Social Psychology

PSYCHOLOGY 260
WESLEYAN UNIVERSITY, FALL, 2012

Instructor: Scott Plous
TAs: Kaitlin DeWilde, Ali Goldberg, Ginah Kim, Miriam Olenick, Sami Ressler, Rachel Verner
CAs: Hee-Kyong Kang, Sam Melvin, Sheryl Rivas, Kelly Toy
Time: 1:10-2:30 pm, Tuesday and Thursday
Classroom: Kerr Lecture Hall (107 Shanklin)
Size limit: 150 students
Credit: 1.0 A/F (graded only)
Web sites: http://www.socialpsychology.org/courses/social12.htm
http://highered.mcgraw-hill.com/sites/0078035295/student_view0/

Instructor and TA Office Hours

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Contact</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DeWilde</td>
<td>Mon, 8:00 – 9:00 pm</td>
<td>103 Judd (x2312)</td>
<td>(817) 874-7096</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goldberg</td>
<td>Wed, 2:00 – 3:00 pm</td>
<td>103 Judd (x2312)</td>
<td>(914) 419-5754</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kim</td>
<td>Wed, 5:30 – 6:30 pm</td>
<td>103 Judd (x2312)</td>
<td>(818) 279-1374</td>
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<tr>
<td>Olenick</td>
<td>Tue, 10:00 – 11:00 am</td>
<td>103 Judd (x2312)</td>
<td>(917) 371-8501</td>
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<td>Plous</td>
<td>Tue and Thu, 2:45 – 3:45 pm</td>
<td>219 Judd (x2368)</td>
<td>(860) 685-2368</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ressler</td>
<td>Sun, 8:00 – 9:00 pm</td>
<td>103 Judd (x2312)</td>
<td>(206) 484-4157</td>
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<tr>
<td>Verner</td>
<td>Thu, 9:00 – 10:00 am</td>
<td>103 Judd (x2312)</td>
<td>(860) 882-3500</td>
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Course Objective

The primary goal of this course is to provide an overview of classic and contemporary research in social psychology. A wide range of topics will be covered, including:

- Self-Perception
- Cognitive Dissonance
- Conformity
- Obedience
- Social Influence
- Persuasion Techniques
- Interpersonal Attraction
- Group Dynamics
- Stereotypes and Prejudice
- Conflict Resolution
- Happiness and Well-Being
- Sustainable Living
Course Requirements

Prerequisites--No prerequisites are required, though many students have found it helpful to take "Foundations of Contemporary Psychology" (Psyc105) or "Psychological Science" (Psyc101) before this course. Students who have taken other general introductions to social psychology, such as "Exploring Social Psychology" (Psyc263) at Wesleyan, are not eligible to take Psyc260.

Attendance--Because the lectures will cover material that goes beyond the readings, class attendance is absolutely essential (including the class before Thanksgiving Break). Repeated late arrivals to class, or talking while the instructor or other students are speaking, may result in lengthy prison sentences. Please be punctual and refrain from talking in class when others are speaking.

Cell Phones and Other Devices--Before each class session begins, please turn off all mobile phones, pagers, recording devices, video games, portable hair dryers, chainsaws, jet engines, and nuclear reactors.

Readings--Unless otherwise noted in class, the required readings are as follows:

- Psychology 260 online library reserve readings (the course password is "psyc260").

I strongly recommend buying Myers' textbook, but if you'd rather not, copies of Social Psychology are on reserve in Olin Library (don't use earlier editions of the textbook--too much material is different from the current edition). Also, you can buy a 180-day subscription to an e-text version, in either online or downloadable format, from CourseSmart.com.

Assignments--During the semester you'll be given several class assignments worth a cumulative total of 40 course points:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Due Date</th>
<th>Point Value</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Random Assignment Assignment</td>
<td>September 18</td>
<td>6 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norm Violation Assignment</td>
<td>October 9</td>
<td>8 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Election Challenge</td>
<td>November 13</td>
<td>8 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Web Interview Assignment</td>
<td>November 20</td>
<td>8 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12th Annual Day of Compassion</td>
<td>December 4</td>
<td>10 points</td>
</tr>
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Some of these assignments are web-based, and others are participant-observation activities that invite you to experiment with your life and report on the results. The details of each assignment will be given in class a few days before the assignment is due. If at any point you prefer not to complete an assignment (or if your attempt to complete it is unsuccessful), you can still receive full credit by turning in a one-page report discussing the barriers that prevented you from carrying out the assignment. Late assignments will not be accepted except in the event of a serious illness or family emergency; please back-up your work and print a copy at least one day before it's due.
Illustrations

On most Tuesdays, I will begin class by sharing a few illustrations of topics covered in the preceding week. In addition, the TAs and I will compile links to web sites and videos that illustrate course topics, and we'll post these links on a "Sites of the Week" web page available from the Psychology 260 home page. You're welcome to suggest illustrations -- from the web or elsewhere -- whenever you encounter items that might be of general interest to the class. If you contribute an illustration, please try to include the full item or article with complete reference information (date, volume, issue number, and page numbers, or web address in the case of an illustration from the Internet).

Grading

To avoid the stress of grades based solely on a midterm and final examination, the course will include three examinations and five assignments (the third exam will take place during finals week but will not be longer or count more than the exam before it). All three exams will cover material from class as well as the readings, and all three will contain a mixture of fixed choice formats (roughly 20 general multiple choice items, 15 applied multiple choice items, and 25 true-false items). Before you turn in a completed exam, please check that no items have been accidentally skipped. In the event that a full page of items is skipped, 50% credit will be given for true-false items and 25% for multiple choice items (the average value that would be received by chance responding), and the resulting exam score will be rounded up or down to the nearest whole point.

Note: Make-up exams or extensions will not be given, except in the event of a serious illness or family emergency (e.g., death of a relative). If you're not feeling well before an exam, please contact me right away rather than taking the exam, because once an exam is taken, the score you receive cannot generally be erased. Also, please note that cell phones and computers must be turned off during exams; anyone found using a mobile device during an examination will automatically receive a score of zero for that exam.

To help prepare for the tests, see the web links "Tips on Taking Multiple-Choice Tests" and "Online Social Psychology Quizzes" listed on the course web site. The Myers textbook also comes with a CD-ROM that contains study questions.

Because students often take awhile to develop a successful study strategy for the exams, the first exam will count less than the later two exams. Specifically, the first exam will count for 120 course points (2 points for each of 60 items on the test), and the later two exams will each count for 180 points (3 points per test item). Final letter grades will be determined by adding together points from two different sources: (1) the three exams (worth a total of 480 points), and (2) the five assignments (worth a total of 40 points). In other words, all course points are counted equally, regardless of whether they come from exams or assignments.

During the semester, you will be able to check your point total by clicking on the "GradeGetter" link at the top of the web syllabus. Within one week of turning in an assignment or receiving a scored exam, you should check GradeGetter and email me immediately if you discover an error (after that time, your scores will generally remain fixed). Likewise, if after speaking with the TAs you feel that your answer to an exam item marked wrong should actually be considered correct, you have one week to email me a statement explaining why your answer is correct.
Once the course is over, your cumulative point total will be translated into a final letter grade. Because the exams in this class will be created from scratch, it's difficult to specify in advance how various exam scores will translate into particular letter grades. Nonetheless, you may use the following cutoffs from a previous year as a rough guide in translating course point totals into letter grades (the final cutoffs will be different from these, but not by much). These cutoffs are based on Peterson's, which is the most common method for translating between grades and 100-point scales:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Letter Grade</th>
<th>Cumulative Point Total</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A+</td>
<td>97.0% and above</td>
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<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>94.0% and above</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>90.0% and above</td>
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<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>87.0% and above</td>
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<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>84.0% and above</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>80.0% and above</td>
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<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>77.0% and above</td>
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<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>74.0% and above</td>
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<tr>
<td>C-</td>
<td>70.0% and above</td>
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<tr>
<td>D+</td>
<td>67.0% and above</td>
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<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>64.0% and above</td>
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<tr>
<td>D-</td>
<td>60.0% and above</td>
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<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>below 60.0%</td>
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**Laptops, Recording, and Special Needs**

Laptops are permitted, but studies suggest that they tend to lower student performance (e.g., from surfing the web in class, answering email, and other multitasking) and that they disturb nearby students, so I wouldn't advise bringing one unless you truly need it. In fact, research on multitasking has even found that texting during class is associated with lower grades, which suggests that the smartest mode for smart phones is "off."

If you have a disability or any special needs, please notify me and the Dean's Office during the first week of the semester, and I'll do my best to accommodate them. The TAs and I are committed to creating the most inclusive and supportive learning environment possible. Here's a statement that Wesleyan asks instructors to include in all course syllabi:

> It is the policy of Wesleyan University to provide reasonable accommodations to students with documented disabilities. Students, however, are responsible for registering with Disabilities Services, in addition to making requests known to me in a timely manner. If you require accommodations in this class, please make an appointment with me as soon as possible, so that appropriate arrangements can be made. The procedures for registering with Disabilities Services can be found at: [www.wesleyan.edu/studentaffairs/disabilities/](http://www.wesleyan.edu/studentaffairs/disabilities/)

*Please note:* Audio or video recording of lectures without permission is expressly forbidden.
Tentative Course Outline and Readings

PLEASE NOTE: Assignments should be read in the order below following each class (except for assignments immediately before an exam, which may be read early if you prefer). Because the schedule below may change, please regard the web syllabus as definitive.

Tue, Sep 4: Introduction

- Myers Chapter 1--Introducing Social Psychology

Thu, Sep 6: The Social Construction of Reality

- Myers Chapter 2--The Self in a Social World

Tue, Sep 11: Interpreting Behavior ("Interpersonal Perception Task" DVD)


Thu, Sep 13: Attributional Biases

- Myers Chapter 3--Social Beliefs and Judgments

Tue, Sep 18: The Relationship Between Attitudes and Behavior

DEADLINE: Random Assignment Assignment Due

- Myers Chapter 4--Behavior and Attitudes (pp. 118-134)
Thu, Sep 20: Cognitive Dissonance and Self-Perception

- Myers Chapter 4--Behavior and Attitudes (pp. 134-148)
- Tips on Taking Multiple-Choice Tests (to help prepare for exam) 
  http://www.socialpsychology.org/testtips.htm

Tue, Sep 25: Deindividuation and Dehumanization ("Quiet Rage" Video)

- Myers Chapter 5--Genes, Culture, and Gender

Thu, Sep 27: First Exam

Tue, Oct 2: Obedience to Authority ("Obedience" Video)


Thu, Oct 4: Conformity ("Candid Camera" DVD Clips)

- Myers Chapter 6--Conformity and Obedience

Tue, Oct 9: Persuasion: An Overview of Tactics

**DEADLINE:** Norm Violation Assignment Due

- Myers Chapter 7--Persuasion
Thu, Oct 11: Compliance Techniques


Tue, Oct 16: Fall Break!

Thu, Oct 18: Money, Message and Margins: Political Ads in the 2012 Presidential Election

(Guest lecture by Professor Erika Fowler, Director the Wesleyan Media Project)

Tue, Oct 23: Negotiation and Group Dynamics ("Abilene Paradox" Video)


Thu, Oct 25: Individual Versus Group Performance (Class Experiment)

• Myers Chapter 8--Group Influence

Tue, Oct 30: Group-Level Biases

• Myers Chapter 9--Prejudice
**Thu, Nov 1:** The Faces of Prejudice ("A Class Divided" and "Blue Eyed" DVDs)


**Tue, Nov 6:** Group Discussion on Discrimination (20/20 DVD Clip on Prejudice)


**Thu, Nov 8:** SECOND EXAM

**Tue, Nov 13:** Aggression ("Bobo Doll" and "Does TV Kill?" DVDs)

**DEADLINE:** Election Challenge Assignment Due

- Myers Chapter 10--Aggression
- **OPTIONAL READING:** Bushman, B. J., & Phillips, C. M. (2001, April). If the television program bleeds, memory for the advertisement recedes. *Current Directions in Psychological Science, 10*(2), 43-47.

**Thu, Nov 15:** Attraction and Intimacy

- Myers Chapter 11--Attraction and Intimacy

**Tue, Nov 20:** Bystander Intervention ("Brother's Keeper" DVD)

**DEADLINE:** Web Interview Assignment Due

- Myers Chapter 12--Helping
Thu, Nov 22: Thanksgiving Break!

Tue, Nov 27: Peace and Conflict Resolution
- Myers Chapter 13--Conflict and Peacemaking

Thu, Nov 29: Clinical Applications of Social Psychology
- Myers Chapter 14--Social Psychology in the Clinic

Tue, Dec 4: Tips on Leading a Happy Life
DEADLINE: Day of Compassion Assignment Due
- Myers Chapter 15--Social Psychology in Court

Thu, Dec 6: Empathy--A Magic Bullet?
- Myers Chapter 16--Social Psychology and the Sustainable Future

Thu, Dec 13: THIRD EXAM [2:00-3:20 pm in Shanklin 107. Please don't ask to take the test at a different time. The Registrar sets exam times, and administering it at multiple times would create extra work for the TAs when they're taking their own exams. We thank you for your understanding.]
Social Psychology Teaching Apprentices

We've prepared this trusty overview to help acquaint you with your friendly TA crew. Please introduce yourself to at least two teaching apprentices within the first week or two of the term so that you're on a first-name basis with the teaching staff. Also, the TAs warmly invite you to stop by at least one office hour by the third week of class, just to make sure things are going well and to make sure you're well prepared for the first exam.

**Kaitlin DeWilde**
Email: kdewilde@wesleyan.edu
Phone: (817) 874-7096
Acceptable calling hours: 10:00 am to 11:00 pm
About me: Hey! I'm a senior psychology major who took Social Psych last year and found myself attempting to bring it up whenever possible, which eventually began irritating my friends, so I decided to spare them and TA this fall. I'm from Fort Worth, Texas, but I only wear cowboy hats when I lose a bet. I spent this summer doing research in Sierra Leone, which perfectly combined my interests in psychology and the ocean. In addition, I have a passion for coffee, so if you ever need to find me or want to chat, Pi Café is always a safe bet!

**Ali Goldberg**
Email: ajgoldberg@wesleyan.edu
Phone: (914) 419-5754
Acceptable calling hours: 11:00 am to 11:00 pm
About me: I'm a sophomore from Chappaqua, New York, and I'm currently planning to double major in Psychology and Theater. I'm also interested in English and French. Social Psychology has been my favorite class so far at Wes, and I'm excited to be one of your TAs this semester! Outside of class, I love to act, sing, dance, drink lots of coffee, and watch reruns of *House*. In the long run, I plan to pursue a career in clinical psychology. I'm really looking forward to meeting all of you and working with you this semester!

**Ginah Kim**
Email: gkim01@wesleyan.edu
Phone: (818) 279-1374
Acceptable calling hours: 11:00 am to 11:00 pm
About me: Hello! I'm a senior psychology major, born and raised in the suburbs of Los Angeles, California. After spending a semester studying and backpacking through Europe, I'm happy to be back at Wesleyan, and I'm looking forward to being your TA. Social Psych was one of my all-time favorite classes, so I'm excited to help you if you have any questions or concerns. Beyond psychology, my interests include practicing Vinyasa Yoga, discovering vegan eateries, reading, and watching the Food Network. If any of that interests you, or if you want to discuss Social Psychology, come find me!
Miriam Olenick
Email: molenick@wesleyan.edu
Phone: (917) 371-8501
Acceptable calling hours: 10:00 am to 11:00 pm
About me: I'm a senior English major at Wes, and I hail from New York City, just like a billion other Wesleyan students. I spent the fall semester of my junior year in Denmark and thought it was very hyggelig. In my free time at Wesleyan, I write for The Argus, serve as assistant editor of Unlocked Magazine, and cook really big meals for my friends. The things that make me ridiculously happy include, but are not limited to, animals (especially cats and dogs, but excluding alligators), screwball comedies from the 1930s, Dim Sum, Star Trek, Wes Anderson, avocados, and Neil Gaiman -- and social psychology, of course!

Samara (Sami) Ressler
Email: sressler@wesleyan.edu
Phone: (206) 484-4157
Acceptable calling hours: 1:00 pm to 10:00 pm
About me: I'm a senior psychology major and am really looking forward to spending this semester as your TA! Social Psychology has been one of my favorite classes at Wes. In particular, I'm interested in human rights issues and conflict resolution. I am from an island off Seattle and spent my summer living in a tipi as a camp counselor. I love ferry boats, baked goods, pine trees, and folk music. I'm looking forward to a great semester!

Rachel Verner
Email: rverner@wesleyan.edu
Phone: (860) 882-3500
Acceptable calling hours: 10:00 am to 10:00 pm
About me: I'm a sophomore from Canada, studying math and science with an eye on the 3-2 program. At Wes, I live in Sign House, play rugby, and work with counseling and psychological services. I love cooking, writing, photography, music, terrible reality TV shows, wearing shorts in the middle of winter, and anything to do with sports. I watch hockey games religiously, white water canoe whenever I can, and go snowboarding and dog sledding in the winter, although I sadly have yet to ride a polar bear to class. I'm still trying, though.

Note: If you call a teaching apprentice and the person does not answer, please leave a voicemail message identifying yourself as a student in Social Psychology.
Take a Test to Really Learn, Research Suggests

By Pam Belluck

Taking a test is not just a passive mechanism for assessing how much people know, according to new research. It actually helps people learn, and it works better than a number of other studying techniques.

The research, published online Thursday in the journal *Science*, found that students who read a passage, then took a test asking them to recall what they had read, retained about 50 percent more of the information a week later than students who used two other methods.

One of those methods — repeatedly studying the material — is familiar to legions of students who cram before exams. The other — having students draw detailed diagrams documenting what they are learning — is prized by many teachers because it forces students to make connections among facts.

These other methods not only are popular, the researchers reported; they also seem to give students the illusion that they know material better than they do.

In the experiments, the students were asked to predict how much they would remember a week after using one of the methods to learn the material. Those who took the test after reading the passage predicted they would remember less than the other students predicted — but the results were just the opposite.

“I think that learning is all about retrieving, all about reconstructing our knowledge,” said the lead author, Jeffrey Karpicke, an assistant professor of psychology at Purdue University. “I think that we're tapping into something fundamental about how the mind works when we talk about retrieval.”

Several cognitive scientists and education experts said the results were striking.

The students who took the recall tests may “recognize some gaps in their knowledge,” said Marcia Linn, an education professor at the University of California, Berkeley, “and they might revisit the ideas in the back of their mind or the front of their mind.”

When they are later asked what they have learned, she went on, they can more easily “retrieve it and organize the knowledge that they have in a way that makes sense to them.”

The researchers engaged 200 college students in two experiments, assigning them to read several paragraphs about a scientific subject — how the digestive system works, for example, or the different types of vertebrate muscle tissue.

In the first experiment, the students were divided into four groups. One did nothing more than read the text for five minutes. Another studied the passage in four consecutive five-minute sessions.
A third group engaged in “concept mapping,” in which, with the passage in front of them, they arranged information from the passage into a kind of diagram, writing details and ideas in hand-drawn bubbles and linking the bubbles in an organized way.

The final group took a “retrieval practice” test. Without the passage in front of them, they wrote what they remembered in a free-form essay for 10 minutes. Then they reread the passage and took another retrieval practice test.

A week later all four groups were given a short-answer test that assessed their ability to recall facts and draw logical conclusions based on the facts.

The second experiment focused only on concept mapping and retrieval practice testing, with each student doing an exercise using each method. In this initial phase, researchers reported, students who made diagrams while consulting the passage included more detail than students asked to recall what they had just read in an essay.

But when they were evaluated a week later, the students in the testing group did much better than the concept mappers. They even did better when they were evaluated not with a short-answer test but with a test requiring them to draw a concept map from memory.

Why retrieval testing helps is still unknown. Perhaps it is because by remembering information we are organizing it and creating cues and connections that our brains later recognize.

“When you're retrieving something out of a computer's memory, you don't change anything — it's simple playback,” said Robert Bjork, a psychologist at the University of California, Los Angeles, who was not involved with the study.

But “when we use our memories by retrieving things, we change our access” to that information, Dr. Bjork said. “What we recall becomes more recallable in the future. In a sense you are practicing what you are going to need to do later.”

It may also be that the struggle involved in recalling something helps reinforce it in our brains.

Maybe that is also why students who took retrieval practice tests were less confident about how they would perform a week later.

“The struggle helps you learn, but it makes you feel like you're not learning,” said Nate Kornell, a psychologist at Williams College. “You feel like: ‘I don't know it that well. This is hard and I'm having trouble coming up with this information.’… “even though in the short term it may seem like a waste of time… [retrieval practice is] going to last for the rest of their schooling, and potentially for the rest of their lives.”