xPSYC 231: Social Psychology (3 credits)

**Spring 2021**

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**Phone:** 703-993-5635 (Please note that I am working from home due to COVID-19 restrictions and do not have access to my office phone).

**Office hours**: By appointment due to scheduling changes in working from home.

**Our Course During Spring 2021**

Welcome! We are embarking on this course during an event that has not happened for the last 100 years, a worldwide pandemic. We are also in the midst of increased participation by citizens in civic engagement and citizen government. I am not sure what disruptions you have experienced due these events. However, I am assuming two things; 1. that you want to learn about social psychology (or how people behave in groups) and 2. that your life has been impacted in some way due to the events of the last year. My goal for this course is to provide you with the opportunity to meet the learning objectives (described below) in a manner that is flexible and takes into account the fact that things may be very different for you now than when you first signed up for this course or may change throughout the semester.

With these assumptions and goals in mind, here is some information about due dates/late policy. The course is broken up into 5 modules. Each module builds on information that you learned during the previous module. There are due dates associated with each assignment. However, I will not take off points for lateness until the module is completed. So, for example, as long as you turn everything in for Module 1 by the end of Module 1, you will not get points taken off. However, I will start to take off 1 point for each day something is turned past the end of the module for which it was due. It may look like there are lots of assignments – each assignment or quiz is specifically designed to help you meet the learning objectives and no one of them will make or break your grade. So, please try to pace yourself. Please contact me along the way or use the ‘ask the professor’ discussion board to ask questions or share concerns. I look forward to getting to know you better!

## Course Description

Welcome! This course is designed to provide you with information on a wide variety of topics relevant to social psychology, the study of the people in social context and groups. This course is **completely** online, which means a great deal of responsibility rests on each student’s shoulders. The course syllabus is a general plan for the course; deviations announced to the class by the instructor may be necessary.

## Blackboard Login Instructions

Access to [MyMason](http://mymason.gmu.edu/) and GMU email are required to participate successfully in this course. Click on the link for Psyc 231-DL. The class website in Blackboard will contain access to videos, assignments, the discussion board, exams, and other course resources. All course activities will take place in Blackboard, so it is important to login and begin to explore the various components in the first days of the semester. Please make sure to update your computer and prepare yourself to begin using the online format BEFORE the first day of class. Check [the IT Support Center](http://itservices.gmu.edu/) website. Navigate to [the Student Support page](https://coursessupport.gmu.edu/Students/) for help and information about Blackboard. In the menu bar to the left you will find all the tools you need to become familiar with for this course. Take time to learn each. Make sure you run a system check a few days before class. Become familiar with the attributes of Blackboard and online learning.

## Required Textbooks

Pearson REVEL

Social Psychology, 10e

By Aronson, Wilson, & Sommers

. You may purchase or rent a digital copy of the textbook. The exams will be provided to you via Blackboard.

There are several tools (flashcards, e-text, audio text, etc) available to you through the Pearson account to use throughout this course. These should all be available to you through the course once you complete the necessary steps with Pearson. In addition to these tools, I have also posted power point slides under the course content area of Blackboard. I put together the majority of these slides for teaching this course “live” and in person. I have added these in case it is helpful to you to see bullet important points for each chapter. Please note, these slides were created based on an earlier version of the textbook.

If you choose to buy the digital text, it will be the easiest for you to have it linked to the course if you buy it through the GMU bookstore.

## Course Learning Outcomes

You will develop the following skills.

1. Generate hypotheses about human behavior in social situations.
2. Design ways to test their hypotheses about human behavior.
3. Describe the ways in which the human brain uses automatic pilot thinking to make everyday life easier.
4. Synthesize information from social psychological research about how the use of automatic pilot thinking leads to conformity, prejudice, and other group processes.
5. Describe the ways in which we can use high effort thinking to improve our understanding of human behavior in social contexts.
6. Use the concepts learned in class to analyze and critically examine our own behavior in everyday life.

## Technology Requirements

**Hardware:** You will need access to a Windows or Macintosh computer with at least 2 GB of RAM and access to a fast and reliable broadband internet connection (e.g., cable, DSL). A larger screen is recommended for better visibility of course material. You will need speakers or headphones to hear recorded content. For the amount of Hard Disk Space required taking a distance education course, consider and allow for:

1. the storage amount needed to install any additional software and
2. space to store work that you will do for the course.

If you consider the purchase of a new computer, please go to [Technology Buying Guide](http://compstore.gmu.edu/pdfs/TechGuide.pdf) to see recommendations.

**Software:** Many courses use Blackboard as the learning management system. You will need a browser and operating system that are listed compatible or certified with the Blackboard version available on the [myMason Portal](http://mymason.gmu.edu/). See [supported browsers and](https://help.blackboard.com/en-us/Learn/9.1_SP_10_and_SP_11/Student/002_Browser_Support_SP_11) [operating systems](https://help.blackboard.com/en-us/Learn/9.1_SP_10_and_SP_11/Student/002_Browser_Support_SP_11). Log in to [myMason](http://mymasonportal.gmu.edu/) to access your registered courses. Some courses may use other learning management systems. Check the syllabus or contact the instructor for details. Online courses typically use [Acrobat Reader](http://get.adobe.com/reader/), [Flash](http://get.adobe.com/flashplayer/), [Java](http://www.java.com/en/download/), and [Windows Media Player](http://windows.microsoft.com/en-US/windows/products/windows-media-player) and/or [Real Media Player.](http://www.real.com/realplayer/search) Your computer should be capable of running current versions of those applications. Also, make sure your computer is protected from viruses by downloading the latest version of Symantec Endpoint Protection/Anti-Virus software for free [here](http://antivirus.gmu.edu/).

Students owning Macs or Linux should be aware that some courses may use software that only runs on Windows. You can set up a Mac computer with Boot Camp or virtualization software so Windows will also run on it. Watch [this video](http://support.apple.com/kb/VI54?viewlocale=en_US) about using Windows on a Mac. Computers running Linux can also be configured with virtualization software or configured to dual boot with Windows.

Note: If you are using an employer-provided computer or corporate office for class attendance, please verify with your systems administrators that you will be able to install the necessary applications and that system or corporate firewalls do not block access to any sites or media types.

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## Course-specific Hardware/Software

Check the syllabus for your course or contact the instructor prior to the start of the course to find out about specific technical requirements for your class. Hardware or software required for your course or program may be available for purchase at [Patriot](http://compstore.gmu.edu/) [Computers](http://compstore.gmu.edu/) (the University’s computer store that offers educational discounts and special deals).

## Course Schedule

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| **MODULES** | **MATERIALS AND CONTENT** | **ASSIGNMENTS** |
| **Module 1 01/25 - 2/15**  **\*\*Optional zoom meeting with Dr. Fischer to review the syllabus – Thursday, January 28th, 2:00 PM** | **Introduction, Research Methods, Social Cognition, Social Perception**   1. Chapter 1, Introduction to Social Psychology 2. Chapter 2 Methodology: How Social Psychologists do Research 3. Chapter 3 Social Cognition 4. Chapter 4 Social Perception | 1. Introductions Due Tuesday 01/26 by 11:59 pm EST 2. **Group Activity #1** (ch2,3,and 4):    1. Part 1 Due Tuesday 2/02 by 11:59 pm EST    2. Part 2 Due Tuesday 02/09 by 11:59 pm EST 3. **Exam #1** (ch3-4) Due Monday 02/14 by 11:59 pm EST (\*\*Exams can be found under the Assessments Section in Blackboard and in the   assigned Module) |
| **Module 2 02/16-3/08** | **The Self, Cognitive Dissonance, Attitudes and Attitude Change**   1. Chapter 2 Methodology: How Social Psychologists do Research 2. Chapter 5 The Self 3. Chapter 6 The Need to Justify our Actions: The Costs and Benefits of Dissonance Reduction 4. Chapter 7 Attitudes and Attitude Change: Influencing Thoughts and Feelings | 1. **Discussion Board Peer Review on Cognitive Dissonance** (ch2,5, and 6):    1. Part 1 Due by Saturday 02/20 by 11:59 pm EST    2. Part 2 Due by Friday, 2/26 by 11:59 pm EST 2. **Self-assessment quizzes** (ch5,6, and 7) Due Monday 3/01 by 11:59 pm EST 3. **Group Activity #2** Due by Friday, 3/05 by 11:59 EST 4. **Reflection Paper #1** (ch7) Due Monday 3/08 by 11:59 pm EST |
| **Module 3 3/09 - 3/28** | **Conformity, Group Processes, and Interpersonal Attraction**  1. Chapter 2 Methodology: How Social Psychologists do Research | 1. **Discussion Board and Peer Review #2** (ch2, 8-10):    1. Part 1 Due Monday 3/15 by 11:59 pm EST |

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|  | 1. Chapter 8 Conformity: Influencing Behavior 2. Chapter 9 Group Processes: Influence in Social Groups 3. Chapter 10 Interpersonal Attraction | b. Part 2 Due Friday 3/19 by 11:59 pm EST  2. **Exam #2** (ch9-10) Due Wednesday 3/24 by 11:59 PM EST  3. **Reflection Paper #2** (chapters 8 and 9) Due Monday 3/28 by 11:59 PM  4. **Group Activity #3:** Due by Monday, 3/28 at 11:59 PM |
| **Module 4 3/29-4/19** | **Prosocial Behavior and Aggression**   1. Chapter 2 Methodology: How Social Psychologists do Research 2. Chapter 11 Prosocial Behavior: Why do People Help? 3. Chapter 12 Aggression | 1. **Exam #3** (ch11) Due Friday, April 2 by 11:59 pm 2. **Reflection Paper #3: Prosocial Behavior** (ch11): Due Friday, April 9 by 11:59 P. M. 3. **Reflection Paper #4: Aggression** (ch12) Due Monday 4/18 by 11:59 pm EST |
| **Module 5 4/19 - 4/30** | **Prejudice**   1. Chapter 2 Methodology: How Social Psychologists do Research 2. Chapter 13 Prejudice | 1. **Peer Review #3** (ch 7,8, and 13):    1. Part 1 Due Thursday April 22 by 11:59 pm EST    2. Part 2 Due by Monday 4/26 by 11:59 pm EST 2. **Reflection Paper #5** Due Wednesday 4/28 by 11:59 pm EST 3. **Final Paper Group Activity** Due 4/30 by 11:59 PM EST |

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## Assignments and Exams Description

**Introduction (5 pts)…….**

**Exams (3 x 10 points each; 30 points total)**: There are 3 exams – they are on specific chapters. You will have unlimited attempts and time for each exam. The highest score will be your grade for that exam. You will have three hours to complete the exam. Exams are open book. \*\*\*Exam due dates and chapters are in the course schedule below\*\*\*

**Self-assessment Quizzes (3 x 5 points each; 15 points total)**: For module 2, you should complete the self-assessment quizzes for chapters 5,6, and 7. Your grade will be based on completion of these quizzes, not based on how many you got correct or in correct. You will have unlimited attempts for these quizzes.

**Reflection Papers (5 x 20 points each; 100 points total):** There are three individual reflection papers. Descriptions for each assignment and grading criteria will be in the assignment link in Blackboard. Each paper will be submitted through the assignment link in Blackboard by 11:59 PM on the due date (see the schedule in the syllabus). I will provide feedback and a grade on each paper. There are no word length requirements for these papers.

**Discussion Board Posts and Peer Review (3 x 20 points each; 60 points total):** There are three different online discussion board and peer review activities. The purpose of these activities is to synthesize and apply the information that you are learning in each module. It is most beneficial to you if every student in the course receives peer feedback. In order to facilitate this, if a classmate already has two pieces of feedback, move on to a classmate who has not yet received feedback. Your grade for this activity is based mostly on your peer review, and much less on the content of what you originally submit... You will receive 2 points for creating your original. You will receive 18 points (see rubric) for providing feedback.

**Group Activities (4 x 20 points each; 80 points total):** The goal of the group activity is to use the information throughout the course to develop hypotheses about a social situation, identify independent and dependent variables using these hypotheses, and then design a study that will test your hypotheses. I have assigned you to groups randomly. Each person in the group will be graded individually, but you will submit the products during each module as a group. In total, you will do the following throughout the semester. 1. Describe a social situation. 2. Generate hypotheses about why people may behave in the way that they do in that social situation. 3. Describe what theory or theories that you have learned in class that led you to your hypothesis. 4. Describe an experiment designed to test your hypothesis. In this experiment, you need to describe you independent variable, you dependent variable, how these variables will be measured, who the participants will be, how the participants will be selected, and what they will actually do. 5. Describe the internal and external validity of your experiment. Do you think that your experiment has higher internal or external validity?

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**Extra Credit**

For extra credit, you may sign up to participate in two hours worth of research participation credit via the psychology department SONA system. Or, you may find something in the news that is relevant to the materials in one of the chapters, and write a one page description about how this news item relates to a concept discussed in the textbook. Either option is worth five points. Extra credit, if you choose to do it, needs to be turned in to me by the end of module 5.

**If you read this far!!!! \*\*\* Post a picture of a cute or funny animal in the class introduction thread\*\*\*** If you complete this task by Wednesday of the first week you get a **bonus extra credit point!**

## Course Policies

To succeed in this class, you will need to work hard to keep yourself on a timeline that allows you to complete material in a timely fashion. Almost all assignments and exams will be available at the beginning of the semester, so students who want to work ahead can do so. On the other hand, assignments and exams will have due dates, and assignments/exams that are completed late will be penalized in scoring (see below). Thus, if you fall behind, it will be hard to do well in the class. You will need to familiarize yourself with the online content associated with this course. Part of this will require reading all of the handouts and instructions provided. The instructor, ITS at George Mason, and online support at Pearson are available for assistance, but if you have difficulty with any of the resources, please be sure to read the associated instructions and handouts prior to requesting assistance.

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**Late Assignments:** All assignments must be turned in on the due date given on the assignment sheet. I will take off one point for each day that an assignment is late.

**Communications Statement:** Official Communications via GMU E-mail: Mason uses electronic mail to provide official information to students. Examples include communications from course instructors, notices from the library, notices about academic standing, financial aid information, class materials, assignments, questions, and instructor feedback. Students are responsible for the content.

I have had the experience of students attempting to email me through their GMU accounts to my GMU account, and the email being funneled to junk mail or disappearing. If you email me and I do not email back within two business days, please contact me at my gmail account.

**Instructor-Student Communication:** The instructor is available by email or phone throughout the entire session. You may email or call with questions, comments, and/or concerns. Throughout the semester, all emails or voice mails will be answered within two business (i.e., M-F) days – although responses will usually come within one or 24 hours business day, please allow two business days or 48 hours. If I will be away from email for more than one day, I will post an announcement in the Blackboard course folder.

Before sending an email, please check the following (available on your Blackboard course menu) unless the email is of a personal nature:

* 1. Syllabus
  2. Ask Professor
  3. On-demand Blackboard videos on how to use Blackboard features, and Technical Requirements.

Feel free to respond to other students in the Ask Professor forum if you know the answer.

## Grading Scale

Your grade will based on points earned through several activities. Each graded activity is described below. Your grade is calculated out of a total of 285 points. **Please note:** In order to maintain a consistent and fair grading policy for everyone enrolled in the course, I will *not* make changes to any of the grading policies outlined below.

A = 256 – 285 points

B = 227 – 255.4 points

C = 199.5 – 226.4 points

D = 170 – 199. 4 points

F = 169.5 points and below

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## University Policies and Resources

* + 1. Academic Honesty: George Mason University has an Honor Code, which requires all members of this community to maintain the highest standards of academic honesty and integrity. The University’s Honor Code can be found [here](http://oai.gmu.edu/the-mason-honor-code/). Cheating, plagiarism, lying, and stealing are all prohibited. It is every student’s responsibility to familiarize himself or herself with the Honor Code. All violations of the Honor Code will be reported to the Honor Committee. **Please contact me if you have questions about what is or is not plagiarism before you turn in an assignment.**
    2. **Mason Official Policy:** Mason uses electronic mail to provide official information to students. Examples include communications from course instructors; notices form the library; notices about academic standing; financial aid information; class materials; assignments; questions; and instructor feedback. Students are responsible for the content of university communication sent to their mason e-mail account, and are required to activate that account and check it regularly.
    3. Students must follow the university policy for [Responsible Use of Computing](http://universitypolicy.gmu.edu/policies/responsible-use-of-computing/)
    4. **Enrollment:** Students are responsible for verifying their enrollment in this class. Schedule adjustments should be made by the deadlines published in the Schedule of Classes (available from the Registrar's Website: registrar.gmu.edu). After the last day to drop a class, withdrawing from this class requires the approval of the dean and is only allowed for nonacademic reasons. Undergraduate students may choose to exercise a selective withdrawal. See the Schedule of Classes for selective withdrawal procedures.
    5. **Student services:** The University provides range of services to help you succeed academically and you should make use of these if you think they could benefit you. I also invite you to speak to me (the earlier the better).
    6. Students are responsible for the content of university communications sent to their George Mason University email account and are required to activate their account and check it regularly. All communication from the university, college, school, and program will be sent to students solely through their Mason email account.
    7. [The George Mason University Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS)](http://caps.gmu.edu/) staff consists of professional counseling and clinical psychologists, social workers, and counselors who offer a wide range of services (e.g., individual and group counseling, workshops and outreach programs) to enhance students’ personal experience and academic performance. Counseling Center: Student Union I, Room 364, 703-993-2380. Web-site [here](http://www.gmu.edu/departments/csdc/).
    8. If you have any specific needs (e.g., related to vision, hearing, learning, or medical conditions) or any religious or cultural practices, please let me know by the second week of class so that I can make the appropriate arrangements. Disabilities must be documented by the Disability Resources Center (703-993-2474) for reasonable accommodations to be provided. Students with disabilities who seek accommodations in a course must be registered with the [George Mason University Office of Disability Services (ODS)](http://ods.gmu.edu/) and inform their instructor, in writing, at the beginning of the semester.
    9. [The George Mason University Writing Center](http://writingcenter.gmu.edu/) staff provides a variety of resources and services (e.g., tutoring, workshops, writing guides, handbooks) intended to support students as they work to construct and share knowledge through writing. University Writing Center: Robinson Hall Room A114, 703-993-1200. The writing center includes assistance for students for whom English is a second language.
    10. [Diversity](http://ctfe.gmu.edu/professional-development/mason-diversity-statement/): George Mason University promotes a living and learning environment for outstanding growth and productivity among its students, faculty and staff. Through its curriculum, programs, policies, procedures, services and resources, Mason strives to maintain a quality environment for work, study and personal growth. George Mason University promotes a living and learning environment for outstanding growth and productivity among its students, faculty, and staff. An emphasis upon diversity and inclusion throughout the campus community is essential to achieve these goals. Diversity is broadly defined to include such characteristics as but not limited to, race, ethnicity, gender, religion, age, disability, and sexual orientation. Diversity also entails different viewpoints, philosophies, and perspectives. Attention to these aspects of diversity will help promote a culture of inclusion and belonging, and an environment where diverse opinions, backgrounds, and practices have the opportunity to be voiced, heard, and respected.
    11. Notice of a mandatory reporting of sexual assault, interpersonal violence, and stalking: As a faculty member, I am designated as a “Responsible Employee”, and must report all disclosures of sexual assault, interpersonal violence, and stalking to Mason’s Title IX Coordinator per University Policy 1412. If you wish to speak with someone confidentially, please contact one of Mason’s confidential resources, such as Student Support and Advocacy Center (SSAC) at 703-380-1434 or Counseling & Psychology Services (CAPS) at 703-993-2380. You may also seek assistance from Mason’s Title IX Coordinator by calling 703-993-8730 or emailing [cde@gmu.edu.](mailto:cde@gmu.edu)
    12. Religious Holidays: A list of religious holidays is available on the University Life Calendar page. See the [Religious Holiday Calendar](http://ulife.gmu.edu/calendar/religious-holiday-calendar/). Any student whose religious observance conflicts with a scheduled course activity must contact the Instructor at least 2 weeks in advance of the conflict date in order to make alternative arrangements.

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