Goals of this course
Although we as individuals like to think of ourselves as free agents guided purely by our own wishes, social psychology reveals how deeply our thoughts, feelings, and actions are influenced by social situations and the people within them. This course provides a broad survey of topics in social psychology that illustrate the various ways in which the real and imagined presence of others influences our thoughts and actions (e.g., developing a sense of self, forming impressions of others, attitudes and persuasion, conformity and obedience, etc.).

The first goal in this course is to have you learn social psychological theories of human behavior; how theories are translated into research questions and tested empirically to verify their validity; and how resulting findings help illuminate social phenomena in everyday life and sometimes helps create interventions. The second goal is to have you learn to critically evaluate the merit of scientific studies so that you can differentiate good science from pseudo-science (“pop psychology”).

Core themes running through the course
1. Human thought and behavior is heavily shaped by social situations and people around us
2. Human thought and behavior is guided by a few basic human motives: the need to be liked by others, to be competent, to belong, to be unique/distinctive but yet to fit in.
3. Much of human thinking happens automatically, without our awareness.

Course content
Our meetings will consist of lectures, class exercises and discussion, and illustrative videos. In lectures and class exercises we will often discuss new information that will not be in the textbook. I expect you to know and be conversant in course material covered in the text as well as lectures and class discussions. So I encourage you to attend class regularly.

Required textbook (available in the Textbook Annex; new and used copies)

Assignments
• Three exams, each worth 24% of your grade, for a total of 72%.
  These exams will be non-cumulative, they will include multiple choice questions and short answers, and will take place during regularly scheduled class times. No make-up exams.

• Homework questions: You will have 7 short homework questions, each worth 3% of your grade, for a total of 21%. You have a choice of doing 7 out of 11 questions. All homework questions are appended to the end of this syllabus. Homework assignments will be collected in class on the due
date. An assignment will be considered late if it is not turned in by the end of class on the date it is due. Points will be taken off late assignments.

- **Class exercises:** During most class meetings we will do short individual or group exercises. These exercises will involve writing and discussion. I will collect the written part at the end of each class. Together, class exercises will be worth 7% of your final grade.

- **Extra credit: Participation in research.** You may earn up to 3% on your final grade by participating in up to 3 hours of psychological research. Each hour of research participation = 1% extra credit. If you sign up for a study, you must show up or contact the experimenter ahead of time before the appointment to cancel or reschedule if you can’t attend (3 or more “no shows” will lead you to lose your human subjects extra credit privilege). For information about how to sign-up for extra credit research visit: [http://www.psych.umass.edu/uploads/sites/0/Files/F12_ug_SONA_%20instructions.pdf](http://www.psych.umass.edu/uploads/sites/0/Files/F12_ug_SONA_%20instructions.pdf)

- **Alternative extra credit option:** If, for any reason, you do not wish to be a research participant, you may choose to get extra credit (3%) by completing 1 extra homework assignment. All homework is due in class on the date mentioned in the syllabus.

**Policy on cheating and plagiarism**
Cheating and plagiarism is not fair to honest students; it goes against the ethics of the university, and is not in your best interest. All students are expected to adhere closely to the University policy concerning academic honesty. For more information on the University's academic honesty policy, check this web site: [http://www.umass.edu/dean_students/codeofconduct/acad honesty/](http://www.umass.edu/dean_students/codeofconduct/acad honesty/)

When reading over the university web page on academic dishonesty, please pay particularly close attention to the description of plagiarism. When writing your papers, do not copy information directly from a research article, textbook, web page or other source without quoting the information and providing the source. In addition, do not paraphrase someone else’s work and submit it as your own without citing the source of the idea. Finally, do not complete your assignments in collaboration with other students. This is easily detected and will not be tolerated. All students involved in copying a paper from another student (or allowing another student to copy an assignment) will receive an F in the course. If you observe other cheating, please notify me immediately.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dates</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Readings</th>
<th>Important Dates</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tue 9/4</td>
<td>What is social psychology? And course logistics</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thu 9/6</td>
<td>Introduction to Social Psychology</td>
<td>Kenrick text Ch 1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tue 9/11</td>
<td>Person and the situation</td>
<td>Kenrick text Ch 2</td>
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<td>Thu 9/13</td>
<td>Person and the situation (cont’d)</td>
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<td>Tue 9/18</td>
<td>Presenting the self</td>
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<td>Tue 9/25</td>
<td>Social cognition</td>
<td>Kenrick text Ch 3</td>
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<td>Thu 9/27</td>
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<td>Tue 10/2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thu 10/4</td>
<td>Attitudes and persuasion + exam review</td>
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<td>Tue 10/9</td>
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<td>Thu 10/11</td>
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<td>Tue 10/16</td>
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<td>Kenrick text Ch 6</td>
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<td>Thu 10/18</td>
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<td>Tue 10/23</td>
<td>Affiliation and friendship</td>
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<td>Thu 10/25</td>
<td>Love and romantic relationships</td>
<td>Kenrick text Ch 8</td>
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<td>Aggression</td>
<td>Kenrick text Ch 10</td>
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<td>Tue 11/13</td>
<td>No class (I’m out of town for work)</td>
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<td>Thu 11/15</td>
<td>Aggression (cont’d)</td>
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<td>Tue 11/20</td>
<td>Prejudice, stereotyping</td>
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<td>Thu 11/22</td>
<td>No class (Thanksgiving)</td>
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<td>Prejudice, stereotyping (cont’d)</td>
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<td>Thu 11/29</td>
<td>Catch-up day</td>
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<td>Tue 12/4</td>
<td>Course evaluations + exam review</td>
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<td>Thu 12/6</td>
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HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENTS FOR THE ENTIRE SEMESTER

Homework #1 (Chapter 1: Intro to Social Psych)

Think of with two examples of events that are correlated. For each example: (1) describe how these two events X and Y are correlated; (2) then describe how correlation is not causation by explaining how it might be the case that X could cause Y, or Y could cause X, and also identify a third invisible variable (Z) that could cause both X and Y.

Homework #2 (Chapter 2: Person and Situation)

Break a social norm (safely). Then write about your experience in 1-2 pages. Specifically: (1) what was the social norm you chose to break? (2) Was it a descriptive or prescriptive norm (define each type of norm; explain how your example fits the definition of one or the other)? (3) What were other people’s reactions to you when you broke the norm? (4) Was it hard for you to break the norm? Did it feel uncomfortable—what does that say about the power of situational forces?

Homework #3 (Chapter 4: Self-concept)

Write about two examples from your own life where you’ve used social comparison to assess your social standing on some social or performance dimension. (1) What was the dimension on which you were trying to determine your worthiness? (2) Who did you compare yourself with and why that person? (3) Was in an upward or downward social comparison? (4) Did the social comparison make you feel good or bad about yourself? Importantly, apply what you’ve learned about social comparison and self-esteem from lecture and the text to your experience.

Homework #4 (Chapter 3: Social cognition)

What is a self-fulfilling prophecy? (1) Describe one example of a self-fulfilling prophecy that you observed happening to someone else or experienced personally. (2) How did that happen? That is, explain step-by-step how your example fit the definition of self-fulfilling prophecy.

Homework #5 (Chapter 5: Attitudes & Persuasion)

Find two advertisements (print ads or video ads)—one advertisement you select must try to persuade the audience using the “systematic route” and the second ad you select must try to persuade using the “heuristic route.” For each ad analyze how the presentation of the content, and the messenger in the ad is tailored to appeal to a listener/reader who has a systematic style of information processing or heuristic style of processing. What type of audience is the advertisement geared toward? Use research in the textbook and lecture to support your answer. Please attach the print ads to your homework or provide the URL for video ads. I must be able to see the advertisements you selected.
Homework #6 (Chapter 6: Social influence)

Think about the following examples and answer the questions below.

1. When some charities and foundations send out donation requests to donors they include a small gift with the donation request (e.g., free address labels for the potential donor; a free pen). What key psychological concept does this example capture and why? Does it have any effect on the person receiving the request? Isn’t it more expensive for the charity to pay and mail these gifts?

2. Have you ever been approached by someone on the street or on campus to sign a petition for a good cause? After you sign the petition have you been asked to donate money for the cause? Would it work the opposite way: be asked to donate first and then sign the petition later? Why or why not? What key psychological concept does this example capture and why?

Homework #7 (Chapter 7: Friendship & Affiliation)

Comparing friendships in real life vs. social media websites (e.g., Facebook)

1. Think about your Facebook friends. Count and list how many of these friendships are communal relationships vs. exchange relationships?

2. Based on what you have learned about communal relationships from the lecture and textbook, do you think it possible to maintain communal relationships via Facebook without having too many (or any) face-to-face interactions? Why or why not? Use concepts from the readings to answer this question.

3. How does the medium (real life vs. social media) in which you keep in touch with friends affect your self-disclosure with them? Specifically, do you self-disclose personal things to your friends in the same way in face-to-face interactions vs. Facebook? Or is the nature of your self-disclosure different when you meet your friend in person vs. talk to them on Facebook? Use concepts from Chapter 7 to explain your answer.

Homework #8 (Chapter 8: Love & Romantic relationships)

Think about your current romantic relationship or a past relationship.

- What are the rewards you get (or got) from partner?
- What are (or were) the costs?
- What are (or were) the investments you had made in the relationship?
- Going into the relationship, how high or low were your expectations of an ideal romantic relationship?
- Is (or was) your relationship satisfaction related to your rewards, costs, investments?
- Does your experience fit the predictions of social exchange theory? Explain based on what you have learned about this theory.
Homework #9 (Chapter 9: Prosocial behavior/helping)

Find two real world events of people who were involved in acts of helping that were reported in the public media such as newspapers, TV, radio, or on the internet.
1. One event must be a helpful act that was clearly motivated by an external reward for the person doing the helping.
   (a) Summarize the event
   (b) Attach a hardcopy of the story with your homework.
   (c) Based on information in the reported story, explain what external reward you think the helper received by engaging in the helpful act

2. The second event you select must be a helpful act that was clearly motivated by an internal reward for the person doing the helping.
   (a) Summarize the event
   (b) Attach a hardcopy of the story with your homework
   (c) Based on information in the reported story, explain what internal reward you think the helper received (e.g., was the helping motivated by the desire to reduce one’s own personal distress, motivated by empathy, something else?).

Homework #10 (Chapter 10: Aggression)

The television, movie, and videogame industries have been under criticism for years for the amount of violence depicted in the media. There’s a great deal of public debate about this issue, which touches on related issues such as censorship and the First Amendment of the Constitution, family values, profitability vs. social responsibility, and definitions of art. Many of the people whose voices are loudest in these debates are often quite ignorant about the empirical research on the effects of media violence on attitudes and behavior.

1. First, discuss and summarize what the research does and does not tell us about the correlational and causal relationship between exposure to violence (on TV, movies, and videogames) and aggressive attitudes and behavior.

2. Based on the research findings you’ve read about, do you think parents need to be concerned about anti-social effects of violent media on their children? Why or why not? If yes, what should parents do?

3. Is there an age limit at which point parents can stop being concerned about the potential anti-social effect of media violence on individuals? Use research evidence to support your answer.

Homework #11 (Chapter 11: Stereotyping)

Go to the following website: http://www.pbs.org/race/002_SortingPeople/002_00-home.htm

You will see faces of 20 people -- try categorizing them by race by clicking on the “Begin sorting” button. When you’re done you will be able to see how many of your categorization decisions matched each individual’s self-identified race versus how many of your decisions were incorrect.
1. First, report how you did. How many of the 20 individuals did you categorize correctly? How many others did you categorize incorrectly?

2. Now that you know where you made mistakes, why do you think some of your categorization judgments didn’t match individuals’ self-identified race? Do you think outgroup homogeneity bias played any role in your errors? Describe what this phenomenon is and how it applies here. Do any other phenomena from Chapter 11 explain the reason for your errors?

3. From the perspective of the individuals you saw, what do you think is the psychological consequence of realizing that one’s own self-identification doesn’t match how other people see you? Use any psychological theories and concepts you’ve learned in this class to answer this question (you might want to look specifically at the chapter on the self-concept and the chapter on prejudice).