

## Psychology 104: Introduction to Social Psychology

Professor Nicholas Christenfeld

Office Hours:     Tuesday 12:37-? The Grove -- See Below  
                           Thursday 10:00-10:52 or by Appointment, McGill 5318

TAs:   Kadimah Elson:   Thursday 2:00-4:00, 4114 McGill  
        Britta Larsen:    Tuesday 2:00-4:00, 3340 McGill

**Course Requirements:** Grades will be based on two (fairly short) papers and two exams. Class participation is encouraged, although it will not affect grades, due to limits of instructor's memory.

**Exams:** Both exams will be multiple choice. They will be based on roughly equal parts of the reading and the lectures. Satisfactory performance is unlikely without attention to both. The final will be cumulative to the extent that it includes concepts and principles, but not details, from the first half. The readings will not always coincide with lecture material, although this will happen more often than chance. However, some topics from the book will not make an appearance in lecture, and some lecture topics will not be mentioned in the book.

**Papers:** The first paper is due a week and a half before the midterm and the second two weeks before the final. Each paper must be under four pages (three would be a good target, and two would make the grader happy). A detailed description of the assignments is attached. For the first paper you will be asked to propose a way to answer the question of whether people are more emotional when they are tired. The second paper will involve proposing a way to study a social psychological phenomenon of your choice.

**Social Social Hour:** After class each Tuesday the Professor and TAs will wander over to the Grove, where they will sit in the sun and hope that students drop by to chat. This is intended to be an informal time, so students should not feel that they need real questions (or complaints) to come and join in.

<u>Date</u>	<u>Lecture</u>	<u>Reading</u>	<u>Personal Growth Opportunity</u>
<b>Classics of Social Psychology</b>			
Sept. 27	Methods of Social Psychology		
Oct. 2	Approach-Avoid Conflicts	Chapter 2	
Oct. 4	Gender Differences and Relationships	Chapter 10	
Oct. 9	Social Facilitation & Social Loafing	Chapter 9 (270-296)	
Oct. 11	Social Comparison	Chapter 5	
Oct. 16	Group Polarization & GroupThink		
Oct. 18	Cognitive Dissonance	Chapter 6	FIRST PAPER
<b>What Controls Our Behavior?</b>			
Oct. 23	Attribution & Its Shortcomings	Chapter 4 (101-123)	
Oct. 25	Emotion & Misattribution		
Oct. 30			MIDTERM
<b>The Dark Side</b>			
Nov. 1	Compliance & Conformity	Chapter 8	
Nov. 6	Obedience (& Movie)		
Nov. 8	Aggression	Chapter 12	
Nov. 13	Prejudice	Chapter 13	
<b>Social Psychology &amp; The Real World</b>			
Nov. 15	Eating & Smoking		
Nov. 20	Psychology & Health	Chapter 15	
Nov. 27	Lie Detection & Eye Contact	Chapter 4 (90-101)	
<b>Social Cognition</b>			
Nov. 29	Heuristics & Game Theory	Chapter 9 (296-303)	SECOND PAPER
Dec. 4	The Unconscious		
Dec. 6	The Self	Chapter 5	
Dec. 12			FINAL EXAM (11:30-2:30)

All Readings are from Aronson, Wilson & Akert's *Social Psychology* (6th Ed., Prentice Hall, 2007)

## Paper Assignments

The purpose of these papers is to give students a chance to design an experiment to address some issue of human behavior. For the first one the topic is determined, but for the second you will propose a way to study a topic of your own choosing. More details about these papers will also be provided in lecture.

**First Paper:** For the first paper you will, in three (double-spaced, normal-margined) pages, describe how you could answer the question of whether people are more emotional when they are tired. What measures would you take, what conditions would you set up, what subjects would you use, what would the procedure be? You should also suggest what information your study could provide as well as what its limitations are. Enough details should be provided so that it is clear what you would do and how you would set about it, but not so many details that the reader gets bored or the paper grows past four pages. There are many reasonable ways of determining whether people are more emotional when tired, and you should pick one rather than trying to include every idea you have.

You do not need to carry out the study, go to the library, or even look at a book. You do not need to write an elaborate introduction or pretend you have done the study. All you have to do is suggest a reasonable and feasible way of addressing, from a social psychological scientific perspective, this topic. We are looking for some creativity and original thought and some indication that you understand the basic methodology of the field. Bear in mind that after reading a few hundred of these we will not take well to any form of excess verbiage. Do not have sentences such as “Studying whether people are more emotional when tired is a very important issue for society” or “More research is needed on this topic.” Keeping the paper restricted to the bare essentials in an almost telegraphic style will be appreciated. It should be possible to mention all the essential elements in about two pages, and people doing so will be duly rewarded. This paper is due in class on October 18th.

**Second Paper:** For this paper you will propose a way to study empirically a claim that is made somewhere in the media. Lots of claims that are made, especially in advertising, are scientifically testable, but are not based on any actual evidence. For example, one airline suggests that it is the friendly airline. Anti-smoking activists claim that smoking makes people look older than they actually are. How would one go about actually seeing if these claims are true? What sort of an experiment or study could one design to evaluate these claims? What control groups are needed? How would one get subjects, and how would you decide which condition they should be in? What would the dependent measures be? For your paper you should pick some claim that has been made without any actual evidence, indicate at the start of the paper what the claim is, who made it and where, and then propose a way to see if it is really true. The key is to think of an issue that is testable -- neither too big and unwieldy nor too small and trivial. That is, don't pick a topic such as ending war and hunger or whether shoe size is associated with height. As with the first paper, in about three pages, address such factors such as the variables, control groups, conclusions and limitations. This paper is due in class on November 29th.