

# Psy 730: Social Psychological Perspectives on the Self

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Professor: Allen McConnell  
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Office: 213 Psychology  
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Hours: TBA

Class meets in: 204 Psychology  
Meeting time: Tuesdays, 5:00 - 7:40 p.m.  
Course ID: 15663  
Webpage: [www.users.muohio.edu/mconnar/psy730-self.html](http://www.users.muohio.edu/mconnar/psy730-self.html)

## Course prerequisite

- Graduate standing in psychology or the instructor's permission

## Readings

- Course readings, available for photocopying in the Psychology Building (location, TBD)
- American Psychological Association (2001). *Publication manual of the American Psychological Association* (5th ed.). Washington, DC: Author.

## Course overview

To many, the notion that social psychologists would study “The Self” may seem surprising. Topics such as impression formation, conformity, group stereotyping, helping behavior, and group decision making may seem “more social psychological” than the self. However, the self is very social for many reasons. First, we often learn about ourselves just like we learn about other social entities, and as a result, those processes inform us about self-understanding. Second, others teach us about ourselves and who we are. Third, our happiness in life is grounded in a social context and is shaped by the influence that social agents have on us. Finally, social factors shape the formation, maintenance, and change of self-relevant knowledge.

During this seminar, we will explore many issues related to the self from a social psychological perspective. One semester will not afford us the opportunity to explore every self-related phenomenon; however, we will attempt to give several themes in-depth treatment and explore some classic and important controversies associated with “The Self.” The course format will be to have student-led discussions each week to examine and analyze readings from empirical research journals and edited volumes. The primary project will be a grant-proposal-style paper project due at the end of the semester.

Most of the success of this class rests with the students and their preparation. The format of this class is to have students lead discussions each week, with student facilitators determining how to best organize and facilitate discussion on the week's topics. Because this is a small class, contributing to group discussion is essential. Moreover, it is through the process of discussion and debate that one's research acumen becomes defined and sharpened. One of the major goals of this class is to help develop students' thinking and problem solving skills, and this is best accomplished by expressing their ideas in writing and class discussions.

## Grades

Discussion facilitation during the semester .....	20%	
Weekly reaction papers (4% per paper, 6 papers maximum) .....	24%	
Class participation (when not facilitating) .....	20%	
Grant proposal.....	40%	Due Monday, December 11

## Facilitating

During the semester, students will share in the responsibility of facilitating discussion (the number of times one facilitates and whether students facilitate on their own or in dyads will be determined based on class enrollment size). It is not the facilitators' responsibility to explain the readings to others or review the important points of each paper. Instead, their role is to provide a framework that is sensible for discussing topics. For example, facilitators may want to circulate questions via e-mail before class to pose questions of their colleagues. They might present an initial framework at the beginning of class (on the board or via overhead) to highlight common (or divergent) themes that run throughout the readings. There are no right or wrong ways to facilitate. The goal of facilitation is to provide structure and direction for fellow students during discussion, not *be* the discussion.

## Reaction papers

During the course of the semester, students will submit up to 6 brief reaction papers (2-3 double-spaced pages) describing their reactions to the week's readings during weeks that they do not facilitate class discussion. They must be typed, but they need not conform to APA style. This assignment is very open-ended and subject to great latitude in interpretation. Because some students specialize in different disciplines (e.g., clinical, cognitive psychology), they may want to "spin" the week's themes in a reasonable fashion toward their interests, which is fine. The goal is to make sure that students come to class not only with the readings read, but come to class having put some degree of thought into the implications of, and interconnections among, the readings. Each acceptable reaction paper contributes 4% to the overall grade. Students must submit reaction papers by e-mail attachment to the instructor before 5 p.m. of the day before class (i.e., by Monday at 5 p.m.). Please label the papers by your name and number (e.g., "Smith2.doc"). The instructor will return them at the beginning of class on Tuesday. Late reaction papers, regardless of the circumstances, will not be accepted.

## Grant proposal project

Students will submit a project by choosing a topic related to the self based on their own interests and developing a program of research in the form of a grant proposal. The topic need not be one that a student facilitated, though doing so may benefit some students. Unlike a typical research paper assignment, a grant proposal lays out several experiments in a programmatic fashion that develop a line of research to address a series of important stereotype-relevant questions. Although students are not be required to conduct the research they propose, the opportunity to develop a well-thought-out proposal should be helpful to those who wish to develop new lines of research. This project must take the form of a grant proposal — it cannot be simply a literature review or a single experiment. The instructor will be available to help students refine their ideas and suggest appropriate resources. The proposal will be written in accordance with the *APA Publication Manual*, though the format is very different from a traditional manuscript. Instead, it will correspond to a NIMH small grant proposal (R03 type). Additional details and guidelines will be provided during the semester. Topics must be approved by the instructor no later than Tuesday, November 28 (the project will face a 10% final grade reduction for each day beyond November 28 that a topic has not been approved). The proposal is due at noon, on Monday, December 11 (submitted to the instructor's mailbox, in paper form). Late proposals without documentation of personal emergency face a 10% reduction in the project's grade for day it is overdue.

## Reading List

### 8/22 — Organizational meeting

### 8/29 — No class

### 9/5 — No class

### 9/12 — The importance of the self

- Leary, M. R., & Tangney, J. P. (2003). The self as an organizing construct in the behavioral and social sciences. In M. R. Leary & J. P. Tangney (Eds.), *Handbook of self and identity* (pp. 3-14). New York: Guilford.
- Nisbett, R. E., & Wilson, T. D. (1977). Telling more than we can know: Verbal reports on mental processes. *Psychological Review*, *84*, 231-259.
- Snyder, M., Tanke, E. D., & Berscheid, E. (1977). Social perception and interpersonal behavior: On the self-fulfilling nature of social stereotypes. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *35*, 656-666.
- Steele, C. M. (1997). A threat in the air: How stereotypes shape intellectual identity and performance. *American Psychologist*, *52*, 613-629.

### 9/19 — The self in memory

- Kihlstrom, J. F., Beer, J. S., & Klein, S. B. (2003). Self and identity as memory. In M. R. Leary & J. P. Tangney (Eds.), *Handbook of self and identity* (pp. 68-90). New York: Guilford.
- Kihlstrom, J. F., & Klein, S. B. (1994). The self as a knowledge structure. In T. K. Srull & R. S. Wyer (Eds.), *Handbook of social cognition* (2nd ed., Vol. 1, pp. 153-208). Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Higgins, E. T., King, G. A., & Mavin, G. H. (1982). Individual construct accessibility and subject impressions and recall. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *43*, 35-47.
- Bargh, J. A. (1982). Attention and automaticity in the processing of self-relevant information. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *43*, 425-436.

### 9/26 — Self-regulation

- Carver, C. S. (2003). Self-awareness. In M. R. Leary & J. P. Tangney (Eds.), *Handbook of self and identity* (pp. 179-196). New York: Guilford.
- Baumeister, R. F., & Vohs, K. D. (2003). Self-regulation and the executive function of the self. In M. R. Leary & J. P. Tangney (Eds.), *Handbook of self and identity* (pp. 197-217). New York: Guilford.
- Higgins, E. T. (1997). Beyond pleasure and pain. *American Psychologist*, *52*, 1280-1300.
- Vallacher, R. R., & Wegner, D. M. (1987). What do people think they're doing? Action identification and human behavior. *Psychological Review*, *94*, 3-15.

**10/3 — Self-perception and cognitive dissonance**

- Dutton, D. G., & Aron, A. P. (1974). Some evidence for heightened sexual attraction under conditions of high anxiety. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *30*, 510-517.
- Zanna, M. P., & Cooper, J. (1974). Dissonance and the pill: An attributional approach to studying the arousal properties of dissonance. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *29*, 703-709.
- Cooper, J., & Fazio, R. H. (1984). A new look at dissonance theory. In L. Berkowitz (Ed.), *Advances in experimental social psychology* (Vol. 17, pp. 229-266). Orlando, FL: Academic Press.
- Fazio, R. H. (1987). Self-perception theory: A current perspective. In M. P. Zanna, J. M. Olson, & C. P. Herman (Eds.), *Social influence: The Ontario symposium* (Vol. 5, pp. 129-150). Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Fried, C. B., & Aronson, E. (1995). Hypocrisy, misattribution, and dissonance reduction. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, *21*, 925-933.

**10/10 — No class****10/17 — Group membership**

- Cialdini, R. B., Borden, R. J., Thorne, A., Walker, M. R., Freeman, S., & Slone, L. R. (1976). Basking in reflected glory: Three (football) field studies. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *34*, 366-375.
- Crocker, J., & Major, B. (1989). Social stigma and self-esteem: The self-protective properties of stigma. *Psychological Review*, *96*, 608-630.
- Major, B., Quinton, W. J., & Schmader, T. (2003). Attributions to discrimination and self-esteem: Impact of group identification and situational ambiguity. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, *39*, 220-231.
- Fredrickson, B L., Roberts, T., Noll, S. M., Quinn, D. M., & Twenge, J. M. (1998). That swimsuit becomes you: Sex differences in self-objectification, restrained eating, and math performance. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *75*, 269-284.

**10/24 — Multiple selves in memory**

- McConnell, A. R., & Strain, L. M. (in press). Structure and content of the self. In C. Sedikides & S. Spencer (Eds.), *The self in social psychology*. New York: Psychology Press.
- Showers, C. J., & Zeigler-Hill, V. (2003). Organization of self-knowledge: Features, functions, and flexibility. In M. R. Leary & J. P. Tangney (Eds.), *Handbook of self and identity* (pp. 47-67). New York: Guilford.
- Linville, P. W. (1987). Self-complexity as a cognitive buffer against stress-related illness and depression. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *52*, 663-676.
- McConnell, A. R., Strain, L. M., Brown, C. M., & Rydell, R. J. (2006). *The simple life: Spillover amplification and the benefits of being lower in self-complexity*. Manuscript under editorial review.

**10/31 — Self-esteem**

- Tesser, A. (2001). Self-esteem. In A. Tesser & N. Schwarz (Eds.), *Blackwell handbook of social psychology: Intraindividual processes* (pp. 479-498). Oxford, UK: Blackwell.
- Goldenberg, J. L., McCoy, S. K., Pyszczynski, T., Greenberg, J., & Solomon, S. (2000). The body as a source of self-esteem: The effect of mortality salience on identification with one's body, interest in sex, and appearance monitoring. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *79*, 118-130.
- Leary, M. R., Tambor, E. S., Terdal, S. K., & Downs, D. L. (1995). Self-esteem as an interpersonal monitor: The sociometer hypothesis. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *68*, 518-530.
- Hirt, E. R., Zillmann, D., Erickson, G. A., & Kennedy, C. (1992). Costs and benefits of allegiance: Changes in fans' self-ascribed competencies after team victory versus defeat. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *63*, 724-738.

**11/7 — Negative self-affect**

- Tesser, A. (1988). Toward a self-evaluation maintenance model of social behavior. In L. Berkowitz (Ed.), *Advances in experimental social psychology* (Vol. 21, pp. 181-227). San Diego, CA: Academic Press
- Spencer, S. M., & Norem, J. K. (1996). Reflection and distraction: Defensive pessimism, strategic optimism, and performance. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, *22*, 354-365.
- Tangney, J. P. (2003). Self-relevant emotions. In M. R. Leary & J. P. Tangney (Eds.), *Handbook of self and identity* (pp. 384-400). New York: Guilford.
- Wood, J. V., & Wilson, A. E. (2003). How important is social comparison? In M. R. Leary & J. P. Tangney (Eds.), *Handbook of self and identity* (pp. 344-366). New York: Guilford.

**11/14 — Self-motives**

- Tesser, A. (2003). Self-evaluation. In M. R. Leary & J. P. Tangney (Eds.), *Handbook of self and identity* (pp. 275-290). New York: Guilford.
- Crocker, J., & Park, L. E. (2003). Seeking self-esteem: Construction, maintenance, and protection of self-worth. In M. R. Leary & J. P. Tangney (Eds.), *Handbook of self and identity* (pp. 291-313). New York: Guilford.
- Steele, C. M. (1988). The psychology of self-affirmation: Sustaining the integrity of the self. In L. Berkowitz (Ed.), *Advances in experimental social psychology* (Vol. 21, pp. 261-302). San Diego, CA: Academic Press.
- Swann, W. B. Jr., Rentfrow, P. J., & Guinn, J. S. (2003). Self-verification: The search for coherence. In M. R. Leary & J. P. Tangney (Eds.), *Handbook of self and identity* (pp. 367-383). New York: Guilford.

**11/21 — Self-illusions**

- Langer, E. J. (1975). The illusion of control. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *32*, 311-328.
- Gilovich, T., Medvec, V. H., & Savitsky, K. (2000). The spotlight effect in social judgment: An egocentric bias in estimates of the salience of one's own actions and appearance. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *78*, 211-222.
- Epley, N., Keysar, B., Van Boven, L., & Gilovich, T. (2004). Perspective taking as egocentric anchoring and adjustment. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *87*, 327-339.
- Taylor, S. E., & Brown, J. D. (1988). Illusion and well-being: A social psychological perspective on mental health. *Psychological Bulletin*, *103*, 193-210.

**11/28 — Selves in the greater social context**

Markus, H. R., & Kitayama, S. (1991). Culture and the self: Implications for cognition, emotion, and motivation. *Psychological Review*, *98*, 224-253.

Cross, S. E., & Gore, J. S. (2003). Cultural models of the self. In M. R. Leary & J. P. Tangney (Eds.), *Handbook of self and identity* (pp. 536-564). New York: Guilford.

McConnell, A. R., Rydell, R. J., & Leibold, J. M. (2002). Expectations of consistency about the self: Consequences for self-concept formation. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, *38*, 569-585.

Brewer, M. B. (2003). Optimal distinctiveness, social identity, and the self. In M. R. Leary & J. P. Tangney (Eds.), *Handbook of self and identity* (pp. 480-491). New York: Guilford.

**12/5 — No class**

**12/11 — Grant proposal due by noon**