DALHOUSIE UNIVERSITY

Department of Psychology & Neuroscience

PSYO 3082: Experimental Social Psychology

Instructor(s):	Chris Moore	moorec@dal.ca	Office hrs by appt.
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Classes:	Fall 2026, Monday/Wednesday 13.05 – 14.25		
Course delivery:	In-person McCain ASS 1198		

Course Description

Social Psychology is the branch of Psychology that explores the organization of social behaviour. Humans spend much of their lives interacting with others and so social psychology touches almost everything we do. It covers perception, cognition, language, emotion, and of course behaviour. It is relevant to both child and adult psychology. It is relevant to individual interactions as well as to groups. You should have gained a good overview of social psychology in the prerequisite area course for this one - PSYO 2080 (Social Psychology). This third-year course builds upon that course as well as the general research methods course (PSYO 2000 – Experimental Psychology and Neuroscience Methods). We will take a deep dive into a particular topic that has ramifications for many areas of social behaviour, and you will plan and design an experimental study that explores a research question related to the topic.

Our focus for this course will be 'guilt.' The course text is my recent book on guilt that was published at the end of 2025. It explains the psychology of guilt and explores all the different ways that guilt appears in our lives. The chapters of this book will form the core reading for the course. Additional readings will supplement this text. We will discuss the many ways that guilt connects to aspects of social psychology. Guilt also has many far-reaching societal impacts, and we will discuss these as well.

In parallel with reading about and discussing guilt, we will look at a variety of issues that have plagued social psychology research in the last 10-15 years. We will focus on the 'reproducibility crisis' in social psychology that led to the idea of 'preregistration' of research studies as best practice.

In the second half of the course, you will home in on one aspect of guilt that you find particularly interesting and develop a research proposal for how our understanding of this aspect may be moved forward through research. This proposal will be in the form of a 'preregistration report.' **This is a group project**. **You will be assigned to a group of up to 4 students, based on shared interests as far as possible, and work as a team to develop the proposal. The grade for the report will be common to the group members.**

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Prerequisites

PSYO 2000 or NESC 2000 (Experimental Methods)
PSYO 2501 (Statistical Methods I)
PSYO 2080 (Social Psychology)

Course Exclusions

None

Learning Objectives

- Broad understanding of the ways in which human social life is structured and the psychological mechanisms that organize social behaviour, with a particular focus on guilt.
- Describe and interpret research designs used in social psychology.
- Skill at summarizing research articles.
- Use of primary literature in social psychology to develop research questions, generate formal hypotheses, and design studies to test them.
- Understanding of the importance of preregistration for social psychology research, and ability to prepare the components included in a preregistration plan.
- Effectively communicate your knowledge and research ideas through formal written work and informal discussions/workshops.

Course Materials

Core text: Chris Moore (2025), *The Power of Guilt. What We Feel It and Its Surprising Ability to Heal.* Toronto: HarperCollins. Available through the Dalhousie Bookstore (https://bookstore.dal.ca/CourseSearch/?course[]=SUB,202710,PSYO,PSYO3082,01) or online.

Additional sources posted on Brightspace.

Course Assessment

Summary

Assignment	Due date (end of day)	Value
1) Early reflection paper	September 25th	5%
2) Take-home midterm exam	October 23rd	30%
3) Social media post	November 6th	5%
4) Registered report	December 9th	40%

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5) Take-home final exam reflection paper	December 18th	20%

Assignments are due by the end of the day (11.59pm). All assignments should be submitted as a **MS Word** document attachment on Brightspace by the deadline. **Do not submit as pdfs as these are more difficult to annotate**. Please title your document using the following format: "Name-Assignment number". For example, I would name my file for the first assignment: Moore-1.

Details

1) Early reflection paper

Write a short (no longer than 500 words) essay on "How guilt plays into my life."

In this paper reflect on how you experience guilt in everyday life drawing connections to the ideas discussed in the first three weeks of class. You may focus on one particular guilt experience or write more generally about how guilt-prone you are.

2) Take-home midterm exam

Write an essay on each of the following two topics (equally weighted). Essays should draw on the lecture materials and readings as well as any further readings you wish to find for yourself.

1: Drawing on the framework presented in the course for the ecosystem of academic publishing, explain why so many results in experimental social psychology are not replicable. What are the implications of these failures of replication for the science of Social Psychology?

2: What is guilt and what is it for? **OR**
Describe how guilt shows up in the relationships between children and their parents.

The word limit for **each** answer is 1000 words. Text over the 1000 words will not be read.

3) Social media post

Produce a social media post (Instagram or X) on guilt. The post should highlight how guilt regulates social relationships. It can take any of the following forms:

a. A comment on a research paper, news article, or article from a popular print or online magazine or blog.
b. A meme illustrating an aspect of guilt
c. An audience engagement post that invites feedback from followers, such as an X poll, request for embarrassing guilt moments, or favourite guilt-related books, songs, or movies.

Submit the post **as well as** a one-page (≤ 300 word) statement of how the post content illustrates the relationship theory of guilt.

4) Registered report

Details will be provided during the course.

5) Take-home final exam reflection paper

Write an essay responding to this question: "What aspect of this course has most made you think differently about human social behaviour? Why?"

The word limit is 1500 words and any text over the limit will not be read.

Conversion of numerical grades to Final Letter Grades follows the Dalhousie Common Grade Scale. **Please note grades will not be rounded up.**

A+ (90-100)	**B+** (77-79.9)	**C+** (65-69.9)	**D** (50-54.9)
A (85-89.9)	**B** (73-76.9)	**C** (60-64.9)	**F** (<50)
A- (80-84.9)	**B-** (70-72.9)	**C-** (55-59.9)	

Course Policies on Missed or Late Academic Requirements

If, for some reason, you will not be able to make an assignment deadline, let me know the reason as far as possible in advance. Student declarations of absences (SDAs) are required for illness and will enable a two-day extension without penalty. Failure to submit an assignment on time without approval will be penalized 1% per day.

Course Policies related to Academic Integrity and Artifical Intelligence

You are responsible for preparing your own papers, but you are welcome to collaborate with other students on literature searches and identification of relevant work. I view generative AI in the same way I view collaboration with humans. You are welcome to use AI (such as Dalhousie's provided Copilot Chat) to help you understand the course material better and to refine your thinking on the course content. Given the unreliability of AI recommendations, you need to check any and all sources that AI may recommend to you. Just as you are not allowed to copy someone else's writing for your assignment submissions (plagiarism), you are not allowed to include AI-generated text in your papers. AI writing is quite easily detectable and if detected in an assignment, your assignment will be submitted to the Faculty of Science as a suspected violation of Dalhousie's Academic Integrity Policy.

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Schedule (subject to change)

During September and October, one class (usually Wednesday) will be on a guilt-related topic that delves into some area of Social Psychology and one class (usually Monday) will be on a topic relating to research practice in Social Psychology. The Wednesday classes will prepare you for the development of your research proposal in the form of a preregistration report.

This course will be run as far as possible in 'blended learning' fashion. What this means is that there will be preparatory reading/listening/watching for each class and class time will be used in part for discussion of the topics covered in the readings. Each class I will go over the main points of the week's topic(s) and then class members will be expected to contribute to discussion.

Date	**Topic**	**Reading/listening/watching (more may be added as the semester progresses)**
September 9th	Introduction to the class	Syllabus
September 14th	Guilt – a universal experience	*The Power of Guilt* Introduction
September 16th	What is guilt?	*The Power of Guilt* Chapter 1 Baumeister et al. (1994)
September 21st	Introduction to the replication crisis.	Elementary primer: https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/basics/replication-crisis Psych podcast Chapter 10. The replication crisis: https://psych.fireside.fm/10 Open Science Collaboration (2015).
September 23rd	What is guilt for?	*The Power of Guilt* Chapter 2 Ostojic et al. (2015)
September 28th	The culture and practice of scientific psychology	
September 30th	Truth & Reconciliation Day	No class
October 5th	The development	*The Power of Guilt* Chapter 3 Vaish et al. (2016)

	of guilt in childhood	
October 7th	Questionable research practices	Kerr (1998) Simmons et al. (2011) Doyen et al. (2012)
October 12th	Thanksgiving	No class
October 14th	Guilt-proneness	*The Power of Guilt* Chapter 4 Cleckley, H. *The Mask of Sanity*. Case history of Tom (pp.64-70)
October 19th	Fraud	https://www.fourbeers.com/108 https://www.fourbeers.com/106 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KOc6xfEnHWg Shu et al. (2012) Krystal et al. (2020)
October 21st	Guilt in adult communal relationships	*The Power of Guilt* Chapter 5 Clark & Mills (2012) Mikulincer & Shaver (2005)
October 26th	Parental guilt and the guilt of adult children	*The Power of Guilt* Chapters 6 & 7 Aarntzen et al. (2023)
October 28th	Guilt gone awry	*The Power of Guilt* Chapter 8 Town et al. (2022)
November 2nd	Solutions to the replication crisis	Chambers (2017) Chapter 7 excerpt Simmons et al. (2021) van't Veer & Giner-Sorolla (2016)

		Giner-Sorolla (2025): This is the most recent comprehensive statement on the topic from the 2025 Handbook of Social Psychology
November 4th	Collective guilt	*The Power of Guilt* Chapter 11 Drew & Moore (2026)
November 16th	Group work	
November 18th	Group work	
November 23rd	Group work	
November 25th	Group work	
November 30th	Group work	
December 2nd	Group work	
December 7th	Guilt in religion	*The Power of Guilt* Chapter 9
December 8th	Guilt in the law	*The Power of Guilt* Chapter 10
December 9th	Making friends with guilt; What have we learned?	*The Power of Guilt* Chapter 12

Syllabus Appendix

(Formerly University Policies and Statements)

Follow this link to view various supports, university policies, and guidelines.

Syllabus Appendix: Student Supports & University Statements, Policies, and Guidelines