



## SOCIOLOGY 401: Social Psychology

### Course Description and Objectives:

Social Psychology reveals just how vulnerable human beings are to social influence. Given this, the question is not whether or not our actions are influenced by others but rather to what degree and under what conditions. This course borrows from both Sociology and Psychology as a means of gaining a better understanding of the variables (factors) that trigger human action. Particular focus is lent to the study of human conformity, persuasion, social cognition, self-justification, human aggression, prejudice and interpersonal relationships.

### Student Learning Outcomes:

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- Contrast micro and macro sociology
- Recognize the basic tenants of symbolic interactionism
- Examine the power of the situation in determining human behavior
- Classify perspectives on impression management and persuasion
- Apply principles of sociologically oriented Social Psychology to personal and professional life
- Understand the ethical principles relevant to doing research in Social Psychology
- Demonstrate a basic knowledge of terms used in Social Psychology
- Develop effective writing skills.

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Adams State College  
Department of Sociology  
Fall 2012  
TR 9:30 am - 10:45 am  
MCD, 316

### Textbooks:

Aronson, Elliot. (2012). *The Social Animal*. NY: Worth Publishers. *ELEVENTH EDITION*.



**Exams (40%):** You will take two exams throughout the semester, each worth 20% of your final grade. Exam questions will mainly test your knowledge of key concepts from the assigned readings but they will also include questions based on supplemental information provided in the classroom discussions and lectures.

**Ethnographic Essay (30%):** This essay is your opportunity to apply the key concepts that we explore throughout this course to a particular social setting. Your final essay should be at least 8 pages (double-spaced). The paper is to be based off of your observations of a specific social setting that you find intriguing. This assignment is due, in class, on the 27<sup>th</sup> of November. Please see the additional handout labeled “Ethnographic Analysis of Social Setting” for more information.

**Final Presentation (10%):** At the end of the semester you will be expected to present the observations you make in your final essay to the rest of the class. You may present your work in the way that you are most comfortable with so as long as your presentation clearly and concisely conveys your work to the rest of the class.

**Participation (20%):**

**Part I (10%):** This class will include both lecture and discussion. That said, emphasis will be placed on the latter. For this reason, it is expected that you *read* the assigned material *before class* so that you can actively participate in classroom discussions. It should go without saying but active participation requires your presence in the classroom. If you miss an extensive amount of class (more than 3 classes), your participation grade will drop significantly.

**Part I (10%):** Social Psychology is primarily concerned with social interaction. As a result, each Thursday I expect students to come to class prepared to discuss and analyze a particular newspaper article through the lens of the particular concept that we are discussing that week (i.e., conformity, persuasion, social cognition, etc). For this assignment I expect you to: (1) regularly read a professional news source such as the New York Times, The Economist, The Los Angeles Times, The Denver Post, etc, (2) each week choose an article that fits with the core theme for the class that week, (3) print the article and read it and (4) after reading the article, jot down several discussion questions for the class to consider. In class I will expect each of you to provide a brief review of your article and then we will all discuss the questions that you have come up with. At the end of class you will turn in your article with your discussion questions (be sure to write your name on your article!).

**Written work:** All written work must be typed, double-spaced, 12-point font (Garamond or Times New Roman preferred), with 1” margins on all sides. Papers *may not* be turned in via e-mail unless I request a digital copy. Late papers will be penalized with a 10 point deduction for each day after the deadline.

**Extra Credit:** For each essay (in this case the final essay), if you utilize the writing lab I will

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increase your final grade, for that particular assignment, by 5 percent (you will need to provide edited drafts with your final essay).

**Persons with Disabilities:** If you have any sort of disability or personal problem which prevents the fullest expression of your abilities, please let me know as soon as possible during the semester - before it interferes with your work - so that I can make a reasonable accommodation to your needs.

**Academic Misconduct:** Taking the easy way out will have real consequences in this class (check out turnitin.com). Plagiarism, cheating, or any other form of academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. Any student engaging in academic dishonesty will be dropped from the course and formal charges will be brought before the Department Chair.

| Date  | Topic                                                 | Reading                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
|-------|-------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 08/21 | -Review syllabus                                      | -Syllabus available on benjaminjameswaddell.com; password for course: soc401.                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| 08/23 | -Introduction to Social Psychology                    | -Ch. 1 in <i>Social Animal</i> (pg. 1-11)<br>-Ch. 1 in <i>Self and Society</i> (1-29) (Website)                                                                                                                                                                 |
| 08/28 | <b>Introduction to Social Psychology as a Science</b> | Ch. 9 in <i>Social Animal</i> (pg. 405-429)<br>*Methodology (should be a review for most).<br>*Bring example of “questionable statistic” to class on Thursday.                                                                                                  |
| 08/30 | -Introduction to Social Psychology as a Science       | -“Telling the Truth About Damned Lies and Statistics,” by Joel Best (available on website in PDF labeled <i>Readings in Sociology (Garth Massey)</i> )<br>*Review of Statistics in Social Sciences, cont.<br>*Discuss students’ analysis of newspaper articles. |
| 09/04 | <b>Conformity</b>                                     | -Ch. 2 in <i>Social Animal</i> (13-35)                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| 09/06 | -Just following orders?                               | Ch. 5 “The My Lai Massacre: A Crime of Obedience?” by Herbert C. Kelman and V. Lee Hamilton (available on website in PDF labeled <i>Readings in Sociology (Garth Massey)</i> )<br>*Discuss students’ analysis of newspaper articles.                            |
| 09/11 | -Conformity, cont.                                    | -Ch. 2 in <i>Social Animal</i> (35-57)<br>-Ch. 7 “Making Sense of the Nonsensical” in <i>Readings</i> (80-97)                                                                                                                                                   |
| 09/13 | -Jonestown                                            | *Watch documentary: <i>Witness to Jonestown</i> .                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| 09/18 | <b>Mass Communication</b>                             | - Ch. 3 in <i>Social Animal</i> (59-84)                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |



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| 09/20 | -The Social Psychology of Politics      | -Ch. 8 “Effects of Varying the Recommendations in a Fear-Arousing Communication” in <i>Readings</i> (101-111)<br>and<br>Miller, C. B. (2009). “Yes we did! Basking in reflected glory and cutting off reflected failure in the 2008 presidential election” (available on website)<br>*Discuss students’ analysis of newspaper articles.                                  |
| 09/25 | -Mass Communication, cont.              | - Ch. 2 in <i>Social Animal</i> (84-115)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| 09/27 | -Violence and the Media                 | - Ch. 4 “The Impact of Mass Media Violence on U.S. Homicides” in <i>Readings</i> (132-146)<br>*Discuss students’ analysis of newspaper articles.<br>*In-class review for midterm!                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| 10/02 | MIDTERM EXAM!!!                         | MIDTERM EXAM!!!                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| 10/04 | <b>Fall Break</b>                       | No class.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| 10/09 | The Social Psychology of News           | -Review Midterm Exam in class.<br>-Start documentary: <i>Outfoxed: Rupert Murdoch’s War on Journalism</i> .<br>*Write up a description of your final project. Explain what you plan to observe and discuss any pertinent literature that you believe might help you understand the phenomenon you will be observing. (Due in class Thursday, October 11 <sup>th</sup> .) |
| 10/11 | Outfoxed                                | Watch documentary: <i>Outfoxed: Rupert Murdoch’s War on Journalism</i> .                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| 10/16 | <b>Social Cognition</b>                 | -Ch. 4 in <i>Social Animal</i> (113-147)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| 10/18 | -The Social Psychology of Attraction    | -Ch. 11 “Contrast Effects and Judgments of Physical Attractiveness” in <i>Readings</i> (149-163)<br>*Discuss students’ analysis of newspaper articles                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| 10/23 | <b>Self-Justification</b>               | -Ch. 5 in <i>Social Animal</i> (177-220)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| 10/25 | -The Social Psychology of Common Spaces | -Ch. 20 “Using Cognitive Dissonance to Encourage Water Conservation” in <i>Readings</i> (275-287)<br>*Discuss students’ analysis of newspaper articles                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| 10/30 | <b>Human Aggression</b>                 | -Ch. 6 in <i>Social Animal</i> (249-279)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| 11/01 | -Violence on the screen                 | -Ch. 22 “The Effects of Observing Violence” in <i>Readings</i> (303-314)<br>*Discuss students’ analysis of newspaper articles                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |



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| 11/06 | Human Aggression, cont.                              | -Ch. 6 in <i>Social Animal</i> (279-295)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| 11/08 |                                                      | -Ch. 24 “Peacetime Casualties” in <i>Readings</i> (329-340)<br>*Discuss students’ analysis of newspaper articles<br><b>*Start Drafting Final Paper!!!</b>                                                                                                                                          |
| 11/13 | <b>Liking, Loving, and Interpersonal Sensitivity</b> | -Ch. 8 in <i>Social Animal</i> (355-381)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| 11/15 | -The Science of Love                                 | -Ch. 37 “Some Evidence for Heightened Sexual Attraction Under Conditions of High Anxiety” in <i>Readings</i> (536-549)<br><br>-Ch. 39 “Arbitrary Social Norms Influence Sex Differences in Romantic Selectivity” in <i>Readings</i> (568-579)<br>*Discuss students’ analysis of newspaper articles |
| 11/20 | -Essay day                                           | No class, work on final essay!!!                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| 11/22 | -Thanksgiving                                        | No Class                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| 11/27 | -Final Presentations                                 | -Turn in final essay!<br>-10-15 min per presenter                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| 11/29 | -Final Presentations                                 | -10-15 min per presenter                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| 12/04 | -Final Presentations                                 | -10-15 min per presenter                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| 12/06 | -Final Presentations                                 | -10-15 min per presenter                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| 12/12 | <b>Final Exam</b>                                    | Wednesday, December 12 <sup>th</sup> from 10:00-11:50am.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |

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