Social Psychology will investigate the theoretical, methodological, and empirical characteristics of social psychological research.

Objectives of the course include:
1. Familiarization with the methods and classic and more recent empirical findings of social psychology.
2. Knowledge of ethical and methodological issues in social psychological research.
3. An emphasis will be placed on multicultural issues.

CORE COMPETENCIES:

Research Skills, Ethics and Evaluative Competency:
Students will be exposed to basic research skills through lectures and evaluation of studies throughout the semester. Ethical issues related to research also will be covered, particularly in connection with ethical guidelines developed by the American Psychological Association.

In a major research term paper, students will develop a research project related to social psychology. Prior to conducting the study, students will submit an ethics proposal using guidelines from the Institutional Review Board. The paper will follow the format specified in the APA Publication Manual (2010) which is required for the course. Students will gain experience by conducting the study, analyzing the results and preparing the paper. The studies are considered as pilot studies for possible conference presentations.

Multicultural Issues:
Through the lectures, and particularly through extensive classroom discussions, the complexities of cultural backgrounds of individuals will be explored in the context of classic and contemporary social psychological research. These discussions will be augmented by extensive contributions from doctoral students of varying backgrounds.

Learning, Cognitive Processes and Affect:

The importance of learning, cognitive processes and affect and emotion will be emphasized through classic and contemporary research. Social learning theory (e.g., Bandura) will be related to the development and maintenance of aggressive behavior, including the effects of the media as a model for violent behavior (e.g., Berkowitz). Learning principles also form the basis for the message-learning approach to the study of attitude change. In addition, the Elaboration Likelihood Model of attitude change directly involves a cognitive approach to the study of how to create long-lasting central process attitude change. Other related areas include the attitude-behavior consistency
literature (e.g., Festinger’s dissonance theory) and models examine the contributions of cognitive and affective components of attitudes toward attitude change. Finally, attribution theory provides a model for examining interpersonal processes.

These competencies will be assessed through classroom discussions and a final examination.

REQUIREMENTS AND ASSESSMENT OF COMPETENCIES:

1. Oral Report: Each student will participate in a team. The team will select a major topic area in Social Psychology, and will present oral reports in the form of a symposium. The reports will include presentations of recent relevant research in the field. Each team will have a Symposium Chair who will introduce the topic area. The presenters will describe recent research in the relevant social psychological area. Students will be graded on their oral presentation, on a short individual paper describing and evaluating recent empirical research in the area, and on a program developed by the team.

2. Students will design, conduct and analyze the results of an experiment in a relevant social psychological research area. Students will work in pairs or teams throughout the research process. In the experiment, two independent variables (i.e., a 2X2 between-subjects factorial design) will be manipulated. A minimum of 12 participants will be recruited for each study. A term paper based on the study will follow the APA Publication Manual Rules. The paper will begin with an Introduction section, including a critical evaluative analysis of 3 or 4 recent social psychological empirical articles, followed by three hypotheses related to the experimental design. The Introduction section will be followed by the Method, Results (only descriptive statistics, as well as an indication of the appropriate analysis to be used when a sufficient number of participants have been included), a Discussion section, References, an Abstract and an Appendix. All materials must be approved prior to conducting the study.

3. There will be a final examination which will assess students’ understanding of Material presented in lectures and the readings.

TOPICS AND READINGS

I. History of Social Psychology


II. Methodology and Ethics


III. Attitudes


IV. Health Behavior


IV. Prejudice and Discrimination

History of prejudice in American Social Psychology.
Henry, P.J., & Hardin, C.D. (2006). The contact hypothesis revisited:
V. Sexual harassment
VI. Aggression and Violence
VII. Social Perception, Cognition and Attribution
VIII. Group Behavior and Social Influence

IX. Interpersonal Attraction and Close Relationships


ORAL REPORTS: March 23 and March 30

TERM PAPERS: May 4