Psychology 604: Attitudes and Social Influence  
Fall, 2012

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Course WEB Page:  
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Class meets from 6:00 PM-9:20 PM on Tuesdays at the Midway location, Room 41

Catalog Description

Psyc 604: Attitudes and Social Influence (4 credits): This course examines theory, research and application in attitudes and social influence. Topics covered include attitude formation, attitude measurement, persuasion and attitude change, group and normative influences, cognitive consistency influences, attitude strength and resistance to influence.

Competence Statement

The student will understand the concepts, theories, and practices associated with attitudes and social influence well enough to apply this knowledge personally relevant contexts at an intermediate to advanced level.

Extended Course Description

This is an applied social psychology seminar on attitude theories and social influence. The study of attitudes has a long history within social psychology and was considered the "most distinctive and indispensable concept in contemporary American social psychology" (Allport, 1935), with some texts actually defining social psychology as the scientific study of attitudes (Bogardus, 1931; Folsom, 1931). As Social Psychology developed in the 1940's, Kurt Lewin developed what he called “Action Research.” Action research was applied to a wide variety of problems including ethnic group relations, community development, and organizational behavior. Action research often included social influences geared toward changing attitudes and behaviors, accompanied by an evaluation or assessment of the targeted outcomes. Lewin’s work was the foundation for much of the field of social psychology.

While the popularity of "attitudes" and “social influence” has waxed and waned within theoretical social psychology, applications of social psychology have always emphasized attitudes, and related topics such as knowledge, motivation, and behavior change. Furthermore, educational programs, mass media campaigns, and many forms of persuasion are undertaken to influence people to take action or adopt new ways of thinking, feeling, and behaving.

This course will cover theory and concepts related to attitudes and social influence. Primary topics to be covered include attitude formation, attitude measurement, attitude-behavior relations, consistency theories, persuasion, social power, group influences, and resisting influence. Throughout the course, students will discuss applications to diverse areas such as health, advertising, mass communications, community interventions, politics, organizations, consumerism, and other topics of interest.
Course Format

The course starts with a focus on definitions/conceptualizations of "attitude" and the formation and measurement of attitudes, and progresses through theory/research dealing with prediction of behavior from attitudes, attitude formation, persuasion, and attitude change. The course continues with social influence, group processes, and applications.

The course will be taught in a seminar format, with substantial student participation in class presentations and discussions (i.e., sharing "teaching" responsibilities with the instructor by leading discussions on selected topics). We will have 2 collective/class projects (e.g., constructing an attitude scale) that would be handled best "electronically" with each student submitting work via e-mail, allowing work to be merged and/or shared effectively. Thus, I expect everyone to have access to Metropolitan State e-mail (and the course e-mail list) for the purposes of communicating and sharing information in this course. Contact the instructor if you need information about getting an account. Students are expected to be present every week, please contact the instructor in advance if attendance will be a problem on any given week.

Each student will develop ideas about how she or he could apply ideas and concepts to areas of personal interest. These will take the form of written proposals in which the student discusses how certain ideas could be applied. One proposal should be expanded into the student’s course project. An example of a proposal might be to apply the theory of reasoned action/planned behavior to explain the factors that predict or account for a particular behavior, like one’s decision to donate or not donate blood. If someone wanted to expand this into a course project s/he might implement a research study to gather data that might help determine the extent to which beliefs, emotions, social norms, and/or self-efficacy help explain why some people donate blood and others do not. Other examples will be provided during the course.

Evaluation

Grades will be determined by your performance on classroom presentations and discussions, group projects, three individual proposals, and your final individual project. The projects/proposals will be completed on topics such as attitude scale development, attitude measurement, the attitude-behavior relation, individual differences in persuasion, normative social influence, and so on. Students who wish to raise their grade on a particular project or proposal will have one opportunity to re-write his or her paper (the re-write must be completed in one week) and the grade on the revised paper would replace the original grade.

Each student will be required to submit a research paper by the end of the semester (Dec. 4th). This 10-20 page paper should include a literature review, hypothesis/methods for an application or empirical research project on a theoretical or applied topic, and preliminary observations/data addressing the research questions or hypotheses (presented as results/discussion). Of course, data collection is time-consuming and the semester time frame is limited, so a relatively small pilot sample of observations will be acceptable. Your final paper should include a survey of relevant background theory and research; a clear statement of the project's goals and hypotheses; a description of the methodology; and a results/discussion section based on your sample detailing how the results did or did not lead to an enhanced understanding of the theoretical or applied issue of interest. It is expected that a preliminary proposal should be submitted to the instructor by mid-November (for feedback on feasibility, etc.).
Participation in discussions, involvement in the collective parts of class projects and leadership of selected discussions will also count toward your final grade. Your participation in collective projects is important to ensure that students have enough information on which to base their reports. Also, class discussions are likely to be most useful and enlightening when all students have read the material ahead of time, so you should read assigned chapters and papers prior to class. Periodically, you will be assigned the role of primary discussant, which means that you will be responsible for summarizing a particular reading and for "kicking off" discussion on that topic. Since participation in class activities is important, your performance in these activities will count toward your final course grade. Please notify the instructor, in advance, if you will miss class.

Components of grade:

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<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Classroom Presentations</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Participation in Discussions</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Group/Class Projects</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Individual Proposals</td>
<td>30%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Individual Final Project</td>
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Final Grades are based on cumulative performance:

- At least 90% for a grade of “A”
- 80-89% for a grade of “B”
- 70-79% for a grade of “C”
- 60-69% for a grade of “D”
- 59% and below, grade of “F”

**Required Textbooks**


Additional readings (book chapters and journal articles) will be required and made available in electronic (or hard copy) format.

**Preliminary Readings**

A chapter was distributed via e-mail prior to the first course meeting. This reading will be covered on the first evening of class. The Chapter is:


Most readings are available at the class website. The readings for September 4 are:


### Tentative Course Schedule (Topics)

Week 1 (8/28): Introduction; Conceptual Foundations of Attitudes.

Week 2 (9/4): Attitude-Behavior Relations (Predicting Behavior)

Week 3 (9/11): Structure of Attitudes and Beliefs, Attitude Measurement

Week 4 (9/18): Attitude Measurement


Week 6 (10/2): Affective Processes: Mere Exposure, Conditioning and Motivational Processes

Week 7 (10/9): The Impact of Behavior on Attitudes

Week 8 (10/16): Social Influence Basics

Week 9 (10/23): Influence: Science and Practice

Week 10 (10/30): Normative Theories and Applications

Week 11 (11/6): Group Influences

Week 12 (11/13): Resisting Influence and Persistence of Attitude Change

Week 13 (11/20): Social Context and Personality Influences on Attitudes and Social Influence

Week 14 (11/27): Future Directions -- Course Wrap-up (Some Students Present Final Projects)

Week 15 (12/4): Students Present Final Projects to Class.
Tentative List of Supplemental Readings (Additions/Deletions will occur)
We cannot cover all of these readings, but the list may stimulate interest or ideas. Some of these (or others) will be selected for class coverage as we move throughout the term.

Likert, R. (1932). *A technique for the measurement of attitudes.* (Sections of the monograph based on Likert’s dissertation)


Examples of Articles based on Projects in Previous Course Sections:


Chapters from following books:


**University and Course Policies**

**Attendance and Participation**
Students who do not attend/participate during the first two weeks of class may be dropped per University policy. Class participation is expected – you are graded on how well you present various readings in class and on the quality of your participation in discussions. Obviously, if you do not attend regularly, you will not be able to participate on a regular basis (which will be reflected in your grade).

**Students with Disabilities**
Students requesting accommodations for disabilities must register with Disability Services (651) 793-1540, TTY (651) 772-7723 or disability.services@metrostate.edu as early as possible. If you have a documented learning disability, or if you suspect you have a learning disability which may impact your opportunity to succeed in this course, call the Disability Services right away so that reasonable accommodations for your documented disability can be explored.

**Academic Honesty**
Plagiarism is the act of using another person's ideas, writings, diagrams, or materials without giving specific credit known as a *citation*. If you plagiarize any materials, you may face failure of the assignment, failure of the course, or other penalties up to and including expulsion from the university. The websites below provide more information on 1) plagiarism, 2) citing sources, and 3) intellectual property rights should you have any questions pertaining to these topics.
II. [http://www.citationmachine.net/](http://www.citationmachine.net/)

**Late Work**
All assignments must be submitted by the due date. Assignments that are not submitted on time may receive a grade of zero, unless you have received prior written approval from the instructor to submit the work under a different deadline. Please note that the instructor may require documentation of events that impede your ability to submit work on time. Written assignments can be submitted electronically.

**Course Drop and Withdraw**
Students may drop this course at any time during the first week of the term without cost or penalty. The Drop deadline is September 2. Students who continue past the drop date but cannot finish the course (or do not expect to finish successfully) might consider Withdrawing from the course. Students Withdrawing is assigned a grade of “W” which will be counted in your completion ratio. Please consult your advisor or the instructor for more information on the “W” grade. The last day to Withdraw from a course this term is November 16.