Social Psychology

PSYCHOLOGY 260
WESLEYAN UNIVERSITY, FALL, 2015

Instructor: Scott Plous
TAs: Adela Fine, Samantha (Sam) Ho, Jeanne Li, Vivian Liu, Gabriella (Gaby) Montinola, Jessica (Jess) Zalph
CAs: Alyssa Glanzer, Tanya Horwitz, Angela Kuang, Jade Ransohoff
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/social15.htm](http://www.socialpsychology.org/courses/social15.htm)

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<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Location</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fine</td>
<td>Mon, 7:00 – 8:00 pm</td>
<td>103 Judd (x2312)</td>
<td>(415) 350-9571</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ho</td>
<td>Wed, 3:00 – 4:00 pm</td>
<td>103 Judd (x2312)</td>
<td>(860) 807-5684</td>
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<tr>
<td>Li</td>
<td>Fri, 1:30 – 2:30 pm</td>
<td>103 Judd (x2312)</td>
<td>(917) 826-5553</td>
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<td>Liu</td>
<td>Tue, 8:00 – 9:00 pm</td>
<td>103 Judd (x2312)</td>
<td>(860) 759-5845</td>
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<td>Montinola</td>
<td>Wed, 10:30 – 11:30 am</td>
<td>103 Judd (x2312)</td>
<td>(617) 840-5051</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>Zalph</td>
<td>Sun, 8:00 – 9:00 pm</td>
<td>103 Judd (x2312)</td>
<td>(646) 427-5160</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. 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, 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 readings (accessible via Moodle)

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 22</td>
<td>6 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norm Violation Assignment</td>
<td>October 13</td>
<td>10 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Web Interview Assignment</td>
<td>December 3</td>
<td>10 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15th Annual Day of Compassion</td>
<td>December 8</td>
<td>14 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 psychological factors 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'll 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 four 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 35 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 four 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 "Moodle" link at the top of the web syllabus. Within one week of turning in an assignment or receiving a scored exam, you should check Moodle 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>
</tr>
<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>
</tr>
<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 please don't bring 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:

> Wesleyan University is committed to ensuring that all qualified students with disabilities are afforded an equal opportunity to participate in and benefit from its programs and services. To receive accommodations, a student must have a documented disability as defined by Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the ADA Amendments Act of 2008, and provide documentation of the disability. Because accommodations may require early planning and generally are not provided retroactively, please contact Dean Patey in Disability Resources, North College, Room 021, or call 685-5581 for an appointment as soon as possible to discuss your needs and the process for requesting accommodations.

*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 8:** Introduction

- Myers Chapter 1—Introducing Social Psychology

**Thu, Sep 10:** The Social Construction of Reality

- Myers Chapter 2—The Self in a Social World

**Tue, Sep 15:** Interpreting Behavior ("Interpersonal Perception Task" DVD)


**Thu, Sep 17:** Attributional Biases

- Myers Chapter 3—Social Beliefs and Judgments

**Tue, Sep 22:** The Relationship Between Attitudes and Behavior

**DEADLINE:** Random Assignment Assignment Due

- Myers Chapter 4—Behavior and Attitudes (pp. 118-134)
Thu, Sep 24:  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](http://www.socialpsychology.org/testtips.htm)

Tue, Sep 29:  Deindividuation and Dehumanization ("Quiet Rage" Video)

- Myers Chapter 5—Genes, Culture, and Gender

Thu, Oct 1:  **FIRST EXAM**

Tue, Oct 6:  Obedience to Authority ("Obedience" Video)


Thu, Oct 8:  Conformity ("Candid Camera" DVD Clips)

- Myers Chapter 6—Conformity and Obedience

Tue, Oct 13:  **Persuasion: An Overview of Tactics**

**DEADLINE:** Norm Violation Assignment Due

- Myers Chapter 7—Persuasion
Thu, Oct 15: Compliance Techniques


Tue, Oct 20: Negotiation and Group Dynamics ("Abilene Paradox" Video)


Thu, Oct 22: Individual Versus Group Performance (Class Experiment)

- Myers Chapter 8—Group Influence

Tue, Oct 27: Fall Break!

Thu, Oct 29: Intergroup Relations

- Myers Chapter 9—Prejudice
**Tue, Nov 3:**  The Faces of Prejudice ("A Class Divided" and "Blue Eyed" DVDs)


**Thu, Nov 5:**  Group Discussion on Discrimination (20/20 DVD Clip on Prejudice)


**Tue, Nov 10:**  Aggression ("Bobo Doll" and "Does TV Kill?" DVDs)

- 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 12:**  SECOND EXAM

**Tue, Nov 17:**  Attraction and Intimacy

- Myers Chapter 11—Attraction and Intimacy
Thu, Nov 19:  Bystander Intervention ("Brother's Keeper" DVD)
  • Myers Chapter 12—Helping

Tue, Nov 24:  No Class Meeting (Instead, "Social Psychology Online")

Thu, Nov 26:  Thanksgiving Break!

Tue, Dec 1:  Peace and Conflict Resolution
  • Myers Chapter 13—Conflict and Peacemaking

Thu, Dec 3:  Clinical Applications of Social Psychology
  **DEADLINE:** Web Interview Assignment Due
  • Myers Chapter 14—Social Psychology in the Clinic

Fri, Dec 4:  ♥ The 15th Annual Day of Compassion ♥

Tue, Dec 8:  Tips on Leading a Happy Life ("This Emotional Life" DVD)
  **DEADLINE:** Day of Compassion Assignment Due
  • Myers Chapter 15—Social Psychology in Court

Thu, Dec 10:  Empathy—A Magic Bullet?
  • Myers Chapter 16—Social Psychology and the Sustainable Future

Sat, Dec 19:  **THIRD EXAM** [2:00 pm to 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.

Adela Fine
Email: afine@wesleyan.edu
Phone: (415) 350-9571
Acceptable calling hours: 11:00 am to 10:00 pm
About me: I am currently a senior psych major here at Wesleyan. I grew up in the inner Richmond district of San Francisco and went to high school across the Golden Gate Bridge in San Rafael. At Wesleyan, I work with Second Stage doing hair and makeup for various productions, including Into the Woods, In the Next Room, and the upcoming production of Sweeney Todd. In my junior year I studied abroad in Copenhagen, where I mainly focused on positive psychology. I love to cook and bake and am a former member of Wesleyan's Full House program house. I think that this semester of Social Psychology is going to be great, and I can't wait to get to know all of you!

Samantha Ho
Email: sho01@wesleyan.edu
Phone: (860) 807-5684
Acceptable calling hours: Noon to 8:00 pm
About me: Hi, everyone! My name is Sam, and I'm a senior majoring in psychology and art. A Taiwanese-American hailing from the llama-lands of Lima Peru, I'm passionate about anything related to Buddhism, design, and the karmic forces that drew us all to this class. On campus, you can find me mending books in Olin, working on my art thesis, cooking tofu, and listening to Ne-Yo. I took Social Psychology last fall, and it changed the way I see my environment and the myriad ways through which we interact and connect with one another. I hope this class will be as eye-opening for you—I'm super excited to be your TA!

Jeanne Li
Email: jli01@wesleyan.edu
Phone: (917) 826-5553
Acceptable calling hours: Noon to 10 pm
About me: I'm from New York City, where I attended a small public high school in Lower East Side Manhattan. I really enjoyed being part of a small high school community in which the teachers and TAs knew who I was, and that sense of community is something I want to help create in Social Psychology so that the large size of our class doesn't prevent us from getting to know each other. In addition to psychology, I'm interested in statistics and journal writing, and I hope to someday study abroad in Korea.
**Vivian Liu**  
Email: vliu@wesleyan.edu  
Phone: (860) 759-0476  
Acceptable calling hours: 10:00 am to 10:00 pm  
About me: Hello, everyone! This is Vivian from Taiwan. I am currently a sophomore who is thinking about a Psych-and-Something-Else double major. I enjoy reading (fantasy, mystery, but most importantly...YA), writing, and drawing in my free time. The only thing I know about my future is that I want to work on something related to child development—whether that means teaching, researching and experimenting, or writing children's books. Since Social Psych has been my favorite class so far, I hope you enjoy it as much as I do!

**Gabriella Montinola**  
Email: gmontinola@wesleyan.edu  
Phone: (617) 840-5051  
Acceptable calling hours: 10:30 am to 10:00 pm  
About me: Hi! My name is Gabriella, but feel free to call me Gaby. I'm a sophomore pursuing a Psych major, Education Certificate, and East Asian Minor. I was born and raised in the Philippines, which is known for its high levels of happiness relative to its low GDP. Living there has inspired me to always look on the bright side. I'm a big lover of fruits, especially mangoes and some others tropical ones that don't have an English translation. If there's one thing I'll never get tired of doing, it's learning new languages. I’ve been studying Japanese for two years now and hope to continue until I graduate so I can officially call myself bilingual! Call me if you ever need a buddy to watch a Studio Ghibli film or recite lines from *Friends*, because I’m a huge fan of doing both. I’m also huge on family—my favorite people to hang out with are often my cousins. Social Psych last year was a life-changing blast and a half. Welcome, welcome!

**Jess Zalph**  
Email: jzalph@wesleyan.edu  
Phone: (646) 427-5160  
Acceptable calling hours: Noon to 10:00 pm  
About me: Hey there! I'm Jess, a Government major in the class of 2016. I enjoy studying politics, history, education, and psychology. I'm also interested in animal rights, both from a legal and ethical point of view. Social Psychology is a wonderful course because it's applicable to many fields of academic interest, and even more so to daily life. Understanding this subject is as much about interpreting your own behavior as interpreting that of others: What are the roots of prejudice you feel? How much do you base your actions on trying to fit in with a group? Why are you attracted to the people you're attracted to? Not all the answers are comforting, but they're all fascinating, and whatever your goals are, a command of social psychology is valuable. I'm happy to help, so feel free to ask if you have any questions.

**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.”