

SYLLABUS
PSYCHOLOGY 2C03: SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY
Department of Psychology, Neuroscience, and Behaviour
McMaster University
Winter 2013

Course time and location: MW 11:30; F 1:30 in JHE 376.

Professor

Dr. J. M. Ostovich

Email: Either jmostovich@mcmaster.ca or through the *Avenue* email system (emails *must* originate from your mac account if the former, and your own *Avenue* account if the latter). Do NOT email me twice – choose one or the other!

Phone: *Do not phone me.*

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Office hours: By appointment; monitor homepage for additional information.

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. I 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*** (either an *@mcmaster account* or your *Avenue account*). Should we need to communicate with you about individual matters, the e-mail will be sent to one of these accounts. You should therefore monitor these accounts regularly. E-mail sent from third-party providers (yahoo, hotmail, cogeco, sympatico, etc.) **will be ignored**. We have this policy for *two 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 include correct spelling and punctuation, should have an ***informative subject line***, and should be polite and to the point.

Note that *Avenue* and *mcmaster.ca* **cannot understand one another**. If writing me or your TA's from your *Avenue* account, the email **MUST** be sent to our *Avenue* accounts; if writing from your *mcmaster.ca* account, the email **MUST** be sent to our *mcmaster.ca* accounts.

Website Policy: You are expected to check our course website on *Avenue to Learn* regularly 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*, due to my high volume of email from 700+ students per term. Questions asked on the discussion boards 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.

The website also has a **chat** function that we'll be trying out for the first time this term. See the news section of our website for details.

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: If you feel that recording lectures will help you perform optimally in the course, then feel free to do so. **HOWEVER:** Consider the lectures **copyrighted material: you cannot post recordings anywhere online**, including on our *Avenue* website.

Participation: In-class, discussion board, chat, and office-hours 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!

Evaluation: 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. The tests will be comprised mainly of multiple choice (MC) questions, but may also include some fill-in-the-blanks (FITB) questions. See below, under “How to do well...” for details.

NB: The instructor reserves the right to alter the evaluation scheme if circumstances warrant.

Test-Taking Policy: Midterms will be run like final examinations. You may bring writing instruments, an eraser (or similar), and essentials like *Kleenex* and water to your desk. You must also bring your student ID card. All other materials, especially electronics (e.g., your cell phone), must stay in your bag. 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: Report your absence to McMaster **right away!! Email me** right away, too. “Right away” means **within 2 days of your absence**. Otherwise, accommodations may not be granted. (Note: Make-up tests are held one week after the original test, during class time; hence the need for speedy communication re. absences.) 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).

How to report an absence: The McMaster Student Absence Form (MSAF) can 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 more than 30%)
- (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, regardless of how it is reported.

What if you miss the make-up test? If you miss the make-up test due to a prolonged illness or prolonged family crisis (or similar), then you must report your absence for both the test and its make-up to your Faculty or Program office; 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, depending on overall performance in the course. Students *who do not pass the cumulative final*, or whose final exam mark is their *lowest mark* in the course, will *not* have their mark adjusted up under any circumstances.

Note as Well: I do *not* do 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, well in the advance of the final exam, for study help.

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.

You will be assessed based on some combination of multiple choice (MC) and fill-in-the-blanks (FITB), to be announced before each test. Test items will be comprised of 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?”).

Below are several tips that will help you perform optimally in PSYCH 2C03. You can find more tips in our course FAQ (see website).

First: Read the *syllabus* and the FAQ section on the course website – emails that come to me asking for information contained in this syllabus will not be answered. If you are confused about something discussed in the syllabus, and the FAQ does not clarify this with you, then post your question on the *Administrative Questions* discussion board (don’t send an email).

Second: Read the *website* carefully as well: follow the discussions, and read any news announcements. Check the website *several times per week*, especially around midterm time!

Third: 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).

Fourth: 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.

Fifth: 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”.

Sixth: Slides are posted *after* their contents have been lectured on. I post the slides after lectures for several reasons (see FAQ for more information). If you have trouble taking effective notes, then please visit CSD/SAS, or see me or one of your TA’s for advice. Or record lectures and fill in your notes later in the day or week. (This would constitute studying, so it’s not a bad idea.)

Seventh: 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.

Eighth: Attend **TA office hours**. You can **sign up** for these on the designated *Avenue* discussion board (if no one signs up, the session will be cancelled). The TA's will attempt to hold about four sessions per week, at different times and on different days each week, to maximize your likelihood of being able to attend if you are interested in the extra help. At these sessions, you will be able to clarify and discuss concepts, and you will get tips on how to organize and understand information both from lectures and the textbook. These sessions, therefore, should optimize your learning, and hence your performance in 2C03.

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, and (2) I'm describing the research that helped develop that theory.

Tests are meant to assess the extent to which you: fully understand theories and concepts; can accurately recall any given experiment (*hint: break experiments down into their main components: methods, independent variable, dependent variable, results*); understand how the methodology of an experiment allowed it to test (or prevented it from testing) the idea it was meant to test; understand how an experiment enhanced, changed, negated, or supported the theory associated with it; can apply the theory, concept, and/or experiment to new and real-world situations.

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 presented a topic the way I have, and why I've chosen to tell you about each piece of research discussed in class. If you study theory, concepts, or experiments in isolation (i.e., merely memorize them), then you will have missed the point of my lectures, 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/SAS (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: Friday 8 February during class time, rooms TBA

Midterm 2: Friday 15 March during class time, rooms TBA

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 unless the topic itself is deleted. Plan carefully so that you do not find yourself "cramming" the readings at the last minute.

Reminder: The textbook will discuss ideas not covered in lecture. Read these sections anyway – this is your opportunity to engage in independent learning, which is an incredibly important skill.

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).

Topics and Readings

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.

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: 11 Sept to 9 Oct

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

Topic 2. Conformity. [Read Ch 6 plus pages 251-253 \(on Minority Influence\) plus pages 311-319 \(on the Bystander Intervention Model\) plus pages 239-247 \(on Groupthink\).](#) *When these pages come up in later readings assignments, you can skip them – they will have been tested already.*

Topic 3. Persuasion. [Read Ch 5 plus pages 122-124 \(on Foot-in-the-Door and Low-Balling\).](#) *When these pages come up in later readings assignments, you can skip them – they will have been tested already.*

Section 2: 16 Oct to 6 Nov

Topic 4. Prosocial Behaviour. [Read Ch 9.](#)

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

Topic 6. Prejudice. [Read Ch 12.](#)

Section 3: 13 Nov to 27 Nov

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

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

Topic 9. Dissonance Theory. [Read Ch 4.](#)

Topic 10. Group Behaviour. [Read Ch 7.](#)

Topic 11 (*IF TIME*). Close Relationships. [Read Ch 11.](#)