

## SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY

SOAN 267  
Fall 2013  
TTh 12:00-1:20 pm, BT 2226  
Office Hours: MW, 10 am – 2 pm

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### Course Description:

Social Psychology is one of a set of 200-level survey courses in sociology, which are designed to cover the breadth of the discipline and to focus on developing academic skills such as learning to read and analyze arguments, and to identify relevant data for evaluating them.

Questions like the following form the core of social psychology, a subfield of sociology and psychology:

*Why do people fall in - and out of - love? What makes relationships last - or disintegrate?*

*Are first impressions really as important as many people believe? And if so, what can you do to make sure that you make a good impression on others?*

*Are some people destined to become leaders because they possess special traits? What makes some leaders charismatic - able to exert truly amazing control over their followers?*

*Is aggression a built-in part of human nature, or can it somehow be reduced?*

*What are the best ways of influencing other people - of changing their attitudes or their behavior?*

If you've ever wondered about questions like these, social psychology is the right place to be. Social psychology focuses attention on description and analysis of the interdependent relation between people and collective social experience - how people think, feel, desire, and behave in social situations as they influence and are influenced by other individuals, groups, and social structures. This semester we will cover major theoretical perspectives in social psychology and methodological approaches to social psychological research, focusing on topics such as the social construction of self and subjective experience, social interaction, relationships, the construction of social structures, and the politics of social reality. An overarching goal of this course is to challenge students to consider the relevance of social psychological analyses to everyday life. Students will also develop skills in reading and analyzing arguments, and identifying relevant data for evaluating arguments in social psychology.

Central design principles for all department courses are:

- 1) that being a successful participant in an academic discipline requires that students are taught the expectations of the discipline;
- 2) that it is necessary to have knowledge to think with;
- 3) that it is necessary to learn skills to read, evaluate, and craft arguments;
- 4) that it is necessary to learn skills to identify and collect appropriate data, perform analysis and report results; and
- 5) that it is important to encourage students to participate in activities that require them to apply and engage the knowledge and skills they learn in classes.

In addition, as a social scientific mode course, Social Psychology offers an opportunity for students to demonstrate competence in the following areas:

§ Thinking systematically about humans, societies, and/or organizations, and their interactions;

- § Applying critical thinking skills and analytical capabilities in the social sciences;
- § Understanding major generalizations, discoveries, principles, concepts, methodologies, technical language, and theories in at least one of the social science disciplines (Psychology, Political Science, Sociology, Anthropology, Economics, and Geography);
- § Understanding what constitutes evidence in the social sciences and how social scientists utilize empirical observations for drawing inferences and conclusions; and,
- § Connecting ideas in the social sciences to real world applications, and to the context of their historical development.

A **basic ground rule** for the class is that everyone's contribution must be treated with respect. No one should have to fear being personally attacked, or worry about giving the "wrong answer." Everyone is expected to read with a critical eye - in other words, actively question what you read and hear, and find ways of applying it. Then share your questions and insights with the class so we can learn from one another. Discussion is not a matter of performing for the instructor - discussion is a way of actively learning. In the same spirit, we will have opportunities in class to share what is learned from assignments and in-class exercises.

**Required Text:** The following reader contains most of the required material for analysis and discussion and is available at the bookstore in the student union.

Cahill, Spencer E. and Kent Sandstrom. 2011. *Inside Social Life: Readings in Sociological Psychology and Microsociology*. 6<sup>th</sup> edition. Roxbury Publishing Company.

We will also be working with the following book for the main writing assignment:

Booth, Wayne C., Gregory Colomb, and Joseph Williams. 2008. *The Craft of Research*. 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

### **Course Requirements:**

1. **Tests:** There will be an in-class midterm and an in-class essay-based final.
2. **Argument Analysis:** Questions will be assigned to guide critical thinking about key points in the readings, and students will then work in groups in class to analyze and answer questions about the central argument(s) in the article. Class discussion will also give students an opportunity to make connections between arguments and concepts across readings and across the discipline of social psychology.
3. **Reflections:** Students will be asked to post regular reflections online regarding the relevance of social psychological concepts to their everyday lives.
4. **Research Assignment:** This assignment will give students an opportunity to briefly explore a topic of interest in social psychology, and to develop skills in finding a topic, asking a research question, demonstrating its significance in the field, and formulating a research problem.
5. **Class Participation and Attendance:** Regular attendance and active participation in class discussions and assignments is essential for doing well in this course. I expect you to be in class every Tuesday and Thursday unless you have a valid reason for not being there (family emergencies, illnesses, or pre-arranged, university-sponsored activities). For an absence to be

excused, you need to contact me (in advance, if possible) to let me know why your absence is necessary. Keep in mind that points will be given for attendance and completion of in-class assignments.

6. **Academic Honesty:** You should all be familiar with Truman State's policy on academic honesty (in the *General/Graduate Bulletin*). I expect you to do your own work, and to give proper credit when you borrow from the work of others.
7. **ADA Compliance:** The university is committed to making every possible effort to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). If you have a disability for which you are or may be requesting an accommodation, you are encouraged to contact both your instructor and the Disability Services office (x4478) as soon as possible.
8. **Some advice:** The Writing Center in McClain 303B (x4484) is open from 8 am to 5 pm, Monday through Friday, and is a very good resource for improving your writing. Also, please note that we will be making use of the Blackboard and Truview websites for email messages, announcements, etc. You need to be sure that the email address listed for you on the Blackboard and Truview websites is an address that you check regularly. If you use an email address other than your Truman email address, you need to find out how to change the address listed for you on Blackboard and Truview (call the IT help desk).

Your course grade will be calculated in the following way:

Reflections	40 points
Research Assignment	30 points
Argument Analyses	100 points
Mid-term Exam	40 points
Final Exam	50 points
TOTAL	260 points

A	=	90% or above
B	=	80%-89%
C	=	70%-79%
D	=	60%-69%
F	=	less than 60%

**Office Hours and Assistance:** Please feel free to come by during office hours to discuss any questions you may have regarding the course or issues raised in class. If you cannot come in during office hours, I will try to arrange a time convenient for you.

## TENTATIVE CLASS SCHEDULE

(Please note that the class schedule is tentative and may be modified over the course of the semester.)

<u>Date</u>	<u>Topic</u>	<u>Readings</u>
8/22	Introduction to Sociological Social Psychology	Ch. 1 from Rohall, Milkie, and Lucas (on Blackboard), pp. 1-12
8/27	Symbolic Interaction	Ch. 1 from Hewitt (on Blackboard), pp. 1-10, 28-33
8/29, 9/3	Human Being and Social Reality	2, 3, 4
9/5, 9/10	Theoretical Perspectives and Research Methods in Social Psychology	Ch. 3 in Rohall, Milkie and Lucas (on Blackboard), Hewitt, pp. 11-27
9/12, 9/17, 9/19	The Social Construction of Self	15, 16, 17
9/24, 9/26, 10/1	The Social Shaping of Subjective Experience	6, 7, 8
10/3, 10/8	The Social Construction of the Body and Embodiment	12, 13
<b>10/15</b>	<b>Midterm Exam</b>	
10/17, 10/22, 10/24	The Self and Social Interaction	20, 21, 23
10/29, 10/31, 11/5	The Organization of Social Interaction	24, 25, 27
11/7, 11/12	The Construction of Social Structures and Boundaries	28, 29, 31
11/14, 11/19	Reproducing and Resisting Inequalities	35, 36
11/21, 12/3	The Politics of Social Reality	39, 41
12/5	Review for final	

**Final Exam, Friday, December 13, 9:30 am – 11:20 am**

## **SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY REFLECTIONS**

One reflection should be posted for each of the main topics – not for each reading. Due dates are listed on the discussion board. You should also post at least two comments in response to two other students' reflections for that topic. What should you write about in your reflection? Social psychology deals with a number of phenomena that occur frequently in your life and the lives of those around you. The more you look for these phenomena the more you will see them and see how they affect your life. Moreover, the more you identify them the better understanding you will have of the concepts we are discussing in class. Thus, the primary focus of your journal should be identifying examples of the phenomena we discuss in class and you read about in your text. Additionally, I would like you to reflect upon some of these observations. For example, what does this event say about how you (or people in general) interact with others? What does it suggest about our motives? Do you see patterns emerging? Can you see more than one concept in a single event? The following are examples of student reflections.

*“The Generalized Other”*

*Last evening, a group of us went to see an X-rated movie. I had never seen one before. We had to wait in line along the sidewalk outside the theater. The theater is in the campus district, and I was exceedingly uncomfortable. I was ashamed of what I believed other people would think of me if they saw me going to a porno movie. I worried that my professors or someone who knew my parents might observe me. This is a good example of the generalized other. Through socialization processes, I had come to take over the view of the larger society, that porno movies are licentious and reveal lewd, carnal appetites - deviant sexuality. The conceptions I hold of the expectations others have of me tell me that if I am seen watching porno movies, others will disapprove of me.*

*“Stereotypes”*

*My roommate and I came to school with our own opinions of each other, based on nothing but our names, addresses, and a short phone call. I, being from the North, saw her string of middle names, Southern accent, and address in small-town North Carolina as evidence of a “redneck.” She in turn saw my long name and Pennsylvania address, and my different accent, as evidence of a “pretentious snob” she would have to live with. Upon meeting, we both found our stereotypes to be quite wrong. Now we laugh about our earlier impressions of one another, as we have become good friends.*

## **RESEARCH ASSIGNMENT: FINDING A TOPIC AND DEVELOPING A PROBLEM STATEMENT**

### **STEP I: Identifying a topic**

- From *Craft of Research*, read:

- a. Quick Tips (p. 50 “For topics focused on a particular field”)
- b. Section 3.1.2 “Finding a Topic for a First Research Project in a Particular Field” and in
- c. Section 3.2 “From a Broad Topic to a Focused One”.

- Use this information to prepare a short list of potential research topics.

- Bring your list with you to class for discussion on **September 12**.

### **STEP 2: Preparing an annotated bibliography**

In order to narrow your topic, ask good questions, and assess their significance, you need to be

familiar with related research in social psychology.

- From *Craft of Research*, read:

Chapter 5, "From a problem to sources"

Create a list of 6 - 8 relevant and reliable academic sources, summarizing the contribution of each source to understanding and refining your topic and identifying good research questions (using 5.2, 5.3, and 5.4 on creating an Annotated Bibliography) – bring the bibliography to class on **October 8**.

### **STEP 3: Converting a topic into a set of potential research questions**

- From *Craft of Research*, read:

a. Section 3.3 "From a Focused Topic to Questions"

i. Produce as many different kinds of questions as you can.

ii. Evaluate your own questions.

b. Section 3.4 "From a Question to Its Significance", and develop an answer to 'so what?' for your best research question.

- Bring your list of questions, evaluations, and at least one statement of significance to class on **October 29**.

### **STEP 4: Turning questions into research problems**

Steps 1 – 3 will serve as preparation for developing a two-page, well-written statement of a research problem. Use your topic, question and statement of its significance to formulate your academic research problem.

- From *Craft of Research*, read:

a. Quick Tip: Manage the Unavoidable Problem of Inexperience (pp 66-67)

b. Sections 4.1-4.4

- then restate your topic/question/significance statement in the form of a research problem.

Bring to class on **November 14**.

### **STEP 5**

Revise research problem statement, and submit a final draft, along with a final draft of the annotated bibliography, on **December 3**.