

Social Psychology in Film (PSY 43200)

Syllabus - Spring 2025

General Course Information

Instructor	Dr. Christopher R. Agnew Department of Psychological Sciences Purdue University Psychological Sciences Building, Room 2162 Office Phone: (765) 494-6254 / E-mail: agnew@purdue.edu
Assistant	Phuc Dang Psychological Sciences Building, Room 2174 E-Mail: dang73@purdue.edu
Office hours	Agnew – by appointment (email Dr. Agnew) Dang – by appointment (email Phuc)
Seminar Time	Thursdays 6:00 to 8:50 pm
Classroom	Peirce Hall (PRCE), Room 277
Prerequisites	PSY 12000 (Elementary Psychology) & PSY 24000 (Social Psychology)
Readings	Posted in Brightspace

Course Plan

This advanced undergraduate course uses popular and less known films to illustrate and promote in-depth understanding of key themes, processes, and principles in social psychology. Topics covered include group decision making, conformity, persuasion, prosocial behavior, interpersonal expectancies, prejudice, and close relationships. The general plan of the course is as follows:

- (1) Prior to each class, you will read an assigned chapter and/or article concerning a particular social psychological theme, process or principle.
- (2) Following my introductory remarks at the start of class, we will review and discuss the ideas presented in the assigned reading. Students will co-lead these discussions.

(3) We will then watch an illustrative film in class, chosen for its linkage to the theme, process, and/or principle. We will watch a total of 14 films throughout the semester.

(4) Immediately after the screening of each film, you will have an opportunity to write an integration paper in class, relating the film to ideas described in the assigned reading and/or in class discussion.

Typical Course Format

Introductory remarks / Discussion of readings → 30 minutes

Break → 5 minutes

Watch film → 112 minutes, on average

Integration papers → 20 minutes

About Film Content

Some of the films we will view contain themes or content designed for mature audiences. This includes both traditional “adult content” such as profanity, nudity, sex, violence, and drug use, as well as broader topics that can cause emotional discomfort such as prejudice and physical violence. I have provided hyperlinks to each film on IMDB.com (which typically provides detailed content advisories). As you will see below, you are only required to write integration papers for 11 of the 14 films that we will view. Thus, I’ve provided a mechanism by which you may skip any film or films that you think would cause you discomfort. It is your responsibility to examine the film content advisory for each film, if any, and determine your comfort level for watching at least 11 of the scheduled films, as watching fewer than 11 will adversely impact your course grade.

Device-Free Classroom

I do not allow electronic devices of any type to be used in class during lectures or film screenings. If for some reason you need to have a device handy or for documented student accommodations, you must let me know before class begins.

Course Evaluation

Course grades are based on the following three components (weighted as noted):

(I) Integration Papers (66%)

You are required to write integration papers concerning any 11 of the 14 themes/films. You will handwrite each paper immediately after we watch the film in class – paper for doing so will be provided in class, but *you are responsible for bringing a pen or pencil with you to class*. In each integration paper, you are to apply one or more ideas presented in the assigned reading or raised in class discussion to describe and elucidate any social psychological aspect of a given film. You will have up to 20 minutes to write your paper. Please write your name, date, and film title in the upper right corner of the paper before handing it in at the end of class. Each paper is worth 6% of your final course grade.

(II) *Discussion Leader (10%):*

Students will be responsible for leading our discussion of the assigned reading each week. To aid in this process, discussant leaders are to prepare, in advance, 4 to 6 discussion questions. The questions will be used to direct our class discussion. Lead discussants are free to structure their questions as they wish (perhaps questioning theories, hypotheses, methods, broader meanings of the readings, etc.). We won't get to all the questions as we have limited time, but we will at least discuss one crafted by each discussion leader. *Discussion questions are to be [emailed to Dr. Agnew no later than 24 hours prior to class](#)*. Assignment to dates/topics will be determined during our first class, with 4 or 5 students assigned to lead discussion each week. Performance as discussion leader is worth 10% of your final course grade.

(III) *Discussion Participation (10%)*

Each week, all students in the class are responsible for reading the assigned material and are expected to actively participate in discussion in class. This component of your final grade, worth 10%, will reflect my assessment of your level of involvement in our weekly discussions across the semester.

(IV) *Attendance (14%):*

This course meets only once per week, so attendance is expected. At the start of each class, you are required to sign an attendance sheet to receive credit for attending that class (each class attendance is worth 1 point of your final grade). If you sign the sheet for another student, this is academic dishonesty. Both you and the student whom you signed for will be penalized accordingly. If you are not staying for the film portion of the class, you must still sign the attendance sheet before you leave to receive credit.

Tardiness distracts your peers and negatively impacts the learning environment. You will lose points for late attendance unless you have previously discussed the issue with me. If you arrive 10 or more minutes late, you will not receive *any* participation points for that class. [Note: Things happen. As such, everyone gets *one* excused absence for a late arrival.]

Summary of Course Grade Components

Integration Papers (n= 11, 6% each)	→	66%
Discussion Leader	→	10%
Discussion Participation	→	10%
Attendance	→	<u>14%</u>
		100%

Grade Scale

100-93	→ A	82-80	→ B-	69-67	→ D+
92-90	→ A-	79-77	→ C+	66-63	→ D
89-87	→ B+	76-73	→ C	62 or less	→ F
86-83	→ B	72-70	→ C-		

Course Schedule

Class	Theme / Process / Principle	Reading	Film (Year, Time, Director)
Jan 16	Course Overview / Introductions	Mar & Oatley (2008)	
Jan 23	Minority Influence in Groups	Prislin (2022)	<i>12 Angry Men</i> (1957, 95 min, Lumet)
Jan 30	Existential Threat	Dar-Nimrod (2022)	<i>Children of Men</i> (2006, 109 min, Cuarón)
Feb 6	Interpersonal Expectations	Snyder & Stukas (1999)	<i>Being There</i> (1979, 130 min, Ashby)
Feb 13	Social Memory	Wells & Olson (2003)	<i>The Thin Blue Line</i> (1988, 101 min, Morris)
Feb 20	Relationships 1: Love	Sternberg (1986)	<i>Her</i> (2013, 126 min, Jonze)
Feb 27	Persuasion	Humă (2023)	<i>Glengarry Glen Ross</i> (1992, 100 min, Foley)
Mar 6	The Self and Social Perception	Greenwald (1980)	<i>Rashomon</i> (1951, 88 min, Kurosawa)
Mar 13	Relationships 2: Attachment	Fraley (2019)	<i>Frozen</i> (2013, 102 min, Buck & Lee)
Mar 20	<i>No Class (Spring Break)</i>		
Mar 27	Prejudice and Discrimination	Dovidio et al. (2017)	<i>Crash</i> (2004, 115 min, Haggis)
Apr 3	Conformity	Capuano & Chekroun (2024)	<i>Das Boot</i> (1981, 149 min, Petersen)
Apr 10	Relationships 3: Violence	Tolan et al. (2006)	<i>Once Were Warriors</i> (1994, 103 min, Tamahori)
Apr 17	Emotion & Decision Making	Lerner et al. (2015)	<i>Inside Out</i> (2015, 95 min., Docter)
Apr 24	Prosocial Behavior	Pfattheicher et al. (2022)	<i>Hotel Rwanda</i> (2004, 121 min., George)
May 1	Relationships 4: Breakup	Aron et al. (2022)	<i>Marriage Story</i> (2019, 136 min, Baumbach)

Readings

January 16: Social Psychology in Film

Mar, R. A., & Oatley, K. (2008). The function of fiction is the abstraction and simulation of social experience. *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, 3(3), 173-192.

<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1745-6924.2008.00073.x>

January 23: Minority Influence in Groups

Prislin, R. (2022). Minority influence: An agenda for study of social change. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 13, 911654. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.911654>

January 30: Existential Threat

Dar-Nimrod, I. (2022). Death awareness and terror management theory. In Menzies, R.G., Menzies, R.E., Dingle, G.A. (Eds.), *Existential concerns and cognitive-behavioral procedures*. Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-06932-1_3

February 6: Interpersonal Expectations

Snyder, M., & Stukas, A. A., Jr. (1999). Interpersonal processes: The interplay of cognitive, motivational, and behavioral activities in social interaction. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 50, 273–303. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.psych.50.1.273>

February 13: Social Memory

Wells, G. L., & Olson, E. A. (2003). Eyewitness testimony. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 54, 277–295. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.psych.54.101601.145028>

February 20: Relationships 1: Love

Sternberg, R. J. (1986). A triangular theory of love. *Psychological Review*, 93(2), 119–135. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-295X.93.2.119>

February 27: Persuasion

Humă, B. (2023). Language and persuasion: A discursive psychological approach. *Social and Personality Psychology Compass*, 17(6), e12755. <https://doi.org/10.1111/spc3.12755>

March 6: The Self and Social Perception

Greenwald, A. G. (1980). The totalitarian ego: Fabrication and revision of personal history. *American Psychologist*, 35(7), 603–618. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.35.7.603>

March 13: Relationships 2: Attachment

Fraley, R. C. (2019). Attachment in adulthood: Recent developments, emerging debates, and future directions. *Annual Review of Psychology, 70*, 401–422. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-psych-010418-102813>

March 27: Prejudice and Discrimination

Dovidio, J. F., Gaertner, S. L., & Pearson, A. R. (2017). Aversive racism and contemporary bias. In C. G. Sibley & F. K. Barlow (Eds.), *The Cambridge handbook of the psychology of prejudice* (pp. 267–294). Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781316161579.012>

April 3: Conformity

Capuano, C., & Chekroun, P. (2024). A systematic review of research on conformity. *International Review of Social Psychology, 37*(1): 13, 1–23. <https://doi.org/10.5334/irsp.874>

April 10: Relationships 3: Violence

Tolan, P., Gorman-Smith, D., & Henry, D. (2006). Family violence. *Annual review of psychology, 57*, 557–583. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.psych.57.102904.190110>

April 17: Emotion and Decision Making

Lerner, J. S., Li, Y., Valdesolo, P., & Kassam, K. S. (2015). Emotion and decision making. *Annual Review of Psychology, 66*, 799–823. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-psych-010213-115043>

April 24: Prosocial Behavior

Pfattheicher, S., Nielsen, Y. A., & Thielmann, I. (2022). Prosocial behavior and altruism: A review of concepts and definitions. *Current Opinion in Psychology, 44*, 124–129. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.copsyc.2021.08.021>

May 1: Relationships 3: Breakup

Aron, A., Lewandowski, G., Branand, B., Mashek, D., & Aron, E. (2022). Self-expansion motivation and inclusion of others in self: An updated review. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships, 39*(12), 3821–3852. <https://doi.org/10.1177/02654075221110630>

Purdue Policies, Resources and Expectations Relevant to this Course

You are responsible for observing the academic regulations and student conduct norms of Purdue University which apply to, among other things, student conduct, academic honesty, and attendance (found here: <https://catalog.purdue.edu/content.php?catoid=17&navoid=22202>).

Some specific policies are described below.

More Information on Attending Class

This course follows the Academic Regulations: Attendance and Office of the Dean of Students: Class Absences posted in Brightspace under “University Policies and Statements.” The policies state that students are expected to be present for every meeting of the classes in which they are enrolled. Attendance will be taken in class. When conflicts or absences can be anticipated, such as for many University-sponsored activities and religious observations, you should inform me of the situation as far in advance as possible. For unanticipated or emergency absences when advance notification to is not possible, contact me as soon as possible by email. For cases that fall under excused absence regulations, you or your representative should contact or go to the [Office of the Dean of Students \(ODOS\) website](#) to complete appropriate forms for instructor notification. Excused absences may be granted by ODOS for cases of grief/bereavement, military service, jury duty, parenting leave, or emergent medical care.

Your Well-Being

If you find yourself beginning to feel some stress, anxiety and/or feeling slightly overwhelmed, try [TAO](#) (Therapy Assistance Online). Sign in and find information and tools at your fingertips, available to you at any time.

If you need support and information about options and resources, please contact or see the [Office of the Dean of Students](#). Call 765-494-1747(M-F, 8 am- 5 pm).

If you find yourself struggling to find a healthy balance between academics, social life, stress, etc., consider signing up for free one-on-one virtual or in-person sessions with a [Purdue Wellness Coach](#). Student coaches can help you navigate through barriers and challenges toward your goals throughout the semester. Sign up is free.

If you're struggling and need mental health services: Purdue is committed to advancing the mental health and well-being of its students. If you or someone you know is feeling overwhelmed, depressed, and/or in need of mental health support, services are available. For help, such individuals should contact [Counseling and Psychological Services \(CAPS\)](#) at 765-494-6995 during and after hours, on weekends and holidays, or by going to the CAPS office on the second floor of the Purdue University Student Health Center (PUSH) during business hours.

Basic Needs Security

Any student who faces challenges securing their food or housing and believes this may affect their performance in the course is urged to contact the Dean of Students for support. There is no appointment needed, and Student Support Services is available to serve students 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday.

Accessibility and Accommodations

Purdue strives to make learning experiences as accessible as possible. If you anticipate or experience physical or academic barriers based on disability, you are welcome to let me know so that we can discuss options. You are also encouraged to contact the Disability Resource Center at: drc@purdue.edu or by phone: 765-494-1247.

Nondiscrimination

Purdue is committed to maintaining a community which recognizes and values the inherent worth and dignity of every person; fosters tolerance, sensitivity, understanding, and mutual respect among its members; and encourages everyone to strive to reach his or her own potential. In pursuit of its goal of academic excellence, the University seeks to develop and nurture diversity. A hyperlink to Purdue's full Nondiscrimination Policy Statement is available on our course website in Brightspace.

Being Honest

Academic integrity is one of the highest values that Purdue holds. Individuals are encouraged to alert university officials to potential breaches of this value by either emailing integrity@purdue.edu or by calling 765-494-8778. While information may be submitted anonymously, the more information is submitted the greater the opportunity for the university to investigate the concern.

Practicing Non-Violence

Purdue is committed to providing a safe and secure campus environment for members of the university community. Purdue strives to create an educational environment for students that promote educational and career goals. Violent behavior impedes such goals. Therefore, violent behavior is prohibited in or on any university facility or while participating in any university activity, including this course.

Being Prepared in an Emergency

In the event of a major campus emergency, course requirements, deadlines and grade weighting are subject to changes necessitated by a revised semester calendar or other circumstances beyond the instructor's control. Relevant changes to this course can be obtained by contacting the instructor via email. ***You are expected to read your @purdue.edu email on a frequent basis.*** The first day of class, I will review the Emergency Preparedness plan for our classroom.

Disclaimer

This syllabus is subject to change.