Psychology 680
Advanced Social Psychology
Fall 2006

Instructor: Dr. Lora Park
Office: 344 Park Hall
Email: lorapark@buffalo.edu
Phone: (716) 645-3650 Ext. 342
Office hours: By appointment
Class meets: Thursdays 12:00 – 2:50pm; 115 Talbert Hall
Instructor webpage: http://Lora.Park.socialpsychology.org/

Psychology 680 is designed to provide an introduction to the major issues and topics in social psychology. The readings will provide examples of classic and current approaches to areas of great interest to social psychologists. Topics to be covered include: fundamental human needs, group and situational influence, the self and self-esteem, motivation, close relationships, cognitive dissonance and self-justification, stigma, stereotyping and prejudice, intergroup relations, emotions, gender, culture, and applications to mental and physical health.

My philosophy of graduate education is that we benefit most when everyone plays an active role in class. We are all here to learn and to learn from each other. One way to facilitate this process is to have everyone come to class each week fully prepared and fully present. This means reading all the assigned articles before class, posing insightful questions and sharing your observations with the rest of class, and overall, being an active participant in shaping the success of this course. In the spirit of keeping our classroom a stimulating learning environment, I will keep the lecture portion of the class to introductory comments on the history of an area of research and the major themes of research within the area. The remainder of the class will consist of lively discussion led by students (see below).

Overall evaluation in this course will be based on 1) weekly reaction papers; 2) student-led discussion; 3) in-class participation; and 4) the final take-home paper.

Student Learning Outcomes: This course is designed to help you achieve the following learning outcomes:

Knowledge: Become familiar with major theories and research findings in social psychology.

Comprehension: Understand and differentiate between various theories and findings in social psychology.

Application: Apply social psychological theories and research findings to personal experiences and to real-world events.

Analysis: Develop critical thinking skills by questioning theories, research findings, and methodologies.

Synthesis: Make broader connections across theories and findings in the social psychological literature.
To this end, grades in this course will be based on a combination of weekly thought papers, in-class participation, and a final paper designed to cultivate these learning objectives and to improve your overall thinking, writing, and communication skills.

Readings
There is no textbook for this course. Instead, each week you will be assigned 4 articles to read on a given topic. All articles will be available in electronic form via the UB Library’s electronic reserve system where you can print them directly from the Internet. Another way of obtaining the articles online is to look up the article directly from the library’s electronic journal listing (e.g., PSYCINFO).

1. Weekly Reaction Papers. To encourage engagement with the material and stimulate class discussion, each week you will be responsible for writing a 1-page, single-spaced reaction paper on the readings for that week. The reaction paper should raise thoughtful observations, questions, and responses to the theoretical ideas, methods, and results of the readings. Do not just summarize the readings; this is your chance to really think about what you have read and respond and react to the ideas presented. What do you see as the major contributions and/or limitations of the ideas or studies? What links can be made across the studies, and why is that important? What questions remain? What future studies are needed? What are the real-world applications and broader implications of the theory or research findings? I will grade the reaction papers on a 10-point scale (1 = poor; 10 = excellent). Reaction papers are due in my mailbox (206 Park Hall) or via email to lorapark@buffalo.edu every Wednesday by 12pm. Papers will be docked 1 point for every day it is late.

2. Student-led Discussion. Each week, one student in the class will be responsible for leading class discussion. When it is your week to lead discussion, you should first give a very brief overview of the articles, then have a concrete plan of how you will lead the discussion. Here are some ways to facilitate discussion:

You could identify the major empirical and conceptual strengths and weaknesses of the papers and orient your discussion around those themes. You could raise specific issues or questions concerning commonalities or differences across the articles assigned for that week; address intriguing contradictions or topics you think the authors have omitted; consider aspects of the theory, methodology, or analysis that you find convincing or not convincing; discuss aspects of the theory, methodology, etc. that you think make the results particularly compelling. You could have the class participate in an exercise to illustrate some point; design a study, generate research ideas that you think represents the next direction for research on that topic, or set an agenda for future research by outlining the moderators or mediators of a particular effect that might be considered. You could raise specific critiques, making sure to justify your criticisms and suggesting alternatives that would improve the article.

In sum, I am giving you lots of room for creativity to design and shape your own class discussion. I will moderate and facilitate the discussion and be actively involved, but I want to give each of you the chance to prepare for and lead a class discussion, which will help you and the other students be more fully engaged with the material. Remember, do not spend most of the presentation just summarizing the findings of the article. Everyone in the class has already read the articles, so we are interested in hearing your thoughts about it. Your overall performance as a student discussion leader will be evaluated on a 10-point scale (1 = poor; 10 = excellent).

3. In-class Participation. Each student should read ALL the assigned articles for the
week and actively contribute to the class discussion. There are many ways of participating in this class. Active participation involves being fully present in class, asking thoughtful questions, building on others’ comments, actively listening, raising interesting observations or issues about the material, drawing links between the material and real-world or personal events, and relating the ideas to your own experiences. The key is to have everyone on board; we are all here to learn from each other, so view class participation as a way to enhance your learning and understanding of the material and to make the most of this class.

4. **Final Paper.** For your final paper, you will have a choice of writing one of the following:

- **a) A 15-20 page (double-spaced) integrative paper.** The goal of this assignment is to encourage you to think about each of the topics we have covered this semester not as separate topics, but as interconnected parts of a larger picture of social behavior. You can use this opportunity to think more deeply about a specific topic or phenomenon that is of particular interest to you in your graduate studies. Specifically, consider 1) how that phenomenon is related to people’s fundamental needs, self-systems, motivations, goals, emotions, cognitions, and behavioral self-regulation, and 2) how that phenomenon is influenced by social contexts such as interpersonal, relationship, intergroup, gender, and cultural contexts. The paper is not a research paper, so you do not need to propose a series of studies or rely on outside sources. Rather, the assignment is to integrate the various issues and topics of the semester based on the articles you have read for the class. Your paper will be graded on how deeply, thoughtfully, and convincingly you can position your own research interest in the context of the readings and topics covered this semester, as well as your ability to link them together to provide a compelling and coherent account of your phenomenon.

- **b) A 15-20 page (double-spaced) research proposal:** The goal of this assignment is to encourage you to come up with a study or series of studies you would like to conduct based on specific readings, topics, and issues of interest to you that we covered this semester. The research proposal should include a detailed background/theoretical rationale section, drawing upon ideas and topics covered this semester; it should also include specific hypotheses logically following from your theoretical background section; a detailed method section (including who the participants would be, materials to be used, procedure); a brief description of the data analysis strategy and expected pattern of results, and a conclusion (what your results, if confirmed, or not, would suggest); and finally, the potential scientific contributions and/or implications of the findings to the field of psychology and to society in general. Ideas for the research proposal should draw upon specific themes and readings from the semester, and will be graded on how deeply, thoughtfully, and convincingly you can position your own research ideas in the context of the readings and topics covered this semester, and your ability to link various ideas together to propose a compelling and coherent set of studies.

All final papers are due in my mailbox (206 Park) by **Thursday, December 14th by 5pm.**
Final grades for the course will be based on 1) your weekly reaction papers, 2) your student-led discussion performance, 3) your contributions to class discussion, and 4) the final take-home paper. I will calculate your final grade using the following formula:

- Class participation: 15%
- Student-led discussion: 15%
- Reaction papers: 30%
- Final paper: 40%

100%

Office of Disability Services

If you have a disability (physical or psychological) and require reasonable accommodations to enable you to participate in this course, such as note takers, readers, or extended time on exams and assignments, please contact me and the Office of Disability Services, 25 Capen Hall, 645-2608, during the first two weeks of class. ODS will provide you with information and review appropriate arrangements for reasonable accommodations.
WEEK 1
August 31: Introduction to the Class

WEEK 2
September 7: Fundamental human needs


WEEK 3
September 14: The person in the situation


WEEK 4
September 21: The self and self-esteem


WEEK 5
September 28: The motivated person


WEEK 6
October 5: The self-justifying person


WEEK 7
October 12: NO CLASS

WEEK 8
October 19: The relationship context


**WEEK 9**  
**October 26: The stigmatizing context**


**WEEK 10**  
**November 2: The stereotyping context**


**WEEK 11**  
**November 9: The intergroup context**


**WEEK 12**

**November 16: The emotional person**


**WEEK 13**

**November 23: NO CLASS (Thanksgiving recess)**

**WEEK 14**

**November 30: Gender and Cultural contexts**


**WEEK 15:**

**December 7: Social psychology and health**


**WEEK 16**
No Class; Final papers due in my mailbox by 5pm Thursday Dec. 14th