

# PSY D15: Current Topics in Social Psychology

## Lay Theories and Implicit Beliefs: Causes and Consequences

Fall 2019

Mondays 3–5pm, HW 408

Instructor: Zoë Francis

Email: [zoe.francis@mail.utoronto.ca](mailto:zoe.francis@mail.utoronto.ca)

Office: SY 162

Office hours: Mondays and Thursdays, 11:00am – 12:00pm

### Course Overview

Is your math ability something innate about you, or can it change? Do you think that self-control runs out with use? Does free will exist? Is your perfect soul-mate out in the world waiting for you, if only you could find them? Even without taking any psychology classes, people hold beliefs about how the world works. Regardless of the accuracy or inaccuracy of these beliefs, our own personal beliefs and mindsets affect our experiences and behaviours.

This course focuses on mindsets, lay theories, and personal beliefs. We will start with an introduction to what mindsets are, the history of mindset research, and their function. We will then discuss how different mindsets are measured and affect outcomes in different domains, including emotions, relationships, health, prejudice, and self-control. We will also discuss the efficacy of mindset interventions, where lay theories come from, and mechanisms by which lay theories may affect outcomes.

Throughout this course, we will examine mindsets from a scientific, empirical perspective. We will use primary journal articles as our main reading material, and will critically discuss the methods, generalizability, and implications of empirical results.

### Learning Outcomes:

- I. Understand how mindsets & lay theories are defined, measured, and studied
- II. Understand how mindsets interact with other areas of psychology (e.g., social, abnormal, educational, health psychology)
- III. Critically engage with how mindset research might be applied in the real-world, focusing on the potential benefits and limitations of interventions
- IV. Become more comfortable reading, understanding, and using primary-source research articles as sources of information
- V. Develop professional communication skills, including presentation, discussion, and writing skills

## Grade Components

### Class Participation and Attendance

10%

In a seminar-style class, attendance is expected and participation is essential. I will keep a record of participation throughout the term. Your participation grade will depend on quality, as well as quantity, of participation. Signs of good participation includes: attendance and punctuality; contribution to small group and/or class-wide discussions; eagerness to participate in activities; offering constructive feedback, questions, and comments; and paying attention to classroom activities and others' presentations.

### Discussion Questions

12%

To facilitate critical thinking about the readings, you will choose **at least six weeks** to submit discussion questions. For each of your selected weeks, you should write at least two discussion questions, **one for each required reading**. These discussion questions must be submitted to Quercus by 5pm on the Thursday before the associated class. Discussion questions should be thoughtful responses to the readings, not requests for clarifications (although you are welcome to ask clarifications questions in addition to your discussion questions). In forming your discussion questions, you may want to consider practical implications of the findings, challenge conclusions, or relate the reading to other topics. You may submit discussion questions for more than six weeks – your mark will reflect the discussion questions from your best six weeks.

**Due by 5pm on Thursdays**

### Class Facilitation & Presentation

20%

Once during the semester, you and your group (usually consisting of 3 people) will serve as facilitators and leaders of the discussion for the week's assigned readings.

Class facilitation will include two main components:

- 1) With a slide presentation, clearly describe the main ideas and findings from the Presentation Article (~25-30 minutes).
- 2) Facilitating the class discussion through the *structured* presentation of discussion board questions (provided by your classmates, shortened/rewritten for clarity) and organization of activities (~60 minutes).

The **presentation** should summarize the background, methods, results, and discussion of the Presentation Article. Optionally, you may supplement the presentation with evidence from other research articles or sources, to give students a broader sense of other research being conducted on your topic.

The **discussion** should touch on **all three articles** (2 required readings and presentation article), and can also go beyond those articles to the week's general topic. Discussion leaders should be prepared to guide discussion so that the discussion is fluid, lively, and interesting for everyone – spend time planning your discussion facilitation, not just planning your presentation! You can be creative by incorporating multimedia and class activities into their discussions (e.g. breaking class into small groups, surveying class participants for their perspectives, organizing a mini-debate, trying to replicate a study from a paper). Though not required, familiarity with other related readings will help you develop expertise on your topic, and so consulting with outside sources is encouraged. Feel free to ask me ahead of time for other related articles or ideas that might supplement your presentation and discussion facilitation.

Each group member should show that they are actively involved with their group, and should demonstrate mastery of the material for that week. To show evidence of mastery, student facilitators should each take turns engaging with other students in the class (through presenting some of the presentation and/or leading scheduled activities and/or leading discussion).

### Midterm Essay

**20%**

The midterm essay will be a 4–5 page (double-spaced) policy paper. The topic of the midterm essay will be announced before reading week, on October 7 (in class and posted on Quercus). You will be expected to create a clear thesis on the specified topic, and develop your thesis using arguments and ideas from the course readings or other sources (as required to support your position).

Additional instructions will be available on the course Quercus page.

**Due October 28, 11:59pm**

### Grant Proposal

**38%**

The final assignment will be a grant proposal related to mindsets, lay theories, or self-theories. You will propose a novel research project, and write a condensed proposal to convince a grant review committee that this project is worth funding. This grant proposal will include background information, research hypotheses, and proposed methods, as well as the significance of the research question.

More detailed instructions for this paper will be provided later in the semester, in class and on Quercus.

**A. Proposed Abstract (5%) – Due November 4, 11:59pm**

To make sure that your research question is of an appropriate size and subject, topics must be approved ahead of time by submitting a short (200 to 250 word) abstract.

**B. Near-Final Draft for Peer-Review – Due by November 18, by 3:00pm**

Starting in-class, we will do a peer-review exercise of your proposals. This component of your grade depends on finishing a near-final draft of your paper BEFORE class begins, and also on the quality of feedback that you provide to two of your peers. The vast majority of your work on the final paper should be done by this draft, leaving you the chance to edit and improve your paper for the final submission. If you do not submit your near-final draft by 3pm on November 18<sup>th</sup>, you will not be included in the peer-review exchange, and will thus receive a grade of 0 on the associated 8% of your grade.

**C. Peer-Review Exercise (8%) – Due by November 25, 3:00pm**

The two peer-reviews themselves must be completed and returned to your peers by class-time the following week. Peer reviews should discuss both content of the draft proposals (e.g., conceptual problems, unanswered questions) and the writing style (e.g., clarity, grammar). Again, if you did not submit your near-final draft on time (above), you will not be included in the peer-review exercise, and will receive a grade of 0.

**D. Final Grant Proposal (25%) – Due December 2, 11:59pm**

Make sure to use the feedback given peer-review exercise, and thoroughly revise your paper before handing it the final proposal. While a grant proposal is shorter than other formats of research proposals, it actually contains *more* content, not less. Given how concise and efficient a good grant proposal must be, a first (or even second) draft is unlikely to be your best work or result in the best possible grade.

## Course Policies

### Emails & Communication:

- I will always respond to emails within one to two working days – that means if I receive an email on Friday, you may not get a response until Tuesday. Emails are best for when you have simple questions that are not already answered in the syllabus. If you have longer questions about course content, presentations, or written assignments, I recommend that you come to office hours, or email me to set up a different time to meet.
- Each presentation group will have their own discussion board on Quercus, consisting of the 3 group members and myself. I am happy to answer questions, and provide guidance or suggestions for your week of class facilitation via this message board. This is a great location to brainstorm activities, additional relevant information, and divide up the work-load before your week's presentation. Of course, you are also welcome to communicate with your group-members via other platforms.

### Technology in Class:

- Laptops are allowed for note-taking and referring to the articles, but please be respectful and don't try to multi-task during class. In small classes, it is obvious when you are not paying attention; remember that participation is part of your grade!

### Disabilities:

- Academic accommodations are available for students with disabilities who are registered with AccessAbility Services (<http://www.utoronto.ca/~ability/>). Students who register and utilize the AccessAbility services will not be identified on their transcript as receiving accommodations. Information disclosed to the service is confidential and is disclosed only with the student's permission. Students in need of disability accommodations should schedule an appointment with me early in the semester to discuss appropriate accommodations for the course. There is little to nothing that I can do for you *after* an assignment.

## Course Schedule & Readings

The readings for each week are written below, and will also be available on the course webpage on Quercus. You are responsible for reading the **two required readings** for each week **before class**. The "Presentation Article" will be presented by the presentation leaders each week, and so it is not necessary to read these papers before class (although, of course, you are welcome to read them before or after class).

### September 9: Introduction & Theories of Intelligence and Personality

1

Jordan, C. H. & Zanna, M. P. (2000). How to read a journal article in social psychology. R. F. Baumeister (Ed.), *The Self in Social Psychology* (pp. 461–470). Philadelphia: Psychology Press. Retrieved from <http://www.uvm.edu/%7Edguber/POLS234/articles/read.htm>

Hong, Y. Y., Levy, S. R., & Chiu, C. Y. (2001). The contribution of the lay theories approach to the study of groups. *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, 5(2), 98–106.

### September 16: Function of Lay Theories

2

Dweck, C. S., & Yeager, D. S. (2019). Mindsets: A view from two eras. *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, 14(3), 481–496.

Boden, M. T., Berenbaum, H., & Gross, J. J. (2016). Why do people believe what they do? A functionalist perspective. *Review of General Psychology*, 20(4), 399–411.

Plaks, J. E., Levy, S. R., & Dweck, C. S. (2009). Lay theories of personality: Cornerstones of meaning in social cognition. *Social and Personality Psychology Compass*, 3, 1069–1081.

## September 23: Beliefs about Other People: Causing and Confronting Prejudice

3

Levy, S., Stroessner, S., & Dweck, C. S. (1998). Stereotype formation and endorsement: The role of implicit theories. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 74, 1421–1436.

Jayaratne, T. E., Ybarra, O., Sheldon, J. P., Brown, T. N., Feldbaum, M., Pfeffer, C. A., & Petty, E. M. (2006). White Americans' genetic lay theories of race differences and sexual orientation: Their relationship with prejudice toward Blacks, and gay men and lesbians. *Group Processes & Intergroup Relations*, 9(1), 77–94.

**Presentation Article:** Rattan, A., & Dweck, C.S. (2010). Who confronts prejudice? The role of implicit theories in the motivation to confront prejudice. *Psychological Science*, 21, 952–959.

## September 30: Lay Theories of Emotion

4

Labroo, A. A., & Mukhopadhyay, A. (2009). Lay theories of emotion transience and the search for happiness: A fresh perspective on affect regulation. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 36(2), 242–254.

Tamir, M., John, O. P., Srivastava, S., & Gross, J. J. (2007). Implicit theories of emotion: affective and social outcomes across a major life transition. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 92(4), 731–744.

**Presentation Article:** Cusimano, C., & Goodwin, G. (2018). Lay beliefs about the controllability of everyday mental states. <http://doi.org/10.1037/XGE0000547>

## October 7: Intervening to Change Lay Theories

5

Paunesku, D., Walton, G. M., Romero, C., Smith, E. N., Yeager, D. S., & Dweck, C. S. (2015). Mind-set interventions are a scalable treatment for academic underachievement. *Psychological Science*, 26(6), 784–793.

Li, Y., & Bates, T. C. (2017). Does mindset affect children's ability, school achievement, or response to challenge? Three failures to replicate. *Unpublished manuscript*. Retrieved from <http://mrbartonmaths.com/resourcesnew/8. Research/Mindset/Mindset replication.pdf>

\*Macnamara, B. (June 26, 2018). Schools are buying 'growth mindset' interventions despite scant evidence that they work well. *The Conversation*. Retrieved from: <https://theconversation.com/schools-are-buying-growth-mindset-interventions-despite-scant-evidence-that-they-work-well-96001>

\*Dweck, C. (June 26, 2018). Growth mindset interventions yield impressive results. *The Conversation*. Retrieved from: <https://theconversation.com/growth-mindset-interventions-lead-impressive-results-97423>

\*Note: Discussion questions are only needed in response to the first two journal articles, not to the two newspaper articles

**Presentation Article:** Sisk, V. F., Burgoyne, A. P., Sun, J., Butler, J. L., & Macnamara, B. N. (2018). To what extent and under which circumstances are growth mind-sets important to academic achievement? Two meta-analyses. *Psychological science*, 29(4), 549-571.

### Midterm Essay Topic Announced

#### October 21: Lay Theories of Self-Control

6

Francis, Z. L., & Job, V. (2018). Lay theories about willpower. *Social and Personality Psychology Compass*, 12, 4, e12381.

Mukhopadhyay, A., & Johar, G. V. (2005). Where there is a will, is there a way? Effects of lay theories of self-control on setting and keeping resolutions. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 31(4), 779-786.

**Presentation Article:** Mrazek, A. J., Ihm, E. D., Molden, D. C., Mrazek, M. D., Zedelius, C. M., & Schooler, J. W. (2018). Expanding minds: Growth mindsets of self-regulation and the influences on effort and perseverance. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 79, 164-180.

#### October 28: Lay Theories of Relationships

7

Knee, C. R., Patrick, H., & Lonsbary, C. (2003). Implicit theories of relationships: orientation toward evaluation and cultivation. *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, 7(1), 41-55.

Kammrath, L., & Dweck, C.S. (2006). Voicing conflict: Preferred conflict strategies among incremental and entity theorists. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 32, 1497-1508.

**Presentation Article:** Maxwell, J. A., Muise, A., MacDonald, G., Day, L. C., Rosen, N. O. & Impett, E. A. (2017) How implicit theories of sexuality shape sexual and relationship well-being. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 112, 238-279.

**Due: Midterm Essay, online by 11:59pm**

#### November 4: Sources of Lay Theories

8

King, R. B. (2019). Mindsets are contagious: The social contagion of implicit theories of intelligence among classmates. *British Journal of Educational Psychology*.  
<https://doi.org/10.1111/bjep.12285>

Sanchez, D. T., Young, D. M., & Pauker, K. (2015). Exposure to racial ambiguity influences lay theories of race. *Social Psychological and Personality Science*, 6(4), 382-390.

**Presentation Article:** Haimovitz, K., & Dweck, C. S. (2016). Parents' views of failure predict children's fixed and growth intelligence mind-sets. *Psychological Science*, 27(6), 859-869.

**Due: Proposal Abstract, online by 11:59pm**



## November 11: Process and Mechanisms

9

Plaks, J., Stroessner, S., Dweck, C. S., & Sherman, J. (2001). Person theories and attention allocation: Preference for stereotypic vs. counterstereotypic information. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 80, 876–893.

Yeager, D. S., Lee, H. Y., & Jamieson, J. P. (2016). How to improve adolescent stress responses: Insights from integrating implicit theories of personality and biopsychosocial models. *Psychological Science*, 27(8), 1078–1091.

**Presentation Article:** Zingoni, M., & Byron, K. (2017). How beliefs about the self influence perceptions of negative feedback and subsequent effort and learning. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, 139, 50–62.

## November 18: Writing Workshop & Peer-Review Exercise

10

No Readings

**Due: Near-Final Draft, Due BEFORE CLASS**

## November 25: Lay Theories of Leadership and Business

11

Offermann, L. R., & Coats, M. R. (2018). Implicit theories of leadership: Stability and change over two decades. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 29(4), 513–522.

Heslin, P. A., & Vandewalle, D. (2008). Managers' implicit assumptions about personnel. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 17, 219–223.

**Presentation Article:** Murphy, M. C., & Dweck, C.S. (2010). A culture of genius: How an organization's lay theories shape people's cognition, affect, and behavior. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 36, 283–296.

**Due: Both Peer-Reviews, online by 11:59pm on November 24<sup>th</sup>**

## December 2: Lay Theories of Health

12

Hauser, D., Nesse, R. M., & Schwarz, N. (2017). Lay theories and metaphors of health and illness. In *The science of lay theories: How beliefs shape our cognition, behavior, and health*. Retrieved from <http://www-personal.umich.edu/~nesse/Articles/Hauser-Nesse-Schwarz-Metaphors%202016.pdf>

Bunda, K., & Busseri, M. A. (2017). Lay theories of health, self-rated health, and health behavior intentions. *Journal of Health Psychology*, 1359105316689143. Online access.

**Presentation Article:** Burnette, J. L. (2010). Implicit theories of body weight: Entity beliefs can weigh you down. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 36(3), 410–422.

**Due: Final Grant Proposal, online by 11:59pm**



## Academic Integrity

Academic integrity is essential to a positive teaching and learning environment. All students enrolled in University courses are expected to complete coursework responsibilities with fairness and honesty. Failure to do so by seeking unfair advantage over others or misrepresenting someone else's work as your own can result in disciplinary action. The University of Toronto's *Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters* outlines the behaviours that constitute academic dishonesty and the processes for addressing academic offences.

**Note:** You may see advertisements for services offering grammar help, essay editing and proof-reading. Be very careful. If these services take a draft of your work and significantly change the content and/or language, you may be committing an academic offence (unauthorized assistance) under the Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters.

It is much better and safer to take your draft to the Writing Centre as early as you can. They will give you guidance you can trust. Students for whom English is not their first language should go to the English Language Development Centre.

If you decide to use these services in spite of this caution, you must keep a draft of your work and any notes you made before you got help and be prepared to give it to your instructor on request.

### Scholastic Dishonesty:

Scholastic dishonesty means plagiarizing; cheating on assignments or examinations; engaging in unauthorized collaboration on academic work; taking, acquiring, or using test materials without faculty permission; submitting false or incomplete records of academic achievement; acting alone or in cooperation with another to falsify records or to obtain dishonestly grades, honors, awards, or professional endorsement; altering forging, or misusing a University academic record; or fabricating or falsifying data, research procedures, or data analysis. In this course, a student responsible for scholastic dishonesty can be assigned a penalty up to and including an "F" or "N" for the course. If you have any questions regarding the expectations for a specific assignment or exam, ask me.

## Missed Term Work due to Medical Illness or Other Emergency

All students citing a documented reason for missed term work must submit their request for accommodations **within three (3) business days** of the deadline for the missed work.

Students must submit **BOTH** of the following:

- (1.) A completed **Request for Missed Term Work Accommodations form** (<http://uoft.me/PSY-MTW>), and

(2.) **Appropriate documentation** to verify your illness or emergency, as described below.

**Appropriate documentation:**

For missed **TERM TESTS** due to **ILLNESS**:

- Submit the Request for Missed Term Work Accommodations form (<http://uoft.me/PSY-MTW>), along with an **original** copy of the official UTSC Verification of Illness Form ([uoft.me/UTSC-Verification-Of-Illness-Form](http://uoft.me/UTSC-Verification-Of-Illness-Form)) or an **original** copy of the record of visitation to a hospital emergency room. Forms are to be completed in full, clearly indicating the start date, anticipated end date, and severity of illness. The physician's registration number and business stamp are required.
- Note: If an end date of "ongoing" is specified, the medical note will be assumed to cover a period of two weeks. If no end date / an "unknown" end date is specified, the note will be assumed to cover a period of three business days (starting from illness start date.)

For missed **TERM TESTS** due to **ACCESSABILITY REASONS**:

- Meet with your **AccessAbility consultant** and have them email Keely ([keely.hicks@utoronto.ca](mailto:keely.hicks@utoronto.ca)) detailing the accommodations required.

For missed **ASSIGNMENTS** due to **ILLNESS**:

- Submit the Request for Missed Term Work Accommodations form (<http://uoft.me/PSY-MTW>), along with a **hardcopy** of the Self-Declaration of Student Illness Form ([uoft.me/PSY-self-declare-form](http://uoft.me/PSY-self-declare-form)).

For missed **ASSIGNMENTS** due to **ACCESSABILITY REASONS**:

- If your desired accommodation is **within the scope** of your Accommodation Letter (ex. your letter includes "extensions of up to 7 days" and you need 3 days), submit the Request for Missed Term Work Accommodations form (<http://uoft.me/PSY-MTW>) and attach a copy of your letter. **Specify how many days extension you are requesting** on the request form.
- If your desired accommodation is **outside the scope** of your Accommodation Letter (ex. your letter includes "extensions of up to 7 days" but you need more time than that) you will need to meet with your **AccessAbility consultant** and have them email Keely ([keely.hicks@utoronto.ca](mailto:keely.hicks@utoronto.ca)) detailing the accommodations required.

For missed term tests or assignments in **OTHER CIRCUMSTANCES**:

Submit the Request for Missed Term Work Accommodations form (<http://uoft.me/PSY-MTW>), along with:

- In the case of a **death of a family member or friend**, please provide a copy of a death certificate.
- For U of T varsity-level or professional **athletic commitments**, an email from your coach or varsity administrator should be sent directly to Keely Hicks ([keely.hicks@utoronto.ca](mailto:keely.hicks@utoronto.ca)) **well in advance** of the missed work, detailing the dates and nature of the commitment.
- For **religious accommodations**, please email ([keely.hicks@utoronto.ca](mailto:keely.hicks@utoronto.ca)) **well in advance** of the missed work.

- For circumstances **outside of these guidelines**, please email Keely ([keely.hicks@utoronto.ca](mailto:keely.hicks@utoronto.ca)) on or before the date of the test / assignment deadline to describe your circumstances and ask what documentation would be appropriate

Documents covering the following situations are NOT acceptable: medical prescriptions, personal travel, weddings/personal/work commitments.

### **Procedure:**

Submit your (1.) [request form](#) and (2.) [medical/self-declaration](#)/other documents in person **WITHIN 3 BUSINESS DAYS** of the missed term test or assignment.

**Submit to:** Keely Hicks, Room SW420B, Monday – Friday, 9 AM – 4 PM. (Slide forms under door if out of office.)

After submitting your documentation, within approximately one to five business days, you will receive a response from your instructor detailing the accommodations to be made (if any).

**You are responsible for checking your official U of T email and Quercus course announcements daily, as accommodations may be time-critical.**

You should continue to work on your assignments to the best of your ability, as extension accommodations may be as short as one business day, depending on the nature of the illness/emergency.

If an accommodation has been granted but you are unable to meet the conditions of the accommodation (ex. you need a longer extension, or you missed a make-up test), you will need to repeat the missed term work procedure and submit additional forms to request further accommodation. Note that in the case of a missed make-up test, an opportunity to write a second make-up test may not be provided.

Completion of this form does NOT guarantee that accommodations will be made. The course instructor reserves the right to decide what accommodations (if any) will be made. Failure to adhere to any aspect of this policy may result in a denial of your request for accommodation.

### **Missed Accommodations**

If an accommodation is granted but a continued illness/emergency prevents you from meeting the requirements of your accommodation, you must repeat the missed term work procedure to request additional accommodations.

(E.g.) If you miss a make-up midterm, you would need to submit another Request for Missed Term Work Accommodations form. If your original medical note / documentation included the date of the make-up midterm, then only the Request form is required. If the date of the make-up midterm fell outside of the dates indicated on your original medical note/other documentation, then a new medical note/other appropriate documentation must also be submitted.

### **Importance of Three Business Day window:**

If you are unable to submit your documents in-person within the three business day window, **you must email Keely** ([keely.hicks@utoronto.ca](mailto:keely.hicks@utoronto.ca)) **within the three business day window** to explain when you will be able to bring your documents in person. Exceptions to the

documentation deadline will only be made under **exceptional circumstances**. Attach scans of your documentation, and be prepared to bring your documents to Keely in-person as soon as you are well. Late documents may not be accepted.

**NOTE: Assignments due at end of term**

Instructors cannot accept term work any later than five business days after the last day of class. Beyond this date, you would need to file a petition with the Registrar's Office (<https://www.utsc.utoronto.ca/registrar/term-work>).