# PSY 235:730 Social Psychology – 3 Credit Hours

# Summer Semester 2025: Session 1

# Online: Monday, May 12th – Friday, June 27th

**Instructor:** Aislinn Low (pronouns – she/her) – [lowaisli@msu.edu](mailto:lowaisli@msu.edu)

**Office Hours:** By appointment via Zoom (appointments can be requested through email)

# Important Course Details:

## 1. Workload:

* 1. This is a fast-paced course compared to a regular Fall or Spring semester class. A Fall or Spring semester is 15 weeks long. In comparison, this summer course is about half that length (7 weeks total from May 12th to June 27th) but covers roughly the same amount of content as the regular, non-summer PSY 235 course. The first exam for this course is on Friday at the end of the first week (5/16/2025), which can come up very quickly. Therefore, it is important to stay up to date on the course calendar and reach out for help early, when needed. There will consistently be graded assignments until the end of the course, therefore it is important to try not to fall behind on course assignments/grades early.

## 2. High-Speed Internet Requirement

* 1. This course (PSY 235 Section 730: Social Psychology) is a fully online course. Therefore, you will need to have access to a computer with consistent access to a high-speed internet connection. Additionally, the course is set up to be asynchronous. This means you can complete most work according to your own needs (there are no set lecture times or synchronous Zoom video meetings). The course is designed to give you flexibility – but this flexibility also comes with the assumption that you will participate actively and meet due dates as required by the course.

## 3. Due Dates and Times

* 1. All times listed in the syllabus and on D2L are in **Eastern Standard/Day Time (EST/EDT/ET) Zone, the same time as East Lansing, Michigan.** Here is the link to a time zone converter if you are outside of the US: <https://savvytime.com/converter/est>
  2. **If you need technical assistance** at any time during the course or to report a problem, you can:
     1. Visit the D2L Help Site – <https://help.d2l.msu.edu/>
     2. Call the *D2L Help Line* – **(517) 432-6200 or (844) 678-6200**
     3. Visit the *MSU Tech Support Site* – <https://tech.msu.edu/support/help/>
     4. Call the *Tech Support Line* – **(517) 432-6200** or toll free **(844) 678-6200**

## 4. Honors

* 1. Unlike Fall/Spring semesters, there is no honors option available for this course or other summer psychology courses

# Required Reading:

* There is no required textbook for this course
* Instead, you will read articles that coincide with the course lectures
  + Articles will be posted on D2L under Content – Readings
  + Article references are included at the end of the syllabus

# Course Overview

This course provides an overview of social psychology. Research in social psychology tries to understand the relationship between the individual and their social situation. This includes both how the situation influences a person’s thoughts, emotions, and behaviors, as well as how a person influences and creates the situation.

Because social influence is so pervasive, social psychological research has implications for virtually all aspects of life: romantic relationships, decision-making, child rearing, marketing and advertising, group identification, political negotiations, etc. So, there is extensive applicability for the principles you will learn in this course. However, rather than providing a list of topics and research findings, this course is structured around the intra- and interpersonal systems that regulate social behavior. My hope is that this provides a more cohesive and engaging presentation. The course is made up of four parts/systems:

1. Biological and Developmental System
2. Cognitive System
3. Motivational System
4. Social System

# Course Objectives

1. To demonstrate how psychologists think about social interactions and social influence.
   1. What questions do psychologists ask?
   2. How do they go about trying to answer these questions?
   3. What have they learned?
2. To teach you how to think like a social psychologist. By the end of this course, you should be able to apply such approaches to novel situations relevant to your own experiences.

# Course Lectures

* A set of instructive and engaging lectures is provided, courtesy of Dr. Joseph Cesario in the Psychology Department here at Michigan State University (<https://psychology.msu.edu/directory/cesario-joseph.html>).
* **The slides are provided to facilitate the lecture and not to present the bulk of the material**. All the lectures and transcribed versions for each unit will be available at the start of each unit.
* Please note that lecture slides for the content covered in each exam will be **closed/inaccessible** for the entire duration of the exam period, regardless of when you begin the exam*.*
  + For example, lectures for the first exam (Biological & Developmental System) will be closed off/inaccessibleat the start of the Exam 1 test period, Friday May 16th at 12:00 AM.
  + **It will be closed for you and all students, even if you are not planning on starting the exam until later in the exam period.** Therefore, do not plan to view the material for that course section after the exam period has begun. However, I will make the following class section lectures and materials (for example, the Cognitive System) available to view starting the Friday once the first exam begins for those who want to begin viewing that material and have finished the first exam.

# Course Requirements

## 1. Exams (50 points each)

* 1. There are five (5) exams in this course
     1. The first four (4) exams are **not** cumulative. These exams only cover content for their respective units.
     2. The fifth (5th) exam is a cumulative final exam. Any content from the duration of the course may appear on this exam.
     3. **Only your top four (4) out of five (5) exams will count toward your grade.** If you are satisfied with your grades on the first four (4) exams, you may opt to skip the final exam with no penalty.
     4. Exams will focus both on the extent to which you are able to remember **what** social psychologists have found and on the extent to which you are able to understand and apply **how** they went about finding it.
  2. Exams will be available online for a window of 24 hours, opening at 12:00 AM (midnight) and closing at 11:59 PM (e.g., Exam 1 will open at 12:00 AM on Friday, May 16th and will close at 11:59 PM on Friday, May 16th). However, once you begin the exam, **you will only have two (2) hours to complete it**. Please be prepared to answer all exam questions within a single sitting (do not split the exam across the day).
     1. Note: The final exam will be open over two days (Thursday, June 26th and Friday, June 27th). However, the exam will close at **5:00 PM on 6/27/2025.** You will still have two hours to complete the exam (within the exam time window) once you start.

## 2. Application Paper (45 points)

1. There is one (1) application/reaction paper in this course (**Due by 6:00 PM on 6/5/25**).
2. The goal of this paper is to first help you absorb information from lectures and readings, then let you go beyond presented information to explore what interests you the most by applying course information to an event/aspect of your life.
3. **The paper should include a brief description of the social psychology concept/theory/technique you have chosen and a description of how this concept/theory/technique applies to a real-life example.**
4. The possibilities for this paper are endless. For example, you could:
   * 1. Use a social psychology theory to make sense of your thoughts, behavior, or emotions. (*Can evolutionary theory tell me why I find my significant other attractive?*)
     2. Reference a movie/tv show/book and illustrate how a social psychology topic in this course was related to a scene, character, or the story as a whole.
5. Present and discuss real world examples (personal, in the news etc.) that do or do not fit what we are learning through lectures and readings.
6. Raise questions or even propose a potential research study idea for future psychological academic research.
7. **Application Paper Guidelines**
   * 1. Application Paper Guidelines can be found on the course D2L page (Content – Application Paper).

**Use of Turnitin:** Consistent with MSU's efforts to enhance student learning, foster honesty, and maintain integrity in our academic processes, I have chosen to use a tool called Turnitin to compare your papers with multiple sources. The tool will compare each paper you submit to an extensive database of prior publications and papers, providing links to possible matches and a 'similarity score.' The tool does not determine whether plagiarism has occurred or not. Instead, I will make a complete assessment and judge the originality of your work. All written submissions to this course may be checked using this tool. In choosing to use Turnitin in this course, I have agreed to follow five guidelines. They are:

1. I will use Turnitin as part of a balanced approach to encourage academic integrity and foster student success.
2. I will openly disclose the use of Turnitin in this course on the syllabus.
3. For a given assignment, I will use Turnitin for all papers.
4. I will make the final determination of originality and integrity.
5. **Please do not plagiarize (also reference the syllabus section on the use of generative AI in this course on pages 8 and 9 for what constitutes plagiarism and you can also go to and read this link** [**https://wts.indiana.edu/writing-guides/plagiarism.html**](https://wts.indiana.edu/writing-guides/plagiarism.html)**).**

**Formatting:**

* Application papers must be **two (2) to three (3) complete pages of writing**. This does not include title pages or reference pages, if used. Use double-spaced text (12-point Times New Roman font and 1-inch page margins). Please **only submit files that are either .docx or .pdf**, otherwise I cannot open and view them (for example: .pages files). Microsoft Word is typically the ideal program to use, although Google Docs is also acceptable, but the file needs to be converted afterwards to a .docx or .pdf once you finish writing it.
* Other than that, there is no required specific format; it should simply be written in a professional manner. You can write on any topic covered **prior to** the paper due date.
* If your application paper does not properly apply the concepts, you will receive brief written feedback.

## 3. Discussion Posts (10 points each)

* 1. Every unit (except for the unit during which your Application Paper is due), you will be required to post on our class discussion board.
     1. Due dates for discussion questions are **Thursdays by 6:00 PM** each week you have discussion questions.
     2. You may post anytime between the start of the section to the due date.
  2. D2L discussion boards can be found under Communication – Discussions – Selecting the appropriate discussion board.
  3. **Discussion Board Guidelines**
     1. Discussion Board Guidelines can be found on the course D2L page (Content – Discussions).

# Makeup/Extension Policy:

Exams: Please plan to complete your exams during the day and time they are given. If something happens that prevents you from completing an exam by the deadline, please notify me via email as soon as possible. If you do not notify me in a timely manner (the following 2-3 days after the exam deadline has passed), you will not being allowed to makeup the exam.

Discussion Posts/Application Paper:Unlike the exams in this course, the Discussion Posts and Application Paper are meant to be completed on the student’s own time (i.e., do not have a strict start date). The only consideration for these assignments is that they must be turned in to D2L before the due date. The due dates for these assignments are clearly communicated within the syllabus and will be sent through announcements via D2L. ***Therefore, there will be no makeups permitted or late submissions accepted for either the discussion question posts or the application paper for the course, without a clear, reasonable, and valid reason that prevented you from completing these graded assignments on time and before the deadline. Any student with questions about this policy should email me for clarification.***

**There are four (4) acceptable reasons for making up assignments:**

1. Observing a religious holiday
   1. Must express intent to observe holidays **two weeks before the assignment deadline**
2. Participating in a required activity or university-sanctioned event
   1. Must provide **advance** notice – notice after the deadline is not acceptable
3. Significant illness of yourself or a family member
   1. **Must provide documentation**
4. Loss of a friend or family member
   1. **Submit form to college**; info can be found [here](https://socialscience.msu.edu/undergraduate/current-students/POLICY_Grief%20Absence1.pdf)

If you require an extension, it is your responsibility to schedule an alternative due date for assignment. Failure to secure permission from me may result in your receiving 0 points for the assignment. When applicable, be prepared to share written documentation.

# Grading Policy

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Point Value** | **% of Final Grade** |
| Exams (4 highest out of 5) | 200 | 74% |
| Application Paper | 45 | 16% |
| Discussion Board Posts | 30 | 10% |
| Total | 275 | 100% |

The grading scale is as follows:

90-100% = 4.0

85-89.99% = 3.5

80-84.99% = 3.0

75 – 79.99% = 2.5

70-74.99% = 2.0

Policy on Grade Changes:At the end of the semester, if you believe that an error was made in calculating your grade, please email me with **evidence**. If you provide adequate evidence, I will check and change your grade in the case that there was an error. This is the ***only*** circumstance under which your grade will change.

Academic Assistance:This is a university, and you are expected to produce college level work equal to an in-person class. If you have any trouble with the material covered in class, please email me. Additionally, the university has resources to assist students, such as the Campus Tutorial Center, the Campus Writing Center, Adult Student Services, and more. A lot is expected of you, but the university wants to help you to produce your best work.

Limits to Confidentiality/Mental Health Resources:Please be aware that class materials are generally considered confidential pursuant to the University’s student policies. However, all University employees, including instructors, cannot maintain confidentiality when it conflicts with their responsibility to report certain issues based on external legal obligations or health and safety considerations of MSU community members and others. As your instructor for this course, I must report the following information (including your name and the details of the disclosure) to the Office for Civil Rights and Title IX Education and Compliance (OCR) and the MSU Police Department if you share it with them:

* **Suspected child abuse/neglect, even if this maltreatment happened when you were a child,**
* **Allegations of sexual assault or sexual harassment when they involve MSU students, faculty or staff, and**
* **Credible threats of harm to oneself or to others.**

The OCR will reach out to you via a confidential email, to see if you would like to pursue legal action and to provide you with additional university resources. You have the right to choose whether or not you would like to utilize any of these services or even respond to the university’s email. If you would like to talk about these events in a more confidential setting, you are encouraged to make an appointment with the [MSU Counseling Center](https://caps.msu.edu/).

It is an MSU required mandate that I am required to follow as an MSU employee. Given this, you should not disclose experiences of abuse or sexual violence related to MSU unless you are comfortable having this information shared with the OCR. Despite the mandate, I do not want to further the culture of silence surrounding abuse and sexual violence in this class. All are encouraged to use the resources listed below (not mandated university reporters) as they process their feelings and experiences in this course.

[MSU Safe Place](http://safeplace.msu.edu/) [NRCDV](http://www.nrcdv.org/) [NNEVD](http://www.nnedv.org/) [NCDSV](http://www.ncdsv.org/) [MCEDSV](http://www.mcedsv.org/) [No More](http://nomore.org/) [RAINN](https://rainn.org/) [The Joyful Heart Foundation](http://www.joyfulheartfoundation.org/) [Feministing](http://feministing.com/) [Futures Without Violence](http://www.futureswithoutviolence.org/)

Email Policy:E-mail is the best way to get a hold of me. However, please use the following guidelines when communicating via email:

* First, ask yourself this question: **“Can this question be answered by looking in the syllabus or looking on the D2L course site?”**
  + A lot of time was spent preparing the course materials so you have all the information you need to succeed in this course. It is your responsibility to read that information.
* Decide if email is the best option before you send. If your question is complicated or will need further discussion, do not just automatically send off an email. Come to office hours instead. Some things are better discussed face to face!
* Use **PSY 235** in the subject line. That makes it clear you are a student in this course asking a question. This helps to prevent e-mails from going directly to the junk folder.
* When **using your phone to send an email**, remember you are writing to a professional person who is doing their job, not sending a text to a friend. Treat every email as professional communication. We are in a place of work.
* Use the appropriate salutation. Please address every email properly.
  + For your instructor, you should say “Hi Ms. Low” or “Hello Ms. Low”.
* Always sign off your e-mails with your full name, so we know who you are. Include a sign off like “Thanks”, or “Best wishes” with your name. This is a sign of courtesy.
* Proofread your e-mail. Is your question clearly conveyed? Did ChatGPT make it sound super weird?
* Be polite.
  + Please do not use abusive email behaviors.
    - For example, do not use abusive subject line behavior like typing the word “URGENT” in the subject line. You may think you are highlighting the actionable items in your email, but the perception from the receiver is that you are implying that your message is more important than any other correspondence the receiver might have received. This may be viewed as a sign that you do not respect or value the receivers’ right to manage their own workload and time.
      * This guidance is adapted from [Forbes](https://www.forbes.com/pictures/egfj45ili/abusive-subject-line-behavior/?sh=21f183a3662d).
  + When a TA or professor responds to help you via email, it is good practice to respond and thank them for their help.
* Finally, emergencies can arise in life, but it is unlikely that a true emergency will arise in relation to this course (i.e., a situation that requires immediate action to be resolved - and cannot be resolved any other way). Please do not use the 'urgent' flag in your emails.
  + Most solutions to academic problems cannot be put in place immediately, and all emails will be addressed in a timely and appropriate manner regardless of how they are flagged.
  + See again the [Forbes guidance](https://www.forbes.com/pictures/egfj45ili/over-use-of-the-priority-flag/?sh=bc4d76069f6), this time on issues with overusing the priority flag.
* More guidance on **email communication in the academic context** is provided in [this link](https://www.bestcolleges.com/blog/email-etiquette-in-college/) and [this link](https://medium.com/@lportwoodstacer/how-to-email-your-professor-without-being-annoying-af-cf64ae0e4087).
* Why is there so much guidance about email habits to avoid?
  + Answer – this advice will serve you well in all professional settings!

**Check your e-mail and course site regularly! During the course, I will post announcements on the course site often with important information and reminders. Please read these announcements as soon as you receive them, and please set up D2L to forward course announcements to your email address. See D2L for information on how to do this.**

Academic Honesty and Artificial Intelligence (A.I.) Policy:The following is the academic honesty statement from the Office of the Ombudsman; all students are required to adhere to this statement:

Article 2.3.3 of the Academic Freedom Report states that "The student shares with the faculty the responsibility for maintaining the integrity of scholarship, grades, and professional standards." In addition, the Psychology department adheres to the policies on academic honesty as specified in General Student Regulations 1.0, *Protection of Scholarship and Grades*; the all-University Policy on *Integrity of Scholarship and Grades*; and Ordinance 17.00, Examinations. (See *Spartan Life: Student Handbook and Resource Guide* and/or the MSU website: www.msu.edu.)

Therefore, unless authorized by your instructor, you are expected to complete all course assignments, including exams and discussion posts, without assistance from any source. You are expected to develop original work for this course; therefore, you may not submit course work you completed for another course to satisfy the requirements for this course. Also, you are not authorized to use the www.allmsu.com website to complete any course work in PSY 235. Students who violate MSU rules may receive a penalty grade, including--but not limited to--a failing grade on the assignment or in the course. Contact your instructor if you are unsure about the appropriateness of your course work. (See also [Academic Integrity | Office of the University Ombudsperson](https://ombud.msu.edu/resources-self-help/academic-integrity))

Any and all forms of cheating are unacceptable. This includes the use of **generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) software (such as ChatGPT, Google Bard, etc.).** Make sure you are familiar with MSU definitions regarding academic dishonesty. A statement regarding the usage of generative AI for this course is given below:

*In my personal experience, the use of generative AI can be useful for certain tasks, such as summarizing or explaining information from a topic that I am less familiar with. I have no issues with students using generative AI in this manner for the course.* **However, it is important to stress that all graded assignments (the exams, the application paper, and the discussion questions) in this course are expected to be reflective of your own knowledge, writing abilities, and ability to problem solve. Therefore, the use of generative AI is NOT allowed for any graded assignment in this course. *In simple terms*, please do not copy and paste sentences or paragraphs into your assignment from any AI (generative or not), as this clearly does not reflect your own work.**

***If there are any further questions about the acceptable use of AI in this course, please email me directly. However, if you find yourself questioning for more than a few minutes over whether your using of an AI resource would be considered cheating for a graded course assignment, it most likely IS cheating.***

# Course Schedule:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Dates** | **Topic** | **Readings** |
| **Part 1: Biological and Developmental System** | | |
| **5/12/25 – 5/15/25** | **Lectures #1-4** |  |
| Course Introduction and Approach |  |
| Evolution | **Read: Cosmides & Tooby (1997)** |
| Evolution Cont.; Life History Theory |  |
| Life History Theory Cont. |  |
| Attachment Theory | **Read: Fraley (2010)** |
| **5/15/25** | **Post Discussion Question**  **(By 6:00 PM EST)** |  |
| **5/16/25** | **Exam 1 (2 Hours)** |  |
|  |  |  |
| **Part 2: Cognitive System** | | |
| **5/17/25 – 5/29/25** | **Lectures #5-14** |  |
| Social Cognition Foundations | **Read: Hamilton & Gifford (1976)** |
| Principles of Knowledge Activation |  |
| Categories & Expectancies | **Read: Macrae & Boden (2000)** |
| Categories & Expectancies Cont. | **Read: Bargh (1999)** |
| Recent Revisions | **Reach: Jussim et al. (2009)** |
| ELM; Subjective Experience/Misattribution |  |
| **5/29/25** | **Post Discussion Question**  **(By 6:00 PM EST)** |  |
| **5/30/25** | **Exam 2 (2 Hours)** |  |
|  |  |  |
| **Part 3: Motivational System** | | |
| **5/31/25-6/5/25** | **Lectures #15-18** |  |
| Fundamentals: Regulatory Focus Theory |  |
| Fundamentals: Self-Control |  |
| Attribution | **Read: Yeager & Dweck (2012)** |
| Attribution Cont. | **Read: Ryan & Deci (2000)** |
| Motivated Reasoning & Perception |  |
| Motivated Reasoning & Perception Cont. | **Read: Fessler & Holbrook (2013)** |
| **6/5/25** | **Application Paper**  **(By 6:00 PM EST)** |  |
| **6/6/25** | **Exam 3 (2 Hours)** |  |
|  |  |  |
| **Part 4: Social System** | | |
| **6/7/25-6/19/25** | **Lectures #19-25** |  |
| Interpersonal Level: Attraction |  |
| Interpersonal Level: Repulsion |  |
| Group Dynamics: Fundamentals of Us vs. Them | **Read: Navarrete & Fessler (2005)** |
| Group Dynamics: Fundamentals of Us vs. Them Cont. |  |
| Group Dynamics: Being a Good Group Member | **Read: Schulz et al. (2007)** |
| Group Dynamics: Being a Good Group Member Cont. |  |
| Group Dynamics: Being a Good Group Member Cont. |  |
| **6/19/25** | **Post Discussion Question**  **(By 6:00 PM EST)** |  |
| **6/20/25** | **Exam 4 (2 Hours)** |  |
|  |  |  |
| **Final Exam** | **Opens** | **Closes** |
|  | **Thursday, June 26th (6/26/25) at 12:00 AM** | **Friday, June 27th (6/27/25) at 5:00 PM** |

# References for Course Readings:

Bargh, J. A. (1999). The cognitive monster: The case against the controllability of automatic stereotype effects. In S. Chaiken & Y. Trope (Eds.), *Dual-process theories in social psychology* (pp. 361-382). New York: The Guilford Press.

Cosmides, L., & Tooby, J. (1997). Evolutionary Psychology: A Primer. http://www.cep.ucsb.edu/primer.html

Fessler, D.M.T., & Holbrook, C. (2013). Friends shrink foes: The presence of comrades decreases the envisioned physical formidability of an opponent. *Psychological Science, 24*, 797-802.

Fraley, R.C. (2010). A brief overview of adult attachment theory and research. https://internal.psychology.illinois.edu/~rcfraley/attachment.htm

Hamilton, D.L., & Gifford, R.K. (1976). Illusory correlation in interpersonal perception: A cognitive basis of stereotypic judgments. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology, 12*, 392-407.

Jussim, L., Cain, T.R., Crawford, J.T., Harber, K., & Cohen, F. (2009). The unbearable accuracy of stereotypes. In Nelson, T. (ed.), *The Handbook of Prejudice, Stereotyping, and Discrimination* (199-227). NY: Psychological Press.

Macrae, C.N., & Bodenhausen, G.V. (2000). Social cognition: Thinking categorically about others. *Annual Review of Psychology, 51*, 93-120.

Navarrete, C.D., & Fessler, D.M.T. (2005). Normative bias and adaptive challenges: A relational approach to coalitional psychology and a critique of Terror Management Theory. *Evolutionary Psychology, 3*, 297-325.

Ryan, R. M., & Deci, E. L. (2000). Self-determination theory and the facilitation of intrinsic motivation, social development, and well-being. *American Psychologist, 55*, 68-78.

Schultz, P. W., Nolan, J. M., Cialdini, R. B., Goldstein, N. J., & Griskevicius, V. (2007). The constructive, destructive, and reconstructive power of social norms. *Psychological Science, 18*, 429-434.

Yeager, D.S., & Dweck, C.S. (2012). Mindsets that promote resilience: When students believe that personal characteristics can be developed. *Educational Psychologist, 47*, 302-314.