



SEVI_ENG 382 SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY

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Course Description:

This course explains in the most experiential manner possible what Social Psychology is, in the sense that it will offer an in depth survey of the various theories and perspectives advanced in the field, completed with practical exercises during which the attendants learn by doing.

The class is organized around a wide variety of topics including conformity, obedience, identity, power, status and interpersonal perception.

We will learn about and prove the existence of phenomena as there are: our **social construction of reality** which often leads to a non rational way of viewing reality, of assessing social situations and of deciding upon them; **self justification, cognitive dissonance** and our strive towards consonance that leads our motivations and drives; **obedience to authority** which comes rather from our own need to be seen as cooperative than from the impact of an authority, but we will also study which kind of **leadership** can ethically steer the human tendency to obey a lot; our tendency to **conform** to others; **discrimination and racism**, coming from **stereotypes and prejudice** and our drive to adhere by stereotypes put on us; human **aggression**; **liking, loving and interpersonal sensitivity**, mass **communication**, propaganda and persuasion; and last but not least the **gender difference** and its ramification in our social perception and behavior.

Students will not only scientifically study the existence of these phenomena, they will also learn about the causes and consequences of these phenomena and apply the received insights to make the current world a better place to stay.

They will repeat experiments and confirm findings from renown social psychologists as there are Dr. Muzafer Sheriff, Dr. Stanley Milgram, Dr. Philip Zimbardo etc; and make concrete applications of those findings in the current day world as to critically assess the value of actions of for example the government of France when it decides to attack the Islamic State; they will be able to develop efficient (yet socially responsible) commercial messages and high power communication/sales techniques based on their understanding of social and self bias and of the mechanism of cognitive dissonance; they will learn to understand what lies and rumors mean for us – that they are not always evil meant and see how for example education processes should deal with the phenomenon; they will gain insight in the power that lays in our tendency to obey others even if these others make us do illegal, immoral things, how it can explain for example the holocaust and they will discuss the way the holocaust could have been prevented, as well as how managers of the restaurant chain Mc Donald's were coaxed into strip searching their employees by a false police agent; they will learn to understand the impact of conformity, how it can lead to social disasters, for example the explosion of the Challenger and how we can learn from them to avoid them from repeating themselves; they will learn how stereotyping is a culturally passed on given, that has a huge impact on social problems as there are discrimination, racism and fascism as well as they will learn strategies to fight stereotypes on a personal and group

basis, and strategies to beat inter-group conflicts; they will experience how the self is involved in our more or less liking of others, they will know and practice what impression management is and its effects in personal and professional life and they will see how the social psychological impact of gender difference is fed by stereotypes and stereotype threats, therefore does not really exist and learn how we can all live together based on the n=1 rule.

Throughout the curriculum, attendants will continuously reflect on the effect of the learning on their own personality and life.

Learning outcomes:

This course will teach participants:

1. Cognitive insight in:
 - a. History of social psychology
 - b. Conceptualization of and definitions within the field
 - c. Different research methods and its preference for the 'experimental method'
 - d. Important social psychological research and its results: the Stanford Prison Experiment, the obedience to authority experiment by Stanley Milgram, the Asch conformity experiment, 'A class divided', Robber's Cave Experiment, ...
 - e. Social problems such as compliance to norms, conformity, obedience to authority, propaganda...
 - f. Social psychological solutions to these social problems such as anonymous voting, Jigsaw techniques, over arching goals, role playing, psychodrama of Moreno ...
 - g. How social psychological mechanisms influence our judgment and decision making processes
 - h. How we can use social psychological phenomena to impact the world around us
 - i. What authenticity and values in life are
2. Practical/experiential learning:
 - a. Critical sense with regards to theory and practice in the field of social psychology (Sokal hoax!)
 - b. Analytic insight in the different research methods
 - c. Competency in conducting a valid social psychological experiment, and in drafting valid conclusions from its findings
 - d. Communication skills
 - e. Impression management
 - f. Appreciate and utilize diversity in teams
 - g. Teambuilding techniques and teamwork
 - h. How to apply social psychological learning with the objective to change social problems within society (for instance: racism, rumors ...)
 - i. Time management
 - j. Giving and accepting feedback
 - k. Leadership competencies
 - l. Working under the pressure

Content (order of content may be modified):

MODULE 1: What is social psychology?

- Definition
- Conceptualization of the field
- History of social psychology
- Cultural psychology
- Practicum: team building exercise to open up authenticity, respect and confidentiality; to gain insight in verbal and non verbal communication; to feel how the social situation defines your thoughts, feelings and behavior
- Different research methods
- Preferred research method: the experiment
- Fundamental and applied social psychology
- Practicum: set up of a social psychological experiment, comparing obtained results from Spanish and American subjects; for example: repetition of conformity test of S. Asch; or an experiment about proximics.

MODULE 2: Social cognition.

- Rationality as opposed to social construction of reality
- Practicum: group discussion about the way religion is being upheld in Andalucía as means to make sense of a region living in extreme poverty.
- Information processing
- Cognitive and social biases
- Practicum : empathy, giving feedback and conflict management in both Spanish and American culture.
- Cognitive dissonance theory and our drive to the mental state of consonance
- Stereotypes, prejudice, xenophobia, discrimination, racism
- Practicum: FILM: 'A time to kill' by J. Schumacher (1996) OR 'The Reader' by S. Daldry (2008), guided by 20 questions about the subject of stereotyping, prejudice and discrimination. We will discuss the content of the movie and how we feel about it afterwards.
- Practicum: observe how Spanish people are subject to stereotype threat and the application of the jigsaw technique to study the topic 'stereotype threat' as a means to overcome prejudice.

MODULE 3: The Self in a social context.

- Awareness of identity
- Identity theory
- Practicum: from Irving Goffman to a Post Secret project: how do Spanish and American people show their backstage part of their identity? Part 1: presenting ourselves with images, what do we decide to not tell, what do we share without telling? Part 2: can we discover a difference in openness when sharing secrets (anonymously) in between Spanish and American students?
- Social identity theory
- Categorization
- Group identification and its risks for society
- Practicum: case study about the Spanish and Catalan case + draft of a recommendation to the Spanish government on how to lower the inter group conflict.
- Gender within social psychology
- Altruism vs. being selfish
- Practicum: via role play and psychodrama we will discover who we are!

MODULE 4: Interaction within the social context.

- Where do attitudes come from?
- Attitudes and beliefs do not only guide our thinking, but also our behavior
- Self esteem
- Practicum: how do you manage the impressions you leave towards your Spanish host environment? Why is impression management important? How and when can you use it strategically?
- Formal and informal groups
- Social influence on group behavior:
 - Rumors
 - Authority and obedience
 - Conformity
 - Public opinion
 - Practicum: based on the case study of the trial against Alfonso Bastera and Rosario Porto, parents who are being accused of having killed their 13 year old adopted daughter, Asunta, we will discuss and find proof for social influence on group behavior
- Mass communication, persuasion, propaganda
- Practicum in developing an advertisement that is applicable towards a Spanish target group, while investigating if we need to adjust the message depending on the target group. Do we find differences in between American and Spanish advertisements?
- Violence and aggression
- Interpersonal sensitivity:
 - Liking and loving
 - Shyness
 - Heroism
 - Practicum: becoming a 'hero in training'.
- Practicum: how do we dismantle this team and integrate the learning of the class in our daily life once back in the USA? AKA: how do we deal with the reversed cultural shock?

Bibliography:

- The social animal. Elliot Aronson. By Worth Publishers, originally published in 1972, 514p.
- Knowing people. Michael J. Lovaglia. By Rowman and Littlefield Publishers Inc., 2013, 362p.

Complementary bibliography:

- Per module you will receive more or less 3 mandatory and 6 optional readings (articles), all to be downloaded from the internet and we will refer you to do critical reviews of some news stories.

Course Grade:

20%: tasks (individual and in group) and presence in class

40%: acquired knowledge (individual - final exam)

30%: projects

10%: personal qualification (individual)

Final letter grades will be assigned using the following scale, expressed in terms of the percentage of total possible points earned:

- 10 = Matrícula de Honor
- 9 – 9,9 = Sobresaliente
- 7 – 8,9 = Notable
- 5 – 6,9 = Aprobado
- 0 – 4,9 = Suspenso
- ✓ Attending the course but not taking the exams = No presentado

Class Attendance:

Class attendance is obligatory and is checked every class day.
Not missing any class *will be considered positively*.

Students are allowed two unexcused absences. Beginning with the third absence, 0,3 points will be subtracted for each unexcused absence.

English expression:

The students should express themselves -both orally and in writing- in good formal English.
Particularly in the written partials and quizzes good academic writing is to be taken for granted.
Bad, sloppy academic writing (misspellings, deficient syntax, etc.) *will be penalized*.

Excused absences:

Medical Certificates: certificates will be considered only if issued by a physician (not notes from the family explaining the student absence).

The certificates must include the *exact* dates for which a student should be excused for having missed classes.

Tardiness:

It is expected that students arrive to class on time and that they return directly to class after any given break.
Arriving 10 minutes late (or more) and/or early class departures are considered unexcused absences and will be taken into account as half absence.

Class Protocol:

Students are required to be involved in class activities. They are expected to show their preparation by participating in discussions, by asking relevant questions, being critical and analytical with the contents presented in class as well as by sharing their ideas and opinions. In class the student is required to maintain a polite demeanor always and under every circumstance. Students are asked not to eat in class and to put their cell phones on silence. With the exception being for class presentations, laptops are not to be used in class.

Special Accommodations:

Students with special needs who require reasonable modifications, special assistance or accommodations in this course (either for properly following-up classes, to take exams, etc.) should direct their request to Academic Coordination during the first week of the course.