

**University of Toronto in Scarborough
Department of Psychology**

***Critical Analysis in Social Psychology
(PSY D16)
Fall 2011***

Instructor: Dr. Gabriela Ilie
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Office Hours: 5-6 PM
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Class Time: Tuesdays 3-5PM
Room: AA204

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.

Prerequisite: [PSYC11H3](#) or [PSYC12H3](#) or [[PSYB10H3](#) plus one C-level half-credit in PSY] Exclusion: PSY420H Enrolment Limits: 24 Breadth Requirement: Social & Behavioural Sciences

Course Evaluation:

- A. **Class participation: 10%** (attendance to all classes only secures 2% of your total 10% for participation; the other 8% must come from your actual engagement in the class discussions)
- B. **Proposal** (3 pages double spaced) due Oct 4th, 2011 – **10 %**
- C. **Class Presentation** (schedule will be determined on the first day of class):
30 minutes individual student presentations (**20%**). Your presentation will be based in part, on your interviews but also three research papers relating to your topic of choice. Your presentation should describe the topic, its relevance to social psychology, the goal of your interviews, your method of investigation (e.g. audio interviews, video interviews, etc.), coding (at list three transcribed interviews should be presented), the outcome of the interviews in some structured form, the theory you derived from the interview (at that point in the process) and how it compares with what you found in the literature review. The presentation should promote discussions at the end of the presentation.
- D. To encourage students to provide meaningful, well thought out feedback during the class presentations, and in lieu of a mid-term exam, **5 critical review papers** of the students' in-class presentations, 4 pages double-spaced (each 4%; 4% x 5 papers = **20%**). Students whose last name starts with A to J – will write their critical review based on the first research paper of the three listed readings that week; K – R – will write their review based on the second research paper; and S-Z – will write their review based upon the last research paper of the selected presentation week. Notice that there will be 8 chances to submit critical review papers but you only have to submit 5. You can pick any 5 of the 8 weeks that you prefer (based on your topic preference).

E. Final Paper due (no more than 100 pages, including the transcribed interviews) last day of class November 29th, 2011, worth: **40%**

- This paper will be on the topic chosen by you. The paper is due in the last day of class, *no exceptions will be made*. Papers will not be accepted by electronic submission. Late papers will not be accepted. No exceptions will be made. Papers should meet the required length (no more than 100 pages) to avoid disappointment in length penalties. Referencing should meet APA style formatting (5th edition).

Important note: It is your responsibility to ensure that you meet the prerequisite requirements for this course as listed in the Scarborough course calendar. Your registration *may be cancelled if you are lacking the appropriate prerequisites*.

OUTLINE:

Date	Week	Lecture
Sep 13	1	Introduction <i>Class Presentation – dates selection by students</i>
Sep 20	2	Describing your project – Qualitative Research <i>(it is essential that you attend this lecture if you are planning to take this course)</i>
Sep 27	3	Describing your project – Qualitative Research cont. <i>(it is essential that you attend this lecture if you are planning to take this course)</i> <i>Practice Session</i>
Oct 4	4	Natural and Human Sciences approaches to phenomena contrasted. <i>Readings posted on the Intranet</i> Proposal Due today at 3:00 PM
Oct 11	5	Presentations 3 students. Critical reviews due today at 3:00 PM PDF articles for Weeks 5 – 13 will be posted on the intranet by the Professor.
Oct 18	6	Presentation 2 students: Critical reviews due today at 3:00 PM
Oct 25	7	Presentations 3 students. Critical reviews due today at 3:00 PM
Nov 1	8	Presentations 2 students

Nov 1	8	Presentations 2 students. Critical reviews due today at 3:00 PM
Nov 8	9	Presentations 3 students. Critical reviews due today at 3:00 PM
Nov 15	10	Presentations 2 students. Critical reviews due today at 3:00 PM
Nov 22	11	Presentations 3 students. Critical reviews due today at 3:00 PM
Nov 29	12	Presentations 2 students. Critical reviews due today at 3:00 PM <i>TERM PAPER DUE today at 3:00 PM</i>

Course style:

This is a seminar undergraduate style course. Students will read some of the same materials for the lectures but may or may not get to read the same materials for the major paper depending on their choice of topic. Each student will pick a specific topic related to social psychology. Students must research the topic they selected and choose three papers each for their presentation. Students must conduct student interviews on the topics of their choice using open-ended questions. The interviews should be audio recorded and then transcribed.

The research articles must be APA journals, in Social Psychology (recent articles, and at least one meta analysis article per presentation are highly recommended). When presenting their topic, students must present their own interpretative narrative of the readings in class while the rest of us listen, write down issues or questions worth discussing after the presenters have introduced their interpretation of the issues presented in the readings and the information emerged from their interviews. The purpose of the presentations is to facilitate class discussion around the comparison between Natural and Health Science approaches to phenomena and discuss the importance of qualitative research as a precursor to later quantitative phases of research. An additional reason is to allow students to gain first hand experience in the processes involved in devising a theory and the critical thinking it inevitably occasions. The course is designed to give students a sense of what it is like to engage in deep scientific talk with some breadth and depth.

What constitutes a good presentation? One that stimulates thought, that presents reading materials relevant to the interviews, that is logical and has depth, that encourages class members to share their views and ideas on the subject and that is able to point to the crux of the arguments in the readings in a clear, articulated way. Relevant mini-video clips are allowed during these presentations (if you think they may be useful to you and may help you stimulate thinking in the direction of your topic).

What will help you be successful in this class?

1. Be an Enthusiastic Informed Presenter:
 - a. Remember everybody in class will have to read at least one of the 3 articles you will be presenting, not to mention that they too will have to lead one discussion during the course. From experience, I know that you will have lots of support. As a presenter you are encouraged to look for the essential, critical issues in the papers, and raise them in class. Remember 20% of your course mark is based on this evaluation.
2. Be a Thoughtful Writer. If you have taken PSYC82; courses in reasoning and logic/ or scientific writing; other D level or graduate courses; advanced courses in Social Psychology, e.g. Cross-Cultural Psychology or Emotion – the knowledge you gained in these courses will be helpful along the way.
 - a. Problems writing or presenting? This site may be useful to you:
<http://www.utsc.utoronto.ca/%7Etlswab/>
 - b. Your critical review papers should take a perspective on Popper and Kohn's arguments as they relate to the research article you were asked to review. You may want to describe the implications associated with taking the author's line of reasoning seriously (benefits and pitfalls), or relevant issues you think the author missed in their conclusions or operationalization of the variables selected, or would be helpful to further analyze (remember to explain yourself; don't just state things: explain why that should be so, what is your rationale).
 - c. Please begin your interviews as soon as possible and start writing on your final paper as soon as the sixth week of class. Then add a little bit to it to the write up each week. Leave yourself ample time for revisions towards the end weeks of the course.

Strive to learn something relevant to your final write up in each class. Allow your self to be an active participant in deep scientific talks and be prepared to make mistakes. You will learn that deep scientific thought is hard work. Have the courage to experience it and learn from it. The skills you will learn in this course are applicable to all aspects of your life, as they are an exercise in critical thinking.

General Policies with respect to grading the written components of the course:

An “A” paper is outstanding in both content and writing. Points are clearly articulated and demonstrate a sophisticated understanding of the phenomena. Students in this category are able to apply what they learned about the natural and health science approaches to phenomena, make conceptual links, and back up their statements with evidence. Papers are free of grammatical errors, spelling, punctuation, and format errors, and provide a clear introduction and a substantive conclusion.

A “B” paper illustrates an adequate understanding of the phenomena and a good effort at crafting a clear and coherent description and/or analysis of the interviews and the literature review, while generally avoiding awkward and unclear writing, grammatical, spelling, punctuation, and format errors. “B+” papers are better than most and have the potential to be excellent work. The B range indicates that I think you are demonstrating a good level of understanding of the course material.

A “C” paper is a paper that was handed in too early. Students in this category have not yet gone beyond a generally minimal description or analysis of the phenomena. Arguments are not terribly well articulated, unsupported with evidence, and difficult for the reader to follow.