

# Psy 221A: Introductory Social Psychology

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Psy 221 on the Web: <http://www.users.muohio.edu/mconnar/psy221.html>  
(please note, this URL is *not* on Blackboard or Sakai)

## Required text

Aronson, E., Wilson, T. D., & Akert, R. M. (2010). *Social psychology* (7th edition). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Prentice Hall.

## Course overview

This course is designed to expose students to the discipline of social psychology, which is the scientific study of how people come to understand individuals, groups, and themselves as social entities. Social psychological processes influence how we perceive, judge, remember, and behave toward people. These processes shape, and are shaped by, our social expectations, social roles, social goals, and social interactions.

Although it may seem that social psychologists merely study “the obvious” (e.g., attractive people are more persuasive than unattractive people), the field has made a significant impact both theoretically (e.g., theories about the formation of stereotypes and prejudice) and practically (e.g., how juries can make better decisions). Sometimes the research is based on observable phenomena and everyday intuition, but even in these cases, an understanding of the processes and limitations of lay knowledge is very important. And sometimes, social psychologists find that laypeople’s intuitions are wrong (e.g., you are more likely to get help with fewer, rather than more, people around you). In such cases, the contributions of social psychology are especially striking.

This course has many goals...

- First and foremost, students should learn about research findings and theories of social psychology.
- Also, students should understand the methods social psychologists use in their research and their rationale.
- In addition, appreciating these techniques will underscore the value of the scientific method and scientific reasoning in understanding our world.
- Finally, students should be able to apply the lessons of social psychology to everyday life. Social psychology is *always* operating in the real world. Why are some people more popular than others? How do corporations craft advertising campaigns to sell their products? Why is a person more likely to sabotage their best friend, relative to a complete stranger, in certain situations? Do subliminal cues affect our behavior? Do people really treat others differently because of their age, sex, or race, and if so under what conditions? How will political candidates use persuasion to earn votes? At the end of the course, students should be able to recognize these processes as they unfold in the world around them and understand why they happen and know their implications.

## Grades

Source	Points
Three in-term exams (250 points each)	750 points
Final exam (350 points)	350 points
Total Points	1100 points

Final grades will be determined by total points accumulated during the semester applied to this scale:

Points	Percent	Grade
1017 - 1100	93% - 100%	A
984 - 1016	90% - 92%	A-
951 - 983	87% - 89%	B+
907 - 950	83% - 86%	B
874 - 906	80% - 82%	B-
841 - 873	77% - 79%	C+
797 - 840	73% - 76%	C
764 - 796	70% - 72%	C-
731 - 763	67% - 69%	D+
687 - 730	63% - 66%	D
654 - 686	60% - 62%	D-
0 - 653	0% - 59%	F

The professor reserves the right to adjust the grading scale. If modifications occur, changes will only make it easier for students to get a better grade (i.e., the scale will never be adjusted against students). However, it would be unwise to anticipate that an adjustment will occur. Final grades are based on the final number of points earned as applied to the above grading scale, no exceptions. There is no end-of-semester negotiation period where students plea and barter for a better grade in the class. If students are dissatisfied with their performance in the class, discuss the situation with the professor early— don't wait until it's too late.

## Exams

Grades are determined by three in-term exams administered during the term and one final exam administered during finals week. Each in-term exam only covers material presented since the previous exam (i.e., they are not cumulative), whereas the final exam is cumulative and *also* emphasizes material presented after Exam 3. Each in-term exam, typically, will be comprised of 50 multiple-choice questions (each item worth 5 points). As a result, each in-term exam is worth 250 points. The final exam has more questions and is worth more points because it covers the last two weeks of class (not covered by any of the three in-term exams) as well as serves as a cumulative exam across the entire course. Students have more time (two hours) to take the final.

Because students can have a “bad day” (especially early in the course), each student's lowest in-term exam grade will be replaced by the average (i.e., statistical mean) of the student's best and worst in-term exams. For example, if a student gets a 150, 180, and 250 on the three in-term exams, the 150 will be replaced with a 200 (the average of 150 and 250). Grade replacement *only* applies to in-term exams and cannot be applied to the final exam. Also, a missed exam is scored as a 0. For instance, if a student missed the first exam (got a 0) and got a 180 and 250 on the next two in-term exams, the 0 would be replaced with a 125 (average of 0 and 250).

## Preparing for exams

In general (though these percentages are rough averages that will vary from exam to exam), question content will reflect 35% unique lecture material, 40% lecture-book overlap, and 25% unique book material. Questions will cover basic definitions, research findings, theory, and applications of social psychology to everyday life. Thus, for any given topic covered in the course, students should be able to (1) *define* what the topic is, (2) *describe an experiment* conducted to understand the topic, (3) *discuss what the topic says about social psychology theories* and how it relates to them, and (4) *describe or identify a real-world phenomenon* that illustrates the topic. Sample questions reflecting these themes for material assessed by Exam I are available on the course website.

Performing well on exams requires that students read book assignments as scheduled in the syllabus, take notes on the readings, attend class and take good notes, ask questions in class or by email about things they do not understand (either from lectures or the book), get help during office hours if they are unsatisfied with their performance, and go over exams with the TA if they need feedback about why they are not doing well.

Being successful in this class, college, and (hopefully) life isn't about cramming facts into one's head and spitting them out on demand. Instead, it is about developing skills to be an active learner who can acquire, digest, organize, elaborate, critique, and reflect on course material. Therefore, there aren't review sessions or providing class notes in this course. It's the students' responsibility to engage and master the course material. This is best accomplished by *active* involvement with the material (reading, taking your own notes, thinking about how you can apply the material to "the real world"). However, the professor and the TA are more than happy to spend time with students on a one-to-one basis to help them develop those skills – not only to "get a good grade" in class, but to help students develop skills essential for success in college and in life.

Therefore students should pay attention to key terms (indicated in the book margins, highlighted at the end of each chapter in the summary, or discussed in lecture), and be able to define each term, describe a scientific experiment discussed in class or in the book that demonstrated that concept, relate that topic to social psychology theories, and identify situations in everyday life where this phenomenon is revealed (see above). Students who adopt a lackadaisical approach to class (e.g., do not keep up with readings, miss classes, are inattentive *while* in class) tend to do *very* poorly (i.e., get Fs not Cs). In the 15-plus years that the professor has taught this class, approximately 10-12% of the class receives an F (even though *many* get As). There is no joy in seeing *any* student earn a bad grade, but students who fail to take the class seriously often do.

## Academic integrity

Both Miami University and the Department of Psychology are dedicated to providing a learning environment based not only on academic excellence but on academic integrity as well. In this course, it is expected that students will adhere to all Miami University guidelines regarding academic misconduct (see Chapter 5 of the *Miami Student Handbook: Academic Integrity* for details). Academic misconduct includes, but is not limited to:

- Submitting work (homework, papers, etc.) conducted for another course without professor approval
- Submitting the work of another individual or party (whether in part or in whole) as one's own
- Possessing prohibited materials during a test or quiz
- Providing or receiving assistance from another student without the professor's permission.

Engaging in academic misconduct can result in penalties ranging from a *minimum* of an F on the assignment to an F in the course, an "AD" signifying academic dishonesty on Miami transcripts, academic suspension, and expulsion from Miami University. Misunderstanding of appropriate academic conduct will not be accepted as an excuse for academic misconduct (see *Miami Student Handbook*, Chapter 5, Section 1.5.A). Please see the professor for clarification regarding any of the above policies. Students are also encouraged to meet with the professor if they suspect another student in the course has engaged in academic misconduct.

## **Class policies**

*Academic integrity:* Any act of academic misconduct (including, but not limited to, lying, cheating, plagiarism) will not be tolerated and will be punished to the fullest extent in accordance with Miami University policy on academic integrity (see *Miami Student Handbook*, Chapter 5, Section 1.5.A). Any evidence of academic misconduct by a group of students will be considered academic misconduct by all parties involved. The professor has *zero tolerance* for academic misconduct and will pursue every avenue of punishment available.

*Assignments:* Assignment due dates are posted in the syllabus. The professor reserves the right to alter the syllabus at any time as warranted. However, the professor will make such revisions at least one week ahead of a particular due date if it entails making assignments due at an earlier (rather than a later) date. Any alterations will be announced in class. Although such modifications will be communicated in advance, it is the student's responsibility to attend to these announcements. Students assume complete responsibility for missing alterations to the course.

*Special considerations:* In situations where special and documented circumstances require that a student not take an exam during a scheduled time (e.g., arrangements for students with learning disabilities, an official university obligation during class time, religious observances), special arrangements can be made with the professor. However, students must make these arrangements with the professor at the beginning of the semester and provide official documentation regarding the circumstances. Students who fail in their responsibilities (e.g., forget to schedule a test taking time) accept the consequences (e.g., fail the exam).

*Classroom conduct:* While in class, people are expected to conduct themselves in a respectful and civil manner. Students are encouraged to express their opinions and beliefs. It is quite another thing, however, to be disrespectful or rude to students or to the professor. It is fine to disagree with others and to express non-PC (politically correct) or non-mainstream views. However, bigotry and disrespect is unacceptable.

Relatedly, disruptive conduct (e.g., distracting laptop use, conversations during class) is unacceptable and students who disrupt class (either for their fellow students or for the professor) will be asked to leave class. Students who want to spend classroom time reading the paper, Facebooking, watching movies, playing videogames, talking to friends, or sleeping should stay at home.

*Course materials, recordings, and legal disclaimers:* Attending class, obtaining the textbook, and taking notes are each student's responsibility. Neither the professor nor the TA will lend out notes or books under any circumstances. If students plan on missing a class, ask classmates to borrow their notes to catch up on what was missed (to learn how to persuade others to do your bidding, read Chapters 7-8 right now).

The content of this course is the intellectual property of the professor and is covered by copyright law. The exams and handouts in this class are copyrighted. Any sale, reproduction, or retransmission of course-related materials (including exams or exam questions) is a violation of U.S. Copyright Law, and any parties (students or commercial enterprises) involved in such activities are subject to both criminal and civil prosecution. Students are allowed to provide or lend notes to fellow students, provided they do not financially profit from doing so. The commercialization of class notes, however, is strictly prohibited.

The professor provides students with the right to record the audio content of class for personal study purposes only. Students do not have the right to retransmit, post, share, or disseminate such recordings (e.g., upload to YouTube) without the professor's express approval. At no time is any student allowed to videotape or capture video content or images from class. Violating these policies will result in a student receiving a failing grade in the class and may subject the student to criminal and civil prosecution from the professor for copyright violation and from fellow students for violations of personal privacy.

*Exams and make-ups:* There are no make-ups for missing an exam for an unexcused reason. An unexcused absence is considered to be an absence where a student (1) did not obtain prior permission from the professor concerning the absence or (2) did not provide documented evidence justifying the absence. Valid documented evidence can be one of three things: (1) a signed note from a health care professional stating that the student was sick and unable to attend class, (2) a letter from a funeral home or clergy on their letterhead indicating that one attended a memorial service, or (3) a letter from the dean supporting one's absence. There are no exceptions to this policy. If students miss an exam, contact the professor as soon as possible to let him know about the situation — and use *multiple* methods, including e-mail and phoning.

If students miss an exam *for an excused reason*, they will take a make-up exam at a time to be scheduled by the student and the teaching assistant. This make-up exam will be an all-essay exam and will be graded by the professor or by the teaching assistant. The multiple-choice form of the exam is only administered once, at the prescribed class time. There is no make-up for the final exam (missing it results in a zero for the exam, not an incomplete in the class or a negotiated grade). Students cannot schedule a make-up exam or receive credit for a make-up exam until after they have received the professor's approval first.

If students miss any exam, they will receive a zero for it (and keep in mind that a student's lowest in-term exam score is replaced by the average of one's lowest and highest in-term exam grades).

All exams are closed book and closed notes. Students must bring identification cards and be prepared to present them to exam proctors upon request to verify their identity. Students must bring their own pencils (soft lead, #2) for the answer sheets. Students who wear hats, wear sunglasses, use personal electronic devices (e.g., iPods, smart phones, laptops), use devices capable of receiving and transmitting information, or operate mobile phones or other communications devices will not be permitted to take the exam. Students must stay in the auditorium during the exam. Students who leave the auditorium must submit their exam as completed; they will not be permitted to re-enter and continue with the exam. Students who anticipate using the restroom or needing a soda should do so before starting the test. Yes, these are all silly rules, but they are listed because of silly stunts tried in the past.

*Final exam schedule:* Please note that because of a scheduling conflict, the final exam is scheduled on a *different* day and time from the day and time published in registrar's schedule. The final exam will be administered on Monday, May 2, from 10:15 a.m. to 12:15 p.m. in 125 PSYC (the same room where class meets). If this time poses a scheduling conflict with another final exam, students must notify the professor and provide documentation of a final exam scheduling conflict in order to take the final exam at a *different time* on the *same day* (Monday, May 2). It is the student's responsibility to bring such conflicts to the attention of the instructor. Students should let the professor know about any final exam conflicts at the beginning of the semester. Students who do not address scheduling conflicts with the professor before the scheduled final exam will receive a zero if they fail to take the final exam even if a legitimate conflict exists.

*Incompletes:* Except for cases of documented medical or family emergencies, incompletes will not be given. There is no need for students to do badly in this class: the professor and TA will be available for meetings during office hours or by appointment, they will answer e-mail questions promptly, and students' lowest in-term exam is replaced by the average of their lowest and highest in-term exams. Deadlines for dropping classes and withdrawals are provided in the General Bulletin and the Academic Calendar information published by the Office of the Registrar. These resources provide Miami's official details regarding deadlines and university policies.

### Semester schedule

Assignments are due on the day listed. Reading assignments are from the Aronson et al. textbook. Unless otherwise indicated by a range of page numbers in parentheses, the entire chapter is assigned.

			Topic	Assignment
Week 1	Tu	1/11	Orientation to the course	
	Th	1/13	Introduction to social psychology	Chapter 1
Week 2	Tu	1/18	Social psychology methods	Chapter 2
	Th	1/20	Social cognition	Chapter 3 (50-62)
Week 3	Tu	1/25	Nonconscious social life	Chapter 3 (67-78)
	Th	1/27	<b>No class — Study Day</b>	
Week 4	Tu	2/1	Judgment and decision making	Chapter 3 (62-67)
	Th	2/3	Impression formation	Chapter 4 (83-94)
Week 5	Tu	2/8	Attribution	Chapter 4 (95-113)
	Th	2/10	<b>Exam 1</b>	
Week 6	Tu	2/15	The social self	Chapter 5
	Th	2/17	The motivated self	Chapter 6
Week 7	Tu	2/22	Attitudes	Chapter 7 (177-183)
	Th	2/24	Persuasion	Chapter 7 (183-206)
Week 8	Tu	3/1	Social influence	Chapter 8 (211-240)
	Th	3/3	Obedience and resistance	Chapter 8 (240-249)
Week 9	Tu	3/8	<b>No class — Spring Break</b>	
	Th	3/10	<b>No class — Spring Break</b>	
Week 10	Tu	3/15	<b>Exam 2</b>	
	Th	3/17	<b>No class — Study Day</b>	
Week 11	Tu	3/22	Interpersonal attraction	Chapter 10
	Th	3/24	Love, sex, and breakups	
Week 12	Tu	3/29	Helping others	Chapter 11
	Th	3/31	Hurting others	Chapter 12
Week 13	Tu	4/5	Group perception	Chapter 13 (387-408)
	Th	4/7	Implications of stereotypes and prejudice	Chapter 13 (408-417)
Week 14	Tu	4/12	Stereotype change	Chapter 13 (417-424)
	Th	4/14	<b>Exam 3</b>	
Week 15	Tu	4/19	Group processes	Chapter 9
	Th	4/21	Groups in action	
Week 16	Tu	4/26	Environment, health, and well-being	SPA Units 1 & 2
	Th	4/28	The law and social psychology	SPA Unit 3
Finals Week	M	5/2	<b>The Final Exam will be administered on MONDAY, May 2, at 10:15 a.m. in 125 PSYC (this is a different day and time than the published schedule)</b>	