



Course information 2026-27

SP2079 Elements of Social and Applied Psychology

General information

MODULE LEVEL: 5

CREDIT: 30

NOTIONAL STUDY TIME: 300 hours

MODE: Locally Taught and Independent Learner Route Only

Summary

This course provides an overview of key areas of social psychology and their application. It addresses issues of both theoretical interest and practical importance, thereby aiding our understanding of how people behave, think, interact and communicate in social settings.

Conditions

Please see Programme Regulations for a list of Prerequisites, Corequisites and Exclusions.

Aims and objectives

This course has five major aims. To:

- provide an overview of the scope of social psychology and its major methodological approaches
- identify the key ideas and processes people use in understanding their social world
- assess the impact of group membership and social influence on people's behaviour
- evaluate the role of social relations in our societies
- illustrate how social psychological knowledge and principles can be applied to real-world issues, especially in organisational and management settings.

Learning outcomes

At the end of the course and having completed the essential reading and activities students should be able to:

- describe key concepts, theories and methodological approaches used in social psychology
- outline the processes used in understanding our social world
- assess how people behave in groups and the role of social influence
- analyse the processes and phenomena involved in social relations
- critically evaluate how social psychology can be applied to social issues and can aid our understanding of human behaviour in real-life settings, especially those involving organisational and economic issues.

Employability skills

Below are the three most relevant employability skills that students acquire by undertaking this course which can be conveyed to future prospective employers:

1. Complex problem solving
2. Emotional intelligence
3. Communication

Essential reading

Gilovich T., D. Keltner, S. Chen and R.E. Nisbett *Social psychology*. (London: Norton, 2023) sixth edition [ISBN 9780393932584].

Hogg, M.A. and G.M. Vaughan *Social psychology*. (Harlow: Pearson Education Limited, 2020) ninth edition [ISBN 9781292090450].

Kassin, S., Fein, S. & Markus, H. R. *Social Psychology* (Sage, 2024), 12th edition [ISBN 9781071931257]

Assessment

This course is assessed by a three-hour and fifteen-minute closed-book written examination.

Syllabus

What is social psychology?: The nature and scope of social psychology; factors which influence social behaviour; theoretical perspectives and the role of theory in research. Research methods in social psychology; research techniques in organisational, management and economic psychology; quality indicators in research: reliability, validity and realism; ethical issues in research including the use of deception; the WEIRD psychology challenge and its implications; the replication (or reproducibility) crisis in social psychology and its implications. Approaches to applying social psychology to real world issues; the challenges and benefits of applying the knowledge and principles of social psychology to practical problems, especially in organisations, workplace and economic settings; social psychology and attitude change; behavioural science and nudging.

Understanding the social world: Concepts of the self; self-awareness and self-perception; self-knowledge and schemas; social comparison; self-esteem; self presentation; performance style and self-presentation strategies; the dramaturgical model; self, culture and diversity; life online and the self. Perception of others and impression formation: information used, and its presentation; Individual decision making and moral judgments; social cognitive strategies: heuristics, biases and errors; the impact of schemata and stereotypes; attributions and attributional style; attribution theory; sources of error and bias; social cognition and culture; are biases and errors really biases and errors? Attitudes: their nature, formation and functions; cognitive consistency and dissonance; the relation between attitudes and behaviour; recent models of the attitude-behaviour link; beyond dissonance: other kinds of rationalisation of action; culture, society and attitudes. Groups: joining and leaving groups; ostracism; group structure, norms and development; minimal group experiments; the effects of groups versus 'mere' presence: social facilitation and social loafing; collective behaviour and crowds: theories of crowd behaviour, collective violence and political action; collective behaviour, emotional contagion and herding collective behaviour online.

Social relations and social influence: Group influence: task performance; decision making; differences between individual and group decision making; groupthink and group polarisation; intergroup conflict and conflict resolution, strategic interaction and negotiation; social dilemmas; political opinion polarisation; are we living in a less violent world? Social influence: norms, power and imitation; conformity: normative influence, majority and minority pressure; compliance and acceptance; obedience to authority: experimental studies; factors affecting obedience and their implications; conformity and culture; conformity and evolution. Attitude change and persuasive communication: Yale model and dual process models; factors in changing attitudes; persuasion and culture; 'fake news' and misinformation; persuasion to change attitudes or behaviour? Interpersonal attraction and relationships: human need for relationships; attraction; relationship maintenance and relationship breakdown; culture and gender variation in relationships; social media dating apps and relationships. Communication: language and thought; language, groups and identity; non-verbal communication; diversity and communication; interpersonal communication in the workplace; corporate communication and reputation management; social media communication; globalisation and language extinction.

Applied topics: Consumer behaviour and marketing: types of consumer behaviour; persuasion and consumer behaviour: consumption, attitude change and identity; marketing persuasion strategies and branding; can people resist advertising? Social media, influencers and consumer behaviour; culture and consumer behaviour. Prejudice and discrimination: characterising prejudice and discrimination; the causes of prejudice: theoretical accounts; consequences of prejudice; how successful are attempts to reduce prejudice and discrimination? Cultural differences and prejudice; globalisation and prejudice. The world of work: experience in the workplace: group dynamics, work motivation, satisfaction at work, psychological contracts, work-life balance; organisational culture; leaders and leadership: styles and theories; leaderships and culture; AI and the future of work. Gender and diversity in organisations: the case for diversity in organisations; gender diversity: roles, stereotypes and norms; gender theory; gender diversity in organisations; cultural diversity: norms, tightness and looseness, collectivism and individualism; cultural diversity in organisation; forms of diversity beyond gender and culture; resistance to diversity, equity and inclusion.