

Psychology of Discrimination

Fall 2003

Instructor: Alexandra F. Corning, PhD
Course Number: PSY 410
Course Time: Mondays and Wednesdays 11:45-1
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COURSE DESCRIPTION AND OBJECTIVES

This course is intended to help facilitate an understanding of discrimination and prejudice from a social-psychological perspective. Using the real experiences of members of several stigmatized groups observed via text and video, the psychologically-based causes, correlates, and consequences of discrimination and prejudice will be examined. As such, this course is intended to help you:

1. broaden your awareness of social context as it pertains to stigmatized status;
2. better understand psychological principles underlying prejudiced attitudes and discriminatory behaviors;
3. become acquainted with current research on the causes, correlates, and consequences of prejudice and discrimination; and
4. gain a more objective view of your personal beliefs and behaviors.

TEXTS

Nelson, T. D. (2002). *The psychology of prejudice*. Boston: Allyn & Bacon.
Sampson, E. (1999). *Dealing with differences: An introduction to the social psychology of prejudice*. Fort Worth, TX: Harcourt Brace.
Psychology of Discrimination Course Packet on Electronic Reserve.

REQUIREMENTS

To meet the objectives of the course, the following assignments have been developed.

Weekly Reading Reactions Posted to Discussion List	20 points
Leading a Class Discussion	10 points
Research Paper (15 pages)	30 points
Class Presentation	15 points
Final Examination	15 points
Attendance	10 points

The grade scheme used in this course is based on a possible 100 points.

A	≥ 93%
A-	90-92%
B+	87-89%
B	83-86%
B-	80-82%
C+	77-79%
C	73-76%
C-	70-72%
D	60-69%
F	≤ 59%

EXPECTATIONS

This course is conducted as an upper-level seminar. Attendance is required at each class for the duration of each class, and consistent participation is expected. Only excused absences (i.e., documented personal illness or death in family) are acceptable, and an excused absence is a rare event. If a student expects to miss a class or any part of a class meeting, the student is required to [inform the instructor in advance](#) and to take responsibility for understanding the applicability of the attendance policy. Finally, in the case that a student does miss a class, it is her or his responsibility to obtain notes (including notes on films) from peers. To help ensure your success in this course, you are encouraged to: 1) read and critique the assigned reading in advance of each class and 2) participate actively in each class discussion.

Students with disabilities should familiarize themselves with the [student resources offered by the University](#) and are encouraged to discuss with the instructor at the outset of the semester and throughout how classroom and outside learning needs may best be addressed.

SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

Week	Date	Course Topic	Reading Assignments
1	August 27	A Psychological Approach to Prejudice and Discrimination	E-Reserve 1 : Jackson, J. (2000). What ought Psychology to do? <i>American Psychologist</i> , 55(3), 328-330.
2	September 1	Basic Definitions and Concepts	Ch 1 (Nelson) Chs 1 & 2 (Sampson)
	September 3	Awareness of Self and Other: Dismantling Hierarchies of Oppression Nature or Nurture and other Sociopolitical Issues	E-Reserve 2 : What do I think? Ch 3 (Sampson) Ch 4 (Sampson) Ch 5 (Sampson, only pp. 68-72)
3	September 8 September 10	Correlates of Prejudice and Discrimination	Ch 4 (Nelson) Chs 6 & 7 (Sampson)
4	September 15 September 17	Social-Cognitive Processes: Categorization, Stereotyping, and Bias	Chs 2 & 3 (Nelson) Chs 8 & 9 (Sampson)
5	September 22 September 24	Social-Cognitive Processes Illustrated: Film: Murder on a Sunday Morning	E-Reserve 3 : Prentice, D. A., & Miller, D. T. (2002). The emergence of homegrown stereotypes. <i>American Psychologist</i> , 57(5), 352-359.
6	September 29 October 1	Gender Socialization	E-Reserve 4 : Bussey, K., & Bandura, A. (1999). Social-cognitive theory of gender development and differentiation. <i>Psychological Review</i> , 106, 676-713.
7	October 6 October 8	How Does Sexism Occur? Film: Women in Sports -- Title IX	Ch 8 (Nelson)

8	October 13 October 15	Heterosexism and Homophobia Film: Assault on Gay America	Ch 10 (Nelson)
9	October 20 October 22	Autumn Recess	
10	October 27 October 29	Race and Racism Testing, IQ, and Academic Achievement Film: Secrets of the SAT	Ch 5 (Nelson) Ch 5 (Sampson, only pp. 58-67) E-Reserve 5 : Steele, C. (1997). A threat in the air: How stereotypes shape intellectual identity and performance. <i>American Psychologist</i> , 52(6), 613-629.
11	November 3 November 5	Social Class: Film: The Two Nations of Black America	E-Reserve 6 : Lott, B. (2000). Cognitive and behavioral distancing from the poor. <i>American Psychologist</i> , 57(2), 100-110.
12	November 10 November 12	Group-Based Theories of Discrimination	Chs 10, 11, & 12 (Sampson)
13	November 17 November 19	Consequences of Discrimination	Ch 6 (Nelson) Chs 13 & 14 (Sampson)
14	November 24 November 26	Challenging Discrimination and Prejudice	Ch 9 (Nelson) Chs 15 & 16 (Sampson)
15	December 1 December 3	Student Paper Presentations Student Paper Presentations	
16	December 8 December 10	Student Paper Presentations Student Paper Presentations	
17	December 16	Final Examination 8am – 10a m	

ASSIGNMENTS

Weekly Reading Reactions Posted to Discussion List

Purpose

This course is designed as a seminar which means that your thoughts, criticisms, and interests will be a driving force for the course. Meaningful class discussion requires preparation on the part of class members. When students compose their thoughts in writing prior to the class meeting, more informed and engaging discussions typically ensue. One requirement of this course is preparation of a reaction each week to the readings assigned for a given week. An electronic posting site (available through [WebCT](#)) that functions similarly to a listserv has been arranged for distribution of the reading reactions to the class.

Procedures

These reactions of approximately 1 page should be substantive reactions to, questions about, or critiques of specific points in the readings which you would like to discuss further in class; they should not include summaries of the readings. Reading reaction opportunities begin September 10th and extend through and include November 26th. Reading reactions each week are due to the electronic post by midnight of the Sunday previous, thus allowing class members time to read one others' comments before the discussion in

class. Those submitted after midnight Sunday will not be assigned points. Over the course of the semester, 10 reading reactions out of the 11 opportunities are required. Further procedural details will be outlined during the first meeting.

Evaluation

Possible total for reading reactions meeting the above requirements of content and timeliness is 20 points.

Leading a Class Discussion

Purpose

During most class meetings, we will engage in a discussion of the assigned readings. At the outset of the semester, 1-2 people per week will be assigned to lead each discussion. The presentation will serve as a means of generating and focusing discussion for that class period.

Procedures

Prior to the class meeting, the facilitators (if two are assigned) should meet to identify the most important issues and questions raised in the week's readings. The facilitators also should carefully read the reactions written that week for incorporation into the presentation. The presentation should be 10 to 15 minutes long and in it should be identified: the important issues, examples of situations in which these issues arise, authors' arguments about these issues, and areas of critique (e.g., what may have the authors missed or where may they have gone astray?). It is not your task to resolve these issues, but to introduce them in a meaningful way toward encouraging further discussion about them. It is also recommended that presenters develop a list of follow-up questions should the discussion stall, or become redundant or tangential.

Evaluation

This assignment is worth 10 points and will be graded according to the above criteria.

Research Paper

Purpose

The major requirement of the course is a research paper, written in APA-style, in which you show original thinking regarding a specific issue pertaining to prejudice or discrimination.

Procedures

A good paper engages theory and empirical results from readings and class lectures and applies the literature to an area of interest to the student (i.e. supports, refutes, complements, and/or extends prior explanations of psychological processes). Two characteristics of poor papers are jaunts into journalistic-style reporting (i.e. "This is my (or someone else's) personal story...") and go-nowhere summarizations of findings on a given topic (i.e., cataloging one finding after another absent of an integrative thesis).

"Getting an Idea." Early in the semester, look through the syllabus and assigned readings to discover those topics of greatest interest to you. Become more familiar with the literature in that area by reading ahead in the topic(s) and conducting a literature search to learn more. The paper may be one of three types: 1) a Research Proposal: based on your thorough reading in a particular area, formulate a specific research question that remains to be explored and write a research proposal on how to study this question scientifically; 2) a Critical Literature Review: Formulate a critique of the literature on a particular topic based on contradictory research findings, poor methodology, or implications from opposing theories; or 3) a Program Intervention: Based on the findings in a particular area in combination with a group/organization in need of consultation, design a prejudice- or discrimination-reduction program, the

main purpose and components of which are grounded firmly in current research. Model papers (provided with permission by previous students) are available from the instructor upon request. Regardless of the type of paper you write, the central thesis for each paper should be carefully thought-out and specifically defined. To this end, you are strongly encouraged to discuss your idea for your paper with the instructor early in the semester, and frequently throughout, so that you appropriately define the parameters of your paper and then meaningfully direct it.

Appropriate Sources. Scientific sources are required to support statements you make in your paper and the bulk should come from outside class readings. [Psychological literature databases](#) (for example, [PsycInfo](#)) available through [our library](#) provide appropriate sources. Magazines and other popular media are not appropriate sources of findings.

Format. The paper must be written in APA style ([5th Edition of the Publication Manual of the APA](#)). The body of the paper, excluding the title page, abstract page, and references should be approximately 15 pages. The references should be formatted in APA style. You are encouraged to submit drafts of your paper regularly throughout the semester for feedback and refinement.

Evaluation

The paper is worth 30 points and will be graded on the basis of how well it meets the requirements outlined above. Papers are due December 1st at the beginning of class. Late papers receive a deduction of five points per day.

Class Presentation

Purpose

Students are required to make presentations of their research papers to the class. The purposes of this assignment are to gain experience presenting to peers, to enhance your classmates' knowledge about the topic you have investigated in-depth, and to further your own expertise on the topic as you prepare a clear and organized presentation and anticipate questions from peers.

Procedures

Class presentations will take place the weeks of December 1st and 8th; students will select presentation dates during the first class meeting.

Evaluation

Presentations should: 1) have clarity with the goal of sharing information with others as the primary aim; 2) be a presentation of your paper with the goal being to share findings or ideas with others in a way that is engaging to the audience (and not be a mere reading of the paper); 3) show signs of time management through adherence to time guidelines (showing consideration for others). Class presentations are worth 15 points.

Final Examination

The final examination will assess your integration of class topics. Responses will be made by students in essay form, and example questions will be provided in advance in class. The final exam will be held at the time and date indicated by the University – 8am to 10am on Tuesday, December 16th – and is worth 15 points.