

Social Psychology in Film

PSY 432
Fall 2021



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Webpage: <http://williams.socialpsychology.org>

Course Webpage: Class Brightspace page

Class times: Although the schedule lists Tuesday and Thursdays meetings, we will only meet as a class (virtually, on Zoom) on Thursdays, 12:00noon – 1:15pm. The Tuesday 12-1:15pm class time is for you to devote to watching some or most of the movies (which we used to do in class when it was in-person).

Office hours: Wednesdays: 11am– 12noon or by appointment (please let me know if you plan to visit).

Films and Readings: There is no textbook; assigned readings will be available on our class Brightspace at least one week before your paper is due. Films will be listed; you are to view the films on your own time during the week that they are assigned using whatever streaming resources you have. Approximate costs for short-term subscriptions to streaming services are probably less than the cost of standard textbooks, and are commensurate with “lab fees” in other courses. However, if you have difficulties (financial or otherwise) in viewing these movies, please contact Dr. Williams.

Course Description

In this course, we examine theory and research in experimental social psychology and use popular (and some that are not so popular) films to assist in provoking thought and analysis of the theory and research.

Aims. This course is different from most. I’m not interested in how well you remember material, but I am interested in how well you think and in how well you articulate your ideas. This is primarily a writing class, in which you will be asked to write short (500-word maximum) thought papers each week. These thought papers would use the film as a vehicle to formulate ideas from the reading. I am looking for creative ideas that extend, contradict, or provide boundary conditions to the theories/hypotheses used in the reading. I am looking for well-constructed papers that are focused on a single thesis and provide supportive arguments for the thesis in the subsequent paragraphs. Each paragraph should tightly pertain to an argument in support of the thesis.

Structure. Each week, readings (journal articles, chapters) will be assigned. We will view a film that has some conceptual relation to the reading topic. Your thought paper, due at 4pm the day before the class meeting, should be submitted to me as a word document (.doc or .docx) through Brightspace. Your paper should support a thesis of your choice (I will be giving you advice as to how to write your papers). **These papers can be no longer than 500 words in length.** Late papers will not be accepted. You will receive feedback and a score for each paper (0-10) by class time, where we will discuss the papers and the film. New readings will be assigned, another film viewed, and so on.

How to submit your papers.

Submit through Brightspace. When you submit your papers (as a Word.doc or Word.docx), please name your document in the following way:

yourlastname-Paper #

example: Smith-Paper 1

Grading. I will grade each paper from 1 (unacceptable) to 10 (excellent). Typically, the grades usually run between 6 - 9.5 points, although there have been exceptions. Although fourteen (14) papers and films will be assigned, **only your top ten (10) papers will be used for grading purposes.** Whether you write the paper or not, you are expected to read



the assigned paper(s), view the film, and take part in the discussion (with the exception of papers #13 and #14, for which there will be no class discussion). Class participation is considered for grading. Course marks will be based on the ten papers (80% of your grade), and attendance/class participation (20% of your grade). **Your final grade is based on your total points divided by the highest score achieved in the class this semester.**

Purdue's standard grading policy will be used to assign final letter grades:

100 – 93% of top score achieved	=	A
92 – 90% of top score achieved	=	A-
89 – 87% of top score achieved	=	B+
86 - 83% of top score achieved	=	B
82 - 80% of top score achieved	=	B-
79 – 77% of top score achieved	=	C+
76 – 73% of top score achieved	=	C
72 – 70% of top score achieved	=	C-
69 - 67% of top score achieved	=	D+
66 – 63% of top score achieved	=	D
62 – 60% of top score achieved	=	D-
< 60% of top score achieved	=	F

Absences and missed papers. If you contact me prior to an absence which is the result of a verifiable emergency or illness, then you can make up the absence by (a) handing in a paper with comments you wanted to make during discussion, and (b) watching the movie on your own time. Because you can choose your top 10 papers, missed papers will simply count as zeros.

Academic Honesty: For your own sake, do your own work. Plagiarism is a serious offense, and is easily detectable with the advent of search engines. It does not matter if you plagiarized intentionally or unintentionally—either way it is plagiarism. I check each paper with plagiarism detection software.

Purdue Student Code of Honor: Know it and follow it. Do your own work. Plagiarism is a serious offense, and is easily detectable with the advent of search engines. It does not matter if you plagiarized intentionally or unintentionally—either way it is plagiarism. Here is a useful website to understand the definition and issues surrounding plagiarism:
<http://www.purdue.edu/odos/osrr/academicintegritybrochure.php>

Emergencies: In the event of a major campus emergency, course requirements, deadlines and grading percentages are subject to changes that may be necessitated by a revised semester calendar or other circumstances. Here are ways to get information about changes in this course: MyPurdue webpage, my class web page, email address:
kipw@purdue.edu. FOR MORE INFORMATION, GO TO:

https://www.purdue.edu/emergency_preparedness/flipchart/index.html

- To report an emergency, call 911. To obtain updates regarding an ongoing emergency, sign up for Purdue Alert text messages, view www.purdue.edu/ea.
- There are nearly 300 Emergency Telephones outdoors across campus and in parking garages that connect directly to the Purdue University Police Department. If you feel threatened or need help, push the button and you will be connected immediately.
- If we hear a fire alarm during class we will immediately suspend class, evacuate the building, and proceed outdoors. Do not use the elevator.
- If we are notified during class of a Shelter in Place requirement for a tornado warning, we will suspend class and shelter in the basement.
- If we are notified during class of a Shelter in Place requirement for a hazardous materials release, or a civil disturbance, including a shooting or other use of weapons, we will suspend class and shelter in the classroom, shutting the door and turning off the lights.
- Please review the Emergency Preparedness website for additional information.
http://www.purdue.edu/ehps/emergency_preparedness/index.html



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Note: Films may change depending upon availability and other options.

Class Mtg	Reading / Assignment	Film / Topic
Aug 26	Organizational meeting; MacDonald, G., & Leary, M. (2003). Why does social exclusion hurt? The relationship between social and somatic pain. <i>Psychological Bulletin</i> . or Williams, K. D. (2011). The pain of exclusion. <i>Scientific American Mind</i> , January/February, 30-37. & Keltner, D. (2008). <i>In defense of teasing</i> . The New York Times.	REJECT (2013) C-92m. D: Ruth Thomas-Suh. (Documentary).
Sept 1, 4pm	Paper #1 is due	
Sept. 2	Discussion of preceding film/paper. Haney, C., Banks, C., & Zimbardo, P. (1973). A study of prisoners and guards in a simulated prison. <i>Naval Research Reviews</i> , Sept., 1-17.	THE STANFORD PRISON EXPERIMENT (2015) C-122m. D: Kyle Patrick Alvarez. A: Billy Crudup, Ezra Miller, Tye Sheridan
Sept. 9	NO CLASS ON SEPT 9	
Sept 15, 4pm	Paper #2 is due	
Sept. 16	Discussion of preceding film/paper. Greenwald, A. G. (1980). The totalitarian ego. <i>American Psychologist</i> , 35, 603-618.	RASHOMON (1950) B/W-85m. D: Akira Kurosawa. A: Toshiro Mifune, Machiko Kyo, Masayuki Mori, Takashi Shimura.
Sept 22, 4pm	Paper #3 is due	
Sept. 23	Discussion of preceding film/paper. Snyder, M., & Swann, W. B. (1978). Hypothesis-testing processes in social interaction. <i>Journal of Personality and Social Psychology</i> , 36, 1202--1212.	BEING THERE (1979) C-130m. D: Hal Ashby. A: Peter Sellers, Shirley MacLaine, Melvyn Douglas, Jack Warden.
Oct. 6, 4pm	Paper #4 is due	
Oct. 7	Discussion of preceding film/paper. Langlois, J. H., Kalakanis, L., Rubenstein, A. J., Larson, A., Hallam, M., & Smoot, M. Maxims or myths of beauty? Metaanalytic and theoretical review. <i>Psychological Bulletin</i> , 126, 390-423.	UNDER THE SKIN (2013) C-108m. D: Jonathan Glazer. A: Scarlett Johansson.
Oct. 13, 4pm	Paper #5 is due	
Oct 14	Discussion of preceding film/paper. Florian, V., Mikulincer, M., & Hirschberger, G. (2002). The anxiety-buffering function of close relationships: Evidence that relationship commitment acts as a terror management mechanism. <i>Journal of Personality and Social Psychology</i> , 82, 527-542. or Goldenberg, J., et al (2001). I am not an animal: Mortality salience, disgust, and denial of human creatureliness. <i>Journal of Experimental Social Psychology</i> , 130, 427-435.	HAROLD AND MAUDE (1971). C-91min. D: Hal Ashby. A: Ruth Gordon, Bud Cort.
Oct. 20, 4pm	Paper #6 is due	
Oct. 21	Discussion of preceding film/paper. Ellemers, N., Spears, R., & Doosje, B. (2002). Self and social identity. <i>Annual Review of Psychology</i> , 53, 161-186. or Swann et al (2012). When group membership gets personal: A theory of identity fusion. <i>Psychological Review</i> .	EUROPA EUROPA (1990) C-112m. D: Agnieszka Hollan. A: Marco Hofschneider, Julie Delpy, René Hofschneider.
Oct 26, 5pm	Last day to withdraw from a course with a W or WF Grade	
Oct. 27, 4pm	Paper #7 is due	
Oct 28	Discussion of preceding film/paper. Penner, L. A., Dovidio, J.F., Piliavin, J.A., & Schroeder, D.A. (2005). Prosocial behavior: Multilevel perspectives. <i>Annual Review of Psychology</i> .	HOTEL RWANDA (2004) C-121m. D: Terry George. A: Don Cheadle, Nick Nolte, Xolan Mali, Desmond Dube, Hakeem Kae-Kasim, Fana Mokoena.

For weather-related emergencies:
<http://www.itap.purdue.edu/tlt/faculty/>



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Nov. 3, 4pm	Paper #8 is due	
Nov. 4	Discussion of preceding film/paper. Steele, C. (1997). A threat is in the air: How stereotypes shape intellectual identity and performance. <i>American Psychologist</i> , 52, 613-629.	THE BELIEVER (2001) C-98m. D: Henry Bean. A: Ryan Gosling, Summer Phoenix, Billy Zane, Theresa Russell.
Nov 10, 4pm	Paper #9 is due	
Nov. 11	Discussion of preceding film/paper. Dovidio, J. F., & Gaertner, S. L. (2004). Aversive racism. <i>Advances in Experimental Social Psychology</i> , Vol.36 (pp. 4-56). NY: Academic Press.	CRASH: (2004) C-122m. D: Paul Haggis. A: Don Cheadle, Matt Dillon, Jennifer Esposito, Thandie Newton, Sandra Bullock, Brendan Fraser.
Nov 17, 4pm	Paper #10 is due	
Nov. 18	Discussion of preceding film/paper. Myers, D. G., & Lamm, H. (1975). The polarizing effect of group discussion. <i>American Scientist</i> , 63, 297-303.	12 ANGRY MEN (1957) B/W-95m. D: Sidney Lumet. A: Henry Fonda, Lee J. Cobb.
Dec. 1, 4pm	Paper #11 is due	
Dec. 2	Discussion of preceding film/paper. Knee, C. R., Patrick, H., Vietor, N. A., & Neighbors, C. (2004). Implicit theories of relationships: Moderators of the link between conflict and commitment. <i>Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin</i> , 30, 617-628.	THE LOBSTER (2015) C-119m. Yorgos Lanthimos. A: Colin Farrell, Rachel Weisz, John C. Reilly, Lea Seydoux
Dec. 8, 4pm	Paper #12 is due	
Dec. 9	Discussion of preceding film/paper. Anderson, C. A., & Bushman, B. J. (2002). Human aggression. <i>Annual Review of Psychology</i> , 53, 27-51. Wildschut, T., Sedikides, C., Arndt, J., & Routledge, C. (2006). Nostalgia: Content, triggers, functions. <i>Journal of Personality and Social Psychology</i> , 91, 975-993.	BOWLING FOR COLUMBINE (2002) C-125m. D: Michael Moore. (Documentary) A. Charlton Heston, Marilyn Manson, Matt Stone. THE WORLD'S END (2013) C-109m. D: Edgar Wright. A: Simon Pegg, Nick Frost.
Dec. 11, 4pm (Saturday)	Optional: Paper #13 and/or Paper #14 is due	



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How to Write Your 2-Page Thought Papers

I realize that 500 words may seem unreasonably restricting to you, preventing you from adequately expressing your ideas. In scientific journals, psychology included, writing is necessarily concise. Specific page restrictions are enforced. If we go over the word limits when we submit an article, it is rejected without review. Redundancy, flowery writing, and ambiguity are to be edited out. This is a difficult exercise. Your first draft for each paper will probably be 3-4 pages long (double-spaced), so your subsequent draft(s) will involve editing your paper down to size. (If, on the other hand, you're having a difficult time coming up with 500 words, then you may not be putting enough thought into your thought papers).

You will then go through a thorough editing stage. Ask yourself these questions: Is this sentence necessary? Is this word necessary? Can I combine these two sentences? Am I straying from my main thesis? Did I ever say "in other words?" If so, then write it correctly the first time so you don't have to repeat yourself.

Some students need an introductory sentence or two to get the ball rolling, but these sentences can often be discarded before submitting the final draft.

Often students talk about more than one thesis, which always results in a lower grade. There is not enough space to write and defend more than one thesis within the 500-word limit. Choose your most provocative and well-argued thesis, and use the entire paper to elaborate upon it.

The first thing I do is Tools>Word Count. If your paper is over 500 words, I strike-through all words after the 500th word, and I don't read these extra words. Seriously; I am not kidding. So, you should do a word count before submitting it, and make sure it is no more than 500 words.

Ten Additional Pieces of Advice

- 1) State your thesis early and explicitly. Just to be safe, underline or italicize it, so I know where it is.
- 2) Do not settle for a wishy-washy thesis. Be brave enough to take a stance and argue for it. Be explicit in how your thesis departs from the point(s) the authors are making. Avoid the obvious (i. e., this movie is a perfect example of this phenomenon; this movie is wrong because it is not consistent with the theory, etc.). I am looking for clever insights, particularly about the theory (or theories) and/or research (not so much about the film). One tip that will likely result in a good grade: Ask yourself, "under what conditions will the general hypothesis in the reading be different?" When will the pattern of results not emerge, or be the opposite, or more pronounced than that which the authors found?
- 3) Select a thesis with a narrow focus. It should be in some way an extension of the reading (not the movie). Critically analyze the reading. Take issue with the theory, the generalizations, or the way the idea was tested. Use the movie to help come up with your idea or to help illustrate your point.
- 4) Do not necessarily select a thesis that is the central focus of the movie or the reading. It could be a tangential issue that piqued your interest.
- 5) Support your thesis with persuasive arguments based upon examples from the reading and the movie.
- 6) Use each paragraph to make a point that will provide strength to your thesis. The point should be clear and the paragraph should be organized around it. Do not write a paragraph that drifts from one point to another to another. Just have one point per paragraph.
- 7) Avoid quotes, especially long ones.
- 8) Define important or esoteric terms. Do not use jargon. Do not use acronyms (DNUA). Do not assume I know what you are talking about.
- 9) Remember that spelling, grammar, sentence structure and organization ARE important and figure into the grading.
- 10) Do not end your paper with a platitude.