PSYC 9310: THEORIES OF SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY
Wednesdays 9:00-11:30am; 101 McAlester Hall
Fall Semester 2006

Bruce D. Bartholow
10 McAlester Hall
Phone: 882-1805
Email: BartholowB@missouri.edu
Web: http://bartholow.socialpsychology.org
Office Hr.: by appointment

Course Description and Objectives

The purpose of this course is to introduce graduate students in social psychology, and those students in related disciplines and others, to the field of social psychology. For each of the topics covered, we will focus on sampling both classic and contemporary theorizing and research. This includes a variety of specific topics, as you will see, such as attitudes, attributions, emotions, intergroup relations, social influence, stereotyping, and many others. This class will be mostly seminar format. We will read and discuss theoretical perspectives and empirical research relevant to social psychology, with a mix of review and empirical papers. Obviously, we cannot cover everything related to social psychology in just one course. Therefore, the primary goal is to provide students with a general understanding of the range of topics studied by social psychologists, to increase students’ ability to comprehend and critically evaluate research, and to get students thinking about ways that social psychology may be relevant to their own research interests and ideas.

If You Need Additional Course Background

This class presumes a basic introductory knowledge of social psychology, equivalent to what should be gained in an undergraduate course. If you feel rusty on some of the fundamentals, you should consider delving into the readings in this section to get yourself up to speed. The readings listed in this section are not required.

Introductory texts in Social Psychology (these are but 2 of the dozens of options out there):


You also should visit this social psychology web site, with a wide variety of related information:

http://www.socialpsychology.org/

Specific Course Requirements and Grading Criteria

There are five things that will determine your grade in this course. You are required to: (1) actively contribute to seminar discussions; (2) lead 30-min wild-card discussions; (3) write a preliminary research proposal; (4) write a more in-depth final research proposal; and (5) present your work to the class. The relative contribution of each of these things to your final grade will be as follows:

1. Active Seminar Participation 30%
2. Leading Discussion 20%
3. Readings outlines/summaries 15%
4. Research Proposal 25%
5. Class Presentation 10%
1. Active Seminar Participation

A large part of the success of this course rests on the participation and contribution of all members. Seminar participation is worth 30% of your final grade. Obviously, this means that you must do the readings prior to each class and be able to discuss them. Critically analyze what you are reading. What is the theme of the paper? What are the key points and conclusions? How do these differ from your own intuitions or experiences? How would you test these alternatives? What processes might be responsible for the observed effects? How could this information be applied in business, clinical, or other real world settings? What might be the limits of application? These are just some examples of the types of things that you might be thinking about when reading for this course; I’m sure you can come up with many others.

Do not feel “shy” about speaking up. Make it a point to say at least a few things—pertinent to the class—every meeting. It shouldn’t be difficult for each person to say at minimum two or three things at each class meeting. I can assure you that the class environment will be extremely supportive to the open exchange of ideas, whatever they are. Some of you already know (and others will learn) what “social loafing” means; we don’t want any here.

It is my opinion that learning takes place more effectively in an active fashion at the graduate level. I will try to answer questions as best I can. However, despite my occasional attempts at claims to colleagues and others, I am only human and likely will not be able to answer everything. I will also try to give background information on each topic at the beginning of each class when appropriate. However, there might be times when I unthinkingly assume that everyone is understanding what I’m saying, when this is not the case. Feel free to ask questions or indicate that you would like to spend some time going over the basics of a particular theory that I may have skimmed over. We can then either use some class time to cover the material or I can give a condensed interpretation in class and then refer you to the appropriate materials for more in-depth coverage.

Also, although I am technically in charge I do not view myself as the “leader” of the seminar, in the way that an instructor “leads” a lecture. I want to make this truly a seminar experience, which requires everyone’s involvement. I hope to facilitate whenever necessary, but I don’t want you all to look to me to lead every discussion (see below).

2. Leading Discussion

Twice during the course of this semester, each student will share in the responsibility for leading the seminar discussion; this will be worth 20% of your final grade. As I said with regard to seminar participation (above), each student should have read and should be prepared to discuss all the readings for every class session. On the days you lead discussion, it is your responsibility to organize the topic, present some of the key ideas, ask questions, and steer the seminar. Each week, two students will share the responsibility for leading discussion. I will attempt to give you some level of choice in what topics you present, but realize that this might not be possible. Also, depending on the number of students who ultimately enroll, some of you might be asked to serve more than twice. If that happens I will give special consideration for grading the discussion portion for those students. The students who are responsible for leading discussion in a given week should get together ahead of time and work out how they want to divide up the class time and responsibilities. You can really approach it any way you like, except that you should not be lecturers and the other class members should not assume they have “time off” while you discuss. You should be prepared with questions to pose to the rest of the group, an outline of what you want to talk about (see point 3 below), and any visual aids you want to use (though none are required).

3. Readings outlines/summaries

For each class period you will be required to turn in a typed outline/summary of the key readings assigned for the week. Although this may seem arduous, tedious, frivolous, and/or other descriptors you may wish to use, doing these outlines will greatly improve our ability to use class time effectively. Specifically, the outlines/summaries serve 3 related functions: (1) they encourage you to read the material carefully and critically; (2) they will focus your ability to discuss the material in a reasonably informed way during class; and (3) they are a tangible way of showing that you have read the material assigned for the week. Another way to view this requirement is that outlines take the place of a formal mid-term and final exam, which we won’t have.
Keep in mind that these outlines do not need to be extremely detailed or exhaustive. They are called outlines precisely because I expect you to structure them in outline form; you don’t even need to use complete sentences, unless doing so helps you corral your thinking. Your outline/summary for the week should provide a general overview of the assigned reading material and should conclude with some of your own thoughts or comments on the material, which you can and should use in class to facilitate your own participation in the discussion. You can either lump your outline of all of the weekly readings together into one über-outline, or you can generate multiple mini-outlines (e.g., one for each reading). I would expect that your outline/summary would never exceed 2 pages, though this will depend a lot on how you choose to structure them.

4. Research Proposal

Your final research proposal will be worth 25% toward your final grade. Proposals in this course will be on topics in social psychology, chosen by you and approved by me. It is expected that your proposal will go beyond what is already known within a particular area of social psychology. That is, try to come up with something that adds theoretically and empirically to an extant area of the literature. Some examples include proposing an integration of two or more areas that we’ve talked about in class, an application of some sort, a new method for better understanding a known phenomenon, a new way to think about an old problem, or a brand new theoretical construct (assuming it has firm grounding in the existing literature). Please write in APA format, or something approximating it very closely.

As part of this assignment, I will expect you to turn in a preliminary idea (no more than a page or 2) for your proposal on Oct 31. This preliminary proposal will be your opportunity to tell me what you think you would like to do, but with the understanding that your topic needs my approval before you go forward with it. The reason for the preliminary research idea paper is to force people to put “pen to paper” at a point in the semester when they can still effectively search whether there is enough information on a topic and whether they can integrate it into some coherent form. I can also give you some feedback and perhaps suggest other ideas or places to look at a point when it is not too late. It goes without saying that you do not have to wait until right before Oct 28 to start on your research ideas.

The main requirement of your proposal is that it be your own work/ideas (i.e., don’t steal from your advisor’s latest manuscript in preparation or other external sources) and that it be explicitly social psychological in nature. That is, although you have considerable flexibility in your choice of topic, I want to see some explicit relation to this course. That is, a topic in social psychology should be the primary focus of the proposal. I want to see an explicit rationale for why your topic is important, what it’s going to tell us, and what you’re going to do. Regarding the former point, it is OK with me for you to discuss your basic idea with your advisor before bringing it to my attention, but you should not work out the details with her or him (or anyone else) before filling me in on it.

5. Class Presentation

You will be required to present your topic to the class, worth 10% of your final grade. We all want to know what you’re doing, and this doesn’t happen if only I read your papers. You can learn from each other. Your presentation will be based on your final research proposal. You will make your presentations in front of the class on presentation day (Dec. 5) at the end of the semester. You can use powerpoint, handouts, or any other materials that you like (e.g., smoke machine, strobe lights, margaritas). The length of your presentations will depend upon the number of students ultimately enrolled in the class, but in general I’d like to have each student present for about 10-15 min. The main point of these presentations is to tell the class what you did, which can lead to others being very interested and potentially collaborating in future research efforts.

I will discuss each of these requirements further as the semester progresses (particularly, if reminded).
Course Outline and Topics

The required readings are mostly research or review articles from psychology journals (see Appendix). However, readings may also include book chapters, books, or other sources. In addition, background information will be discussed as necessary. Specific readings and availability and location of the readings will be discussed at the first class meeting. Readings marked with an asterisk (*) are available on PDF. All others will need to be photocopied. With the exception of Oct. 18 and Nov 29, the final reading listed for each class meeting is optional.

Aug 22. Introduction and Overview to the Course

Aug 30. General historic (and folkloric?) overview of the field -- CHUCK & LINDSAY


Sep 6. Attitudes and A-B Relations -- MATT


Sep 13. Expectancies -- AARON


Sep 20. Attribution and explanation -- LINDSAY


Sep 27. Stereotyping, prejudice, and intergroup relations -- CHUCK


Oct 4. Social Cognition -- SARAH


Oct 11. Impression formation and change -- BRUCE


Oct 18. Social influence and social comparison (Note: All of these readings are required) -- MATT


Oct 25. No Class (Bruce will be traveling)

Nov 1. Self and self-regulation -- AARON


Nov 8. Emotion and affective processes – LINDSAY (?)


Nov 15. Social neuroscience -- SARAH


Nov 22. NO CLASS (Thanksgiving Recess)

Nov 29. Aggression and helping (Note: All of these readings are required) -- BRUCE


Dec 6. Class Presentations and Final Research Proposal Due. Class presentation day; the length of class presentations will depend on the number of students enrolled. My guess is that each presentation will be about 10-15 min. Final Research Proposals are due today at the beginning of class.

Appendix I: Additional material I wish we could cover
Unfortunately, this course merely skims the surface of the field of social psychology. Obviously this means that there is a lot of the field that we will not be covering. Here are some additional readings that, if time and exhaustion were not factors, I would like to cover. (Again, this is still not an exhaustive list.) When choosing your research proposal for this course, feel free to select topics related to any of these areas.

**Goal striving**

**Motivation**


**Intergroup relations**


**Interdependence/close relationships**


**Appendix II: Resources in Social Psychology and Related Fields**

Students who are unfamiliar with social psychology may find the following information useful when searching for resources in social psychology and related fields. Of course, keep in mind that there are several complex factors that go into making any particular work “good” or “bad,” and that there are many excellent journals.

**Top-tier Journals in Social Psychology**

*Journal of Personality and Social Psychology (JPSP)*--sponsored by the American Psychological Association (APA). Golden!
Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin (PSPB)—sponsored by the Society for Personality and Social Psychology (SPSP).

Personality and Social Psychology Review (PSPR), includes reviews, etc., that previously appeared in PSPB, sponsored by SPSP.

Journal of Experimental Social Psychology (JESP)—sponsored by the Society of Experimental Social Psychology (SESP).

So-called “second tier” journals in social psychology.

European Journal of Social Psychology (EJSP)
Basic and Applied Social Psychology (BASP)
Journal of Applied Social Psychology (JASP)
British Journal of Social Psychology (BJSP)
Social Cognition
Journal of Social Psychology
Social, Cognitive, and Affective Neuroscience (SCAN) – as the name implies, this new journal (started in 2006) publishes social neuroscience work.

Social Neuroscience – another new journal as of 2006.

Some General Journals in Psychology

Psychological Review (Psych. Review)—sponsored by APA; arguably the top journal in psychology. Platinum!
Psychological Bulletin (Psych. Bull.)—sponsored by APA. Also top.
Psychological Science (Psych. Science)—sponsored by the American Psychological Society (APS). Also top.
Annual Review of Psychology (ARP)—One of the most highly referenced sources in all of psychology. Mostly invited chapters written by “stars” in an area.

Some Great Edited Books in Social Psychology

Advances in Experimental Social Psychology (AESP)—published yearly. Invited and solicited chapters.

Handbook of Social Psychology—newest version published in 1998—published about every 10 years or so. Invited chapters. You’re already “famous” (or know someone who is) if asked to write one here.

Dual process theories in social psychology (1999) – edited by Chaiken and Trope, with contributions from many giants in the field. Good stuff here.

Fundamentals of social neuroscience, edited by Harmon-Jones and Winkielman, published by Guilford Press (in press). – This book is supposed to come out later this year (actually, it was supposed to come out 2 years ago) and will represent the first edited volume dedicated to topics in social neuroscience. There are other books on this topic,
but they are all “readers,” meaning that the editors of those books collected numerous published articles and put them together for ease of accessibility. This book will consist of chapters written by leaders in this field (and some non-leaders, including yours truly) summarizing various areas of research in social neuroscience and social cognitive neuroscience.