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Fall 2021

## STS 321-001: Social Psychology

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## **STS 321 – Social Psychology**

Fall 2021 - Face to Face  
Tue-Thur 10:00am – 11:20am  
Central King Building 219

Dr. N. Pescetelli  
[niccolo.pescetelli@njit.edu](mailto:niccolo.pescetelli@njit.edu)

Office: Cullimore Hall 312

Office Hours: Thursday 12:00pm – 2:00pm

### **Generic Course Description**

Social psychology is the study of how individuals affect and are affected by other people and by their social and physical environments. Social psychology helps us to understand and explain how our thoughts, feelings, and behaviors are influenced by the actual, imagined, and implied presence of others. Social psychology is the recognition that human responses are influenced by social situations, in addition to, the products of our individual personalities. Social psychologists study interpersonal and group dynamics and social challenges, such as prejudice, implicit bias, bullying, criminal activity and substance abuse. They research social interactions and the factors that influence them, such as group behavior, attitudes, public perceptions and leadership (apa.org). This course will provide students an introduction and overview of research and theory in social psychology.

### **Textbook**

Akert, Aronson, & Wilson. (2010). Social Psychology. 10th Edition. Pearson. ISBN 1292341475

### **Student Learning Outcomes**

By the end of the course, students will be able to:

1. To introduce the basic subject area of social psychology and its relationship to human interaction, our environment, society, and technological society.
2. Identify and understand the major theories, principles, and research findings in the field of social psychology
3. To develop an understanding for social psychology and how it can be used to study human behavior, the global society and in various life situations
4. To analyze society and technology using a social psychological lens- and the role it plays in our constantly evolving culture and society.
5. To use social psychology to gain a better understanding of society and groups in which we all live, as well as, our technological society
6. To demonstrate content area knowledge of the field of social psychology
7. To employ quantitative and qualitative analytical techniques relevant to identified content in the field of social psychology
8. Framing contemporary issues through a social psychological lens
9. To use self-reflection and critical thought that expands awareness of the student and the world around them and apply the theories of social psychology in this process

### **Classes**

Classes will revolve around book chapters, discussion of the readings or homework assignments. The course is interactive so I expect questions and contributions from students. I also expect you to have done the assigned readings *before* class. I encourage you to go back and re-read assignments after class.

There will be a reading, typically a peer reviewed paper, associated with each class. While classes will cover the textbook programme of a social psychology undergraduate course, the readings will tend to be more thought provoking and in-depth analysis of a topic covered during the week.

Many of the readings are challenging, and you will have to work to understand them. Often, this will require *hard work*. If you have skim read the paper half hour before class, it will show.

The readings will help you write your final group report. Reading other people's work is key to understanding how scientific papers are structured, as well as getting familiar with their language and terminology, tone of voice and storytelling. If you do the readings regularly, writing your final research report will feel natural. Please, do come see me during my office hours when you experience difficulty.

A good way to begin to understand the readings is to discuss them, both inside and outside of class. I have chosen readings that are likely to provoke thought and discussion. For this reason, I expect regular attendance in class. I also expect everyone to show respect for the opinions of others. I encourage you, however, to find respectful ways to disagree. The point of the class is not to reach a consensus, but rather to provoke thinking.

I encourage you to participate actively in discussion. Class participation will contribute to your class participation grade described below. It is in your own interest if I know your name. There will also be opportunities for discussion (as well as writing) on the class Canvas site. The class will have its own discussion forum to which students will be expected to contribute.

Although the classes will cover all textbook chapters, I strongly encourage you to read the textbook as well as it provides a much deeper analysis of the content.

### **Rules of behavior**

1. *Respect*  
You must respect everyone. You should expect there to be disagreement. If you disagree with something that you read, see or hear please be considerate and constructive in how you critique someone else's ideas.
2. *Criticize ideas not people.*  
We are here to train critical thinking. It is important that you respect people holding different beliefs, even if you think they are wrong. Instead, try to criticize the idea.
3. *Speak from your "I" voice - your own experience*  
Share experiences and feelings, don't generalize.
4. *Embrace global perspectives*  
Be open to other perspectives; possibilities come when we don't all agree. Each of us has their own biased beliefs. Openly discussing ideas with other people allows us to embrace a more global perspective.

### **Attendance Policy and Participation**

I expect you to attend all classes and to have legitimate excuses for any classes missed. I also expect you to catch up on whatever you miss if you are absent for any reason.

You will receive a **class participation grade**, described in greater detail below. Failure to attend class or participate actively in course activities, including in class debates, will negatively affect your grade for the course.

### **Makeup Policy**

In the event of an unexcused absence, you will *not* have the opportunity to make up any graded assignments. If you show up late for an exam, you will *not* be given more time to complete the exam. All excused absences must be addressed via email to the Dean of Students office ([doc@njit.edu](mailto:doc@njit.edu)). When contacting the Dean of Students office you can keep me in the loop by putting my email in CC.

### **Other Course Policies**

Classes will be held under the [Chatham House Rule](#). Under the Chatham House Rule, anyone who comes to class is free to use information from the discussion, but is not allowed to reveal who made any particular comment outside of the class. It is designed to increase openness of discussion.

I expect you to arrive on time to class and keep disruptions during class to a minimum. Do *not* use phones, tablets, and other similar devices to chat/text/or talk with family and friends during class. Recording of audio and video is not permitted as it invalidates the Chatham House Rule. However, please do bring a smartphone to class because there will be some interactive content.

Phone/tablet/laptop use is permitted in class only for class purposes (taking notes, Googling something I said, interacting with the live content, etc.). If you choose to use your device for purposes other than those related to the class, it is your loss. If you distract other students in doing so, it is their loss, as well. I expect you to respect your fellow classmates and your instructor enough not to distract yourselves and others. With this policy, I am attempting to treat you as an adult. As with all other policies, I reserve the right to change my mind or make exceptions for specific individuals.

The best way to contact me is via email or to visit me during office hours. You can expect a reply within 48 hours. Notice that I do not check emails on the weekends. You are, of course, encouraged to ask questions before, during, or after class or schedule a time to meet.

### **NJIT Code on Academic Integrity**

*Academic Integrity is the cornerstone of higher education and is central to the ideals of this course and the university. Cheating is strictly prohibited and devalues the degree that you are working on. As a member of the NJIT community, it is your responsibility to protect your educational investment by knowing and following the [academic code of integrity policy](#).*

*Please note that it is my professional obligation and responsibility to report any academic misconduct to the Dean of Students Office. Any student found in violation of the code by cheating, plagiarizing or using any online software inappropriately will result in disciplinary action. This may include a failing grade of F, and/or suspension or dismissal from the university. If you have any questions about the code of Academic Integrity, please contact the Dean of Students Office at [dos@njit.edu](mailto:dos@njit.edu)”*

You are expected to abide by the NJIT University Code on Academic Integrity at all times (for details, see: <http://integrity.njit.edu/index.html>). You must write and sign the following pledge on your exams:

On my honor, I pledge that I have not violated the provisions of the NJIT University Code on Academic Integrity.

In the context of this course, unless group work is specifically authorized by me, all work should be completed on your own without any unauthorized aids. *All* writing and quizzes, including on your Canvas entries, is expected to represent your own work, completed on your own specifically for this course. This means that you cannot copy text from other papers, websites, encyclopedias, or any other source without quoting any copied material and fully and accurately citing your sources. In addition, if you refer to, use, or build upon ideas from other work, even if you don't quote that work exactly, you should fully acknowledge your sources. When citing an online article, a link to the relevant webpage will suffice as a full citation on Canvas.

I take plagiarism and citations very seriously and do not enjoy having to question whether a document constitutes plagiarism. For all our sakes, please take care to cite all referenced material. For any questions involving these or any other Academic Integrity issues, please consult me.

### **Students with Disabilities**

NJIT offers accommodations to students with disabilities. If you need some sort of academic accommodation, please contact Scott Janz, Associate Director of the [Office of Accessibility Resources and Services](#), Kupfrian Hall 201 to discuss your specific needs. A Letter of Accommodation Eligibility from the office authorizing student accommodations is required.

### **Basic Needs Security**

Any student who has difficulty affording groceries or accessing sufficient food to eat every day, or who lacks a safe and stable place to live, and believes this may affect their performance in the course, is urged to contact the Dean of Students for support. Furthermore, please notify the professor if you are comfortable in doing so.

### **Requirements and Grading**

This course is graded according to the requirements specified and weighted below.

Class participation	30%
Quizzes (3 quizzes of 10% each)	30%
Group project presentation	20%
Group project report	20%

**Class participation (30%):** participation includes discussion in class, possible occasional quizzes, in-class assignments, attendance, and Canvas Discussion Forum/blog postings.

You may have noticed that class participation is 30% of your final grade. Actively participating in class, has a number of advantages:

- You will get a higher grade
- You are making classes more interesting for yourself and your fellow classmates
- You are memorizing content so that exams and quizzes will be a breeze
- You develop critical thinking, and learn how to be a good scientist, which means being able to criticize existing theories and propose new hypotheses

### Pre-class readings

I will give you a paper that is related to the content of the class for you to read before every class. Read it **before** class. Come to class prepared to discuss it. If the discussion does not emerge naturally, I will actively ask questions to specific people. There are no right or wrong answers when discussing a paper. However, if you do not engage with the discussion or give the impression that you have not read the paper this will negatively affect your grade.

When reading the paper at home, think of things that you like about the paper, things that you disagree with, how you would have done the study better or how it relates to your personal experience.

Class may be a scary place for some students to take risks; but it is also a safe place for you to explore your own thinking. As long as what you are saying relates to what we are discussing in class, and as long as you are respectful of your classmates and instructor, feel free to say what you want. No single relevant statement you make in class will negatively affect your grade. So, it doesn't matter if, during class discussion, you make a mistake. It's better to make a mistake publicly in class and understand why it is a mistake rather than making a mistake privately during an assignment.

### Exams

Monthly exams will consist of quizzes on Canvas. You have a limited amount of time to answer them, typically from Friday 00:01 to Monday 23:59. No retakes are allowed. If you miss the deadline you will receive 0% for that quiz assignment. You have only one shot at it, so please be sure you have studied the material before starting the exam. Each quiz covers 4 chapters of your book with the exception of the last quiz that will cover 5 chapters. There are a total of 3 quizzes. Each quiz is worth 10% of your final grade for a total of 30%. Canvas will give you immediate feedback. If you have questions about the feedback, we can discuss it in class or during office hours.

### Group project

Social psychology is all about research studies. The best way to learn the subject is to run a study yourself. With this group project you will team up in groups of 3-4 people and produce an original piece of research. You will be asked to: submit a one-page research plan by midterm. Then, in the second half of the course you will run the study, write a final report and present your findings to the rest of the class during the last week of the course. The one-page research plan is not graded but it's a prerequisite to get a grade in the group project and must be handed in **on time**. The group project written report counts for 20% of your final grade. The group project presentation counts for another 20% of your final grade. Late submission of the research plan and/or of the report will discount your group project grade by 50%. Submitting *something* on time is always better than submitting something slightly better too late or not submitting anything at all. I will provide feedback via Canvas; If you have questions about the feedback, we can discuss it in class or during office hours.

**N.B. – Plagiarism will be severely punished.** Copying someone else's work is cheating. Allowing someone to copy your work is cheating. Googling and copying from a website without acknowledging your source is cheating. Copying from anywhere without acknowledging your source is cheating. Using other people's work and not acknowledging them is *cheating* but using their work AND acknowledging them to make your point stronger is *science*.

### Deadlines

- Quizzes (30%):

- Quiz 1: **11th October**
- Quiz 2: **8th November**
- Quiz 3: **13th December**
- Group project (40%):
  - One-page research plan submitted by **October 29th**
  - The final report should be submitted by **December 21st**
  - The group presentations will take place during the last week of the course (ending **Dec 10th**)
- Last Day to Withdraw from Classes: **November 10th**

### **Grade scale**

Letter and numerical grades are translatable on the following scale:

A = 90%+

B+ = 87-89.99%

B = 80-86.99%

C+ = 77-79.99%

C = 70-76.99%

D = 60-69.99%

F = 0-59.99%

### **Class Schedule**

#### **Wk 1:** (Sep 2)

“Introduction to STS 321”

#### **Wk 2:** (Sep 7/9)

Introducing Social Psychology

#### **Wk 3:** (Sep 14/16)

Methodology: How do social psychologists do research?

#### **Wk 4:** (Sep 21/23)

Social Cognition: How We Think about the Social World?

#### **Wk 5:** (Sep 28/30)

Social perception: How Do We Come to Understand Other People?

#### **Wk 6:** (Oct 5/7)

The Self: Understanding Ourselves in a Social Context

#### **Wk 7:** (Oct 12/14)

Cognitive Dissonance and the Need to Protect our Self-Esteem

#### **Wk 8:** (Oct 19/21)

Attitudes and Attitude Change: Influencing Thoughts and Feelings

#### **Wk 9:** (Oct 26/28)

Conformity and Obedience: Influencing Behavior

#### **Wk 10:** (Nov 2/4)

Group Processes: Influence in Social Groups

**Wk 11:** (Nov 9/11)

Attraction and Relationships: From Initial Impressions to Long-Term Intimacy

**Wk 12:** (Nov 16/18)

Prosocial Behavior: Why do People Help?

**Wk 13:** (Nov 23)

Aggression: Why do we Hurt Other People?

**Wk 14:** (Nov 30/ Dic 2)

Prejudice: Causes, Consequences and Cures

**Wk 15:** (Dic 7/10)

Group Project Presentations

**Wk 16:** (Dic 14/17)

Group project open work week

**N.B. – Everything on the syllabus is subject to change. When changes are made, a new version or corresponding changes will be posted on the course Canvas site.**

**Learning Management System - Canvas**

We will use Canvas as our main LMS. The statement from Canvas can be found [here](#).

Refer to [this link](#) from the Office of Digital Learning for further materials.