
Rutgers University
830:591: Current Topics in Social Psychology
Self-Regulation and Self-Control
Fall 2016

Thursdays 2:00-5:00pm
TILLET 605

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Office Hours: By appointment; schedule via email

Course Description

The successful attainment of goals is a multi-determined process. At several stages along the road to goal achievement, people face self-regulatory challenges that threaten to hinder progress. How do people overcome obstacles and difficulties in order to successfully meet their goals? How do they resist temptations, regulate emotions, ignore distractions, and disengage from unworthy pursuits? The course provides an overview of the major theories and findings in research on self-regulation and self-control. We will explore both the conscious and nonconscious processes by which people regulate their emotions, thoughts, behaviors, attention, and impulses in order to attain their goals. Our exploration will cut across multiple domains, delving into self-regulation strategies and processes that are implicated in consumer behavior, health and fitness, interpersonal relationships, and overcoming stereotypes, to name a few.

Course Requirements

Readings: We will read a mix of original empirical research articles, chapters, and review articles. Readings will be distributed electronically via Sakai. You are expected to read the assigned readings *before* each class so that you'll be prepared to discuss what you read. I encourage you to read the articles in the chronological order that they were written since later papers may build off earlier ones.

Class Discussions: Your success in the class will be determined in large part by your active participation in class discussions. The readings are meant to encourage lively discussion, discourse, and debate. Participation in these discussions should be taken seriously and a large portion of your grade will come from your participation. As a heads up, there should be no single paper that you do not comment on at least once during class discussion.

Discussion Leaders: Each week, two students will serve as Discussion Leaders for the week. They'll be responsible for reading one additional paper (assigned in advance), designing a mini-presentation (see below), and helping to lead the discussion of the week's readings. Discussion leaders should consider themselves my co-professors for the week; they should strive to guide the other students in the class to a deeper understanding of the readings. Each student will serve as a Discussion Leader twice throughout the semester.

Mini-Presentations: Each week, Discussion Leaders will give a short mini-presentation. These presentations should be related to the topic and the readings for the week but, importantly, should extend beyond the readings. Find demonstrations, videos, or real world examples that illustrate the concepts discussed that week. Design or lead a relevant class activity. Take a poll, design a game, act out a scenario. Remember, you are the co-professors for the week. How can you make sure the class understands and can relate to the phenomena discussed in the readings?

Research Presentation: During finals week, you will do an in-class presentation in which you design and develop an idea for your own research study. Now that you have a working knowledge of self-regulation and self-control research, what questions do you feel like have yet to be answered? What would YOU like to know about how people regulate their behaviors, emotions, or thoughts during goal pursuit? You can build off of the empirical work you have read in class, or design a study in a completely new domain. It is your chance to be the experimenter. You do not actually need to carry out the study, but you should think through all of the pieces of designing it—what does the literature already say about this topic, what will your study add, how would you run the study, what would you expect the results to be? To save yourself the last minute stress of having to come up with a research idea, you should think about potential topics for this THROUGHOUT the course of the semester. Start thinking early! You will meet with me at a designated time a few weeks prior to the end of the semester “pitch” your idea and receive feedback.

Goal Journal: Finally, as an ongoing, semester-long project in this class, you will keep a “Goal Journal.” The purpose of the project is to try to put to use in your everyday life the strategies and tools you have learned about in the psychological research. Specifically, in the beginning of the semester, you will identify a goal you would like to work toward for the semester. Throughout the semester, you will log entries in your goal journal that describe how you have used and implemented the research we’ve learned about in class in your efforts to meet your own goal. You should make **at least three** entries in your journal. In each entry, you should discuss what the psychological research says is an effective route to goal pursuit using a specific article we have read in class, how you specifically implemented that idea in your everyday life, and what the outcomes of that were. Did it seem to help or harm your progress toward meeting your goal? **An additional final entry** should detail your overall progress toward meeting your goal and your future plans for continuing efforts toward your goal. The journal will be due on Sakai by 5:00pm on our final class session during finals week. No late journals will be accepted for **any reason whatsoever**.

Grading

Discussion Participation	30%
Mini-Presentation	20%
Research Presentation	25%
Goal Journal	25%

Course Schedule and Readings

(The ordering of the topics may change. As much notice as possible will be given if scheduling changes occur.)

WEEK 1 (SEPT 8): INTRODUCTION

WEEK 2 (SEPT 15): GOAL SETTING AND IMPLEMENTATION

Reading #1: Oettingen, G., Pak, H., & Schnetter, K. (2001). Self-regulation of goal setting: Turning free fantasies about the future into binding goals. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 80*, 736–753.

Reading #2: Gollwitzer, P. M., & Brandstatter, V. (1997). Implementation intentions and effective goal pursuit. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 1*, 186-199.

Reading #3: Dalton, A. N., & Spiller, S. A. (2012). Too much of a good thing: The benefits of implementation intentions depend on the number of goals. *Journal of Consumer Research, 39*, 600-614.

WEEK 3 (SEPT 22): GOAL PLANNING, INITIATION, AND FOLLOW-THROUGH

Reading #1: Dai, H., Milkman, K. L., & Riis, J. (2015). Put your imperfections behind you: Why and how meaningful temporal landmarks motivate aspirational behavior. *Psychological Science, 26*, 1927-1936.

Reading #2: Rogers, T., & Milkman, K. L. (2016). Reminders through association. *Psychological Science, 27*, 973-986.

Reading #3: Townsend, C., & Liu, W. (2012). Is planning good for you? The differential impact of planning on self-regulation. *Journal of Consumer Research, 39*, 688-703.

WEEK 4 (SEPT 29): NO CLASS!

WEEK 5 (OCT 6): GRIT AND PERSEVERANCE

Reading #1: Duckworth, A. L., Peterson, C., Matthews, M. D., & Kelly, D. R. (2007). Grit: perseverance and passion for long-term goals. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 92*, 1087-1101.

Reading #2: Duckworth, A., & Gross, J. J. (2014). Self-control and grit: Related but separable determinants of success. *Current Directions in Psychological Science, 23*, 319-325.

Reading #3: Credé, M., Tynan, M. C., & Harms, P. D. (2016). Much ado about grit: A meta-analytic synthesis of the grit literature. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*

WEEK 6 (OCT 13): GOAL PROGRESS AND ATTAINMENT

- Reading #1:** Koo, M., & Fishbach, A. (2008). Dynamics of self-regulation: How (un)accomplished goal actions affect motivation. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 94*, 183-195.
- Reading #2:** Koo, M., & Fishbach, A. (2012). The small-area hypothesis: Effects of progress monitoring on goal adherence. *Journal of Consumer Research, 39*, 1-17.
- Reading #3:** Campbell, M. C., & Warren, C. (2015). The progress bias in goal pursuit: When one step forward seems larger than one step back. *Journal of Consumer Research, 41*, 1316-1331.

WEEK 7 (OCT 20): GOAL DISENGAGEMENT

- Reading #1:** Wrosch, C., Scheier, M. F., Miller, G. E., Schulz, R., & Carver, C. S. (2003). Adaptive self-regulation of unattainable goals: Goal disengagement, goal reengagement, and subjective well-being. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 29*, 1494-1508.
- Reading #2:** Wrosch, C., Miller, G. E., Scheier, M. F., & De Pontet, S. B. (2007). Giving up on unattainable goals: Benefits for health? *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 33*, 251-265.
- Reading #3:** Vohs, K. D., Park, J. K., & Schmeichel, B. J. (2013). Self-affirmation can enable goal disengagement. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 104*, 14.

WEEK 8 (OCT 27): DELAY OF GRATIFICATION

- Reading #1:** Mischel, W., Ebbesen, E.B., & Zeiss, A.R. (1972). Cognitive and attentional mechanisms in delay of gratification. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 21*, 204-218
- Reading #2:** Mischel, W., Shoda, Y., & Rodriguez, M. L. (1989). Delay of gratification in children. *Science, 244*, 933-938.
- Reading #3:** Casey, B. J., Somerville, L. H., Gotlib, I. H., Ayduk, O., Franklin, N. T., Askren, M. K., ... & Glover, G. (2011). Behavioral and neural correlates of delay of gratification 40 years later. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, 108*, 14998-15003.

WEEK 9 (NOV 3): COUNTERACTIVE CONTROL

- Reading #1:** Trope, Y., & Fishbach, A. (2000). Counteractive self-control in overcoming temptation. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 79*, 493-506
- Reading #2:** Myrseth, K. O. R., Fishbach, A., & Trope, Y. (2009). Counteractive self-control: When making temptation available makes temptation less tempting. *Psychological Science, 20*, 159-163.
- Reading #3:** Fishbach, A., Zhang, Y., & Trope, Y. (2010). Counteractive evaluation: Asymmetric shifts in the implicit value of conflicting motivations. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology, 46*, 29-38.

WEEK 10 (NOV 10): TAMING TEMPTATION

- Reading #1:** Mead, N.L., & Patrick, V.M. (2016). The taming of desire: Unspecific postponement reduces desire for and consumption of postponed temptations. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 110*, 20-35.
- Reading #2:** Milyavskaya, M., Inzlicht, M., Hope, N., & Koestner, R. (2015). Saying "no" to temptation: Want-to motivation improves self-regulation by reducing temptation rather than by increasing self-control. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 109*, 677-693.
- Reading #3:** Patrick, V. M., & Hagtvedt, H. (2012). "I Don't" versus "I Can't": When empowered refusal motivates goal-directed behavior. *Journal of Consumer Research, 39*, 371-381.

WEEK 11 (NOV 17): DEPLETION WARS!! (READINGS TBA)

WEEK 12 (NOV 22: NOTE TUESDAY CLASS TIME): CONSTRUALS OF SELF-CONTROL CONFLICTS

- Reading #1:** Fujita , K. Trope , Y. Liberman , N. Levin-Sagi , M. (2006). Construal levels and self-control. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 90, 351-367
- Reading #2:** Fujita, K., & Roberts, J. C. (2010). Promoting prospective self-control through abstraction. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 46, 1049–1054.
- Reading #3:** Fujita, K., & Sasota, J. A. (2011). The effects of construal levels on asymmetric temptation-goal cognitive associations. *Social Cognition*, 29, 125.

WEEK 13 (DEC 1): REGULATING STEREOTYPES AND OVERCOMING BIASES

*Project Pitch: Schedule a time this week to meet with me to pitch your presentation idea and get it approved

- Reading #1:** Gordijn, E. H., Hindriks, I., Koomen, W., Dijksterhuis, A., & Van Knippenberg, A. (2004). Consequences of stereotype suppression and internal suppression motivation: A self-regulation approach. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 30, 212–224.
- Reading #2:** Devine, P.G, Plant, E.A, Amodio, D.M, Harmon-Jones, E., & Vance, S.L. (2002). The regulation of explicit and implicit race bias: The role of motivations to respond without prejudice. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 82, 835-848.
- Reading #3:** Gailliot, M. T., Plant, E. A., Butz, D. A., & Baumeister, R. F. (2007). Increasing self-regulatory strength can reduce the depleting effect of suppressing stereotypes. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 33, 281-294.

WEEK 14 (DEC 8): SELF-REGULATION AND INTERPERSONAL PROCESSES

- Reading #1:** Finkel, E. J., & Campbell, W. K. (2001). Self-control and accommodation in close relationships: An interdependence analysis. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 81, 263-277.
- Reading #2:** Fitzsimons, G. M., & Finkel, E. J. (2011). Outsourcing self-regulation. *Psychological Science*, 22, 369-375.
- Reading #3:** Fitzsimons, G. M., & Finkel, E. J. (2010). Interpersonal influences on self-regulation. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 19, 101-105.

FINAL EXAM WEEK (DATE TBD): IN-CLASS PRESENTATIONS