

Syllabus

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

Dr. Michael Inzlicht

Winter 2010

Mondays 11:00-1:00 MW264

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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, present a (comprehensive) research poster.

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 online through Blackboard (under Course Documents)

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.

Blackboard

I will use Blackboard 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 Blackboard; so the syllabus, class notes, class schedule, and reading list are all there. Blackboard is also the place you go to log-on to and participate in the discussion board. I recommend getting quickly acquainted with Blackboard and checking it on a regular basis throughout the semester for announcements and messages. Also, please make sure to update your Blackboard account so that your correct email address is noted. You do not need to apply for Blackboard access. If you are registered, you will automatically see this class when you log-on to the intranet. To access

Blackboard, log onto <http://www.utoronto.ca/>, scroll to the bottom of the screen and click on the “Portal Login,” on this next page, again, click on to the “Portal Login,” and here enter your UTORid and password, and voila you have access!

Discussion Forum

To help foster communication between each of you, I've created a discussion forum on Blackboard. The forum should 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 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 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 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. 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. 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 2-3 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. Email questions to the class (via Blackboard) by no later than midnight the night before class. 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.

Poster Presentation

You will form into groups of two and each group will prepare a poster presentation, much like something you would present at a professional conference. In this poster, you will 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 ideas progress. I must approve all paper topics. This is just a proposal for a research study; no data needs to be collected. Details of the poster assignment will be specified later, but you should start thinking about the topic as early in the semester as possible.

This poster will be presented on the last day of class (**March 29, 2010**). I encourage you to use this poster as an opportunity to apply the social psychological methods that you will learn to a topic in psychology about which you care deeply.

Progress Reports

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 research ideas (Jan 25) and project outlines (March 22nd). I want you to turn in brief descriptions of your poster idea on Jan 25th, and a refined research idea with a typed reference list (10 references, minimum) by March 22nd. Together, submitting both of these will make up 5% of your grade. Note, I will not be grading these, simply giving you 5 points for handing these progress reports, assuming they're complete.

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.

Grading Summary

Reaction papers—25%

Class Attendance—5%

Class Participation—15%

Discussion Leader—20%

Progress Reports—5%

Poster Presentation—30%

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: Jan 4 **Introduction, Background, and Basics**

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

Week 2: Jan 11 **Self-knowledge: *What am I like?***

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

Week 3: Jan 18 **The Self: *What is I? What is me?***

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

Week 4: Jan 25 **Self-esteem: *Am I good?***

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

*** Note: brief descriptions of research topic due this week. We will discuss these in class.

****Week 5: Feb 1** **Self-esteem Motivation: *Can I feel even better?***

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

****Week 6: Feb 8** **The Automatic Self: *Am I conscious of myself?***

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

Feb 15 **Family Day Holiday—No class**

Week 7: Feb 22 **Class to be announced**

****Week 8: Mar 1 Self-regulation: *Can I control myself?***

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

****Week 9: Mar 8 Terror Management & Meaning: *Why am I here?***

Readings: Baumeister: Reading 6 (Greenberg, Solomon, Pyszynski et al.)
Reader: Proulx & Heine (2008)
Reader: Cohen, Solomon, Maxfield, Pyszczynski, & Greenberg (2004)

****Week 10: Mar 15 Self and Culture**

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

Week 11: Mar 22 Happiness: *Am I content?*

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

**** Note: Refined research idea with 10 references due this week. We will discuss these in class.*

Week 12: Mar 29 Poster Presentations

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. Proulx, T., Heine, S. J. (2008). The case of the transmogrifying experimenter: Affirmation of a moral schema following implicit change detection. *Psychological Science*, 19, 1294-1300.
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.