we will read and discuss many of these articles, as indicated in your schedule for the course.

I have tried to prepare a broad gauge reading list of topics in social psychology. The list includes a wide range of writings from different theoretical perspectives---social-personality psychology, consistency theories, and social-cognitive theories. Because of my own interests I am sure the list is slanted in a social-cognitive direction, but I would be happy to have suggestions which would give it wider range.

The list represents a rich storehouse from which you may draw the kinds of information

that has the most meaning to you. You may also want to go well beyond this list into other areas of social psychology that have special interest to you. If you have questions on where to start in investigating your area of interest in social psychology, I will be glad to help you get started.

I will comment in our first course meetings on each reference on the list about which I have personal knowledge. This should help you choose the points where you want to start your own reading and learning. It is important that you develop the ability to plan your course of study by identifying areas of social psychology of interest to you.

Requirements

I want each of you to know that I have set up requirements for myself that I see as being associated with your learning of the academic material and that also allow individual personal development to occur. I have several goals for myself as the professor of this course.

First, I will strive to give the students access to myself as a person, to my expertise in the field, and to my experience as a social psychologist.

Second, I will be as prepared as I can be to suggest experiences (reading materials, research projects, films to observe and study, demonstrations to attempt, practices to apply, etc.) that students might not otherwise think of or be aware of, with the goal of increasing the learning options available to them.

Third, I will be prepared to accept each student's autonomy and freedom, which includes the freedom to succeed and to fail. Fourth, I will be prepared to give each learner honest feedback, to the best of my ability as a professor and a person, on each of the following dimensions:

1. ability to conceptualize theories and hypotheses in social psychology,
2. demonstrated skill in understanding research in social psychology,
3. effective oral and written communication abilities,
4. innovation in thinking about topics in social psychology,
5. insight in terms of self-understanding,
6. ability to engage in functional and self-empowering interpersonal communication, and
7. my personal judgment as to your progress and growth, both intellectually and interpersonally.

Please note that I am prepared to give feedback in these areas if a student desires it. During the first class days we can discuss these issues with the goal that it will lead to greater understanding on your part of what you wish to accomplish in the course.

A passing grade in the course will not be turned in until all of the following requirements have been fulfilled.

There are several aspects of the course which will be required for you as the student. These are as follows:

First, I wish to have a list of the readings you have done for the course turned in at the

beginning of class on Tuesday, February 10. I want to have the updated list turned in again at the end of the course. In the lists you will write entries that indicate the way you have read the selection. For example, you might list a book and state "Chapters 3 and 6 were read thoroughly." You might list another book and state "Skimmed the book and found it was over my head." You might list another book and say, "I got so much out of this book that I read it twice and made careful notes on Chapters 5 through 12." You might state, "I was repelled by the whole point of view and only read enough to become convinced that I was disgusted with the author." In other words, **what is wanted is an honest account of what you have read and the depth to which you have read the material you covered.** The books and articles do not necessarily have to be on the reading list or from either of the required texts. **I do expect you to comment on each of the chapters in the base text by Aronson and the articles in the Readings About the Social Animal text we choose to cover.** If you find texts or articles that apply to social psychology please let me know about them so I can include them on the reading list. I hope you will feel engaged with the field and read a great deal for the course.

The **second requirement** is that you write a paper (I call it the personal change paper) which may be as brief or as lengthy as you wish about your own ideas about the most significant areas of social psychology to you and the ways those ideas have changed or not changed as a result of this course. In this paper use the space to show me what you have learned both about the field and yourself because of your efforts in the course. In the past this paper has generally been five to seven pages in length, not including the title page and references.

A **third requirement** is that you write one reaction report every week based on any readings, any experience, or any discussion you may have had. This report can be as long or as short as you desire. It should, however, be limited to your reactions, by this I mean your feelings. I want you to feel as free as possible in these reports in expressing your feelings about anything you want to write about, whether or not it has anything to do with the course. These reaction reports will be submitted via Blackboard. Your first reaction report should be submitted by the beginning of class on Thursday, January 29. Subsequent reaction reports are due at the beginning of class on February 5, 12, 19, & 26, March 5, 12, & 26, & April 2, 9, 16, & 23.

The **fourth requirement** is to be your personal reaction to the course as a whole. I would like this turned in to me in a sealed envelope with your name on the outside. You are at liberty, however, to mark on it, "Please do not open until the final grades have been turned in." If you mark the envelope in this fashion, I assure you I will honor your request.

In this reaction I would like you to state very honestly what the course has meant to you, both positively and negatively. I would like any criticisms you have to make of the course and suggestions of ways in which it might be improved. This in short is your opportunity to evaluate the course, the instructor, and the manner in which the course has been carried out. It will in no case have any influence on your final grade but if you are fearful that it might have such an influence please mark your envelope as suggested, and I will not open it until all the grades have been turned in.

The **fifth requirement** is that you attend every class session fully prepared to participate

in the course as it progresses.

The **sixth requirement** I have is your attendance and participation in class on a daily basis. I often find that people miss class when they are feeling bad about what happens in class on a day to day basis. Please feel free to express both your joys and frustrations to me as the class progresses. If you merely stop coming to class, you have missed a chance to learn and denied me a chance to hear your concerns about the direction of the course. We are all participants in this course and if you fail to come to class, your voice will not be heard as we discuss and learn from one another. I want you to feel welcome and to realize I want to hear your ideas about the things you read and learn about in the course. All that being said, attendance is very important in this class. I reserve the right to drop a student from the class with a failing grade if he or she misses six class days.

Additional requirements will on occasion come up during the class. These requirements will be described as we encounter them, given our development as a class and as individuals.

Finally, failure to fully complete any of the requirements will result in a failing grade being assigned for the course.

Please note: Every member of the class is assured of a passing grade if the basic requirements listed here are completed fully and on time. Whether the student obtains a “C,” “B,” or “A” depends upon his or her achievement on an objective examination which will be based on the academic material covered in the course. This exam may consist of questions in a multiple choice, true-false, short answer, essay or alternate format and will be given on Tuesday, May 12, from 12:30 p.m. to 2:30 p.m. in LH 300.

The final letter grade assigned in the course does not represent a measure of achievement in the realization of any personal values other than knowledge of specific factual information. The most important self-evaluations will have to be made by you some time in the future, perhaps months from the end of the class.

I have made it a point to emphasize one rule concerning personal communication technology. Here it is:

Turn off all electronic equipment before you enter the classroom. This means cell phones, Ipads, etc. I want to be able to count on your full attention during our time together as much as I hope you count on mine.

TENTATIVE TOPIC SCHEDULE FOR PSYCHOLOGY 2304

<u>DATE</u>	<u>WEEK</u>	<u>TOPIC</u>	<u>BASE TEXT READINGS</u>
1/20 1/22	1	Introduction, Course Overview, & Conversation What is Social Psychology?	The Social Animal, Chp. 1 & Chp. 9 & Readings 1 & 2 from RATSA (Readings About the Social Animal)
1/27 1/29	2	What is Social Psychology? What is Social Psychology?	The Social Animal, Chp. 1 & Chp. 9 & Readings 1 & 2 from RATSA
2/3 2/5	3	Conformity Conformity	The Social Animal, Chp. 2 The Social Animal, Chp. 2
2/10 2/12	4	Conformity Conformity	The Social Animal, Chp. 2 The Social Animal, Chp. 2 —Reading 7 from RATSA
2/17 2/19	5	Mass Communication, Propaganda, and Persuasion Mass Communication, Propaganda, and Persuasion	The Social Animal, Chp. 3 The Social Animal, Chp. 3 —Reading 9 from RATSA
2/24 2/26	6	Mass Communication, Propaganda, and Persuasion Mass Communication, Propaganda, and Persuasion	The Social Animal, Chp. 3 The Social Animal, Chp. 3 —Reading 10 from RATSA
3/3 3/5	7	Social Cognition Social Cognition	The Social Animal, Chp. 4 The Social Animal, Chp. 4 —Reading 15 from RATSA
3/10 3/12	8	Social Cognition Self-Justification	The Social Animal, Chp. 4 The Social Animal, Chp. 5
3/17 3/19	9	WELL-DESERVED VACATION FOR ALL A WELL-DESERVED VACATION FOR ALL	
3/24 3/26	10	Self-Justification Self-Justification	The Social Animal, Chp. 5 —Reading 18 from RATSA The Social Animal, Chp. 5
3/31 4/2	11	Self-Justification Human Aggression	The Social Animal, Chp. 5 The Social Animal, Chp. 6

<u>DATE</u>	<u>WEEK</u>	<u>TOPIC</u>	<u>BASE TEXT READINGS</u>
4/7	12	Human Aggression	The Social Animal, Chp. 6 —Reading 24 from RATSA
4/9		Human Aggression	The Social Animal, Chp. 6
4/14	13	Prejudice	The Social Animal, Chp. 7
4/16		Prejudice	The Social Animal, Chp. 7 —Reading 29 from RATSA
4/21	14	Prejudice	The Social Animal, Chp. 7 —Reading 32 from RATSA
4/23		Liking, Loving, and Interpersonal Sensitivity	The Social Animal, Chp. 8 —Reading 37 from RATSA
4/28	15	Liking, Loving, and	The Social Animal, Chp. 8
4/30		Interpersonal Sensitivity and Final Conversation	—Reading 39 from RATSA
5/5		Final Conversation	
5/12		FINAL EXAM, 12:30 PM - 2:30 PM, LH 300	

Below you will find the Program Learning Objectives (PLO) dealt with in this course. The student learning objectives follow and relate, to a greater or lesser extent, to the PLOs dealt with in the course.

Program Learning Objective (PLO #3)

1. The graduating psychology student will attain a level of competency in the area of social psychology that indicates value has been added over the course of their psychology education.

Student Learning Objectives

Required Task-Reaction Reports:

Goal One: The student will demonstrate the ability to engage in the self-expression of emotions by writing weekly reaction reports. (Affective Domain: Respond)

Goal Two: The student will demonstrate value development by reporting an emotion they experienced by writing about it in the reaction reports. (Affective Domain: Value Development)

Required Task-Reading Log:

Goal Three: The student will write an evaluation of the readings they complete for the course that will be examined both at the mid-term and the end of the semester. (Cognitive Domain: Evaluation)

Goal Four: The student will demonstrate an awareness of their responsibility for their development as a life-long learner by taking personal responsibility for the volume of readings they complete. (Affective Domain: Value Development)

Required Task-Personal Change Paper:

Goal Five: The student will compare and contrast their knowledge of social psychological

principles from the beginning to the end of the course. (Cognitive Domain: Evaluation)

Goal Six: The student will report in the paper how their feelings about themselves, the social environment around them, and their place in it have changed because of the course. (Affective Domain: Value)

SPECIAL NOTATION FOR EDUCATION STUDENTS:

I know that some education students may take this course. This course addresses some of the objectives of the TExES Exam for the subject area of social science, which includes a psychology portion. Specifically, this course may address the following objectives, among others.

Domain III

Geography, Culture, and the Behavioral and Social Sciences

Competency 13 (Social, Anthropological, and Psychological Concepts and Processes)

The teacher applies sociological, anthropological, and psychological concepts and processes to understand cultural formation and change, intergroup relations, and individual development.

- Demonstrates knowledge of the history and theoretical foundations of psychology.
- Demonstrates knowledge of the behavioral, social, cognitive, and personality perspectives of human learning.
- Understands basic psychological principles including those related to motivation, sensation and perception, personality, relationships between biology and behavior, and relationships between the self and others.

The interested student is informed that for full information concerning the TExES exam in education concerning psychology as a part of the social sciences, they should contact the SRSU Education Department for materials concerning test preparation and administration. It is the student's responsibility to inform the instructor of this course if he or she is a candidate for the exam. If so, the instructor can guide them to resources that will assist with their exam preparation.