

SOCIOLOGY 0020

PERSPECTIVES ON SOCIAL INTERACTION AN INTRODUCTION TO SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY

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Semester II, 2008-2009
Tu, Th 1:00-2:20
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This course examines the individual in social situations. We explore the social development of the person, the emergence of interpersonal relationships, and the process of integrating the individual and the social system. We will be guided by two distinct perspectives on the human social actor; each perspective contributes a unique understanding to any social issue. We will use these perspectives to gain insight into those personal and social factors that influence a person's behavior throughout the process of personal growth and integration into society. We are interested in how people seek answers throughout the life course to two fundamental questions of human existence: "Who am I?" and "What is my place in the social order?"

The course is divided into two parts. In focusing on the first fundamental question (Who am I?), Part I investigates the social development of the individual. We will begin with a brief presentation of the two perspectives that will guide our analysis: cognitive social psychology and symbolic interactionism. We next turn to a social psychological understanding of the self. From cognitive social psychology, we will examine the self as an entity; in contrast, symbolic interactionism will introduce us to the notion of the self as a process.

Part II presents the process of social integration, involving the second fundamental question: What is my place in the social order? We will begin by considering the process of self-presentation, in which an individual conveys impressions of themselves in order to become a part of society and attain the goals they set for themselves in social interaction. We follow with a discussion of social relationships, from friendships through romantic love; we will investigate the ways in which people build intimate connections to others. Next, we turn to altruism, as we explore the social and personal factors that facilitate or inhibit helping in an emergency. Finally, in analyzing social conflict, we will try to understand the nature of conflict and its contribution to the social order; in particular, we will focus on conflicts with authority and the conflict between doing good and doing evil.

For each topic, I have assigned a book that presents the core issues for our analysis. In addition, I have assigned a single article that serves as an exemplar of theory or empirical research on the topic; these articles will serve as material for the weekly discussion sections. All required books are on reserve in Rockefeller Library; the individual articles (marked with an asterisk) are available in the Online Course Reserve Access (OCRA).

Grades will be determined by your performance on three papers and a final examination. For the first paper, you may choose *either* Topic 2 (The Self as Entity) or Topic 3 (The Self as Process); for the second paper, you may choose *either* Topic 5 (All the World's a Stage) or Topic 6 (The Development of Interpersonal Relationships); for the third paper, you may choose *either* Topic 7 (Altruism) or Topic 8 (Conflict and

Community). Whatever topic you choose, your paper will be guided by a stimulus sheet that will serve as the focus of your analysis. Each paper should be 12 pages long. The final examination will be comprehensive and cover Part I *and* Part II of the course outline; it will be an open-book, open notes examination in essay format and will be given during the regularly scheduled final examination period (May 6, 9:00 a.m.). Each grading opportunity will be worth 25% of your final grade.

The required books for this course are:

- Elliott, Gregory C. 2009. *Family Matters: The Importance of Mattering to Family in Adolescence*. Wiley-Blackwell
- Erving Goffman. 1959. *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. Doubleday Anchor.
- John P. Hewitt. 2007. *Self and Society: A Symbolic Interactionist Approach to Social Psychology* (tenth edition). Allyn and Bacon.
- Diane Vaughan. 1986. *Uncoupling: Turning Points in Intimate Relationships*, Vintage Press.
- Robert Wuthnow. 1991. *Acts of Compassion: Caring for Others and Helping Ourselves*. Princeton University Press,
- Philip Zimbardo. 2007. *The Lucifer Effect: Understanding How Good People Turn Evil*. Random House.

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COURSE OUTLINE

Note: All required books are on reserve in Rockefeller Library;
readings with an asterisk are available in OCRA (Online Course Reserves Access).

Part I: The Social Development of the Individual

1. An Introduction to Social Psychology: Two Perspectives on the Human Social Actor (1 week)
*Isen and Hastorf, "Some perspectives on cognitive social psychology"
Hewitt, Chapter 1

2. The Self as Entity (2 weeks)
Elliott, entire book
*Baumeister, "Rejected and alone"

3. The Self as Process (2 weeks)
Hewitt, Chapters 2-3
*Cooley, "The social self"

4. Making Social Interaction Work (1 week)
Hewitt, Chapters 4-5
*Davis and Schmidt, "The obnoxious and the nice"

Part II: The Process of Social Integration

5. All the World's a Stage (2 weeks)
Goffman, entire book
*Elliott, "Some effects of deception and level of self-monitoring"

6. The Development of Interpersonal Relationships (2 weeks)

- * Murray, Holmes, & Griffin, "Self-esteem and the quest for felt security: How perceived regard regulates attachment processes"

Vaughan, entire book

7. Altruism (1 week)

- * Oesterle, Johnson, & Mortimer, "Volunteerism during the transition to adulthood: A life course perspective"

Wuthnow, entire book

8. Conflict and Community (2 weeks)

- *Goffman, "Strategic interaction"

Zimbardo, entire book

**** FINAL EXAM ****