

Department of Psychology & Neuroscience

PSYO 4080: Topics in Social and Personality Psychology: *How to Be Social*

Instructor(s): Chris Moore moorec@dal.ca Office hours by appointment
Classes: Fall 2023, Thursday 08.35 – 10.25
Course delivery: In-person McCain 2190

Course Description

The theme of this course is “How to be social.” We will explore four different ‘modes’ of social relations. These four modes are separable but interconnected. *Interpersonal relations* involve psychological mechanisms that allow individuals to interact, communicate, and collaborate. *Group relations* distinguish ingroups and outgroups and involve psychological mechanisms that support ingroup cohesion and outgroup competition. *Hierarchical relations* organize individuals according to dominance hierarchies. Psychological mechanisms governing dominance and subordination serve to maintain and sometimes challenge such hierarchies. *Reproductive relations* involve psychological mechanisms that organize interactions around various behaviors that enable reproduction. Each of these modes will be explored from four different perspectives: evolution/phylogeny, development, mature human functioning, and society & culture. Students will be expected to read assigned work and develop their own ideas in relation to these (or other related) topics. Classes will include a combination of instructor and student presentations and students will be expected to contribute actively to class discussion. Assessment will be based on student presentations and a final paper.

Course Prerequisites

None

Course Exclusion

None

Learning Objectives

- Broad understanding of the ways in which human social life is structured and the psychological mechanisms that organize social behaviour.
- Skill at summarizing research articles.
- Skill at making brief oral presentations and leading discussion.
- Analysis of the relevance of psychological science for societal issues and ability to produce a short article demonstrating this relevance that is appropriate for a general audience.

Course Materials

Course Brightspace page

Course Assessment

For seven of the classes, you are required to find one paper relevant to the theme of the course: *How to be social*. For the whole semester, at least one paper must be on each mode of how to be social (interpersonal, group, hierarchical, reproductive) and at least one paper must be on each of three perspectives on how to be social (evolution, development, adult human). You will prepare and deliver a brief presentation (~5 slides) on the paper you have chosen and lead a short discussion on it. You need to submit a pdf and a ≤ 300 -word summary of each paper two days in advance of the class at which you will present it. Presentation dates will be determined randomly in advance.

You will also prepare an opinion editorial (op-ed; ≤ 1000 words, double spaced) style paper on how the research on one or more of the topics covered in the course inform a contemporary social issue in society. You are welcome to be ‘provocative’ in these pieces. I have provided an example on Brightspace to illustrate. The due date is the last day of classes (December 6th).

Grades will be based on the summary (5 marks) and presentation (5 marks) for each of the seven papers (total 70%) and the final op-ed paper (30%).

Other course requirements

Participation in discussion of classmates’ presentations (not graded but important for the class to work!).

Conversion of numerical grades to Final Letter Grades follows the Dalhousie Common Grade Scale

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 (health-related, scheduling conflict), you cannot make an assigned presentation date, let me know as far as possible in advance and we will find an alternate time. If you cannot make an assigned presentation time, you should attempt to switch your presentation with another student (this may mean presenting twice in one class) or let me know and I will find an alternate time.

Failure to deliver a scheduled (or rescheduled) presentation by the end of the semester will result in a 0 for the grade (out of 10) for that paper. You can make up 5 marks for each missed paper by submitting the summary by the end of the semester.

Course Policies related to Academic Integrity

You are responsible for preparing your own presentations and summaries, but you are welcome to collaborate with other students on literature searches and identification of relevant work.

Course Content

The first two classes will be introductory and will be led by Chris Moore. Thereafter, students will lead choice of content within the course theme.

Readings for Weeks 1 & 2

This is a selection of readings to give a flavour of the course. We will discuss these and some other relevant topics in the first two classes. You do not need to know them in detail, but you do need to understand how they help frame the theme of the course.

Interpersonal relations

Clark, M. S., & Mills, J. R. (2012). A theory of communal (and exchange) relationships. In P. A. M. Van Lange, A. W. Kruglanski, & E. T. Higgins (Eds.), *Handbook of theories of social psychology* (pp. 232–250). Sage Publications Ltd.

Melis, A. P., & Warneken, F. (2016). The psychology of cooperation: Insights from chimpanzees and children. *Evolutionary Anthropology*, 25, 297-305.

Group relations

Dunham, Y. (2018). Mere membership. *Trends in Cognitive Sciences*, 22, 780-793.

Rakoczy, H. & Schmidt, M. (2013). The early ontogeny of social norms. *Child Development Perspectives*, 7, 17-21.

Hierarchical relations

Guyer, J. & Vaughan-Johnston, T. (2018). Upward and downward social comparisons: A brief historical overview. *Encyclopedia of Personality and Individual Differences*, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-28099-8_1912-1

Zeng, T. C., J. T. Cheng, J. T., & Henrich, J. (2022). Dominance in Humans. *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society B* 377, no. 1845.

Reproductive relations

Geary, D. C. (2010). *Evolution of Fatherhood. Chapter 6 in Male, female. The evolution of sex differences*. Washington, D.C. American Psychological Association.



Hazan, C. & Shaver, P. (1987). Romantic love conceptualized as an attachment process. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 52, 511-524.