

Social Psychology
PSYC 308, Section 3

(2008)

When: Tuesdays and Thursdays 12:30 – 1:45
Where: Swing 222

Course Website: <http://www.psych.ubc.ca/~schaller/psyc308.htm>

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Required Textbooks:

Aronson, E., Wilson, T. D., Akert, R. M., & Fehr, B. (2006). *Fundamentals of Social Psychology*. Toronto: Pearson Prentice Hall.

The textbook should be available for purchase in the UBC Bookstore.

In addition to the textbook, I will also be making several additional short articles available to you, via the course website. You're required to read those too.

Course Objectives and Overview:

Social psychology is the subfield of psychology that investigates the many ways in which our thoughts and actions are influenced by the real or implied presence of others. (Research in social psychology covers a wide range of topics, including such things – and these are just a few broad examples – as self-concept, stereotypes and prejudices, attitudes and attitude change, interpersonal attraction, altruism, aggression, and group decision-making.) This course is designed to provide you with a good overview of the most influential theories and research findings within social psychology. In providing you with this overview, I want you to truly understand the underlying psychological processes – so that you not only know the various facts and findings, but you also are able to think critically and integratively about the subtle mental processes that produce these findings. I want you to leave this course really knowing how the human mind works in social situations.

This is a big class, so classes will typically follow a lecture format. But please don't let that keep you from thinking: I'll try as best as I can to keep you alert and mentally active in class. Please feel free to ask questions and/or make cogent comments during class.

The material I present in class is designed to supplement the material in the books. Sometimes I'll

review material that is in the assigned readings. Sometimes I'll amplify and extend that material. Sometimes I'll present stuff that doesn't show up anywhere in your readings.

You are responsible for knowing everything in the assigned readings and for knowing everything presented in lectures. Be sure to keep up with the readings. And be sure to come to class. (I won't be taking attendance in any formal way, but I know from experience that students who come to class tend to do much better on exams.)

Exams:

There will be two exams, a midterm and a final. Your grade on the midterm counts 30% toward your overall course grade. Your grade on the final exam counts 60% toward your overall course grade.

Midterm Exam: The midterm exam will be on Tuesday, February 12. Part of it will consist of multiple-choice questions. Another part of the exam will require you to do some speedy writing. You will have 70 minutes to do it.

Final Exam: The final exam will be sometime in April, on a date to be announced later. Part of it will consist of multiple-choice questions. Another part of the exam will require you to do some speedy writing. You will have two hours to do it. It will be partially cumulative, covering all of the material presented throughout the course, but primarily emphasizing material presented after the midterm.

Exams won't be handed back to you. Students at UBC have the right to view their marked examinations with their instructor, providing they apply to do so within a month of receiving their final grades. This review is for pedagogic purposes. The examination remains the property of the university.

Students who miss an exam will receive a mark of "0" for that exam. You will not be allowed to take a make-up an exam unless you have written documentation from a health professional.

Paper Assignment:

There will be one paper assignment. Your grade on this paper counts 10% toward your overall course grade. The paper is due on Tuesday, March 18. (Sometime in February I will provide you with further details, posted on the course website.)

Your completed paper is due at the beginning of class on the date indicated. If you are unable to attend class on that day for any reason, then please turn the paper earlier, or make arrangements to have the paper delivered to me by the due date. You must deliver a hardcopy of your paper; do *not* email it.

If you turn in a paper late, you'd better have a very good reason for doing so. I'll expect to see some sort of credible written documentation – e.g., a note from a health professional. In the absence of such documentation, I will deduct one-third of one letter grade per day for every day that the paper is late.

You should retain a copy of all of your papers, to guard against the possibility of loss. You should also retain any marked assignments that are handed back to you, in case you wish to apply for a Review of Assigned Standings.

Scaling of Grades:

Grades will be scaled in order to maintain equity among sections and to conform to University, Faculty, or Department grading norms. In accordance with the policy of the Psychology Department, the expectation is that the grades in this course (as in all 300-level courses) will be normally distributed around an average grade of approximately 68 (i.e., right around a C+ or B-).

Let me explain what this is all about. The primary function of grades is to inform you (and other people) as to your performance *relative* to other students taking the course. In order for grades to serve this function, it's important that average performance is reflected in an average grade, that better-than-average-but-not-great performance is reflected in a better-than-average-but-not-great grade, and so forth. The Faculty of Arts is very concerned about "grade inflation" and has set guidelines for appropriate distributions of grades in courses at all levels. This is something we really pay attention to in the Psychology Department – especially in courses like PSYC 308 for which there are multiple sections taught by multiple instructors.

Let me make this point in a slightly different way. Don't be fooled by the fact that UBC records numerical grades on a 100-point scale. Numerical grades *aren't* percentages. They are simply a numerical translation of letter grades. Again: The purpose of your final course grade is to reflect your performance in this course *relative* to the other students taking the course. If your performance is right in the middle of the overall grade distribution, then you'll get an average grade (a C+ or B-). If most students in class perform better than you, you'll get a low grade (in the low C's, or D's or – if you're way at the bottom of the grade distribution – an F). If you perform better than average, then you'll get a better-than-average grade (e.g., a B perhaps). And if you perform way better than average (e.g., if your performance is among the top 15% of students in the entire class) then you may get an A.

So, please remember that, for this course, the average final grade will be around a C+ or B-, and that grades will be normally distributed around that mean. I will scale the grades to ensure that the distribution of final grades in this class meets these guidelines.

Special Accommodations:

UBC accommodates students with disabilities who have registered with the Disability Resource Centre (DRC). If you have a disability that may affect your performance in this class, please make sure you have contacted the DRC to arrange for accommodations. Please let me know of these accommodations as soon as possible.

UBC also accommodates students whose religious obligations conflict with attendance, assignments, or examinations. Please let me know as soon as possible – and well in advance of any assignment or examination – if you will require any accommodation on these grounds.

The university does not have any formal policy on accommodating students who plan to be absent for varsity athletics, family obligations, or other similar commitments. So, please do not assume that you will get special accommodations for these sorts of absences. It is your responsibility to ensure that you meet the course requirements as scheduled. If you do plan to be absent during any time an assignment or examination is scheduled, please discuss this with me as soon as possible (and make sure you do so before the drop date.)

Class conduct:

Please show respect for everyone else in class. Show up on time, and please don't leave early, because

comings and going during class are very disruptive. Make sure cellphones and other distracting electronic stuff are turned off before you come to class. And please don't chatter when I'm lecturing or if someone else is talking. I do want you to actively participate in the class – to ask questions and make comments – but please do so in respectful way.

Academic Dishonesty:

Cheating, plagiarism, and other forms of academic misconduct are very serious concerns of the University, and the Department of Psychology has taken steps to alleviate them. In the first place, the Department has implemented software that can reliably detect cheating on multiple-choice exams by analyzing the patterns of students' responses. In addition, the Department subscribes to *TurnItIn* – a service designed to detect and deter plagiarism. All materials (term papers, lab reports, etc.) that students submit for grading will be scanned and compared to over 4.5 billion pages of content located on the Internet or in TurnItIn's own proprietary databases. The results of these comparisons are compiled into customized "Originality Reports" containing several, sensitive measures of plagiarism; instructors receive copies of these reports for every student in their class. In all cases of suspected academic misconduct, the parties involved will be pursued to the fullest extent dictated by the guidelines of the University. Strong evidence of cheating or plagiarism may result in a zero credit for the work in question. According to the University Act (section 61), the President of UBC has the right to impose harsher penalties including (but not limited to) a failing grade for the course, suspension from the University, cancellation of scholarships, or a notation added to a student's transcript.

All graded work in this course, unless otherwise specified, is to be original work done independently by individuals. If you have any questions as to whether or not what you are doing is even a borderline case of academic misconduct, please consult your instructor. For details on pertinent University policies and procedures pertaining to academic dishonesty, please see [Chapter 5 in the UBC Calendar](#), and visit the [Academic Integrity](#) page on UBC Faculty of Arts website.

Other Stuff:

This syllabus is our roadmap for the course, but it is possible that some revisions (in scheduling, in policy, etc.) may have to be made as we work our way through the material. Any announcements made in class "count" just as much as policies outlined in this written syllabus.

Further information about academic regulations, course withdrawal dates and credits can be found in the [University Calendar](#). If you run into trouble and need information about studying, preparing for exams, note-taking or time-management, free workshops and advice are available from the Student Resources Center.

Calendar of Events: Topics and Assigned Readings

Here is a list of the general topics that we will be covering each week, along with a list of the readings that you should have completed by the time we cover these topics.

Week 1 (January 8 and 10): Introductory Material
- Aronson et al., Chapter 1

Week 2 (January 15 and 17): More Introductory Material

- Aronson et al., Chapter 2

Week 3 (January 22 and 24): Social Cognition

- Aronson et al., Chapter 3

- Additional reading: Carey (2007). Who's minding the mind? *New York Times*, July 31, 2007.

Week 4 (January 29 and 31): More Social Cognition

- Aronson et al., Chapter 3

Week 5 (February 5 and 7): Self-Concept

- Aronson et al., Chapter 4

- Additional reading: Leary (1999). Making sense of self-esteem. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 8, 32-35.

Week 6 (February 12 and 14): Midterm Exam / Attitudes and Attitude Change

- Midterm Exam on Tuesday February 12

Week 7 (Week of February 26 and 28): Attitudes and Attitude Change

- Aronson et al., Chapter 5

Week 8 (March 4 and 6): Social Influence

- Aronson et al., Chapter 6

- Additional reading: Cialdini (2003). Crafting normative messages to protect the environment. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 12, 105-109.

Week 9 (March 11 and 13): Groups and Group Processes

- Aronson et al., Chapter 7

Week 10 (March 18 and 20): Interpersonal Attraction

- Aronson et al., Chapter 8

- Paper Assignment due on Tuesday, March 18

Week 11 (March 25 and 27): Altruism

- Aronson et al., Chapter 9

- Additional reading: Carey (2006). Just thinking about money can turn the mind stingy. *New York Times*, November 21, 2006.

Week 12 (April 1 and 3): Aggression

- Aronson et al., Chapter 9

Week 13 (April 8 and 10): Stereotypes and Prejudices

- Aronson et al., Chapter 10

- Additional reading: Fiske, Harris, & Cuddy (2004). Why ordinary people torture enemy prisoners. *Science*, 306, 1482-1483.