

# **Psychology 569: Practical Wisdom from Advanced Social Psychology**

## **Course Overview and Objectives:**

Welcome to Practical Wisdom from Advanced Social Psychology. This course was designed with the expressed purpose of making you not only a better scientist of human behavior, but of using cutting-edge research in social psychology to improve your life. At the end of this course, you be savvy consumers of psychological data, and will also be better equipped to critically evaluate your own beliefs and experiences and make changes for the better.

Psychology is unique among the sciences in that it is reflexive (i.e., it refers to oneself). In other sciences, you can study the intricacies of fluid dynamics or decipher the way cells process signals and still have the way you live your life relatively unchanged. Psychology, on the other hand, takes Occam's razor and turns it inwards, dissecting one's own experiences and subjecting one's beliefs to the scrutiny of science. It can be a difficult process at times, but ultimately, knowing the truth about human behavior will give you a unique insight into the happenings of the world.

Many advanced courses favor content depth over content breadth, focusing in depth on one particular question. Instead, this course has significant content breath (e.g., judgment and decision making, happiness, relationships, stress and health, morality), but focuses on how these topics matter to you—with the ultimate aim of providing students with practical wisdom for life. It is not the kind of class that will prepares you for a specific career in graduate school, but instead will better prepare you for optimal everyday living.

A secondary aim of this course—but still related to preparing you for the real world—is the communication of research and ideas. Therefore, students will be presenting homework in class, and preparing figures, presentations and papers, in order to effectively—and beautifully—communicate your thoughts. In real life, good Powerpoint presentations and good figures can get you a job, and it is important to know how to do these things well.

There will be a fair amount of work in this course and it will be difficult at times – that's the "advanced" part. It's designed to be fun, though. If it's not, you should let me know; come by office hours and tell me how to make it better. Each week, there will be a couple readings and a homework assignment. You will also have three assignments and three tests throughout the semester. Each class, I will randomly select 7 people to come to the front of the class to talk about the homework assignment.

## **Class Policies**

In general, just be courteous to me and one another.

No laptops. I understand it is often easier to type than to take notes by hand. However, I know the temptation of the dark side (i.e., facebook) is powerful. Research suggests that such

distractions impede learning. Also, I prefer the occasional glassy eyed stare of boredom than the distracted chuckles that the internet offers.

No phone antics. Cell phones are now miniature laptops, capable of email, texting, and web surfing; however, cell phones cannot even be used to take notes on. Please do not surreptitiously email under your desk. If you are bored, then think about a pressing concern in your life and how to remedy it. I have had some of my best ideas while bored.

Arrive on time.

Missed classes. If you need to miss class, it is your responsibility to make up the material covered. Grab the notes off a willing classmate. We all have important obligations, and so I'm not worried if you miss one. If you miss multiple classes, doing so may cost you a significant portion of your grade (see Homeworks). If you need to miss an exam, that is fine as well. Only your two top exams will count towards your grade.

Academic integrity. The full spiel is at the back, but in brief – do not cheat. Do not pass off another's work as your own. Do not copy another's exam. When in doubt, cite it, and everything you do and you'll be fine. For more information, see <http://studentconduct.unc.edu/>

Issues. All the things above make me seem like a strict schoolmarm, but like a schoolmarm, I really want you to do well. Ideally, everyone will glide through this course loving it and getting great marks. But sometimes things conspire to make it go roughly. If you are having trouble, then talk to me *early on*. We can talk about it and figure out what's going on and how to make it better. Swinging by on the last day of class after failing all the exams is not as useful as coming by after the first exam.

Late assignments. Late assignments will not be accepted. If it is handed in late, you will receive a grade of zero. If you fail to attach an assignment to email, or fail to post an assignment online on time, then it is late and will therefore receive a zero. *Make sure you double-check your attachments.*

## Evaluation:

### Exams – 40%

This course has three in-class exams. I would prefer to have all exams count, but I understand that sometimes a day just doesn't go well, or sometimes you have to miss one for sickness or some other reason. Therefore, only your top two will count towards your grade (20% each). These exams will be non-cumulative and will be mixed format – using multiple choice and short answer. Exams will not be handed back but questions about grades can be asked about in office hours. *One of these exams will take place in the final exam slot—December 10<sup>th</sup> at 4pm.*

### Homework– 20%

#### *Homework*

Psychology is all about doing. What good is knowledge about human behavior if you don't know how to apply it? Each week, you will be asked to do an assignment related to past or future readings. For example, one week, you will be asked to come up with a new personality dimension and some questions to tap it before categorizing a couple of your friends. I will then randomly (with replacement) call up eight people each class to tell us about it. As there is only one homework per week, this means that there will be two classes where we will discuss each assignment. These presentations won't be hard; just say what you did (keep it under a minute). While psychology usually distains anecdotal evidence, here's your chance to anecdote away!

The homework will be pass/fail. If it is clear you've done the work and are prepared to talk about it (i.e., have a number of things written down), you'll get full marks. Everyone in the class starts off at a perfect 20 points. If I call your name and you are not there or not prepared, then you lose your free pass. After that, you'll lose 5 points at a time. That's 5% of your grade.

### Figure Assignment – 10%

A large part of science is presenting your results in a pleasing and easy to understand way. To this aim, you will take a dataset available online, and turn it into a figure worthy of publication in the New York Times. Guidance can be found in books by Edward Tufte, and inspiration can be found on the blogs <http://www.informationisbeautiful.net/visualizations/> and <http://flowingdata.com/>

You can use whatever software you wish for this: photoshop, illustrator, powerpoint, or plain old paint. Free trials can be obtained of any Adobe software from the web. This can be anything you want, as long as it's clear and presents psychologically flavored data in an interesting way. The more complex the data being simplified the better. For example, most good figures have at least 3 dimensions of data. The figure of Napoleon's advance<sup>1</sup> has direction, army size, and advance/retreat. You can use an online data-set, or an article we've already read, or something from your life. It can even be made up.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic-art/402943/70821/Statistical-map-of-Napoleons-Russian-campaign-of-1812-The-size>

For example, you could (if I didn't just now do it) come up with your own typology of four types of guys, four types of girls, how likely they are to be successful at dating, and how likely their children are to be normal. This can be accomplished with boxes (for types) with callouts explaining the types, lines between boxes (for probability of successfulness) and a percentage of a kid's body shown or the color of a kid for the final category. You can take clip art or graphics from other figures (e.g., different graphics of a man and woman). Just acknowledge where you got your graphics/icons from.

*Approximate breakdown.* Complexity/Simplification of data: 3; Engagingness/Clarity: 4; Effort: 3.

### **Research Paper Assignment – 20%**

After all the articles you've read, you will have your chance to write your own article. The format will be like a Psychological Science article (look in Google Scholar for lots of real fulltext examples). Short, sweet, and to the point. You should come up with a novel idea you'd like to test, go through a literature review, and then talk about a study that tests this idea. Your study is guaranteed to work, as you'll be making up the data. You can just report a reasonable  $F$ ,  $t$ , or  $r$  statistic. Talk briefly about your findings and then discuss the implications of the study for both theory and the real-world.

For guidance on style and writing, see the APA publication manual, George Orwell's essay on politics and the English language, Wegner's random guidelines, and the Elements of Style. To ensure references are APA style, use Zotero ([zotero.org](http://zotero.org)), which can download references from Google scholar and PsycINFO directly into Mozilla Firefox. You can then install the MS Word plug-in and then everything should be beautiful in your bibliography. Paper length is 10 pages APA style (double spaced, 12pt font, 1" margins), excluding references and abstract (which itself is limited to 150 words)

*Approximate breakdown.* Abstract: 1; Intro/Literature Review: 5; Research Design/Method: 4; Results/Analyses/Figures: 2; Discussion: 4; General Impression/Clarity/APA format: 4

### **Research Presentations – 10%**

After completing your paper, you will give a brief presentation of it. This will be in powerpoint and will be very short (<10 minutes, exact length TBD). Here, you will begin with an engaging anecdote to make your research point accessible, which will lead into the theory/real-world problem motivating your study. Then talk about the conflicting/incomplete previous research and or ideas, and then how your study tested and resolved this.

*Approximate breakdown.* Slides: 3; Clarity: 2; Style: 2; Peer evaluation; 3.

### **Bonus Points!! Visit Me at Office Hours within the First Month – 2%**

Stop by and introduce yourself. Tell me where you're from and what you're planning on doing after graduation. Easy points.

**Note about assignments:** All assignments can be completed individually or in pairs. Pick your partner wisely. If your partner is a slacker, then you'll know not to work with them for the next assignment.

**Other notes:**

Each class, there will be one reading that will be related to class. All readings will covered be on the exam.

If you would like a re-grade of an assignment, that is possible, but if you receive a lower grade, it sticks.

TED talks count as class content and will be on exams.

Lectures will be available online after the lecture.

Course evaluations will be online

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## Reference Material:

All papers must be written in APA format. It is recommended that you get yourself a copy of the APA manual. Know it, love it. Use Zotero and the Word plug-in and it will do most of this stuff for you!

American Psychological Association. (2001). *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (5<sup>th</sup> ed.). Washington, DC: Author.

Writing is hard. For a good guide, you should buy Strunk and White – it'll be the best \$10 ever spent. You should also look at Orwell's rules: <http://www.pickthebrain.com/blog/george-orwells-5-rules-for-effective-writing/> These two things together will make your writing 10x better.

Strunk, W., & White, E. B. (1999). *The Elements of Style* (4th ed.). Needham Heights, MA: Allyn and Bacon.

To paraphrase Orwell, don't turn this:

I returned and saw under the sun, that the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, neither yet bread to the wise, nor yet riches to men of understanding, nor yet favour to men of skill; but time and chance happeneth to them all.

Into this:

Objective considerations of contemporary phenomena compel the conclusion that success or failure in competitive activities exhibits no tendency to be commensurate with innate capacity, but that a considerable element of the unpredictable must invariably be taken into account.

## Course Schedule

<b>Date</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Reading</b>	<b>Homework</b>
Aug 18	1. Introduction	Levin & Norenzayan (1999)	Read Syllabus
Aug 20	2. Classics	Milgram (1963)	
Aug 25	3. Heuristics and Biases	Kruger et al. (2005)	Operationalization
Aug 27	4. Numbers and Chance	Gladwell – Black Swan	Operationalization
Sep 1	5. Value and Money	Dunn et al (2008) Hsee et al (2013)	New Heuristic
Sep 3	6. Affective Forecasting	Loewenstein (1999)	New Heuristic
Sep 8	7. Happiness	Harker & Keltner (2001)	Trick your friends
Sep 10	<b>Review Session</b>		Trick your friends
Sep 15	<b>Exam 1</b>		
Sep 17	8. Mind Perception	Woodward (2005)	
Sep 22	9. Mind Perception and Morality	Knobe (2003)	Best Anthropomorphisms
Sep 24	10. Morality	Pizarro (2003) – <b>Figure due in class.</b>	Best Anthropomorphisms
Sep 29	11. Evolution of Morality	Brosnan & de Waal (2003)	Influence moral decisions
Oct 1	12. Emotion	Gladwell – The Face	Influence moral decisions
Oct 6	13. Negotiation	Babcock—Introduction	2 Truths and a Lie
Oct 8	<b>Review Session</b>		2 Truths and a Lie
Oct 13	<b>TED 1</b>	<a href="http://www.ted.com/talks/michael_shermer_on_believing_strange_things.html">http://www.ted.com/talks/michael_shermer_on_believing_strange_things.html</a> <a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KgnR3iljO_c">http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KgnR3iljO_c</a> <a href="http://www.ted.com/talks/lang/eng/robert_sapolsky_the_uniqueness_of_humans.html">http://www.ted.com/talks/lang/eng/robert_sapolsky_the_uniqueness_of_humans.html</a>	
Oct 15		<b>Fall Break</b>	
Oct 20	<b>Exam 2</b>		
Oct 22	14. Self-Control	Buehler et al., (1994)	
Oct 27	15. Free Will	Smullyan (1981)	Self-Control Technique
Oct 29	16. Personality	McAdams (2006)	
Nov 3	17. Relationships	Reading <a href="#">one</a> , <a href="#">two</a> , <a href="#">three</a>	
Nov 5	18. God	Shariff et al. (in press) High Gods	Analyze Relationship
Nov 10	<b>Speaking Practice and Presentation Workshopping</b>		
Nov 12	Presentations 1		Analyze Relationship
Nov 17	Presentations 2		
Nov 19	Presentations 3		
Nov 24	TED 2	<a href="https://www.ted.com/talks/paul_piff_does_money_make_you_mean">https://www.ted.com/talks/paul_piff_does_money_make_you_mean</a> <a href="https://www.ted.com/talks/angela_lee_duckworth_the_key_to_success_grit">https://www.ted.com/talks/angela_lee_duckworth_the_key_to_success_grit</a> <a href="https://www.ted.com/talks/carol_dweck_the_power_of_believing_that_you_can_improve">https://www.ted.com/talks/carol_dweck_the_power_of_believing_that_you_can_improve</a> <a href="https://www.ted.com/talks/dan_gilbert_you_are_always_changing">https://www.ted.com/talks/dan_gilbert_you_are_always_changing</a>	<b>Final Paper Due by 5pm</b> Send to my email: <a href="mailto:kurtgray@unc.edu">kurtgray@unc.edu</a>
Dec 1	<b>Review Session</b>		
Dec 10	<b>Final Exam at 4pm</b>		

## Reading List

- Babcock, L., & Laschever, S. (2008). *Women Don't Ask: Negotiation and the Gender Divide*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
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- Dunn, E. W., Aknin, L. B., & Norton, M. I. (2008). Spending money on others promotes happiness. *Science*, 319(5870), 1687–1688.
- Gladwell—Black Swan in the New Yorker
- Gladwell—The Face in the New Yorker
- Harker, L., & Keltner, D. (2001). Expressions of positive emotion in women's college yearbook pictures and their relationship to personality and life outcomes across adulthood. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 80(1), 112–124.
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- Smullyan, R. M. (1981). Is God a Taoist. *The Mind's I* (pp. 321–341). New York, NY: Basic Books.
- Woodward, A. L. (2005). The infant origins of intentional understanding. *Advances in Child Development and Behavior*, 33, 229–262.