

Course Outline

Psychology D16 *Critical Analysis in Social Psychology*

UTSC
WINTER 2009

Lectures: University of Toronto Scarborough
Wednesdays 7-9 pm; Location: BV361

Course Director: Gabriela Ilie, Ph.D.
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Office hours and location: Wednesdays 5:30-6:30 pm; Office: SW418.

Email contact: For security purposes, and time considerations, student emails will be answered if and only if the subject line contains your name, student number, and course number. Expect a reply within 2 business days.

Course Description:

The development of social psychology is examined both as a discipline (its phenomena, theory, and methods) and as a profession. The Natural and Human Science approaches to phenomena are contrasted. Students are taught to observe the lived-world, choose a social phenomenon of interest to them, and then interview people who describe episodes from their lives in which these phenomena occurred. The students interpret these episodes and develop theories to account for their phenomena before searching for scholarly research on the topic.

The knowledge you gain in this course will help you to learn to think critically about the techniques (both methodological but also theoretical) used to examine issues in social psychology, and the implications drawn from them. In this course you will have to express your thoughts about this and the material presented in both written and verbal form. The following website will help you decide whether this is or not a course for you:

<http://www.utsc.utoronto.ca/%7Etlswweb/instruction/taxonomy.htm>.

Course Evaluation:

Attendance (1 point per class) and Class discussion-debates participation (3 points max per class): 10%
Proposal (1 page) due January 14th, 2009 – 10%
Presentation (schedule will be determined on the first day of class): 35%
Final Paper due April 1st no later than 7 PM. LATE PAPERS WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED. NO EXCEPTIONS WILL BE MADE. Worth 45%

Recommended text: Social Psychology, Second Canadian Edition, Myers & Spencer(2004).
Required text: Analytical Reasoning

Organization of the Course

This is an advanced undergraduate seminar course in which **enthusiastic class participation, coming to class ready to discuss the readings assigned is very important. Participation includes attendance and punctuality (1 point for each class attended) as well facilitating class discussion, paying careful attention to classmates' presentations, offering constructive feedback, questions, and comments, and showing respect for other's contributions. (up to maximum 3 points for each class).** Each class member gets to pick and present a theory they put together of a social phenomenon that interests them, while the others listen and at the end of the presentation they ask questions and raise issues. The purpose of the presentation is to facilitate discussion and provide constructive feedback or comments that the presenter could incorporate in his/her final write up. To create a stimulating, safe, equitable discussion environment, **each participant should try to strike a balance between listening and speaking.** 45% of your course mark will be based on verbal articulation and expression; 55% on written work. This is a course where you need to express yourself in both verbal and written form to be able to do well.

Proposal Instructions (worth 10% of your final mark)

Due: January 14th 2009 in class, before the lecture.

Late proposals will not be accepted for marking.

Missing the first day of class of a mandatory attendance seminar 4th year level course is not acceptable.

This is a 4th year level seminar course. Attendance to all classes is MANDATORY.

(2 pages double spaced)

For this assignment you are required to:

- 1. Choose a social phenomenon that interests you. Be sure to choose a specific topic** (e.g., racial attitudes; victimization; perceived self; deindividuation; attributions; judgment; hindsight bias; prejudice; conformity; discrimination; love; romantic relationships; procrastination; etc.). Very important to keep in mind: pick something that really interests YOU. I had students in the past who got a really good mark on the proposal and later traded their proposal mark for the ability to change their topic as they had "no fire in their belly" to quote one of them, to research the topic nor were they able to connect it to any aspect of their lives. So be sure to **pick something that has personal relevance and interests you.**
- 2. Justify your choice of the phenomenon; explain how it is a social phenomenon** (e.g., perceived self - social psychology is the science of how people think about, influence, and relate to one another; at the centre of it all is the self in a social world). Be sure to go over your Social Psychology textbook if you need a refresher course on your topic.

3. **Explain why the phenomenon you picked interests you.**
4. **Describe how you plan to operationalize (measure) it? How do you define your concept? What are related concepts that are tied in its definition** (e.g. if your concept is LOVE; what is LOVE? Love means many things for many people. What is Love to you? Romantic Love? Passionate Love? Compassionate Love? Something else? What is Romantic Love anyway? If I seem to want to see/or talk to X everyday and I want to know how X thinks, feels and acts in the world, does that mean I am experiencing ROMANTIC LOVE for X? What are the characteristics of the type of Love you want to explore in your study?)
5. **Describe what questions will you be asking the people you will be interviewing (in order to assess your THEORY of the CONCEPT you have selected) and how you plan to organize them. How you are planning to get as much information on this topic as possible from the people you will be interviewing -- while being consistent and without leading them into the answers you will like them to give you. What is the population you will be interviewing?**
6. **Remember: you need to interview at least 12 people!**
7. **You are required to write a 2 page proposal, double spaced. Make sure you clearly state your THEORY and your MODEL.**
8. **Your proposal should be original and show that you thought about the issues you are planning to evaluate. You need a full day to work on this proposal. Don't cut yourself short and don't wait until the last moment to do it.**

Power point presentations (35% of your course mark)

Schedule:

The scheduling will be done on a first come/ first served basis, so be sure to email me asap.

WEEK. No class.

January 28, 2009:
February 4, 2009:
February 11, 2009:
February 18, 2009: READING

February 25, 2009:
March 4, 2009:
March 11, 2009:
March 25, 2009:
April 1, 2009:

Each student is required to give a 20 minutes power point presentation on their topic to the class. Points will be awarded for creativity and uniqueness, where appropriate. Students must describe:

- **their topic, theory and model**
- **what does the topic means to you: the importance and meaning of the topic chosen**
- **why is your topic important; relevance of the topic to us and people in the society; why should we care about this?**
- **explain the topic as a social phenomenon;**
- **how did you operationalize your variable**
- **how did you assess your theory (questions asked and basic results depictions, e.g., graphs)**
- **describe the population you interviewed**
- **describe the process you used to interview people (questionnaires, tapes interviews; video interviews, etc.)**
- **how did you organized your data**

- your interpretation of the results
- were you able to find support for your theory
- limitations and links between it and the three theories discussed in class, where applicable

If you signed in the course after January 7, first day of class you need to contact me a.s.a.p. to book your presentation as only three students may present per day.

Your presentation should be focused on:

- a) Defining the social phenomenon
- b) Why the topic interests you?
- c) Why is the topic important?
- d) What is YOUR theory about it?
- e) What is the model behind it? In other words: What assumptions are YOU making?
- f) How did you assessed your theory? Explain us your rationale behind it.
- g) What are the results of your interviews
- h) Did you find support for your theory?
- i) What are the limitations to your investigation
- j) What are the implications of your results?
- k) Are you aware of your own biases? Tell us about it. What did you learn from this exercise?
- l) How are you planning to trace the topic back to research and conduct your lit review?

Term paper (45% of your course mark) – Due on April 1st, 2009 no later than 7:00 PM

General Instructions:

When doing a research paper, citing your sources is necessary to help you support and develop your position and also to avoid plagiarism (which is when you do not give other people credit for their ideas). Be careful plagiarism can result in a failing paper, failure in the course, and further academic penalties. Please be aware of plagiarism and access UTSC's website on the issue. Your paper will be scrutinized closely and issues of plagiarism will be dealt with according to the University of Toronto's policies and regulations **WITHOUT EXCEPTION**.

- This assignment involves reading at least 10 research articles on the topic you selected and comparing and contrasting this research with the theory you devised and the results you obtained through the interviews you conducted.
- The articles must be from scientific journals (APA journals in social psychology).

- The paper must be typed, double-spaced, with 1" margins, and must follow the APA style and must have appropriate sections (e.g., abstract, introduction, body, conclusion or discussion section).
- Your paper will be graded for both content (were the essays well written, well integrated, how well did they follow the standards and elements of thought, were your arguments logical, did they relate to your theory, psychological interpretation, depth of the critical analysis of the research process) and form (spelling, grammar, punctuation, presentation).
- The paper is due on **April 1, 2009 no later than 7 pm in class**. The paper should be 25 pages in length, double-spaced without counting the abstract, title page, and references. Late papers **WILL NOT** be accepted. **NO EXCEPTIONS WILL BE MADE. Be sure to make or save a copy of your paper (either on paper or on computer disk) as a backup before you submit it to me.**