DALHOUSIE UNIVERSITY

Department of Psychology & Neuroscience

PSYO 3082: Experimental Social Psychology

Instructor(s):   Chris Moore   moorec@dal.ca   Office hours by appointment

TA: Sarah MacDonald   sr751611@dal.ca

Classes: Winter 2024, Monday/Wednesday 10.05 – 11.25

Course delivery: In-person Killam Library 4106

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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.' I am currently writing a book on guilt that will be published some time in 2025. It explains the psychology of guilt and explores all the different ways that guilt appears in our lives. The draft chapters of this book will form the core reading for the course. Additional readings will supplement this core text. We will discuss the many ways that guilt connects to aspects of social psychology. Guilt also has many far-reaching societal impacts, which we will also discuss.

In parallel with reading about and discussing guilt, we will also take a 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 experimental research. This proposal will be in the form of a 'preregistration report.'

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.
- Understand 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

Course Brightspace page and the sources posted there.

Course Assessment

Summary

Assignment	Due date (end of day)	Value
1) Early reflection paper	January 26th	5%
2) Take-home midterm exam	February 16th	30%
3) Social media post	March 15th	5%
4) Preregistration report	April 8th	40%
5) Take-home final exam reflection paper	April 15th	20%

All assignments should be submitted as a MS Word document attachment to moorec@dal.ca or on Brightspace by the deadline. Please title your document using the following format: "Name/B00number-Assignment number". For example, I would name my file for the first assignment: Moore/B00129362-1.

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**

Answer the following two questions (equally weighted)

Q1: In your opinion, what is the single most important reason why so many results in the experimental social psychology literature are not replicable? Justify your answer in detail.
Q2: According to the readings, what is guilt and what is it for? **OR**
Describe how according to the readings, guilt shows up in the relationships between children and their parents.

The word limit for **each** answer is 1000 words. This limit doesn't mean you have to write 1000 words. You will not be penalized for answers that are shorter if you write a full answer but 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.

For examples, see @mfwguilt on Instagram or @Dalman3958 on X. Submit the post **as well as** a one-page (≤ 300 word) statement of how the post content illustrates the relationship theory of guilt.

4) **Preregistration report**

Details to be elaborated over the course of the first few weeks.

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 <u>Dalhousie Common Grade Scale</u>

A+ (90-100)	**B+** (77-79)	**C+** (65-69)	**D**	(50-54)
A (85-89)	**B** (73-76)	**C** (60-64)	**F**	(<50)
A- (80-84)	**B-** (70-72)	**C-** (55-59)		

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

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.

Schedule

For most weeks, the first class (Monday) will be on a guilt-related topic that delves into some area of social psychology and the second class (Wednesday) will be on a topic relating to experimental research 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 largely be run 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 largely 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. To ensure everyone gets involved you will be assigned to discussion groups (different groups randomly assigned each week) and part of each class time will involve in-group discussion before presenting your ideas to the class.

Date	Topic	Reading/listening/watching (more may be added as the semester progresses)
January 8th	Introduction to the class	Syllabus
January 10th	Guilt – a most universal experience	*Guilt* introduction
January 15th	What is guilt?	*Guilt* chapter 1 Baumeister et al. (1994)
January 17th	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).
January 22nd	What is guilt for?	*Guilt* chapter 2 Ostojic et al. (2015)
January 24th	The culture and practice of scientific psychology	Doyen et al. (2012)
January 29th	The development of guilt in childhood	*Guilt* chapter 3 Vaish et al. (2016)

January 31st	Questionable research practices	Kerr (1998) Simmons et al. (2011)
February 5th	Guilt-proneness	*Guilt* chapter 4 [Cleckley, H. *The Mask of Sanity*](). Case history of Tom (pp.64-70)
February 7th	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)
February 12th	Parental guilt	*Guilt* chapter 5 Aarntzen et al. (2023)
February 14th	Solutions to the replication crisis	Chambers (2017) Chapter 7 excerpt Simmons et al. (2021) van't Veer & Giner-Sorolla (2016)
February 26th	Guilt in adult relationships	*Guilt* chapter 6 Mikulincer & Shaver (2005)
February 28th	Group work - brainstorming guilt research questions	
March 4th	Collective guilt	*Guilt* chapter 10
March 6th	Group work – finalizing your question(s) and hypotheses.	
March 11th	Guilt gone awry	*Guilt* chapter 7
March 13th	Group work – developing methods	Sample size; Note limitations on design to (1) correlation and (2) simple experiment (t-test).
March 18th	Guilt in religion	*Guilt* chapter 8

March 20th	Group work – finalizing methods	
March 25th	Guilt in the law	*Guilt* chapter 9
March 27th	Group work – finalizing analyses	
April 1st	Making friends with guilt	*Guilt* chapter 11
April 3rd	Group work – finalizing preregistered report	
April 8th	What have we learned?	