Module PS3034
SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY

2013/2014
2nd semester

Lecturer:
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Office hours: Wed 3-5
Aims and Objectives

This module explores in depth some of the key topics in social psychology. A variety of theoretical and methodological approaches in social psychology will be examined in order to develop your understanding of the field and your ability to evaluate social psychological research critically. The lectures will use the issue of prejudice and intergroup relations to examine different levels of analysis, theoretical approaches, and methodologies in social psychology in greater depth. We will explore strengths and limitations of different approaches, examine current debates in the literature, and link theoretical knowledge to current events.

**Intended learning outcomes:**

1. A detailed understanding of the different social psychological approaches to social issues
2. Awareness of the strengths and limitations of each of these approaches, and understanding of current debates in the literature
3. Critical handling of primary source material; ability to evaluate complex and conflicting empirical evidence
4. Application of multiple perspectives to psychological phenomena
5. Ability to think about psychological phenomena at multiple levels of analysis; sensitivity to individual, interpersonal, intergroup, and contextual factors
6. Awareness of the relationship between psychological theory and social issues, and ability to evaluate the extent to which psychological theories help our understanding of, and our ability to address, these issues

Course structure

Lectures will take place on Tuesday morning (9-11am, Old Library), followed by a more interactive afternoon session (2-5pm, Old Library). This will typically consist of group work, discussion, or practical exercises. For the afternoon sessions, you will be
split into three groups, who will meet from 2-3pm (Group A), 3-4pm (Group B), and 4-5pm (Group C), respectively. Group allocation will be resolved in the first week.

**Assessment**

This module is assessed by 100% continuous assessment, which is a 2,000 word essay.

The title of the essay is: “Are the links between religiosity and prejudice best understood as an individual-level phenomenon or a group-level phenomenon?”

To address this topic you will need to:

1. Summarise some key literature on the links between religiosity and prejudice, given the scope specified in points 2 and 3.
2. Define (reasonably) the limits of what you will consider prejudice for the purposes of the essay, but avoid focusing on just a single issue – you need to avoid the criticism that your argument is limited to one special case.
3. Define what aspects of religiosity you will consider for the purposes of the essay. (There is a great deal of literature on Christianity and prejudice and you can reasonably restrict your essay to this, but you need not. You can approach religiosity more widely, or pick a different narrow focus if you can support that decision with sufficient literature.)
4. I don’t mind which way you argue the answer to the question, but the point will be to use the rhetorical focus of the essay to illustrate your knowledge of the arguments for individual and group processes that might underpin prejudice. The essay will be judged not on your rhetorical answer to the question, but on how thoroughly you illustrate your knowledge in answering it, and how compellingly you marshal your evidence for whatever position you take.

The essay should be 2000 words (maximum); which excludes references, tables and figures, but includes footnotes. The essay should be submitted via MMS and is due at 5pm on Tuesday 18th March.

**Course outline and reading**

Below is an overview of each week’s topic along with some reading materials. There will be one or two core texts that you should read each week (e.g., overview book chapters), as well as a number journal articles, which were selected to represent a wide range of methods (e.g., laboratory experiments, field experiments, surveys, observation, qualitative interviews, archival research) within social psychology. I do not expect you to read all of the suggested journal articles, but you should read at least one or two each week to consolidate what you have learned in the lecture. The readings are accessible through either multiple copies on short loan in the library, or via electronic access to the journals. Several readings will be available on Moodle.

**Useful Online Resources**

http://www.socialpsychology.org/social.htm -- a website devoted to psychological research, contains many useful links and resources

http://www.understandingprejudice.org/ -- a website containing many links related to causes and consequences of prejudice
Lecture 1
Introduction

The lectures will use the issue of prejudice and intergroup relations to examine different levels of analysis, theoretical approaches, and methodologies in social psychology in greater depth. The first lecture will set the stage for the remaining course by introducing key concepts and research questions, defining and differentiating different forms of prejudice, and discussing methodological and measurement issues.

Core reading

Further reading


Lecture 2
Explaining prejudice: Individual-level processes

Is prejudice rooted in our evolutionary history? Do some people have a “prejudiced personality”? This lecture will cover theoretical perspectives that emphasize intra-individual processes as fundamental sources of prejudice. We will discuss approaches that view prejudice as ‘abnormal’ and stemming from early life experiences and resulting personality traits, as well as approaches which suggest that some forms of prejudice may be part of our biological make-up.
Core reading

Further reading

Lecture 3
Explaining prejudice: Group-level processes

This lecture examines a number of approaches which view functional relations between groups and characteristics of the social structure (e.g., status and power differences between groups) as at the heart of intergroup conflict and "prejudice". Approaches that aim to explain both change and stability of group hierarchies will be discussed.

Core reading

Further reading
Lecture 4

Promoting social change: The prejudice-reduction paradigm

How do we create more tolerant and fair societies? This is one of the key questions in social psychology and will be the focus of the final two lectures. This lecture will introduce the prejudice-reduction approach to social change and introduce a number of interventions designed to reduce prejudiced attitudes and increase social harmony. We will start examining these interventions critically and discuss potential shortcomings of prejudice reduction as a strategy to achieve progressive social change.

Core reading

Further reading
Lecture 5
Promoting social change: The collective action paradigm

The toppling of oppressive regimes during the Arab Spring demonstrates that social protest can be an important catalyst of social change. In this lecture we will talk about social-psychological research that has examined the societal and psychological factors that mobilize collective action. We will examine predictors of collective action among both members of disadvantaged social groups and members of advantaged groups who act in solidarity with a disadvantaged group. We will also discuss the importance of emotions (e.g., anger, guilt, moral outrage) in motivating collective action against social injustices.

Core reading

Further reading