

## **Syllabus**

Current Topics in Social Psychology—The Self in Social Psychology (PSYD15H3)

Dr. Michael Inzlicht

Fall 2006

Thursday 3:00-5:00 M262

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Office Hours: Mondays 12:00 – 1:00

### **Course Description**

In this senior seminar we will explore the topic of the self from an experimental social-psychological perspective. In other words, we'll be concerned with experimental research related to the self, and how it may help us to understand fundamental processes of the "hyphenated self:" self-knowledge, self-esteem, and self-regulation, for example. Senior seminars in social psychology are designed to explore a topic in social psychology in some depth while meeting a writing component. Thus, this course requires that you conduct library research, write a (comprehensive) final paper, and present your paper visually to seminar members.

### **Required Text**

- Baumeister, R. F. (1999). The Self in Social Psychology. Philadelphia, PA: Psychology Press. Available at bookstore.
- Class Reader. The reader will contain required articles. Available at bookstore.

### **Course Structure**

This course is designed to not only introduce you to much of the important theory and research in the social psychology of the self, but also to develop your skills as critical thinkers and as sophisticated consumers of science; this will help you regardless of what you pursue in your future. I've designed this course to maximize meaningful learning and to minimize the memorize-and-regurgitate kind of style that we all get enough of in undergraduate courses. Lecturing will be minimal. On most days, I will try to limit my own talking to a fairly brief orientation to each day's topic and to guiding discussions where necessary. The course will mainly consist of student-led discussions aimed at fostering meaningful (as opposed to superficial) understanding of the material. The success of this seminar depends on everyone's preparation, and everyone's preparation will depend on carefully completing the readings and weekly reaction papers.

### **Readings**

The number of readings will vary per week and will sometimes include assigned chapters in the text plus additional articles from your course reader. Other weeks will focus solely on additional articles from the course reader. Please remember that these readings are mandatory.

### **Intranet**

I will use the intranet to communicate with you (i.e. to make announcements) and so that you can each communicate with one another. Anything I hand-out in class will also be posted on the intranet; so the syllabus, class schedule and reading list are all there. The intranet is also the place you go to post your discussion questions when you are leading discussion; this will be done on the discussion board. I recommend getting quickly acquainted with the intranet and checking it on a regular basis throughout the semester for announcements and messages. You do not need to apply for intranet access. If you are registered, you will automatically see this class when you log-on to the intranet. To

access the intranet, log onto <https://intranet.utoronto.ca/home.php?login=1>, enter your account name and password, and select Courses.

### **Discussion Forum**

To help foster communication between each of you, I've created a discussion forum on the intranet. This is where you post your discussion questions when it is your week to lead discussion. These discussion questions need to be posted by no later than midnight Wednesday. The forum should also be the first place you go when you have questions about course material. Please feel free to use this space as our virtual classroom. So, post clarification questions! These posts are valuable because they may echo many people's concerns. Remember, however, to respond to questions as well as this will enhance the classroom experience and create a self-sustaining internet community.

### **Reaction Papers**

To foster thoughtful, exciting, and worthwhile discussion, I will ask that you prepare reaction papers to the weekly readings. This assignment is designed to get you *thinking* about the readings, while ensuring that everyone has something to contribute during class discussion. You have some freedom in deciding how to complete this assignment. Spend some time highlighting the main points of the readings, but most of your paper should do other things: e.g., connect these main points, critique a study or its findings (or the authors' interpretation of the findings), consider/discuss/develop new ideas, and/or propose a new study. Convince me that you really understand the material! I encourage you to bring in *relevant* material from other courses. Papers should be **turned in at the start of class**, be between one to two double-spaced pages (500 words max), follow APA style, and will be graded on a scale ranging from 5 (excellent) to 0 (fail). You are required to turn in **five** reaction papers, though what weeks you chose are up to you. The one exception: you may **not** turn in a paper for weeks that you lead class discussion (see below). Also, you may turn in more than five reaction papers, and only the best six will count toward your grade. Reaction papers will constitute 25% of your final grade.

### **Class Participation and Attendance**

In a seminar-style class, attendance is expected and participation is essential. Your learning and grade depends on it! Your participation grade will depend on *quality* as well as quantity of participation. I will keep a record of participation throughout the term. Signs of good participation includes: Attendance, punctuality, eagerness to participate, showing respect to others' contributions, facilitating discussion, paying careful attention to classmates' presentations, and offering constructive feedback, questions, and comments. Note that I do not want class discussions monopolized by the same 3 or 4 people. That means that people should make an effort to talk enough, but not too much. Participation is worth 10% of your grade and attendance, 5%.

### **Discussion Leaders**

Another way we will cultivate lively discussion is to have different discussion leaders for a number of classes. On five specified weeks (noted by \*\* in schedule), a group of five to six students will "lead" the class. Leaders will be responsible for two things in each of these classes: (1) giving oral presentations on the weekly readings and (2) leading discussion on the readings. Given the size of the groups, these two tasks should be broken down so that each group member shows that they were actively involved with their group and can demonstrate mastery of the material. The discussion leaders will come into class prepared to lead and guide the discussion so that the discussion is fluid, lively, and interesting for all the students in the class. I encourage all leaders to be creative by incorporating class activities (e.g. breaking class into small groups to discuss different perspectives of the readings) and multimedia into their discussions. Though not required, familiarity with other relevant readings (including those found in the text) will help you develop "expertise" on your topic. Leaders also should prepare questions to help guide class discussion. Post questions on the discussion board by no later than midnight Wednesday. This will allow everyone time to mull over the issues your questions raise. Everyone must lead discussion once. I encourage you to seek advice

before posting questions or leading class. Please note that some "leader weeks" will contain *two* longer required readings, while others will contain *one* longer reading and *two* shorter readings. In the end, each week contains about the same number of pages. Together your questions and leadership will constitute 15% of your grade.

### **Research Proposal and Poster Presentation**

You will form into groups of two and each group will submit an 8-10 pages, typed, double-spaced experimental research proposal in which you review a body of literature, describe research hypotheses which extend this literature, and propose a study which will test these hypotheses. Which literature you focus on is up to you, though it must relate to the self (and from a social psychological perspective). You should consult with me when choosing your topic, and as your paper progresses. I must approve all paper topics. This is just a proposal; no data needs to be collected. Details of the assignment will be specified later, but you should start thinking about the topic as early in the semester as possible.

This paper is due during Finals Week. I encourage you to use this paper as an opportunity to apply the social psychological methods that you will learn to a topic in psychology about which you care deeply. **The term paper must be received by no later than 4:30pm on Monday December 11th.** On the last day of class, you will also give a formal poster presentation of your research, much in the style of a poster presentation at a professional conference.

### **Important Dates**

To make sure you are making good progress on your project, we will devote parts of three classes to in-class group discussions of your hypotheses and paper ideas (Oct 5th), project outlines (Nov 2nd), and drafts of your literature review (Nov 23rd). Although not mandatory, I encourage you to turn in brief descriptions of your paper idea by Oct 5th, a refined research idea with a typed reference list (10 references, minimum) by Nov 2nd, and a rough draft of your literature review by Nov 23rd. Final versions of your paper should contain at least 15 references, conform to APA style, and must be turned in by Dec 11th. Papers will constitute 35% of your final grade and posters, 10%. More details about this assignment will be discussed in class.

### **Guidelines for Writing Assignments:**

- Use APA style
- All works that are referred to (directly or otherwise) must be cited in the text, and in a reference page at the end of your work.
- Omit needless words. Quoting Strunk and White (1957):

"Vigorous writing is concise. A sentence should contain no unnecessary words, a paragraph no unnecessary sentences, for the same reason that a drawing should have no unnecessary lines and a machine no unnecessary parts. This requires not that the writer make all of her or his sentences short, or that s/he avoid all detail and treat subjects only in outline, but that every word tell."

- Avoid quotes, especially lengthy ones.
- Spelling, grammar, and sentence structure are important and figure into the grading

### **Email Policy**

My policy is to respond to emails within 2 *working* days of receipt. I am available to all my students and encourage you all to visit me during office hours (Mondays 12:00-1:00) even if it's to have a casual chat. However, given my already overflowing inbox, I am less encouraging of email. If you have questions or concerns, always check the course syllabus and intranet site first. If you can't find what you need, get to know your neighbour (get his/her phone number and email) and ask him/her.

You could also try posting a question in the discussion forum. If that doesn't work, come to my office hours or email me.

### **Lateness Policy**

Given that you have a choice of turning in your reaction papers on any of five topic weeks, late reaction papers will not be accepted. Late research proposals (due Dec 11<sup>th</sup>, 4:30pm) will be docked 5% for each day that they're late.

### **Grading Summary**

Reaction papers—25%  
Class Attendance—5%  
Class Participation—10%  
Discussion Leader – 15%  
Research Proposal – 35%  
Poster Presentation – 10%

### **List of Topics and Readings**

Note: Baumeister refers to Textbook and Reader refers to class reader

\*\* Refers to a week with where discussion leaders lead class

#### **Week 1: Sep 14 Introduction, Background, and Basics**

**Readings:** Baumeister: Appendix (Jordan & Zanna, pp. 461-470)

#### **Week 2: Sep 21 The Self: *What is I? What is me?***

**Readings:** Baumeister: Reading 3 (James)  
Reader: Mead (1913)

#### **\*\*Week 3: Sep 28 Self-knowledge: *What am I like?***

**Readings:** Baumeister: Reading 1 (Shrauger & Schoeneman)  
Baumeister: Reading 2 (Taylor & Brown)

#### **Week 4: Oct 5 Self-esteem: *Am I good?***

**Readings:** Reader: Baumeister, Campbell, Krueger, & Vohs (2005)  
Reader: Baccus, Baldwin, & Packer (2004)

\*\*\* Note: Non-mandatory brief descriptions of research topic due this week

#### **\*\*Week 5: Oct 12 Self-esteem Motivation: *Can I feel even better?***

**Readings:** Baumeister: Reading 18 (Steele)  
Reader: Leary (1999)  
Reader: Pelham, Carvallo, & Jones (2005)

**\*\*Week 6: Oct 19      Identity: *Who am I?***

**Readings:**      Reader: Brewer & Gardner (1996)  
Reader: Shih, Pittinsky, & Ambady (1999)  
Reader: Martin & Ruble (2004)

**Week 7: Oct 26      Class to be announced**

**Week 8: Nov 2      Happiness: *Am I content?***

**Readings:**      Reader: Diener & Oishi (2005)  
Reader: Nickerson, Schwarz, Diener, & Kahneman (2003)

*\*\*\* Note: Non-mandatory refined research idea with 10 references due this week*

**\*\*Week 9: Nov 9      Self-regulation: *Can I control myself?***

**Readings:**      Baumeister: Reading 15 (Carver & Scheier)  
Baumeister: Reading 16 (Baumeister, Bratslavsky, Muraven, & Tice)

**\*\*Week 10: Nov 16      Terror Management: *Why am I here?***

**Readings:**      Baumeister: Reading 6 (Greenberg, Solomon, Pyszczynski et al.)  
Reader: Solomon, Greenberg, & Pyszczynski (2000)  
Reader: Cohen, Solomon, Maxfield, Pyszczynski, & Greenberg (2004)

**Week 11: Nov 23      Self and Culture**

**Readings:**      Baumeister: Reading 7 (Markus & Kitayama)  
Reader: Shea (2000)

*\*\*\* Note: Non-mandatory rough draft of literature review due this week*

**Week 12: Nov 30      Poster Presentations**

*\*\*\* Note: Final Papers are due **Dec 11<sup>th</sup>** by no later than 4:30pm!!*