

## **C8307 Social Psychology**

**20 credits**

**Class leader:** Dr Sally Wiggins  
**Tutor:** Dr Mark Elliott

### **Aims:**

This class aims to enable students to critically engage with contemporary perspectives and debates within social psychology, particularly those surrounding cognitive and critical/discursive approaches. This class is aligned to the British Psychological Society's QE syllabus and covers key areas within social psychology required for gaining Graduate Basis for Registration. The class builds on the level 2 class **C8202 Social & Health Psychology**, therefore prior knowledge of the content of the level 2 class is a requisite for **C8307**.

The class is grounded in current research which will drive elements of the specific content of the class: lectures and activities will be informed by current debates in the field, as well as providing a solid grounding in cognitive and discursive approaches within social psychology.

Students will be required to work with challenging theories and to develop their independent learning skills through group work and individual study activities. Self-directed learning activities, tutorials and online learning activities will be used to encourage students to take responsibility over their learning; these will include elements of choice to stimulate motivation and interest. Critical thinking will be encouraged and developed through these activities and through discussions and informal feedback with peers and tutors.

The class thus prepares students with the academic skills needed for moving into Honours year as well as providing a comprehensive understanding of key areas in social psychological research.

### **Content:**

**Attitudes and attitude change:** Social cognition models of attitudes such as the Theory of Planned Behaviour and the Health Belief Model will be covered in detail. This content will also include theories regarding the functions of attitudes, the link between attitudes and behaviour, as well as discursive psychological challenges to the attitudinal model.

**Identity:** Social, personal and group identities will be covered from both cognitive and discursive/critical perspectives. Core theories to be covered will be Social Identity Theory and Self-Categorisation Theory. Different 'types' of identity will be focused on in detail, such as gender, nationality, ethnicity, and so on.

**Prejudice:** This topic connects both attitudes and identities, and covers a broad range of areas such as social representations and social schemas, stereotyping, prejudice and conflict.

**Epistemology:** Throughout all the class material is a concern with the theory of knowledge and how social psychological knowledge is produced, and to what effect. Tensions between the cognitive and discursive approaches are explored, and students are encouraged to develop a rounded understanding of contemporary social psychology from different perspectives.

### **Learning outcomes:**

Cognitive skills

i. an ability to evaluate contemporary and conflicting perspectives within social psychology.

Knowledge and understanding

ii. an understanding of a range of issues and topics areas within social psychology.

iii. knowledge of the different methodologies used within different topic areas and social psychological perspectives.

- iv. an understanding of the epistemological assumptions of both cognitive and discursive perspectives and the implications of these for social psychological research and knowledge.

Practical skills

- v. independent reading and self-guided study.
- vi. group work and elements of peer-teaching through self-directed learning activities.
- vii. practical experience in designing and/or conducting questionnaire research.
- viii. practical experience in analysing a piece of qualitative data.

**Employability**

C8307 provides students with a number of skills which are valued outside of the Undergraduate context. These include: the ability to develop an argument based on empirical evidence; the ability to understand and translate research findings into plain English; the ability to put social psychological theory into practice (particularly in the problem-based learning and self-directed learning components of the class); the ability to work in teams (in the problem-based learning component).

**Feedback:**

Students will receive detailed, written feedback on their essays. Verbal feedback will also be provided by staff in the tutorials and self-directed learning sessions. Feedback, however, comes in many forms and at various points: when a discussion post on MyPlace is responded to, this is feedback; when you email a member of staff and they reply, this is feedback; a response to a question before, after, or during a lecture, is feedback! If any feedback is unclear, given the opportunity, staff will be happy to clarify it.

**Place in course:**

This is a level 3 psychology class. It will build upon the content provided in the level 2 **PY202 Social & Health Psychology** and provides the basis for 4th year options in social psychology and qualitative approaches. All second year classes are prerequisites for this class.

**Methods of teaching:**

The class is taught by means of **lectures, tutorials and self-directed learning** sessions.

**Teaching Hours:** Three hours per week, during semester 1.

Monday 9-10am, Thursday 10am-12pm. Room allocation will be provided later.

**Assessment:**

The class is assessed by one examination and one essay. The examination counts for 60% and the essay for 40% of the overall class mark. The examination takes the form of essay-style answers. The University and the Department require students to attend lectures, seminars, tutorials, and practicals regularly and to perform satisfactorily in the associated work. Students who fail to attend, or who have not submitted the essay by two weeks following the deadline may be excluded from the degree examination. Any student with coursework outstanding at the time of the examination will receive a Fail for the examination performance and will not be able to obtain a pass at the resit examination unless the outstanding work completed to a satisfactory standard has been submitted.

**Reading:**

The class leader recommends the following core texts (can be found in the library). As a 3<sup>rd</sup> Year class, you should begin to make greater use of journal articles, and suggested titles will be provided at the end of most lectures.

Dickerson, P. (2011) *Social psychology: Traditional and critical perspectives*. Essex: Pearson.

*Available as an electronic text on the library website.*

McKinlay, A. & McVittie, C. (2008) *Social psychology and discourse*. Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell. *Available as an electronic text on the library website.*

Sutton, R. & Douglas, K. (2013) *Social Psychology*. Palgrave. *Companion website available.*