



SYLLABUS

SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY

Course instructor: Fatos Selita

Contact Hours: 40

Class time: Thursday 2.00-5.00pm

LONDON, UK

COURSE DESCRIPTION

The purpose of this course is to introduce you to the field of Social Psychology. Social psychology is the scientific study of the way in which people's thoughts, feelings, and behaviors are influenced by the social context—real or imagined. Social psychology seeks to understand individuals' subjective experiences and the way those experiences impact our behavior. We will discuss topics such as how we come to know and understand ourselves, how attitudes are formed and influence our behavior, and how groups influence our thoughts and actions. By the end of the course, you will be able to describe and discuss influential theories in the field and the major findings related to them.

This course will also introduce you to research in social psychology. You will also acquire the skills to extract information from research and learn how to critically evaluate the scientific process. Although this course will specifically focus on the understanding and application of psychology research, mastering these skills will allow you to be a better consumer of research across the behavioral sciences.

Together, this course will provide you with the skills to evaluate different social psychological theories while paying attention to the practical implications of these ideas in our lives.

You will learn this information in a combined lecture/discussion format. Each week will include a lecture followed by a seminar discussion of a primary source research article. Please be prepared to actively engage with this material and your colleagues in class, be open to new ideas, and relate the ideas and methods you learn in this course to your everyday experiences.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

The aims of this course are to familiarize you with the concepts, theories, and methods of social psychology and to help you recognize the influence of the environment on behavior, thoughts, and feelings.

Expected Learning Outcomes:

- Learn about important theories and research findings in social psychology
- Learn about how social psychology uses science to create new knowledge
- Learn how to critically read and evaluate scientific arguments.
- Become a more thoughtful consumer of research in your daily life
- Be able to identify real-world applications of Social Psychology research.
- Develop your skills as a critical thinker about all topics, not just psychology

INSTRUCTIONAL METHODOLOGY

The sessions combine introductory lectures, discussions and group work. Students will be expected to actively prepare for all classes. The classes are highly participative.

COURSE READING

RECOMMENDED TEXTS

- Social Psychology, 4th Edition. Eliot R. Smith, Diane M Mackie, Heather M. Claypool. Psychology Press. ISBN-13: 978-1848728943
- Oedipus Rex in the Genomic Era. Human Behaviour, Law and Society. Kovaš, Y. & Selita, F., (2021). Palgrave Macmillan. ISBN 978-1-349-96048-4
- Journal Articles

METHOD OF EVALUATION (GRADING)

The course will be evaluated on the following 4 assessments:

1. Group work and presentations, individual contributions, in the form of unstructured debate at the Speakers' Corner (15% of the grade): Detailed instructions will be given during the previous session.
2. Short Test (30% of the grade): You will be asked to provide short explanations for 8 concepts covered in first 5 sessions. The 8 concepts will be chosen from a list of 20 concepts taken from the text, lecture, and the supplemental readings (if applicable) that you will be required to revise. The test will take place after week 6 and will last for 1 hour.
3. Class Participation (20% of the grade): To get participation points, you need to participate, meaning that attending the sessions is a prerequisite. In addition, you need to be active in discussions and do the in-class exercises.
4. Workshop Exercise (group work, individual submissions) (35% of the grade). Workshop: Using Social Psychology for the Benefit of Society.

COURSE SCHEDULE: Thursday, 2-5pm; April 2 – June 4, 2026

Note! Reading ahead of class is important for the in-class exercises

Week 1, Apr 2, Introduction to Social Psychology

Textbook Reading: Smith, Mackie, & Claypool, Chapters 1 & 2.

Other preparation:

- Chapter 1, pages 1 – 14. Chapter 2, pages 24 - 53; *The Role of Ethics and Values in Research*, 47 - 51.

Week 2, Apr 9, Decision making

Reading.

- Kovas and Selita. *Oedipus Rex in the Genomic Era: Human Behaviour, Law and Society*. Chapter 3. <https://link.springer.com/book/10.1057/978-1-349-96048-4>

Week 3, Apr 16, Freedom of speech. Visit to Speakers' Corner

Reading.

- Aniceto Masferrer 2023. *The Decline of Freedom of Expression and Social Vulnerability in Western democracy*. Int J Semiot Law. www.Doi.org/10.1007/s11196-023-09990-1.
- Noel Yaxley. 2022. *Gone to Rot. Free speech in Britain is losing ground to the "right" not to be offended*. <https://www.city-journal.org/article/gone-to-rot>
- Selita, Fatos. 2019. *Improving access to justice: community-based solutions*. Asian Journal of Legal Education, 6(1-2), pp. 83-90. <https://research.gold.ac.uk/id/eprint/26640/>

Week 4, Apr 23, Biases

Reading:

- Editorial: Sergio Da Silva et al. *Highlights in psychology: cognitive bias (a summary of resources)*
- Vincent Berthet, 2021. *The Impact of Cognitive Biases on Professionals' Decision-Making: A Review of Four Occupational Areas*. doi: 10.3389/fpsyg.2021.802439.
- Asuka Kaneko et al. *Cognitive and Affective Processes Associated with Social Biases*.

Week 5, Apr 30, Social Influence: Culture & Religion. Visit to Neasden Temple

Visit to BAPS Shri Swaminarayan Mandir (Neasden Temple).

Reading:

- Collette, T., & Miller, R. L. (2019). *Social influence: A cross-cultural perspective*. In K. D. Keith (Ed.), *Cross-cultural psychology: Contemporary themes and perspectives* (2nd ed., pp. 549–574). Wiley Blackwell. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781119519348.ch27>
- Helen C. Harton and Ian M. Beatty. *The bidirectional relationship between social influence and culture* <https://doi.org/10.4337/9781035309672.00010>

Note! Reading ahead of class is important for the in-class exercises

Week 6, May 7, The Self & Social Identity

Textbook Reading: Smith, Mackie, & Claypool, Chapters 4 & 6.

Other preparation:

- Kovas and Selita. *Oedipus Rex in the Genomic Era: Human Behaviour, Law and Society*. Chapter 3. <https://link.springer.com/book/10.1057/978-1-349-96048-4>

Week 6, May 8, Friday, 10.00-16.00*: Co-Curricular Workshop, Interdisciplinary Workshop 'Individual differences and Justice'; and Visit to Welcome Collection

The workshop consists of the following elements:

- **Presentation by Professors Selita and Kovas**
- **Mock Trial:** students will act in different roles (judges, lawyers, expert witnesses, jury etc.) putting into action the material from the entire course.
- **Walking excursion** (Royal courts of Justice, Inns of Court).

Reading

- Kovas, Y. & Selita, F., (2021). *Oedipus Rex in the Genomic Era. Human behaviour, law and society*. Palgrave Macmillan. ISBN 978-1-349-96048-4

Visit to Welcome Collection (replaces the session on Week 9)

- The Session will take place at the Welcome Collection. 183 Euston Road, London NW1 2BE. <https://wellcomecollection.org/> Meeting at 5pm in the Welcome Collection Lobby. - The session includes exploration of the collection, assignment and a workshop.
- This session replaces the session on Week 9.

Week 7, May 14, Group Influence and Conformity

Textbook Reading: Smith, Mackie, & Claypool, Chapter 9. Stanford Prison Experiment Movie.

Week 8, May 21, Relationships, Intimacy and Attraction. *Presentations*

Textbook Reading: Smith, Mackie, & Claypool, Chapter 12.

Other preparation:

- Chapter 12, pages 438 - 467, *Attachment styles*, page 461 - 464.
- Campbell, L., & Stanton, S. C. (2019). *Adult attachment and trust in romantic relationships*. *Current Opinion in Psychology*, 25, 148-151.
- Finkel, E. J., Simpson, J. A., & Eastwick, P. E. (2017). *The psychology of close relationships: Fourteen core principles*. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 68, 383-411.
- Reis, H. T., & Aron, A. (2008). Love: *What is it, why does it matter, and how does it operate?* *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, 3, 80-86.
- Reis, H. T., & Gable, S. L. (2015). *Responsiveness*. *Current Opinion in Psychology*, 1, 67-71.

Note! Reading ahead of class is important for the in-class exercises

Week 9*, May 28 – No class session on this date.

This class session takes place in week 6 – Welcome Collection Workshop. Use this week to prepare for the final group presentations in week 10.

Week 10, Jun 4, Workshop on Psychology and Society. Assessment.

Workshop: Individual contribution to Workshop on Psychology and Society.

Reading: Revise all materials.

ATTENDANCE

All classes, whether on or off-site, are obligatory. See Attendance Policy for details.

GENERATIVE AI

Students can use GenAI tools in this class to help locate studies in the area. They should however reserve thinking to Self; and *must* reserve content to Self. Use of GenAI content will affect your grade and can amount to academic misconduct (more information can be obtained from the GEO London office).

ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT

Students are prohibited from committing or attempting to commit any act that constitutes academic misconduct. By way of example, students should not give or receive (or attempt to give or receive) unauthorised help on assignments or examinations without express permission from the instructor. Students should properly acknowledge and document all sources of information (e.g. quotations, paraphrases, ideas) and use only the sources and resources authorized by the instructor. If there is any question about whether an act constitutes academic misconduct, it is the students' obligation to clarify the question with the instructor before committing or attempting to commit the act.