

SYLLABUS

SOCL 3403-101 Social Psychology

Fall 2026

Contact Information

PROFESSOR: Dr. Beverly L. Stiles

OFFICE: O'Donohoe, Rm 124

OFFICE HOURS:

- Mon. 10:00-12:00
- Tues. 9:00-9:30
- Wed. 10:00-12:00
- Thurs. 9:00-9:30
- Friday: By appointment

While I hold regular office hours, I am available to you outside of these times. However, it is best if you make an appointment to see me so that I am free when you stop by. If you do not have an appointment and I am free, I am more than willing to make some time to see you. However, if you just stop by, there will be times when I am unavailable or may be with another student. Do not take this personally.

PHONE: 940-397-4019

EMAIL: Beverly.stiles@msutexas.edu

TEXT:

- *Social Psychology* by Branscombe and Baron. This is the 14th edition. ISBN: 978-0-13-441096-8.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Social psychology is the scientific study of the way people think about, feel, and behave in social situations. It illuminates how the individual influences those around them, but are also influenced by others. It is a survey course to introduce you to the perspectives, research methods, and empirical findings of social psychology. Topics to be covered include social cognition, social perception, conformity, prosocial behavior, interpersonal attraction, persuasion, stereotyping and prejudice, just to name a few. Equally important is the goal of cultivating your skills for analyzing the social situations and events that you encounter in your everyday lives.

COURSE OBJECTIVES—Students should develop the following skills

- Be able to demonstrate an understanding of the basic scientific method underlying social psychological research.
- Demonstrate a general knowledge of the major theories and current findings within each of the topics covered.
- Recognize and appreciate how basic theory and experimental findings apply to everyday situations.

- Examine the self and identity: Analyze how personal identity, roles, and self-concept develop through social interaction.
- Analyze group processes: Study group dynamics, conformity, collective behavior, and social influence.

READING HINTS:

A good textbook does not ensure learning. Textbooks must be used properly. I have found over the years that many students simply do not know how to use a textbook, so I am providing, as a part of this syllabus, some suggestions for reading your text.

- The first rule is to begin reading immediately, don't postpone.
- Secondly, realize that reading a textbook is different than reading a newspaper, a magazine, a novel, or something on your electronic devices. Much of the latter is written to give you information quickly and at a glance and to entertain. A textbook is designed to instruct, to develop a position, and to support that position. It demands far more from its readers than all of the latter. While newspapers, magazines, novels, and the like are designed to be read only once, the author of a textbook expects that several readings may be required to fully understand the material. So, allow enough time to read the material several times. One strategy is to quickly read the material and grasp the general organization and major points, then carefully read a second time, making reading notes, and then reread quickly one more time immediately before an exam. The third time you should be able to quickly read some passages while concentrating on the more difficult ones. This strategy will also give you a good feeling for how the author writes and organizes material.
- Keep reading, even if you reach a passage or even pages that you find difficult and that you do not understand. At least read the words. You will find that while you may not understand one point, the next point may be considerably easier and you may understand it quite well.
- Make a schedule for reading and don't deviate from it. Set a date to complete your first reading, second, and third. Schedule yourself for only a few pages at any one session.
- Underline and circle words. Mark and write in the margins. The beauty of a loose-leaf textbook is that if you can put your text in a notebook, you can three hole punch and add additional pages with your study notes and even notes from class. All in one tidy package.

EXAMS AND GRADING:

There will be four (4) exams, including the final. The final is not comprehensive. Each exam will consist of 50 multiple choice questions. You will have 50 minutes for each exam. Each exam will be open from Sunday morning at 8:00 am through Monday night at 11:00 pm. Once you open the exam, your 50 minutes begins. The time allotted is not meant to provide you with time to use your books, so 50 minutes is more than fair. Although, if you have read the material, I would expect that you will indeed have time to look up an answer of two, maybe more. However, if you haven't read and studied prior to the exam, you will find that you do not have time to finish. Also, the professor who taught this class before only allotted 45 minutes. Also, everyone receives a different exam as all exams have questions randomly selected from a large pool of questions. I do intend to add 10 points to your lowest exam grade, which often is the first exam since the first exam helps everyone to realize that I was

telling the truth when I said that you really do have to read the chapters and study the material. The first exam also helps students to understand how a professor tests or how the person creating the test bank, constructs questions. I do add some of my own questions related to videos or other material that I include but that is not in the text. I add the 10 points at the end when I am averaging grades.

Grades

EXAMS	GRADING
Exam 1	100 points
Exam 2	100 points
Exam 3	100 points
Exam 4	100 points
Chapter Discussions	60 points
Paper Assignment- due Dec. 5 th , 10:59 pm	40 points

To average your grade, add up all points and divide by 5.

THE AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT

The Americans with Disabilities Act is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you believe you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please contact Office of Disability Accommodation. The telephone number is 397-4140.

Exam Content

- Exam 1
 - Chap. 1
 - Chap. 2
 - Chap. 3
- Exam 2
 - Chap. 4
 - Chap. 5
 - Chap. 6
- Exam 3
 - Chap. 7
 - Chap. 8
 - Chap. 9
- Exam 4
 - Chap. 10
 - Chap. 11
 - Chap. 12

DISCUSSION POSTINGS:

You will also receive a grade for your chapter discussions at the end of the semester (worth 60 points). When you add the chapter discussion points to the current paper assignment,

which is due at the end of the semester, and is worth 40 points, they equal 100 points. So together they equal a test grade. Each chapter discussion is worth 5 points. There are 12 chapters, equaling 60 points. This participation will be based on response to the discussion questions that I post and the responses to your classmates post as well as what you read from the other student postings. The D2L system does keep track of everything you do, to make it easy for me to keep track. It really is an amazing system. I will post one to three questions for each chapter. I want actual dialogue here rather than simply responding by saying "I agree" or "I disagree...blah, blah, blah." I don't want any derivative of that either--- So, no saying your discussion of "X" was very thorough, etc. I want to see that you are drawing from the chapter when you post your initial responses and when you post your responses to your classmates. So, I want you to provide me with page numbers for the information you are posting. I find that this keeps students actually using the text and learning the material. Also, I want to see that when you respond you are adding something to the conversation, do not repeat what the person just stated. Find additional related material that you can add. This helps you and everyone else study and learn the material. Also, it is just fine for you to talk about your own experiences—Sometimes I even ask for that. However, it should never just be that alone. Make it relevant to what the chapter says and then refer to that (with page numbers) from the text. Talking about your experiences makes it interesting to you and to others, but remember that no one is tested over your experiences, so you need to make connections to the chapter material and be explicit about it. Again, this helps you and everyone else study and learn the material. Also, please remember to be civil. This is defined as no cursing, do not put someone down, but provide each other with an open environment for discussing and disagreement. I will post discussion questions for each chapter, sometimes I do this a few weeks in advance for those who read ahead or so that students know what questions will have to be answered as they're reading the chapter. You have a week per chapter. Your initial responses will always be due by Friday night at 11:00 pm. Your responses are due Sunday night by 11:00 pm. You will also need to read three-fourths (3/4s) of all of the responses of your classmates, not just 3/4s of the initial responses. You will have until 11:00 pm on Sunday night to have read those 3/4s postings. Here's something to help you out—If you get on at 9:30 pm Sunday night and read all of the postings there, you'll capture that 4/5s. I know this after teaching online for over 20 years. I tell you this because not everyone wants to stay up until 11:00 pm on Sunday night. Still, it is open until 11:00 pm for those who need to the extra time to post and to read.

GRADING FOR PARTICIPATION:

The chapter discussions are graded according to the following:
Each chapter is worth 5 points.

- Plus 2 points for posting your initial posting by the Friday due date at 11 pm ***and*** for responding to the postings of your classmates by the following Sunday at 11 pm. You need to respond to three of your classmates' postings. That means that you should have 4 postings for each chapter (your initial and three other postings).
- Plus 2 points for posting substantively, such that it is evident that you are drawing from the weekly chapter (and including page numbers) and that it is thorough and relevant. This is considered a quality posting. I do not want you to just spout off and reply making statements without drawing from the text. I need to see that you are actually reading the text material.

- Explanations: This means that if you do not post on time and respond to your classmates with three substantive responses, I do not have to give any credit if you simply post the initial response, because you did not follow through with the classmate responses. However, it has been my practice to give that one point for the initial posting if it is substantive with page numbers and on time, even if you do not post the three classmate responses with page numbers. In doing this I am essentially giving some credit for the one initial response to make it count for something. Therefore, each posting essentially receives one point since there are 4 postings total and chapter postings are worth 4 points total. If you post your initial response on time and it is substantive, you receive a point for it. If it is late you will not receive credit. That is, if the initial posting is not posted by Friday night at 11:00 pm it is late and you will not receive credit for it. You can't post the responses to your classmates late because the chapter closes at 11:00 pm on Sunday night. If your postings are not substantive and are without page numbers, you do not receive credit for them. That's because you could post something that makes no sense at all such as "blah, blah, blah" or "I don't like this chapter" by Friday night at 11:00 or by Sunday night at 11:00 and say that you made a post. However, I am not counting it if it doesn't have page references (because it can't be substantive without the page numbers).
- Plus 1 point for reading at least 4/5s (four-fifths) of the postings of your classmates by 11 pm Sunday night.

PAPER OPTIONS:

Paper Option one:

You are required to find a current event article from such sources as the New York Times, Newsweek, Time, or any other reputable newspaper or news magazine, that you can analyze in terms of something social psychological, something you have learned from this course. I want you to analyze this article by integrating concepts from the text and telling how they relate to the issues in the article. You will need to also provide page numbers from your text for the concepts that you are using to analyze the article. You need to use at least 8 concepts, but more if you need to use more to be thorough in your analysis. Please provide the title of your article, author, as well as the name of the magazine or newspaper from which it appears, and the date. It can't be older than one year, so can't be older than Dec. 2025. Remember that this is an analysis, not an article review. Of course, I am aware that you will need to give a brief overview, but this should not take more than a couple paragraphs. The analysis needs to be thorough. There is an assignment link for this under assessments. Please know that if you do not provide page numbers for concepts from your text, it is an automatic 0 for this paper. You will need to double space this with 12-point font, one-inch margins. This should be no less than 5 pages, but you may need more in order to be thorough.

Paper Option two:

I want you to select one of these films to analyze (same referencing rules and other instructions apply as above, but you may need about one page instead of two paragraphs to give an overview):

- Black Mirror, "nosedive" (Season 3, Episode 1)

- The Wave (2008 German film, but has subtitles)
- The Truman Show (1998 film, and one of my favorites)
- The Experimenter—This is about The Milgram experiments (2005 film)

Further information needed for Option two:

- Psychological Mechanisms (approximately 1.5 to 2 pages):

You need to identify and discuss at least two core concepts directly from the textbook that corresponds to your choice (e.g., social loafing, heuristics, cognitive dissonance, normative social influence etc.). Detail how these occur in the characters' minds or individual behaviors.

- The Sociological Intervention (approximately 1.5 to 2 pages):

You need to evaluate the social environment. How do macro structures (e.g., socioeconomic status, institutionalized technology, power hierarchies, authority positions) engineer, trigger, or force the psychological behaviors you detailed in your paper.

- Critical Reflection (0.5 pages):

Connect the media to the real world. How does this film reflect real-life systemic patterns in our contemporary society?

EMERGENCY NEEDS:

Unexpected life circumstances can affect anyone. If you are experiencing challenges meeting basic needs—such as housing, utilities, food, transportation, healthcare, technology, textbooks or other life necessities, resources may be available to help. Visit the [Student Emergency Support and Resources webpage](#) to learn more, and explore emergency support opportunities through MSU and how to access them. For additional information, please contact the Office of Student Affairs: Clark Student Center #108, (940) 397-7500, student.affairs@mstuexas.edu.