
Rutgers University
830:421: Advanced Topics in Social Psychology
Self-Regulation and Self-Control
Spring 2020

Monday/Wednesday 1:40-3:00pm
TILLET 103B

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Office Hours: By appointment; schedule via email

Course Description

People often look ahead and set important goals for the future. They save up their hard-earned money now so that they can go on vacation next year, or they start dieting in January so that their beach bodies will be ready by June. But despite highly valuing their goals, many people experience difficulty meeting them. Nearly 80% of the individuals who set New Year's resolutions have broken them by Valentine's Day! Indeed, people often struggle to meet goals, even goals they value a great deal.

At several stages along the road to goal achievement, people face 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 health and fitness, interpersonal relationships, consumer behavior, moral decision-making, and overcoming stereotypes, to name a few.

Course Requirements

Course Site: If you are registered for this course, you will have access to our course site on Sakai. There you will find the syllabus, readings, assignments, grade book, and announcements related to the course. You can also utilize the chat room feature to ask questions of your classmates and communicate broadly with the class. If you have any trouble accessing our course material, please let me know as soon as possible.

Readings: There is no textbook for this course. Instead we will read a mix of empirical research articles, chapters, and review articles. Readings will be distributed electronically via Sakai. You are expected to read the assigned readings *before* class so that you'll be prepared to discuss what you read. Class participation is a big part of your grade, and you will not be able to effectively contribute to the class discussion without doing the readings. I encourage you to read the articles in the chronological order that they were written since later papers may contain responses to earlier ones.

Reaction Paragraphs: As you are reading the papers, write down a few questions or comments that come to mind. Each week you will submit two brief paragraphs via Sakai (one paragraph per reading). The paragraphs should not be summaries but rather should contain your general reactions to the readings. They can address any aspect of the reading that you found interesting, irrelevant, provocative, contradictory and/or confusing. What questions do you have? What puzzled you? Does the research resonate with what you've found in your own life? I'll choose a few of the questions each week to help guide our in-class discussions. The reactions should be uploaded via Assignments in Sakai **no later than 8pm on Sunday**. (The portal will close at 8:05pm so please don't wait until the last minute to submit in case there are technical problems). No late reactions will be accepted for any reason, no exceptions. You will receive up to five points per week for a max of 50 points. This means you can miss one submission during the semester without penalty. No reactions are due on the first full week of class (Week 2, Jan 27 & 29).

Class Participation: Your success in the class will be determined in large part by your active participation in class discussions. The readings are meant to encourage discussion, discourse, and debate. As a general rule, there should be no single paper that you do not comment on during class discussion.

Mini-Presentations: Each week, several students will serve as my co-professors for the week. These students will read one additional paper, and they will give a short “mini-presentation” about it. Remember you’ll be teaching the class about a paper they have never read before; how can you make sure the class understands and can relate to the reading? You should try to go beyond just describing what was in the paper. For example, make your presentation interactive and ask questions to the audience. Find demonstrations, videos, or real world examples that illustrate the concepts. Design or lead a class activity. Take a poll, design a game, act out a scenario, give a demonstration of the papers’ methods, etc. You will have about 20-30 minutes at the end of class on Wednesday to present.

Goal Journal: As an ongoing, semester-long project in this class, you will log entries into a “Goal Journal.” In the beginning of the semester, you will identify a goal you would like to work toward for the semester. Throughout the semester, I will post several prompts as assignments on Sakai. The prompts will encourage you to use and implement the research we’ve learned about in class in your efforts to meet your own goal. You will have **one week** to submit a 1-2 page journal entry responding to the prompt. There will be a total of FOUR journal entries throughout the course of the semester. Each entry will be worth 10 points for a total of 40 points.

Final Presentation: During final exam week, you will do an in-class presentation in which you present an idea for your own research study. You can work in pairs or alone on this final project—your decision. Now that you have a working knowledge of self-regulation and self-control research, what questions do you feel 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 experiment, of course, 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! I’ll reserve class time on the last class day to get help/feedback from me.

Grading

In-Class Participation	50 points
Reaction Paragraphs	50 points
Mini-Presentation	20 points
Goal Journal	40 points
Research Presentation	40 points
Total = 200 points	

Standards for Conduct

This class aims to foster a learning-centered environment which promotes and values:

- the acquisition and dissemination of knowledge
- critical thinking
- honesty/integrity
- professionalism
- respect for others and their viewpoints

In support of these values, the following factors may also affect your grade in the course:

Mutual respect. Inappropriate interpersonal behavior and communication in and outside of class is not acceptable. It is expected that students will behave in a respectful way with the instructor and other students. I welcome (and encourage!) debates and disagreements about the course topics, as long as contrary viewpoints are shared in a way that is respectful and considerate. Participation grades may reflect class behavior, and those students who behave in a way deemed disruptive or offensive will see it reflected in their grades.

Academic misconduct. Any student who cheats or plagiarizes will be referred to the Academic Judiciary Board. Plagiarism involves any attempt to pass off work from another source as your own. This includes when the sources of ideas are not cited. If you are uncertain how to properly cite references, please ask me. If you are not familiar with the University’s policy on academic integrity, you can find more information here: <http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/academic-integrity-policy/>.

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 (JAN 22): INTRODUCTION

Recommended Reading: Jordan, C. H. and Zanna M. P. (1999). How to read a journal article in social psychology. In R. F. Baumeister (Ed.), *The Self in Social Psychology* (pp. 461-470). Philadelphia: Psychology Press

WEEK 2 (JAN 27 & 29): SETTING AND IMPLEMENTING GOALS

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. (1999). Implementation intentions: Strong effects of simple plans. *American Psychologist, 54*, 493-503.

WEEK 3 (FEB 3 & 5): BOOSTING MOTIVATION AND INITIATING GOAL PURSUIT

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: Hennecke, M., & Converse, B. A. (2017). Next week, next month, next year: How perceived temporal boundaries affect initiation expectations. *Social Psychological and Personality Science, 8*, 918-926.

WEEK 4 (FEB 10 & 12): GOAL PLANNING AND FOLLOW-THROUGH

Reading #1: 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.

Reading #2: Rogers, T., Milkman, K. L., John, L. K., & Norton, M. I. (2015). Beyond good intentions: Prompting people to make plans improves follow-through on important tasks. *Behavioral Science & Policy, 1*, 33-41.

WEEK 5 (FEB 17 & 19): 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.

WEEK 6 (FEB 24 & 26): GOAL PROGRESS AND MONITORING

Reading #1: Koo, M., & Fishbach, A. (2012). The small-area hypothesis: Effects of progress monitoring on goal adherence. *Journal of Consumer Research, 39*, 1-17.

Reading #2: Woolley, K., & Fishbach, A. (2017). Immediate rewards predict adherence to long-term goals. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 43*, 151-162.

WEEK 7 (MAR 2 & 4): 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.

WEEK 8 (MAR 9 & 11): 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: 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: SPRING BREAK NO CLASS!

WEEK 10 (MAR 23 & 25): COUNTERACTIVE CONTROL

Reading #1: 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: Zhang, Y., Huang, S. C., & Broniarczyk, S. M. (2010). Counteractive construal in consumer goal pursuit. *Journal of Consumer Research*, *37*, 129-142.

WEEK 11 (MAR 30 & APR 1): TAMING TEMPTATION AND IMPROVING SELF-CONTROL

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: Tian, A. D., Schroeder, J., Häubl, G., Risen, J. L., Norton, M. I., & Gino, F. (2018). Enacting rituals to improve self-control. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *114*, 851.

WEEK 12 (APR 6 & 8): DEPLETION WARS!! (READINGS TBA)

WEEK 13 (APR 13 & 15): CONSTRUAL LEVELS AND SELF-CONTROL

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.

WEEK 14 (APR 20 & 22): REGULATING STEREOTYPES AND OVERCOMING BIASES

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: 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 15 (APR 27 & 29): SELF-REGULATION AND INTERPERSONAL PROCESSES

Reading #1: Fitzsimons, G. M., & Finkel, E. J. (2011). Outsourcing self-regulation. *Psychological Science*, *22*, 369-375.

Reading #2: Lowe, M. L., & Haws, K. L. (2014). (Im) moral support: the social outcomes of parallel self-control decisions. *Journal of Consumer Research*, *41*(2), 489-505.

WEEK 16 (May 4): Final presentation meetings

FINAL EXAM (TUESDAY, MAY 12th 12:00-3:00pm): IN-CLASS PRESENTATIONS