

**SYLLABUS**  
**PSYCHOLOGY 2C03: SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY**  
**Department of Psychology, Neuroscience, and Behaviour**  
**McMaster University**  
**Fall 2016**

Course time and location: MWR at 1:30pm in TSH 120

**Professor:**

Dr. J. Ostovich

Contact: [psy2c03@mcmaster.ca](mailto:psy2c03@mcmaster.ca) (**PSY**, not PSYCH) for all course-related emails, including **MSAFs** and emails from **SAS**; do **not** use the *Avenue* system.

Office: PC-415A

Office hours: Monitor website for days and times; also by appointment.

**Teaching Assistants:**

Arela Agako, Alina Protopopescu, and Joanna Spyra

Email: Use [psy2c03@mcmaster.ca](mailto:psy2c03@mcmaster.ca) for initial contacts.

Office hours: Monitor website discussion boards (under “administrative”) for days, times, and locations; also by appointment.

**Please note:** This syllabus – including scheduling, topic order, topics themselves, and assessment strategy – is subject to change if circumstances warrant (e.g., TA loss, blizzard). Changes will be announced on the course website.

**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): Aronson, Wilson, Fehr, & Akert. *Social Psychology*, 6<sup>th</sup> Canadian Ed. I strongly recommend *against* using anything other than the edition listed here; content of other editions may differ, which could affect you on tests. 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.

**Evaluation:** Your final mark will be based on your performance on two multiple choice (MC) midterms (@30% each) and one MC final exam (@40%). The midterms will be non-cumulative (*exception*: research methods), and will cover lecture material *and* assigned readings, *especially* readings on topics not discussed in class. The final exam will be cumulative, but otherwise exactly the same as the midterms.

See the section entitled “how to perform optimally in this course” (pages 3-4) for more detail on test content.

**Participation:** In-class, discussion board, and office-hour 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!

**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.

**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 and to [psy2c03@mcmaster.ca](mailto:psy2c03@mcmaster.ca) **within 2 days of the missed test**. Failure to comply with the **two-days rule** could result in your earning a mark of zero on the missed test. Make-up tests are held one week after the original test, during class time; hence the need for speedy communication.

In order to receive any sort of accommodation (e.g., makeup test), we must receive an official university email indicating that you've complied with university regulations, as well as your personal email requesting accommodation.

How to report an absence to McMaster: In the event of an absence for medical or other reasons, students should *carefully* review and follow the regulations outlined in the undergraduate calendar, "[Requests for Relief for Missed Academic Term Work](#)". Please note that these regulations have changed beginning Fall 2015. Any deviation from these regulations will result in a mark of "0" for the missed work.

Note that you may only use an MSAF for work valued at *less than* 25%. This means that, in this course, you *cannot use the MSAF*, and must follow the regulations described in part 2 of the *Requests for Relief* section. Please have documentation from your faculty sent to [psy2c03@mcmaster.ca](mailto:psy2c03@mcmaster.ca), **not** to Dr. Ostovich's personal email address.

How to report an absence to teaching staff: Your email to [psy2c03@mcmaster.ca](mailto:psy2c03@mcmaster.ca) should do the following: (a) *briefly* explain why you've been forced to miss the test (less detail is best!); (b) request relief for the missed work, and (c) indicate whether you have submitted documentation to the university, and if not, when that will be happening. The content of your email will be kept confidential.

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 original test *and its make-up* to your Faculty or Program office **within 2 days of the makeup test**; otherwise, you will receive a mark of zero for the missed work. If you can provide an acceptable excuse for having missed the make-up, then we will figure something out for you. 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.

**E-mail Policy:** E-mails must originate from a valid McMaster account (please use *MacMail* rather than the *Avenue* system for all e-mail communication). As per McMaster policy, e-mail sent from third-party providers (e.g., hotmail, cogeco, google) will be deleted. Please also keep in mind that e-mails to your professors and TAs are professional communications. They should (1) include correct spelling and punctuation, (2) have an *informative subject line*, and (3) be brief.

**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, is *preferred to email communication*. By asking questions on the discussion boards (rather than over e-mail), you are (1) giving other students the chance to benefit from your question, and (2) provide an encoding (learning) experience for students who wish to answer your question (this is *strongly* encouraged!).

The discussion boards are meant to be a "safe place" for asking and answering questions. Students who are rude or inconsiderate (e.g., "trolls") may be banned from using them.

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 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.

**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 Learn Optimally In This Course.**

This course tests your knowledge using multiple choice (MC) items. The MC items have been designed to test your knowledge in the following domains: **facts** (e.g., "what was the finding?" or "what is the definition of X?"); **concepts** (e.g., "what does the finding mean?" or "why is this particular finding important?"); and **application** (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:** Use your resources. Read this **syllabus** *very* carefully! And read our *Avenue to Learn* **website** carefully as well, including your course **FAQ**. 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!). Makeup tests occur during class time, about one week after the original test.

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

**Fourth:** Read your textbook and any other assigned readings. You 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. Note that your textbook comes packaged with an **online learning tool**. This may help you to more easily learn the textbook materials. Independent learning is an important skill. You will be expected to do this in your upper level courses, and – more importantly – in what academics call "the real world".

Fifth: Learn how to take effective notes. Slides are posted *after* their contents have been lectured on. In order to do well in the real world, you will have to know how to cope with large amounts of incoming information, without slides to guide you. If you have trouble taking effective notes, then please visit CSD/SAS, or see me or one of your TAs for advice.

Note that my slides contain only basic information – bullet points, figures, and pictures. You cannot re-create lectures, and therefore cannot succeed in this course, by depending on them instead of attending lecture and/or taking effective notes.

Sixth: Visit with a TA or with Dr. Ostovich if you're having trouble. **Do not wait** until you've done poorly on both midterms to set up a meeting: at that point, **it's too late**. You should monitor your performance and visit with someone at the first sign that something is amiss!

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

Tests are meant to assess the extent to which you:

- (1) fully understand theories and concepts
- (2) can accurately recall any given experiment (*hint*: break experiments down into their main components: methods, independent variable, dependent variable, results)
- (3) understand how the methodology of an experiment allowed it to test (or prevented it from testing) the idea it was meant to test
- (4) understand how an experiment enhanced, changed, negated, or supported the theory associated with it
- (5) can apply any given 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 about *why* I've presented a topic the way I have, and why I've chosen to discuss the research I've discussed in class. If you study theory, concepts, or experiments in isolation (i.e., merely memorize them), then you have no hope of demonstrating your understanding of the course on tests..

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

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

**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 7<sup>th</sup> October during class time (rooms TBA)

**Midterm 2**: Monday 14<sup>th</sup> November during class time (rooms TBA)

**Final Exam**: To be scheduled by the Registrar

**A note on the readings**: If you suspect that you've uncovered a mismatch between lecture and text materials, please post about it on the "readings" discussion board, and we will look into it for you. Often, what seems like a mismatch is really just the result of the textbook and professor focusing on different levels of analysis – that is, the mismatch represents differences in what each source considers important, rather than an error by one source or the other.

**McMaster policy 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.

## 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. Most of the time, we do one topic per week, but sometimes (especially in Section 3) we do two.

### Section 1: 9 September to 5 October

Topic 1. Introduction and Research Methods. [Read Ch.'s 1 and 2.](#)

Topic 2. Conformity. [Read Ch. 7 and pages 298-304 \(from Ch. 10\)](#)

Topic 3. Persuasion. [Refer back to pages 198-202 \(from Ch. 7\); read pages 146-157 \(start at "How Do Attitudes Change?" and stop just before "Changing Our Attitudes ... Theory of Cognitive Dissonance"; from Ch. 6\).](#)

### Section 2: 7 October to 9 November

Topic 4. Prosocial Behaviour. [Read Ch 10 \(note: you've already read pages 298-304 and may skip these pages\).](#)

Topic 5. Aggression. [Read Ch 11.](#)

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

### Section 3: 11 November to 7 December

Topic 7. Self and Self Esteem. [Read Ch's 3 and 5.](#)

Topic 8. Attribution Theory. [Read Ch 4.](#)

Topic 9. Dissonance Theory. [Read Ch 6 \(note: you've already read pages 146-157, and may skip these pages\).](#)

Topic 10. Group Behaviour. [Read Ch 8.](#)

Topic 11. Close Relationships. [Read Ch 9.](#)