

SYLLABUS
PSYCHOLOGY 2C03: SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY
Department of Psychology, Neuroscience, and Behaviour
McMaster University
Fall 2011

Course time: M7pm
Course location: HSC 1A1

Professor

Dr. J. M. Ostovich

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Office hours: W 3-4pm; monitor announcements section of website for cancellations, changes, and extra hours.

Teaching Assistants

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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).

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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 to how research findings are used to advance our understanding of human social behavior.

Textbook (required): Custom edition of Myers, Spencer, & Jordan. (2009). *Social Psychology*, 4th Canadian Ed., available exclusively at the McMaster bookstore. Other editions of this textbook will not only be more expensive, but also do not have the same pagination and chapter order as this one. I therefore strongly recommend against using anything other than the edition listed here (or its non-custom analogue). If you *do* use a different textbook, then it is up to you (*not me or your TA's*) to figure out which pages and chapters to read. E-mails asking us for help with this will be deleted.

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 (e.g., hotmail, cogeco) will be ignored. We have this policy for *two important reasons*: (1) to ensure that we know with whom we are

communicating; and (2) to teach the professional use of e-mail. *Remember:* E-mails to your professors are professional communications. They should (1) include correct spelling and punctuation, (2) have an *informative subject line*, and (3) be brief.

Website Policy: This course has an *Avenue to Learn* 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 communication*. I have hundreds of students each 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 wish to answer these questions themselves.

Please see the top of 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 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.

Policy re. the Recording of Lectures: No student is permitted to record lectures, unless they have CSD documentation that they require this service due to disability (e.g., dyslexia). Those with permission to record lectures *may not share* their recording with others. Any infraction of this policy will be severely dealt with.

Why? You will have difficulties in your post-graduate, real-world job if you are not able to listen effectively to, and take note of, the right things. Note-taking gives you practice in this very important skill.

Participation: In-class and discussion board participation are strongly encouraged. 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) and one final exam (@40%). The midterms will be non-cumulative (*exception:* research methods), and will cover lecture material *and* assigned readings – even readings on topics not discussed in class. The final exam will be cumulative, but otherwise the same as the midterms.

All tests will be comprised of multiple choice (MC) and short answer (SA) questions. See below, under "How to do well..." for details.

NB: The instructor reserves the right to alter the evaluation scheme if circumstances warrant (e.g., TA loss).

Test-Taking Policy: Midterms will be run like final examinations. You can bring writing instruments, an eraser (or similar), and essentials like kleenex and bottled water to your desk. You must also bring your student ID card. All other materials, especially electronics, must stay in your bag, at the front or side of the room in which you write your test. Note that *if your cell phone rings or buzzes during a midterm, then you will be docked 5%* on that midterm. TURN IT OFF!

Missed Tests: Recently, McMaster has adopted a self-report tool, the McMaster Student Absence Form (MSAF), to be used to report some (but not all) absences. Please make yourself familiar with the ins and outs of using this form by going to <http://www.mcmaster.ca/health/> and <http://www.mcmaster.ca/msaf/>.

The MSAF *cannot* be used in the following situations:

- (1) when the request for relief of missed work is for non-medical reasons (e.g. religious holidays, personal reasons, athletic events as a student athlete, etc)
- (2) for a medical situation that lasts for more than 5 days, or
- (3) for a second or subsequent time in a term, or
- (4) for a major piece of work (worth 30% or more)
- (5) for the final exam.

The MSAF can be used, once per term, if you are absent from the university for a medical reason lasting fewer than 5 days. Longer absences or absences due to non-medical reasons must be reported to your Faculty or Program office, with documentation. Note that relief from term work may not necessarily be granted. When using the MSAF, report your absence to ostovij@avenue.cilmcmaster.ca. You must then contact me *within 2 working days* at that same address to discuss arrange for a *make-up test* for the work you have missed (make-up tests are held one week after the original test, during class time). No requests for special consideration will be accepted after two weeks' time has elapsed (i.e., you will receive a mark of zero on the missed midterm).

If you miss the make-up test, then you must report your absence to your Faculty or Program office, with the same caveat as described above; otherwise, you will receive a mark of zero on the missed work. If you can provide an acceptable excuse for having missed the make-up, then either (a) an alternate make-up assignment will be designed for you or (b) the 30% value of the midterm will be added to the 40% value of the final exam, resulting in a 70% final. If you miss both midterms and their makeups, then you will fail this course (you cannot have a 100% final). You are advised to seek academic counseling if this happens to you.

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)

Note: The instructor reserves the right to adjust final marks up *or down*, on a 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.

Note as Well: I do *not* do special favours for one student that I do not also do the whole class. Your final mark is your final mark, unless a marking or mathematical error has been made. 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 dishonestly.

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.

This term, my testing method for 2C03 is changing substantially. Previously, tests in this course were based mainly (65%) on written answers. However, this Fall, you will be assessed based on some combination of multiple choice (MC), true-false (T/F), fill-in-the-blanks, and very brief written questions (definitions and explanations). Test items will be a mixture of fact-based questions (e.g., “what was the finding?” or “what is the definition of X?”), conceptual questions (e.g., “what does the finding mean?” or “why is this particular finding important?” or “how do you know that the interpretation of this finding is correct?”), and applied (e.g., “given what you know about topic A, how would a person behave in situation B?”). More than half of your mark will be based on responses to MC items; fewer than half will be based on written responses. Because the midterms and final are not yet set, I cannot be more specific about format at this time, but will fill in the details during class and on *Avenue* once I know more.

Below are several tips that will help you perform optimally in PSYCH 2C03.

First: Know your materials. Read the *syllabus* – it is your bible; emails that come to me asking for information contained in this syllabus will not be answered (if you’re confused about something in the syllabus, post your question on the *Admin* discussion board. 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 (i.e., a zero on a missed test).

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 you’ll read about 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 re-create 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.

My tests are based on that structure. Thus, you should be able to: describe theories; describe any given experiment accurately (*hint*: break it down into its main components: methods, independent variable,

dependent variable, results); explain how the methodology of an experiment allows it to test (or prevents it from testing) the idea it's meant to test; explain how an experiment enhanced, changed, negated, or supported the theory associated with it.

In order to do well on tests, then, 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 a TA, and we'll gladly help you.

DATES, TOPICS, AND READINGS

This schedule is subject to change. Any changes will be announced on our course website. 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, 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:

Midterm 1: 3 October

Midterm 2: 7 November

Final Exam: To be scheduled by the Registrar's Office

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 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.

Textbooks, lamentably, sometimes interpret data differently from one another, and from how the professor interprets data. If a lecture differs from the textbook *on exactly the same point*, then you should ignore the textbook's interpretation. Sometimes, what seems like a contradiction, though, is really just the result of the textbook and professor discussing different levels of analysis (e.g., larger vs. smaller picture).

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

Page numbers refer to the page numbers *used by the textbook itself*, rather than the set of numbers added by the makers of your custom edition. So, the *bottom set* of numbers is what you want to use.

Section 1: 12 Sept to 3 Oct

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

Topic 2. Social Influence (*conformity, bystander intervention, obedience to authority*): [Read Ch 6 and pages 251-253 \(on Minority Influence\) and pages 311-319 \(on the Bystander Intervention Model\)](#)

Topic 3. Persuasion: [Read Ch 5 and pages 122-124 \(on Foot-in-the-Door and Low-Balling\)](#)

Section 2: 17 Oct to 7 Nov

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

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

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

Section 3: 14 Nov to 5 Dec

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

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

Topic 9. Group Behaviour: [Read Ch 7](#)

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

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