

**SYLLABUS**  
**PSYCHOLOGY 2C03: SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY**  
**Department of Psychology, Neuroscience, and Behaviour**  
**McMaster University**  
**Winter 2010**

Course time: R 7pm  
Course location: JHE/376

**Professor:**

Dr. J. M. Ostovich

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Phone: Do not call me; I can never remember the contents of a phone discussion; thus any promises I make you over the phone are almost certainly going to be forgotten! and, once forgotten, null and void!

Office: PC-415A

Office hours: TBA; monitor announcements section of website for weekly updates.

**Teaching Assistants:** Please see the document “Your TA’s”, on the homepage of our website, for information on office location. Monitor announcements section for updates on office hours.

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**Please note:** This syllabus – including scheduling, topic order, topics themselves, and assessment strategy – is subject to change if circumstances warrant (e.g., TA loss, “snow days”).

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**Course Description:** This course is designed to introduce you to research and theory in social psychology. We will pay special attention to how research is carried out in this very experimental field, and how research informs (and forms) theories of human social behavior. We will also think about how social psychology can be applied to everyday life.

**Textbook** (required): Myers, D. Spencer, S., & Jordan, C. (2009). *Social Psychology*, 4<sup>th</sup> Canadian Ed. I *cannot vouch for previous editions’ suitability* as substitutes, and *strongly recommend using the edition specified here*. Do not email me asking whether you should use a previous edition! The answer is right here!

I have created a *custom edition* of this textbook for you (the one with the *white cover*), available in the McMaster bookstore. This version cuts materials that will not be used in 2C03, is soft-cover, is printed in black and white, and therefore saves you *big* bucks. If you prefer a full version of the textbook, then this can be bought on-line for \$120.00, or thereabouts.

**E-mail Policy:** E-mail *must* originate from your *designated McMaster e-mail account*. Should we need to communicate with you about individual matters, the e-mail will be sent to your mcmaster.ca account. You should *monitor this account regularly*. E-mail sent from third-party providers (yahoo, hotmail, cogeco, sympatico, etc.) will be ignored. We have this policy for *three reasons*: (1) to reduce the amount of incoming spam to our accounts; (2) to ensure that we know with whom we are communicating; and (3) to teach the professional use of e-mail. *Remember*: E-mails to your professors are *professional communications*. They should include *correct* spelling and punctuation, should have an *informative subject line*, and should be polite and to the point.

**Website Policy:** This course has a Blackboard website. You are expected to check this website with regularity for announcements, updates, discussion board postings, and other valuable information. It is *your responsibility* to keep up with the information provided on this site.

Use of the website's **discussion boards** is strongly encouraged, and, in the case of non-private inquiries (e.g., questions about course content and the running of this course, but *not* emails reporting illness or other private matters) is *preferred to email communications*. I have 650 students this term and cannot possibly answer all emails. Questions asked on the discussion board allow other students with the same questions the chance to see the answer (and therefore not have to ask the question themselves). Discussion board questions also provide a learning experience for students who attempt to answer these questions themselves.

Please see the *first post* on each discussion board for *directions on how to use the board*. Posts that ignore these directions will be deleted. The professor reserves the right to *ban* students from the course website if they use the board inappropriately (e.g., posting mean or other inappropriate comments). This will involve lost access to slides and other important course information.

Finally, students should be aware that, when they access the electronic components of this course, private information such as first and last names, user names for the McMaster e-mail accounts, and program affiliation may become apparent to all other students in the same course. The available information is dependent on the technology used. Continuation in this course will be deemed consent to this disclosure. If you have any questions or concerns about such disclosure please discuss this with the course instructor.

**Participation:** In-class and discussion board participation are strongly encouraged. Remember, if you have a question, your colleagues probably have one, too, and will appreciate it if you speak up. Don't be shy about asking questions!

**Assessment:** Your final mark will be based on your performance on two midterms (@ 30% each; dates listed on bottom of page 4) and one final exam (@ 40%).

The midterms will be non-cumulative (*exception*: research methods), and will cover lecture material *and* assigned readings, *even* readings not discussed in class. The final exam will be cumulative, but otherwise exactly the same as the midterms.

All tests will be comprised of some combination of multiple choice and written answers. The written sections of my tests are *based entirely on lectures*, and include definitions, descriptions of experiments, and interpretation of the contribution of these experiments to social psychology theory. The multiple choice sections test both lecture and readings material.

**Missed Tests:** It is your responsibility to submit all excuses for missed tests to the office of the Associate Dean of your faculty *within one week* of the original test date. It is *also* your responsibility to *speak with your professor as soon as possible*. Senate regulations for petitions for special consideration have always required that: "40.

The student shall make a prompt and timely request for special consideration." No requests for special consideration will be accepted after one month.

If you miss the midterm, a makeup test will be provided during class time a week to the day after the original test (yes, this means that you will miss a lecture if you miss the midterm). *If you miss this make-up*, then you must once again supply an excuse to your Associate Dean; otherwise, you will receive a mark of zero (0) on the midterm. If you can provide an acceptable excuse to your Associate Dean for having missed the make-up, then an alternate make-up assignment will be designed for you. *This make-up assignment could take the form of a research paper, essay examination, or oral examination. Therefore, please consider the consequences of missing a test carefully!*

**Final Grade Calculations:** Your final grade will be converted to a letter grade, according to the following scheme:

<u>Percentage (Grade)</u>	<u>Percentage (Grade)</u>	<u>Percentage (Grade)</u>	<u>Percentage (Grade)</u>
90-100 (A+)	77-79 (B+)	67-69 (C+)	57-59 (D+)
85-89 (A)	73-76 (B)	63-66 (C)	53-56 (D)
80-84 (A-)	70-72 (B-)	60-62 (C-)	50-52 (D-)
			0-49 (F)

**Please Note:** The instructor reserves the right to adjust final marks up *or down*, on an individual basis, in the light of special circumstances. Students *who do not pass the final*, or whose final exam mark is their *lowest mark* in the course, will *not* have their final marks adjusted up under any circumstances – poor performance on a cumulative final demonstrates a lack of familiarity with course content.

**Please Note as Well:** I do *not* do special favours for one student that I would not also do the whole class. For example, I will not, under normal circumstances, bump up a final mark for any one student (e.g., 69.2% is a C+ for *all* students; it is *not* a B- for you, but a C+ for the rest of the class). Your final mark is your final mark, unless a marking or mathematical error has been made. I live by this rule because special favours to one student are unfair to the multitude of students who neither ask for nor get those same favours. Therefore, if you are concerned about your final mark, it is your responsibility to visit with me or with one of your TA's for guidance.

**Academic Integrity:** You are expected to exhibit honesty and use ethical behavior in all aspects of the learning process. Academic credentials you earn are rooted in principles of honesty and academic integrity. Academic dishonesty is to knowingly act or fail to act in a way that results or could result in unearned academic credit or advantage. This behavior can result in serious consequences, e.g., a grade of zero (0) on an assignment, loss of course credit with a notation on the transcript ("grade F assigned for academic dishonesty"), and/or suspension or expulsion from the university. It is your responsibility to understand what constitutes academic dishonesty. For information on the various types of academic dishonesty, please refer to the Academic Integrity Policy, at <http://www.mcmaster.ca/academicintegrity>.

### **How To Do Well in this Course.**

#### **READ THIS SECTION CAREFULLY!!!**

**First:** Know your materials. Read the *syllabus* – it is your bible; emails that come to me asking for information contained in this syllabus will be ignored. Read the *website* carefully as well: follow the discussions, and read any announcements. Check the website *several times per week*.

**Second:** Know the *missed tests policy*. Do exactly as this policy asks if you miss a test, or you may be in for a nasty surprise.

Third: You cannot do well in this course if you do not *attend lectures*. Although the textbook does support the lecture material, lectures often go far beyond the textbook. Therefore, if you miss lectures, you will miss important information.

Fourth: You also cannot do well in this course if you do not supplement lectures with *independent learning from the textbook*. I do not cover all of the materials in the textbook; there is no time for that in a one-term course. Therefore, I expect you to spend some of your study-time identifying important concepts from the text, and learning them. Independent learning is a very important skill. You will be expected to do this in your upper level courses, and – more importantly – in what academics like to call the “real world”.

Fifth: Slides are posted *after* their contents have been lectured on. I post the slides after lectures for several reasons. The most important of these is that no one in the real world is going to give you slides! In order to do well in the real world, you will have to know how to cope with large amounts of incoming information. If you have trouble taking effective notes, then please visit CSD, or see me or one of your TA’s for advice.

Sixth: Please note that my slides contain only *basic information* – bullet points and data. You cannot recreate lectures, and therefore cannot succeed in this course, by depending on them instead of attending lecture.

Finally: *Think carefully* about the information I’m presenting you in lecture. Usually, lectures are structured such that (1) you’re learning about some theory or idea, and (2) I’m describing the research that helped develop that theory or idea.

The written sections of my tests are based on that structure. Thus, you should be able to: describe any given experiment accurately (*hint*: break it down into its main components: methods, independent variable, dependent variable, complete results, as I do in lecture); explain how that experiment enhanced, changed, negated, or supported the theory it is associated with.

Thus, in order to do well, you must engage in *active studying*. That is, you must *spend time thinking about the material*, rather than merely memorizing it. My best advice is that you spend some of your study time thinking carefully about *why* I’ve chosen to tell you about a given piece of research. If you study the experiments in isolation (i.e., merely memorize them), then you will miss the point of the experiments, and you will therefore do rather poorly on the tests.

If you’re having trouble figuring out how to study effectively, then please visit CSD (I’d bring them this syllabus if I chose to see them), and/or come see me or one of your TA’s, and we’ll gladly help you.

### **DATES, TOPICS, AND READINGS**

This schedule is subject to change.

Any changes will be announced on Blackboard.

The most likely change is the timing of topics scheduled directly before and after midterms.

**Basic structure of the course**: This course is divided into three (3) sections. Below (next page), you will find a list of topics (with associated readings listed in [blue](#)) that I expect to cover in each of these sections. At the end of each section of lectures, you will write an exam. Here are the pertinent dates (next page):

Midterm 1: 4 Feb

Midterm 2: 11 Mar

Final Exam: To be scheduled by the Registrar

**A note on dates and deadlines:** The instructor and university reserve the right to modify elements of the course during the term. The university may change the dates and deadlines for any or all courses in extreme circumstances. If either type of modification becomes necessary, reasonable notice and communication with the students will be given with an explanation and the opportunity to comment on changes. It is the responsibility of the student to check their McMaster email and course websites weekly during the term and to note any changes.

**A note on the readings:** I will *not* be deleting any of the readings listed below. Plan carefully so that you do not find yourself “cramming” the readings at the last minute.

This syllabus does not contain exact dates other than those for tests. I do this in order to allow us flexibility in timing of topics. A good rule of thumb is to read one topic’s readings per week.

### **Topics and Readings**

Again, there are *no exact dates* listed for each topic. However, we will tend to complete one topic per week up until section 3, at which point we will sometimes complete two topics per week.

Page numbers refer to the page numbers *used by the textbook itself*, rather than the set of numbers imposed on us by the makers of your custom edition.

#### **Section 1: 7 Jan to 4 Feb**

Topic 1. Research Methods: [Read Ch 1](#)

Topic 2. Social Influence (*conformity, bystander intervention, obedience to authority*): [Read Ch 6 and pages 271-275 \(on Minority Influence\) and pages 311-319 \(on the Bystander Intervention Model\)](#)

Topic 3. Persuasion: [Read Ch 7 and pages 120-123 \(on Foot-in-the-Door\)](#)

#### **Section 2: 11 Feb to 11 Mar**

Topic 4. Prejudice: [Read Ch 12](#)

Topic 5. Aggression: [Read Ch 10](#)

Topic 6. Altruism *aka* Prosocial Behaviour: [Read Ch 9](#)

#### **Section 3: 18 Mar to 8 Apr**

Topic 7. Self Esteem: [Read Ch 2](#)

Topic 8. Attribution Theory: [Read Ch 3](#)

Topic 9. Group Behaviour: [Read Ch 8](#)

Topic 10. Dissonance Theory: [Read Ch 4](#)

Topic 11. Sex: [Read Ch 11](#)