

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

**CLASS INFORMATION:**

**Summer 2014**

**MTWTh**

**12:10-2:00pm**

**LSH B115**

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

**INSTRUCTOR:**

**Lyra Stein, Ph.D.**

**Email:** [Lyra@rci.rutgers.edu](mailto:Lyra@rci.rutgers.edu)

**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 and determinism vs. free will. 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 each class, you will be required to upload a 1-2 page summary of all assigned articles 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 why. You are allowed to miss up to 3 summary papers without penalty. For each summary paper beyond the minimum requirement, you can earn an additional 5 points of extra credit (up to 15 total points). I will not accept late summary papers.

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 Powerpoint and can be a roundtable discussion. You will find an additional article relating to the topic and present these to the class in addition to the required reading. 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, 5 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 therefore 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/myth in psychology that was 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 Psychinfo, 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 13-upload 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
<u>Other assignments</u>	<u>140 points</u>
Total Points possible <b>400</b>	

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)\*\***

<b>Date</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Reading Due</b>	<b>Assignment Due</b>
M 7/7	Introduction to Class/Careers in Psychology/Research Design		
T 7/8	APA style/The format of research papers/Library research/Plagiarism	-introduction	-Assignment 1- Careers
W 7/9	Cognitive Biases/Internalized beliefs/Cognitive Dissonance	-Chapter 6	-Assignment 2- Plagiarism tutorial
Th 7/10	Critical evaluation of evidence	Read <a href="http://www.naturalnews.com/027178_autism_vaccines.html">http://www.naturalnews.com/027178_autism_vaccines.html</a> and <a href="http://www.parents.com/health/autism/vaccines/health-update-more-proof-that-vaccines-don't-cause-autism/?page=1">http://www.parents.com/health/autism/vaccines/health-update-more-proof-that-vaccines-don't-cause-autism/?page=1</a> before coming to class	-Assignment 3- internalized beliefs
M 7/14	Cognitive Determinants of Questionable beliefs	-Chapters 2, 3 & 4 in Gilovich	--Assignment 4- evaluation of evidence
T 7/15	Motivational and Social Determinants of Questionable Beliefs	-Chapters 5,6 & 7 in Gilovich	-Summary (9am by email)
W 7/16*	Introduction to Evolution and Evolutionary theories	-Chapter 7/Essays on Darwin	<b>--paper topic due</b> -Summary (9am by email)
Th 7/17*	Is Evolution a Good Explanation for Psychological Concepts?	-Assigned Readings	-Summary (9am by email)
M 7/21*	Does the Evidence Support Evolutionary Accounts of Female Mating Preferences?	-Assigned Readings	-Summary (9am by email)  -Assignment 5-Mate Preference Assignment
T 7/22*	Does Teaching Scientific Determinism Lead to Bad Behavior?	-Assigned Readings	-Summary (9am by email)
W 7/23*	Nature/Nurture Debate	-Assigned Readings	-Summary (9am by email)  <b>-reference list for paper</b>
Th 7/24*	Stereotype Accuracy	-Assigned Readings	-Summary (9am by email)
M 7/28*	ESP debate	-Assigned Readings	--Summary (9am by email)

T 7/29*	Can Positive Psychology Make Us Happier?	-Assigned Reading	--Summary (9am by email)  <b>-outline of main points for paper from references</b>
W 7/30*	Is Emotional Intelligence Valid?	-Assigned Reading	--Summary (9am by email)
Th 7/31*	Are Today's Youth More Self-Centered Than Previous Generations?	-Assigned Reading	--Summary (9am by email)
M 8/4*	Do Online Friendships Hurt Adolescent Development?	-Assigned Reading	--Summary (9am by email)
T 8/5	Peer Review-rough drafts of paper		<b>-rough draft of paper</b>
W 8/6*	Does Facebook Have Generally Positive Psychological Effects?	-Assigned Reading	--Summary (9am by email)
Th 8/7*	Dating-Do Opposites Attract? Do we know why we are attracted to others?	-Assigned Reading	--Summary (9am by email)
M 8/11	Last review of final paper		
T 8/12*	Can Sex be Addictive?	-Assigned Reading	--Summary (9am by email)
W 8/13*	Is Homosexuality Biologically Based?	-Assigned Reading	--Summary (9am by email) <b>-Final Papers Due</b>

List of Readings:

*7-9 Introduction*

Gilovich, T. (1993). *How we know what isn't so*. New York, NY: Simon & Schuster.

**7-9**

Chapter 6 "Psychology and Everyday Thinking" in

Lilienfield, S. O., Lynn, S. J., Namy, L. L. & Woolf, N. J. (2010). *Psychology: A framework for everyday thinking*. New York, NY: Allyn & Bacon.

**7-14 Cognitive Determinants of Questionable Beliefs**

Chapter 2 “Something Out Of Nothing”  
 Chapter 3 “Too Much From Too Little”  
 Chapter 4 “Seeing What We Expect To See”

Gilovich, T. (1993). *How we know what isn't so*. New York, NY: Simon & Schuster.

### **7-15 Motivational and Social Determinants of Questionable Beliefs**

Chapter 5 “Seeing What We Want To See”  
 Chapter 6 “Believing What We Are Told”  
 Chapter 7 “The Imagined Agreement of Others”

Gilovich, T. (1993). *How we know what isn't so*. New York, NY: Simon & Schuster.

### **7-16 Introduction to Evolution and Evolutionary theories**

Chapter 7 “Evolution, Heredity & Behavior”

Lilienfield, S. O., Lynn, S. J., Namy, L. L. & Woolf, N. J. (2010). *Psychology: A framework for everyday thinking*. New York, NY: Allyn & Bacon.

### **7-17 Is Evolution a Good Explanation for Psychological Concepts?**

Ganatt, E. E. & Melling, B. S. (2009). Evolutionary Psychology Isn't Evil, It's Just Not Any Good. In B. Slife (Ed.), *Taking sides: Clashing views on psychological issues* (46-56). New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.

Geher, G. (2006). Evolutionary psychology is not evil. *Psychological Topics*, 16(2), 181-202.

Schmitt, D. P. & Pilcher, J. A. (2004). Evaluating evidence of psychological adaptation: How do we know one when we see one. *Psychological Science*, 15, 643-649.

### **7-21 Does the Evidence Support Evolutionary Accounts of Female Mating Preferences?**

Buller, D. J. (2005). *Adapting minds: Evolutionary psychology and the persistent quest for human nature*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Buss, D. A. (2008). *Evolutionary Psychology: The New Science of the Mind, 3rd Edition*. New York, NY: Allyn & Bacon

### **7- 22 Does Teaching Scientific Determinism Lead to Bad Behavior?**

Baumeister, R. F., Crescioni, A. W. & Jessica L. Alquist (2011). Free Will as Advanced Action Control for

Human Social Life and Culture. *Neuroethics*, 4, 1-11.

Nahmias, E. (2011). "Why 'Willusionism' Leads to 'Bad Results': Comments on Baumeister, Crescioni, and Alquist. *Neuroethics*,

Vohs, K. D. & Schooler, J. W. (2008). The Value of Believing in Free Will: Encouraging a Belief in Determinism Increases Cheating. *Psychological Science*, 19 (1), 49-54.

### **7-23 Nature/Nurture Debate**

DeKay, W. T., & Buss, D. M. (1992). Human nature, individual differences, and the importance of context: Perspectives from evolutionary psychology. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 1(6), 184-189.

Eagly, A. H. (2013). *Sex differences in social behavior: A social-role interpretation*. Psychology Press.

McCrae, R. R., Costa Jr, P. T., Ostendorf, F., Angleitner, A., Hřebíčková, M., Avia, M. D., ... & Smith, P. B. (2000). Nature over nurture: temperament, personality, and life span development. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 78(1), 173.

### **7-24 Stereotype Accuracy**

Fiske, S. T. (1998). Stereotyping, prejudice, and discrimination. In D. Gilbert, S. T. Fiske, & G. Lindzey (eds). *The Handbook Of Social Psychology*, Vol. 2 (4th ed.). (pp. 357-411). New York: McGraw-Hill.

Jussim, L., Cain, T. R., Crawford, J. T., Harber, K. & Cohen F. (2009). The Unbearable Accuracy of Stereotypes. Prepared for *The Handbook of Prejudice, Stereotyping, and Discrimination*. Nelson, T. D. (Ed.). CRC Press.

### **7-28 ESP Debate**

Bem, D. J. (2011). Feeling the future: experimental evidence for anomalous retroactive influences on cognition and affect. *Journal of personality and social psychology*, 100(3), 407.

Howe, P. D., & Webb, M. E. (2014). Detecting Unidentified Changes. *PloS One*, 9(1), e84490.

Ritchie, S. J., Wiseman, R., & French, C. C. (2012). Failing the future: Three unsuccessful attempts to replicate Bem's 'Retroactive facilitation of recall' effect, *.PloS One*, 7(3), e33423.

### **7-29 Can Positive Psychology Make Us Happier?**

Boehm, J. K. & Lyubomirsky, S. (2009). The Promise of Sustainable Happiness. Lopez, S. J., & Snyder, C. R. (Eds.). *The Oxford Handbook of Positive Psychology, 2nd ed.*, Oxford University Press.

Newman, L. C. & Larsen, L. J. (2009). How Much of Our Happiness Is Within Our Control? In B. Slife (Ed.), *Taking sides: Clashing views on psychological issues*. New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.

Wood, J. V., Perunovic, W. E., & Lee, J. W. (2009). Positive Self-Statements Power for Some, Peril for Others. *Psychological Science, 20*(7), 860-866.

### **7-30 Is Emotional Intelligence Valid?**

Goleman, D., & Cherniss, C. (2001). Emotional Intelligence: Issues in Paradigm Building. *The emotionally intelligent workplace: How to select for, measure, and improve emotional intelligence in individuals, groups, and organizations*. Jossey-Bass.

Locke, E. A. (2005). Why emotional intelligence is an invalid concept. *Journal of Organizational Behavior, 26*(4), 425-431.

Mayer, J. D., Salovey, P., & Caruso, D. R. (2008). Emotional intelligence: new ability or eclectic traits?. *American Psychologist, 63*(6), 503.

### **7-31 Are Today's Youth More Self-Centered Than Previous Generations?**

Trzesniewski, K. H., Donnellan, M. B., & Robins, R. W. (2008). Do today's young people really think they are so extraordinary? An examination of secular trends in narcissism and self-enhancement. *Psychological Science, 19*(2), 181-188.

Twenge, J. M. (2009). Generational changes and their impact in the classroom: teaching Generation Me. *Medical Education, 43*(5), 398-405.

Twenge, J. M., Konrath, S., Foster, J. D., Keith Campbell, W., & Bushman, B. J. (2008). Egos Inflating Over Time: A Cross-Temporal Meta-Analysis of the Narcissistic Personality Inventory. *Journal of Personality, 76*(4), 875-902.

### **8- 4 Do Online Friendships Hurt Adolescent Development?**

Donchi, L., & Moore, S. (2004). It's a boy thing: The role of the Internet in young people's psychological wellbeing. *Behaviour Change, 21*, 76-89.

Valkenburg, P. M., & Peter, J. (2007). Online Communication and Adolescent Well-Being: Testing the Stimulation Versus the Displacement Hypothesis. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication, 12*(4), 1169-1182.



Whitty, M. T. (2008). Liberating or debilitating? An examination of romantic relationships, sexual relationships and friendships on the Net. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 24(5), 1837-1850.

### **8-6 Does Facebook Have Generally Positive Psychological Effects?**

Gonzales, A. L., & Hancock, J. T. (2011). Mirror, mirror on my Facebook wall: Effects of exposure to Facebook on self-esteem. *Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking*, 14(1-2), 79-83.

Jelenchick, L. A., Eickhoff, J. C., & Moreno, M. A. (2012). "Facebook depression?" Social networking site use and depression in older adolescents. *Journal of Adolescent Health*.

Kross, E., Verduyn, P., Demiralp, E., Park, J., Lee, D. S., Lin, N., ... & Ybarra, O. (2013). Facebook use predicts declines in subjective well-being in young adults. *PloS One*, 8(8), e69841.

### **8-7 Dating-Do Opposites Attract? Do we know why we are attracted to others?**

Buss, D. M. (1985). Human mate selection: Opposites are sometimes said to attract, but in fact we are likely to marry someone who is similar to us in almost every variable. *American Scientist*, 73(1), 47-51.

Lee, L., Loewenstein, G., Ariely, D., Hong, J., & Young, J. (2008). If I'm not hot, are you hot or not? Physical-attractiveness evaluations and dating preferences as a function of one's own attractiveness. *Psychological Science*, 19(7), 669-677.

Montoya, R. M., Horton, R. S., & Kirchner, J. (2008). Is actual similarity necessary for attraction? A meta-analysis of actual and perceived similarity. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 25(6), 889-922.

Morry, M. M. (2005). Relationship satisfaction as a predictor of similarity ratings: A test of the attraction-similarity hypothesis. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 22(4), 561-584.

### **8-12 Can Sex Be Addictive?**

Carnes, P. (2003). Understanding Sexual Addiction. *SIECUS Report ( June/July)*.

Ferree, M. C. (2001). Females and sex addiction: Myths and diagnostic implications. *Sexual Addiction & Compulsivity: The Journal of Treatment and Prevention*, 8(3-4), 287-300.

Siegel, L. A. & Siegel, R. M. (2007). Sex Addiction: Recovering from a Shady Concept. In B. Slife (Ed.), *Taking sides: Clashing views on psychological issues*. New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.

### **8-13 Is Homosexuality Biologically Based?**

Jones, S. L., & Yarhouse, M. A. (2000). *Homosexuality: The use of scientific research in the church's moral debate*. InterVarsity Press.

Rahman, Q. (2005). The neurodevelopment of human sexual orientation. *Neuroscience & Biobehavioral Reviews*, 29(7), 1057-1066.