

Instructor: Tamara J. Ferguson, Ph.D.
Class Time: 3:30 - 6:00 pm TH (EDUC 487C)
Office: EDUC 499
Office Hours: T, Th (12-1), & by appt.
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GETTING TO KNOW YOU: I would appreciate each student preparing a two-paragraph “autobiographical” description. In this, please sketch your background (undergraduate major & minor(s), institution, date of Bachelor’s degree; if applicable, where/when you earned a Masters’ degree & topic of the thesis), graduate program in which you are enrolled, known or planned thesis and/or dissertation topics, major research interests, and intended career. This information is helpful to me in selecting particular research studies to cover in class. Please e-mail this to me no later than 1/29.

REQUIRED TEXTBOOK: Steg, L., Buunk, A., & Rothengatter, T. (Eds.). (2008). *Applied social psychology: Understanding and managing social problems*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. (see USU bookstore).

Each week, students will read and prepare questions about *one assigned chapter* from this text.

REQUIRED JOURNAL ARTICLES: Students will be devouring *several journal articles* per week and submitting discussion questions about each article. Bring to class a print copy of each week’s assigned articles and the organized list of discussion questions that your “discussion leader” will have emailed to you in advance.

COURSE CALENDAR: This calendar will appear as the very last section of the syllabus.

OVERVIEW OF COURSE REQUIREMENTS & POINT DISTRIBUTION

Your final letter grade in the course will be calculated as the percentage (out of 100) earned based on the following seven requirements:

Requirements	Percentage of Grade	Due Date
(1) Weekly textbook chapter questions and answers (Chapters 2-13; for each chapter, students prepare answers to its review questions).	20%	Email to Tam by Tuesday each week (midnight)
(2) Submission of journal article discussion questions. To receive full marks, questions should be of consistent high quality (1 for each article; approximately 4 articles per week x 13 weeks). May miss one week's worth of questions.	10%	Email to discussion leader by Monday each week (7 p.m. sharp)
3) Lead one in-class discussion of journal articles: Organizing thematically all discussion questions for one topic; emailing these to class. In class, providing an innovative & informative introduction of the topic & articles; facilitating a productive discussion of these.	10%	* Student's topic/week tba * Email organized list of questions to class by W of assigned week (12 noon sharp)
(4) Active & constructive in-class contributions. High participation rate across 12 weeks needed to receive full marks. May miss one week.	10%	See Calendar
(5) Rough-draft of "applied social psychology" (ASP) research proposal. Draft must include all sections of a typical empirical journal article, conforming to APA style & formatting guidelines. Estimated length: 20-25 pp. Attach hard copies (to be returned) of all consulted literature <i>or</i> provide reliable web address for each article.	10%	3/05 (students email to Tamara by midnight) 3/29 (Tamara emails brief feedback to each student by midnight)

Requirements	Percentage of Grade	Due Date
(6) Final draft of ASP proposal. Must pursue original research question(s) addressing real-world social problems, with valuable and clear-cut implications for assessment, therapy, prevention/intervention programs; individual, group, or organizational policy. Should demonstrate logical and valid derivation of the applied research question(s), hypotheses, and methodology from literature in experimental social psychology. Estimated length: 30-35 pp. (APA style & format).	30%	4/10 (students email to Tamara by midnight) 4/30 (Tamara emails final feedback to each student by midnight)
(7) Final exam covering the required textbook.	10%	Preferably 4/27

LOGISTICS: STUDENT PREPARATION & IN-CLASS MEETINGS

Submitting your assignments. Prepare all written assignments in Microsoft-WORD. *Consistently* name each file, as follows:

LastName_FirstInitial_Topic_Assignment.doc

Example pertaining to a file regarding the *person perception* topic that contains your journal article *discussion questions*:

Ferguson_T_PersPerc_DiscQs.doc.

Example pertaining to a file regarding a required *textbook chapter* containing your *short essay questions/answers*: Ferguson_T_Ch2_ExamQs.doc.

You *email* each assignment to the person or persons designated below.

Nature of weekly activities. Plan on these activities each week:

All students digest and take notes regarding approximately four journal articles (approximately 4 articles). Articles are obtained either from the course website *or* via an email from Tamara.

All students prepare *one* high quality discussion question regarding *each* article (approximately 4 questions).

All students email their discussion questions to the Discussion Leader (DL) by **Monday 7 p.m. sharp.**

[In the interim, all students *also* will be digesting *one* chapter from the required textbook. They answer the Review Questions at the end of each chapter, starting with Chapter 2 (Chapter 1 is not required). They compile answers to all review questions for a chapter into a WORD document. They email that document to Tamara by **Tuesday evening, midnight.**]

The DL thematically orders students' journal article discussion questions and rank-orders the themes from most-to-least innovative, interesting, invigorating. The DL compiles the organized questions into a document. S/he emails this document to everyone by no later than **Wednesday, 12 noon sharp.**

All students review the DL's document, thinking about *all* discussion questions and being prepared to address *all* discussion questions by the next day's class (Thursday).

All students bring printed copies of the articles, the DL's document, and notes about their answers to discussion questions to that **Thursday's class.**

Tamara lectures on the assigned topic in Th's class (1st half of class).

During 2nd half of class period, the DL first cleverly introduces the topic(s) covered in the journal articles, briefly summarizes each journal article, and then facilitates a discussion. All students are expected to play active roles in the entire class discussion.

COURSE ASSIGNMENTS: EXPECTATIONS

Journal article discussion questions. Students prepare *one* high quality discussion question for *each* journal article assigned for that week's topic. In their WORD document, they center their name & the topic. In the text's main body, they list the title of an article, question for that article, title of next article, question for that article, etc.

What is a high quality discussion question? I enumerate criteria to keep in mind while crafting each question. Of course you do *not* actually prepare a written document regarding any of these criteria. You should, however, at least keep some written notes to help prepare for your in-class participation.

Remember that science is the art of good & truthful story-telling. The person who tells the best story wins the prize! Your goal is to discern whether the story you just read is the *best* one that could have been told about the subject matter. Think of it this way: You've just read about a set of data. These *data* are the core of the story. The authors made sense of those data in a particular way (using a particular theoretical framework that makes certain assumptions about relevant questions to ask, the data to be collected, how to analyze those, what they mean, their relevance to real-world phenomena, and so forth). Your charge is to ask "Can I tell a completely different, yet equally compelling, story about these data? Can I explain the findings from a totally different perspective?" In essence, then, you want to *mentally* rewrite the story the authors told. Having done this, you'll automatically discover tons of good questions to ask about the article.

Another way to approach creating questions is as follows: Pretend the journal editor has invited you to submit a commentary on the article, because you are an expert in the field. Commentaries are *not* reviews that led the article to be published; the article *already* will have withstood the "review level" of scrutiny. Commentaries are to be *critical* and *thoughtful* extensions of the published research findings' meaning, validity, generalizability, and the like. To prepare a good commentary, the person first must demonstrate full understanding of the theory(ies) driving the research, previous findings in the area, the methodology, and the data analytic techniques used. Only *after* demonstrating comprehension at this level can commentators legitimately raise worthwhile questions about the research and offer meaningful extensions of it. Even though reviewers "passed off" on the article, it *is* okay to raise *legitimate* questions concerning each theory's validity, its applicability to the phenomena of interest; to specify doubts question ways in which the investigators operationalized constructs, conducted their data analyses; to question inferences drawn from the results, or claims of the authors about what their findings

demonstrate, or the findings' generalizability. Thoughtful commentators suggest the relevance of *competing* theories to the phenomena of interest, they suggest alternative interpretations of results, they ask "what if" questions (e.g., what if participants interpreted their task *in this way*?; if so, that means your results have shown X rather than Y).

AGAIN: Students email the *journal article discussion* document to the designated discussion leader **no later than 7 p.m. on the Monday** evening prior to the Thursday we will be discussing these articles in class.

Participation in class discussions. Although students are emailing to the discussion leader *only* their questions, they should prepare in advance *notes* regarding their *answers* to those questions. This will help you minimize hemming & hawing, or stumbling over your words, while verbalizing your answers during our in-class discussions!

As Dr. B. Tschanz emphasizes in his personality course, students in our 6510 class are responsible for contributing to the entire discussion and for digesting all journal articles. The actual class discussion should last about 60 minutes. This affords approximately 15 minutes of discussion per each journal article. All students should be prepared to give answers to *their* discussion questions *and* to comment on those of others. If the discussion leader (the DL) does not "randomly" call on students to solicit their input about other students' questions, I will intervene.

The DL: Roles in general. The DL is to fulfill *six* roles. Briefly enumerated, these are:

- Organizing and disseminating students' discussion questions
- Briefly introducing the *topic* area that the journal articles represent
- Briefly delineating the content of the journal articles
- Briefly criticizing the journal articles
- Leading a discussion of students' questions about the articles
- Giving feedback about the "quality" of each discussion question

To help shape the DL's thinking, note that my lectures always draw from, and focus on findings from, the *experimental social psychological literature*. My role is to sketch the important themes in that literature, after which I hone in on important research studies to illustrate how experimental social psychologists pursue evidence for particular themes. I will by no means have canvassed the entire area in any lecture!

The journal articles I assign are meant to illustrate specific studies in each week's general topic area. Although I try to avoid assigning "review" articles, there are some review articles in the list. In all cases, however, the articles (and lectures) represent the very tip of *one* of *several* deep icebergs representing the class session's topic area. This is a good approach *given* each DL's task. By assigning fairly specifically oriented research articles, this gives the DL (and students in general) the opportunity to practice & model a *critical* attitude toward a *well-delimited* set of theories, assumptions, and methodologies. Moreover, each DL (and students) gains practice in thinking through the logic of pretty specific methodologies and theories by *applying* them to real-world problems. Of course, there always is the risk that the specific articles chosen do not resonate to all students; at the same time, receiving the chance to focus on a topic of interest to them in students' research proposals helps to alleviate those misgivings.

The DL: Organizing & disseminating students' discussion questions. The DL will have *thematically* organized all students' discussion questions and *rank-ordered* the themes from most-to-least interesting (innovative, inspiring, etc.). The DL then is to prepare a WORD document, beginning it with the topic's name (e.g., Person Perception) and the DL's name. In this document, and starting with the most interesting theme:questions, the DL describes the *theme*, followed by the complete text of all discussion questions relevant to the theme. The DL needs to identify each discussion question by the submitter's (student's) name *and* to specify with which particular journal article each question is associated (e.g., by including an abbreviated title of the journal article). The DL continues in this fashion for the next most interesting theme:questions, until s/he has iterated through all submitted questions.

AGAIN: The DL emails to the class the *organized list of discussion themes:questions by no later than Wednesday at 12 noon sharp*.

The DI: In-class overview & critique of articles (10 min max). Near the beginning of each Thursday's discussion session, the DL is to briefly describe his/her understanding of the assigned articles. What were their main

points? Why, or in which ways, are these articles *important* to the more general topic area that I (Tam) presented in her lecture?

Find some fun ways of introducing this section of your presentation. At the *very end* of my description of all the DL's tasks, I provide examples of resources you might consult to aid your preparation.

Also, in a very informal, "off the top of your head" manner, identify any *specific problems* with the content of the articles. Specific problems could concern methodological details, obvious generalizability issues, or concerns with data analysis techniques specific to one research question or dependent variables. The DL should raise specific problems s/he observed. The DL also should raise those mentioned by students in their *discussion questions*. The discussion questions of relevance here likely will be ones of a relatively "nit-picky" nature. By addressing these specific matters in this portion of your "discussion," you can avoid needing to re-raise them later on during the general discussion. Also by doing this, you also are helping students better understand the articles *and* you are giving feedback to students about which questions were too specific or nit-picky to inform the later general discussion, which is intended to be more invigorating or inspiring.

NOTA BENE: Importantly, however, do *not* focus your overview or critique on the broader & more interesting questions students asked. *That* is the point of the more general discussion you will facilitate *later* in the session.

The DI: In-class discussion of articles' applicability to real-world problems. (10 min max). In this part of your presentation, the goal is identifying *real-world problems* to which you personally think the journal articles potentially are applicable. If I had to apportion how much time DLs spent preparing each of their appointed tasks, *this* would be the one requiring the greatest effort/time expenditure. Give several plausible examples of real-world problems. You should "draft" for the audience research questions, designs, and methodologies *extending* the research articles to those real-world problems.

Do *not* worry about being "correct" or precise. The important goal of this second set of questions (and answers) is to *practice, practice, practice* extending basic research principles to real-world issues. Think divergently and creatively!

Also, if you see problems with applying the journal articles to real-world issues, specify what those problems are! Obviously, here, you want to think through whether the theory(ies), assumptions of those theories, research questions, methodologies, or the results reported by (or alluded to by) the authors of the articles *are* potentially applicable to issues in our daily lives. Included in this part of your presentation should be thoughts about each article's applicability to particular "national" cultures, populations, age groups, genders, ethnicities only (and why you think each is a valid restriction).

The DL: Facilitating the discussion. The DL's role *also* involves facilitating the discussion session of our Thursday in-class meetings. This role is straightforward: You walk the class through each question from your "organized" list, calling on each pertinent student, asking them to *first* explain the rationale for posing the question, *then* to outline in broad brushstrokes their "answer," after which *all* students should be invited to (and are expected to) chime in with their ideas about the question.

One of the DL's roles is to ensure active participation by all. If the class shows little understanding of a question and its rationale, or provides sub-optimal input regarding these, the DL should encourage them to explain *why* they have so little input. At times, this might reveal a need for the author of the original question to elaborate on it a bit more in order to stimulate a deeper discussion.

At other times, this might teach us that the original question was too straightforward, or narrow, to inspire much discussion. In this case, I expect *both* the DL and the class as a whole to share input with the question's original author about ways of improving the question. All of this is *feedback* regarding the quality of students' discussion questions; based on this feedback, students should aspire to prepare "better" questions for the next class. [And, on this note, be aware that I'll place less grading emphasis on students' discussion questions during the first few weeks of class to give students the chance to "get the hang of" which kinds of questions to prepare. This should *not*, however, be taken as license to willfully submit lesser quality questions at *any point* throughout the semester].

I cannot emphasize enough the DL's role in providing *feedback* to the class about the quality of each discussion question. Do not shy away from playing this role. It is similar to the role many of you now play in other contexts (e.g., group discussions of ways in which your colleagues might consider improving their clinical skills). Giving constructive, helpful, and empathically motivated

feedback to colleagues is a skill on which all of you likely will need to draw later on in your actual profession. I realize we all shudder at the thought of “criticizing” another because we dislike hurting someone’s feelings and might risk some form of retaliation (shades of social psychology). *Trust me*: Colleagues who feel they can *trust you* would *much rather* hear any suggestions for improvement from you immediately after they might have performed sub-optimally than they would prefer receiving this input later on in time, via questionable routes (e.g., through the rumor mill), or that time, lack of information, and self-protective motives ultimately have greatly distorted.

I hope that our entire group, myself included, will endeavor to create a climate of mutual trust and cooperation that facilitates an *immediate* feedback system meant to help *all of us* improve! Of course, I won’t administer truth serums or bend arms to achieve this goal. You should feel free to withhold input regarding another’s contribution when you feel uncomfortable being kindly forthright about what you do or don’t understand, or feel needs improvement. When you do refrain from offering feedback, I do ask for you to self-reflect on the “where-fore’s and why-fore’s” of this reluctance. I think our class readings will help you identify contributors.

The DL: Use of resources. I encourage DLs to provide *creative* and *entertaining* discussions of articles and their applicability. You might be particularly entertaining and creative while first introducing the topic to the audience. Remember, however, entertainment or humor simply for their own sake are unacceptable (and will detract considerably from your grade).

Throughout any of your contributions, the goal is to make the material come alive, while maintaining a professional demeanor and avoiding insulting others. You *must* select materials of clear *academic* relevance to the topic, explicitly delineating their relevance either before or after presenting them.

DLs should consider incorporating one or more of the following as part of their presentations: They might prepare a PPT presentation summarizing for the class information about the topic that s/he has independently gleaned by completing a *few* outside readings about it. They might introduce the topic by showing a relevant video clip (obtained, for example, from YouTube). The DL could involve the class as participants in a brief replication of an important experiment representative of the topic. They might have the class complete, score, and discuss the meaning of their scores regarding a couple of measurement instruments representative of protocols used in this research area. The DLs could identify a passage from a novel, poem, or song that

poignantly captures the “gist” of certain topic-relevant phenomena, theories, or findings. The DL could read these aloud to the class, or ask several students (and Tam) to take turns reading aloud certain segments of them. *Audio only, or A/V, interviews* with social scientists, or with individuals whose experiences and/or work bear on social psychology, can be particularly engaging and revealing of a topic.

I am more than willing to help DLs identify resources to incorporate in their introductory materials. Be sure, however, to consult me *at least* one week, if not two weeks, in advance of your presentation.

There literally are *thousands* of online resources. You can locate the more obviously relevant ones by googling, for example, “teaching resources in psychology,” and then searching for sites specifically relevant to social psychology.

Here are a few examples of some of the better ones I personally use:

Jonathan Mueller’s CROW website, including but not limited to:

- <http://jonathan.mueller.faculty.noctrl.edu/crow/> (general)
- <http://jonathan.mueller.faculty.noctrl.edu/crow/activities.htm> (activities)

Social Psychology Network (including this website regarding online studies):

- <http://www.socialpsychology.org/expts.htm#listings>

<http://www.youtube.com> (video clips)

Sources of inspiration, for me, additionally include various television networks (e.g., PBS, NGC, Discover, Animal Planet, the History Channel), televised scientific series [e.g., NOVA, Scientific American Frontiers, especially that with Alan Alda; certain *Dateline* segments, *Frontier*], general-audience TV series (e.g., *House*, many of the not too over the top “survivor” type reality shows, plus *American Idol*), and radio networks or programs (e.g., NPR, Doug Fabrizio’s, Diane Rehm’s. *Science Friday*).

Of course, as long as you use these to illustrate a clearly relevant point, you should draw from online or televised humorous resources, such as the Onion, or the Skeptical Inquirer.

I do hope that DLs will read one or two journal articles to become more familiar with the assigned topic, relying on these to prepare their introductory statements. If working from home, and after connecting to the USU's library through its VPN server, you can access PsycINFO to download PDF copies. I, personally, often find Google Scholar to be of greater help than PsycINFO; Google Scholar often picks up on articles not easily targeted by PsycINFO! PDF copies of articles you've identified through Google Scholar's search engine can be found and downloaded, once again, via a connection to USU's library through the VPN server.

Required textbook assignments. Students read *one* chapter assigned from the required textbook concerning applied social psychology.

Last week, in class, we discussed the need for students to create their own questions regarding each chapter. After much consideration, I have decided to pilot test a *different procedure*, basing this pilot on students' answers to, and experiences in answering, the REVIEW QUESTIONS appearing at the end of each of the chapters 2 through 6. If this procedure yields excellent levels of comprehension by students, we will continue to implement it for the remaining chapters (7 through 13).

The procedure in effect for our pilot experiment is as follows: "Review Questions" appear at the end of each chapter. Students are to prepare comprehensive answers to each review question for a chapter. All answers should be conveyed in the student's own words, instead of the authors' words. By the word "comprehensive," I mean answers that provide all details from the chapter needed to sufficiently address the question being asked. Be sure to provide definitions of each concept, theory, or methodology to which a question refers.

With each answer, demonstrate that you can correctly apply the pertinent concepts, theories, or methodologies. To demonstrate this, give two concrete examples. The first concrete example may be based on one that the chapter authors provide. The second concrete example should be one that you have created. Ideally, your own example would either (a) derive from actual research experiences you *already* have accrued, or (b) be based on material learned from this course's lectures, journal article readings, and discussions. Examples of Type (a) likely will be prevalent regarding Chapters 2 through 4 of the book because you will not yet have received much exposure to this course's lectures or journal article readings. Starting with Chapter 5, however, I expect to see examples consistent with Type (b).

Email your chapter review question answers to Tamara each Tuesday, as per our course calendar. The first due date is **Tuesday, January 20th (midnight)** and pertains to **Chapter 2's review questions**.

By the following Tuesday after each chapter's answers are due, I will email each student feedback regarding the quality of their answers. As per other graduate courses in the psychology department, this feedback will be qualitative in nature. Each answer will receive one of three "marks," i.e., EXCEEDS EXPECTATIONS, MEETS EXPECTATIONS, or NEEDS CONSIDERABLE IMPROVEMENT. Should a student earn a majority of "needs considerable improvement" classifications regarding a chapter, s/he should consult with Tamara for feedback, either during her office hours or by appointment.

I encourage students to collaborate in learning this textbook's material. Effective collaboration would involve getting together to discuss each chapter's contents and helping each other understand the more difficult sections. Effective collaboration would not involve dividing up the review questions so that one student answers a few questions, another student answers the next few, etc., after which each student uses & presents colleagues' answers as their own.

The final exam will be based on Chapter 2 through 13's review questions, although I will change the format so that the question/answers are multiple-choice in nature. For all questions involving application of material to *examples*, I will choose these examples from material we have covered in class. Nonetheless, your preparatory efforts (including the examples you have created) will be of tremendous benefit to you in studying for the final exam.

The final exam likely will be given *early* in the week of final exams, or even the Friday before final exam week. This all depends on students' schedules and preferences. We can soon settle on the final exam week. The final exam will consist of approximately 10 multiple-choice questions per chapter x 12 chapters (120 questions total). All questions will be derived from the chapters' review questions. To prepare for the final exam, students are encouraged to share with each other the answers they gave to all chapters' review questions. This truly will be an excellent method of prepping for the final exam, although the exam will *not* be an exact duplicate of your review question answers.

Required writing assignment. In a separate document, I will outline expectations regarding the rough draft and the final draft of your applied so-

cial psychology research proposal. I will discuss details of this assignment in class on February 5th. Details of the assignment will be provided on the course website by no later than 1/29.

COURSE LOAD

Social psychology is an area pivotal to successfully pursuing most careers requiring the Ph.D. in psychology and Psychology 6510 is students' only formal opportunity to gain working knowledge in this broad specialty area. I have carefully selected course readings and created course assignments that are demonstrably representative of nationwide graduate courses in social psychology *and* that fulfill relevant APA accreditation requirements.

Hence, as with any graduate-level course, Psychology 6510 is rigorous, as well as being time- and energy-intensive. Individual differences in reading comprehension and writing skills prevent me from stipulating, upfront, how many hours/week each student will need to set aside for this course. As a general rule of thumb, and excluding the time spent in class, students should plan to devote at least *9-to-12 hours to the course each week*. Moreover, during weeks when you are responsible for organizing and leading the discussion, you should *add at least another 2-3 hours*.

COURSE OBJECTIVES (Desired Outcomes)

Summary of Course Objectives

By the end of the semester, students will ...

- have an understanding of the practical and historical roots of social psychology.
- be able to knowledgeably discuss what the literature contributes to understanding, and helping to reduce, many of the contemporary problems facing us today.
- have actively applied principles of social psychology to several specific problems, including developing feasible, implementable, and scientifically testable intervention or prevention protocols.
- have expressed these applications in several professionally prepared written & oral products.

Detailed Course Objectives

1. *Learning the content fundamentals:* Students will demonstrate a working knowledge of social psychology's basic theories, methods, and findings, and they will demonstrate abilities to critically apply them to a wide spectrum of problems in areas, such as physical & mental health, everyday decision making (e.g., in the law, consumer purchasing decisions), the environment, business & larger institutions, and education).
2. *Understanding social psychology's experimental and applied research methods:* The key objective here is demonstrating an ability to examine and explain behavior through the lens of a social psychologist. Additionally, you should be able to critically evaluate common sense intuitions about social psychological phenomena, explaining *why* these intuitions exist (e.g., their functions) and suggesting methodologically sound ways of assessing these intuitions' validity.
3. *Professional development:* Why would social psychology be one of the most heavily covered areas covered on exams, such as the GRE subject exam, or various professional licensing exams? It is because of this field's recognized relevance to virtually *any* specialty and career trajectory within psychology. Insights gleaned from studying social psychology will help strengthen and build the contributions you make in the future to your chosen career and to your clientele, be these individuals struggling in their own personal lives, or be they institutions intent on improving the lives of many. Knowing the fundamentals of human social motivation, cognition, motivation, influence, and behavior, will help you to thrive in, and enjoy, your chosen specialty.
4. *Personal development:* Social psychology is relevant to your own personal social interactions and relationships. Becoming intimately familiar with the field should help you better understand problems you currently face, or might be at risk of confronting.

FOCUS OF THE COURSE

Social psychology is a large and diverse field that psychologists and sociologists have pursued since the late 1800's. Exposing students to the entire field in a 3-credit class

would be analogous to covering all of clinical, counseling, & school psychology, or experimental and applied psychology, in only one graduate course. Instead of canvassing the entire field, this course provides an overview of *selected* classic and contemporary foci in *experimental* (basic) and *applied* social psychology.

This semester students will internalize basic and applied knowledge and mechanisms in social psychology. Our objective is to use this information in two fundamental ways. First, we will study mechanisms and processes known to characterize social perception, cognition, motivation, and interaction. Second, we will apply this knowledge to identifying real-world problems, suggesting feasible means of solving or reducing them, and evaluating these efforts' merits.

Because “problems” tend to be negative, many disciplines within psychology, including social psychology, historically have adopted a negative view of human nature and its potential for change. As such, we will examine fields of social psychological study depicting this pessimistic stance, including prejudice & discrimination, sexism & racism, aggression & violence, self-serving tendencies, self-defensive biases, & downright selfishness. Recently, however, the positive side of human existence, including its sociality, has been rediscovered. If time permits, we will explore individuals' and groups' more positive proclivities, including helping & altruism, morality, apologies & forgiveness.

The course's central themes regarding *basic* (aka *experimental*) *social psychology* are social cognition & emotion, social influence, & social interaction. Of the diverse classic subject areas¹ illustrating these themes, I focus specifically on (1) person perception, the self & identity, attitude formation & change, stereotyping (social cognition); conformity, compliance, & obedience (social influence); prosocial and aggressive behavior (social interaction). In addition, I devote two weeks of the course to a relatively hot area of study in social and general psychology, namely the topic of *emotions*. Interwoven throughout many sessions are easy to understand readings illustrating two additional new areas, namely, social evolutionary and social neuroscience perspectives.

Social psychology, as a basic and applied science, entails its own set of unique research methodologies and a variety of specific content areas. We, therefore, also will cover this field's innovative methodological tools, including experimental design in basic social psychology and behavior-focused intervention in applied social psychology. We will canvas the numerous competing theories proposed in the broad basic

¹ Not covered in the lectures or readings are classic areas, such as decision-making, leadership, interpersonal attraction, close relationships, or equity & justice. Students interested in these topic areas are *welcome* to focus their research proposal on one of these topics, and I would be happy to recommend essential readings.

areas pertaining to processes of social perception, cognition, motivation, and behavior, and learn the results of critical experiments meant to put these ideas to test. While exploring this area's foundations, we will discover their application to everyday problems in the realms of decision making & judgment, the legal system, cultural diversity and acculturation, education, environmental problems, gender issues in work & organizations, physical health & illness, mental health, modern organizations, and politics.

RULES & POLICIES

Course-specific rules regarding penalties for late assignments are specified earlier in this Syllabus. Students are responsible for knowing institutional rules regarding FERPA, academic honesty & the honor code (e.g., cheating, plagiarism), and its myriad academic policies. Do not violate the honesty or honor code in any way, including inadvertently borrowing any person's words or ideas without proper credit. Violation of the academic honesty & honor code is associated with severe penalty, ranging from an "F" in the course to expulsion from the university. If you need a refresher on any rules or policies, please consult USU's Spring 2009 Schedule of Classes. For your convenience and fair warning, quotes from that bulletin are included on the 6510 course website.

COURSE PREREQUISITE

Psychology 6510 is supposed to have an undergraduate course in social psychology as a prerequisite. The graduate programs and, therefore, entrance requirements and student backgrounds that this course "services" are so diverse, however, that I do not enforce this prerequisite. Those of you who find yourselves struggling with the course material should consult with me, as I am happy to recommend background reading material to you that will not be an overly burdensome chore to consume and that should help lessen comprehension difficulties.

The widely ranging background and interests of students in the course are both a blessing and a curse. Because of this diversity, we all will learn valuable information from the other. During class participation students should be sensitive to the diverse backgrounds and interests of their cohorts. Although I greatly encourage application of the material to each student's interests and background, I stress the avoidance of discussions that presume too much prior knowledge of any field; we also should minimize discussions that focus at

length, or too specifically, on any one student's area of interest or preferred paradigm.

COURSE CALENDAR & READINGS

Students already have a course calendar. This calendar will be revised by 1/22 to reflect three changes: (a) the *Tuesday* midnight due date of answers to each required textbook chapter's review questions. (b) abbreviated titles of each assigned journal article, and (c) the DL assigned to each weekly topic.