

**Advanced Topics in Social Psychology
Myths and Misconceptions
01:830:421:H2**

CLASS INFORMATION:

Summer 2013

MTWTh

12:10-2:00pm

LSH B115

On line schedule of classes <http://www.acs.rutgers.edu/soc>

INSTRUCTOR:

Lyra Stein, Ph.D.

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Office: Tillett 313 <http://rumaps.rutgers.edu/?q=tillett+Hall>

Office Hours: by appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This course will explore common myths and misconceptions in popular psychology. Popular misconceptions will be used as a vehicle for determining how to distinguish factual from fictional claims in pop psychology. In addition, some of the great debates in psychology will be analyzed, such as nature vs. nurture. This course will also provide an opportunity for students to consider issues which cut across previous course boundaries and thus help achieve an overview of the field. Furthermore this course will polish skills in written communication and engage critical analysis of theories and research.

COURSE OBJECTIVES:

- Become a wise consumer of psychological research and information that you are exposed to through the media.
- Develop your critical thinking skills by examining current research in psychology.
- Improve your writing and oral presentation skills by writing and speaking about controversial topics
- Learn to write a research paper in APA style
- Increase your ability to understand and appreciate alternative viewpoints that differ from your own..
- Enjoy learning about a variety of topics in psychology

CURRENT ACADEMIC INTEGRITY POLICY:

<http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu> *Violations include: cheating, fabrication, plagiarism, denying others access to information or material, and facilitating violations of academic integrity.*

General Academic Integrity Link:

<http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/>

Resources for instructors (and students) can be found at:

<http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/resources>

Take a 20 minute interactive-tutorial on Plagiarism and Academic Integrity,

<http://www.scc.rutgers.edu/douglass/sal/plagiarism/intro.html>

LEARNING RESOURCES:

Assigned readings posted on Sakai

INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS:

Multitasking in Class: Research shows that when we do more than one thing at a time, we shift our attention from one thing to another and then back. In that shift, we lose focus, and it takes a little time to refocus on the new task. Multitasking is an inefficient use of time. I am going to do my part to do all I can to provide interesting class sessions so you won't feel the need to shift focus onto something else, and I am going to ask that you help with this by keeping your cell phone where you won't be tempted to check incoming texts. Thanks!

Do not leave lecture early: Besides distracting your fellow students, when I hear people leaving or packing their bag, I become very distracted. I lose my train of thought and will have to stop the lecture until the noise ceases. [P.S.: I understand that occasionally people must miss part of a class. **If you intend to do so, please sit in the back** so you won't distract everyone

Syllabus & Sakai Site: This contains everything you need to know about the course; keep this in your notebook and refer to it often.

COURSE/ATTENDANCE POLICY:

Because this is primarily a discussion-based course, attendance is not only important, but required to do well. As evidence of your attendance and preparation for class, you will be required to upload a 1-2 page summary of each issue by 9am on the day the class to your dropbox. Summarize the reading assignments for the topic in 1-2 pages and include your own view on the topic and what evidence convinced you. You are allowed to miss up to 2 summary papers without penalty. For each summary paper beyond the minimum requirement, you can earn an additional 5 points of extra credit (up to 10 total points).

On the day that you are presenting, you will also include a bibliography of at least 2 sources (besides the assigned readings) that you used in preparation for the discussion with your summary. If you wish, you may turn in hard copies of the articles, but it is not required.

For each topic, 2-3 students will be the discussion leaders for the class. You will present the evidence for the topic (if a debate topic, you will present both sides). This need not be a formal presentation with powerpoints, but more of a roundtable discussion. You will find 2 articles relating to the topic and present these to the class in addition to the required reading. There is no "correct" answer for any of these issues, although they are all important and hopefully interesting. You will then open a discussion to the class and pose questions which you think will stimulate discussion.

Part of your grade will be based on participation, therefore make sure you have read all of the assigned

readings and are ready to discuss the issues.

-You can miss 3 classes without penalty. If you miss more than 3 classes, 10 points will be deducted from your total for each class missed.

ACCOMMODATIONS:

Appropriate accommodations will be made for students with disabilities.

Full disability policies and procedures are at <http://disabilityservices.rutgers.edu/>

Students with disabilities requesting accommodations must follow the procedures outlined at <http://disabilityservices.rutgers.edu/request.html>

FINAL PAPER:

This is a writing intensive course and you will be evaluated on a final research project.

The paper should be 8-10 pages (not including title page or references). Use APA style formatting for: Title page, Headings, Citations (Author, Year), and References.

Have a clear stance on a controversial topic in psychology that is not formally discussed in class. See list for ideas.

Support your ideas using original research articles published in professional journals. Search online databases such as Psycinfo, Medline, Google Scholar, etc. Of the at least 10 reliable sources you need, MOST (8) should come from scientific journal articles.

Present scientific evidence to support your view. Comment on the reliability and validity of the research methods used to support your view, and point out any alternative interpretations of the research results. Example: Is there an obvious bias in the research?

You will submit an electronic copy of the research paper along with a printed version. The electronic copy will be submitted to a plagiarism detection web site (TurnItIn.com). This is primarily to help you learn how to properly cite your sources and to ensure that you do not quote extensively from your sources.

DUE DATE: August 14-hand a hard copy to me in class and also upload a copy to your Sakai dropbox

EVALUATION:

Evaluations are based on:

Summary Papers 60 points (12 x 5 points each)

Discussion Presentation 50 points

Final Paper 100 points

Participation 50 points

Other assignments 140 points

Total Points possible **400**

A: 360-400 points, B+ 340-359 points, B: 320-339 points, C+ 300-319 points, C: 280-299 points, D: 240-

279 points, F: 239-0 points

LECTURE TOPICS AND READING:

******(All dates are approximate and changes will be announced in class)******

Date	Topic	Reading Due	Assignment Due
M 7/8	Introduction to Class/Careers in Psychology/Research Design		
T 7/9	APA style/The format of research papers/Library research/Plagiarism	-introduction	-Assignment on Careers
W 7/10	Critical evaluation of evidence	Read http://www.naturalnews.com/027178_autism_vaccines.html and http://www.parents.com/health/autism/vaccines/health-update-more-proof-that-vaccines-dont-cause-autism/?page=1 before coming to class	-Plagiarism tutorial
Th 7/11	Cognitive Biases/Internalized beliefs/Cognitive Dissonance	-Chapter 6	-Assignment of evaluation of evidence
M 7/15	Cognitive Determinants of Questionable beliefs	-Chapters 2, 3 & 4 in Gilovich	-Assignment on internalized beliefs --paper topic due
T 7/16	Motivational and Social Determinants of Questionable Beliefs	-Chapters 5,6 & 7 in Gilovich	
W 7/17	Introduction to Evolution and Evolutionary theories	-Chapter 7/Essays on Darwin	
Th 7/18*	Is Evolution a Good Explanation for Psychological Concepts?	-Assigned Readings	-Summary (9am by email)
M 7/22*	Does the Evidence Support Evolutionary Accounts of Female Mating Preferences?	-Assigned Readings	-Summary (9am by email) -Mate Preference Assignment Due
T 7/23*	Does Teaching Scientific Determinism Lead to Bad Behavior?	-Assigned Readings	-Summary (9am by email)
W 7/24*	Nature/Nurture Debate	-Assigned Readings	-Summary (9am by email) -reference list for paper
Th 7/25*	Stereotype Accuracy	-Assigned Readings	-Summary (9am by

