

**Syllabus**  
Current Topics in Social Psychology—The Self in Social Psychology (PSYD15H3)  
Dr. Michael Inzlicht  
Fall 2007  
Mondays 11:00-1:00 MW262

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**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.utsc.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 Sunday. 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. The discussion forum is also the place to participate on-line. If you are shy, and have a hard time speaking up in class, you can also participate virtually by posting commentary, thoughts, and questions on the discussion board. To keep pace with class, however, you need to make sure that you "participate" on-line regularly, at least once per week.

### 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 end 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 choose 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 five 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 include: 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. To make sure I (and you) keep track of your class participation, you should keep a participation log, (i.e. noting what questions you answered or asked, what comments you made, etc.). I will collect these from time to time. Participation is worth 10% of your grade and attendance, 5%. As mentioned above, you also have the option of participating on-line on the discussion board. If you are shy and have a hard time speaking up in class, the discussion board is the place for you to get your participation credits. To earn top marks on-line, remember to post regularly, at least once a week. If you think you are participating enough in class, you don't need to participate on-line.

### **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 two 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 should also prepare questions to help guide class discussion. Post questions on the discussion board by no later than midnight Sunday. 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. 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 **one of the topics covered in class**. You should consult with me when choosing your topic, and as your paper progresses. 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 the last day of class (**December 3, 2007**). 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. 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 and Details**

To make sure you are making good progress on your project, we will devote parts of two classes to in-class group discussions of your hypotheses and paper ideas (Oct 1st) and project outlines (Nov 5th). Although not mandatory, I encourage you to turn in brief descriptions of your paper idea by Oct 5th, and a refined research idea with a typed reference list (10 references, minimum) by Nov 5th. Final versions of your paper should contain at least 10 references, conform to APA style, and must be turned in by Dec 3rd. 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 4:00-5:00) 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 3rd, 5:00pm) will be docked 5% for each day that they are 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 10 Introduction, Background, and Basics**

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

### **Week 2: Sep 17 Self-knowledge: *What am I like?***

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

### **Week 3: Sep 24 The Self: *What is I? What is me?***

**Readings:** Baumeister: Reading 3 (James)  
Baumeister: Reading 4 (Turner)

### **Week 4: Oct 1 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

**Oct 8 Thanksgiving—University Closed**

### **Week 5: Oct 15 Class to be announced**

### **\*\*Week 6: Oct 22 Self-esteem Motivation: *Can I feel even better?***

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

### **\*\*Week 7: Oct 29 The Automatic Self: *Am I conscious of myself?***

**Readings:** Reader: Bargh & Chartrand (1999)  
Reader: Dijksterhuis & Nordgren (2006)  
Reader: Bargh & Williams (2006)

**\*\*Week 8: Nov 5      Self-regulation: *Can I control myself?***

**Readings:** Baumeister: Reading 15 (Carver & Scheier)  
Baumeister: Reading 16 (Baumeister, Bratslavsky, Muraven, & Tice)  
Reader: Shah (2005)

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

**\*\*Week 9: Nov 12      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 10: Nov 19      Self and Culture**

**Readings:** Baumeister: Reading 17 (Markus & Kitayama)  
Reader: Cohen (1998)

**Week 11: Nov 26      Happiness: *Am I content?***

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

**Week 12: Dec 3      Poster Presentations**

*\*\*\* Note: Final Papers are due Dec 3<sup>rd</sup> by no later than 5:00pm!!*

**Course Reader**  
**Current Topics in Social Psychology:**  
**The Self in Social Psychology (PSYD15)**

1. Baumeister, R.F., Campbell, J.D., Krueger, J. I., & Vohs K.D. (2005). Exploding the self-esteem myth. *Scientific American*, 292, 84- 91.
2. Baccus J.R., Baldwin, M.W., & Packer, D.J. (2004). Increasing implicit self-esteem through classical conditioning. *Psychological Science*, 15, 498-502.
3. Leary, M.R. (1999). Making sense of self-esteem. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 8, 32-35.
4. Pelham, B.W., Carvallo, M., & Jones, J.T. (2005). Implicit egotism. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 14, 106-110.
5. Bargh, J., A., & Chartrand, T. L. (1999). The unbearable automaticity of being. *American Psychologist*, 54, 462-479.
6. Dijksterhuis, A., & Nordgren, L. F. (2006). A theory of unconscious thought. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 1, 95-109.
7. Bargh, J. A., & Williams, E. L. (2006). The automaticity of social life. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 15, 1-4.
8. Shah, J. (2005). The automatic pursuit and management of goals. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 14, 10-14.
9. Solomon, S., Greenberg, J., & Pyszczynski, T. (2000). Pride and Prejudice: Fear of death and social behavior. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 9, 200-204.
10. Cohen, F., Solomon, S., Maxfield, M., Pyszczynski, T., & Greenberg, J. (2004). Fatal attraction: The effects of mortality salience on the evaluations of charismatic, task-oriented, and relationship-oriented leaders. *Psychological Science*, 15, 846-851.
11. Cohen, D. (1998). Culture, social organization, and patterns of violence. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 75, 408-419.
12. Diener, E. & Oishi, S. (2005). The nonobvious social psychology of happiness. *Psychological Inquiry*, 16, 162-167.
13. Nickerson, C., Schwarz, N., Diener, E., & Kahneman, D. (2003). Zeroing in on the dark side of the American dream: A closer look at the negative consequences of the goal for financial success. *Psychological Science*, 14, 531-536.