



Course information 2025-26

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

Hogg, M.A. and G.M. Vaughan Social Psychology. (Harlow: Prentice Hall, 2017) eighth edition [ISBN 978-1292090450]

Sanderson, C.A. Social Psychology. (New York: Wiley, 2010) [ISBN 978-0471250265]

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; reliability, validity and realism; ethical issues in research. 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.

Understanding the social world: Concepts of the self; self-perception; self presentation; performance style and self-presentation strategies; the dramaturgical model. Perception of others and impression formation. Individual decision making and moral judgments; social cognitive strategies: heuristics, biases and fallacies; the impact of schemata and stereotypes. Attributions and attributional style; attribution theory; sources of error and bias. Attitudes: their nature, formation and functions; cognitive consistency and dissonance; the relation between attitudes and behaviour; recent models of the attitude-behaviour link; the nature and impact of social representations.

Social influence: Groups: roles, norms and cohesiveness; altruism and pro-social behaviour. Group influence: task performance; problem solving; decision making. Differences between individual and group decision making in social, economic and organisational settings. Intergroup conflict and conflict resolution, strategic interaction and negotiation. Conformity; normative influence, majority and minority pressure and its impact; compliance and acceptance. Obedience to authority; experimental studies; factors affecting obedience and their implications. Social influence and contagious processes in settings involving uncertainty, such as crowds and economic environments. Attitude change and persuasive communication; analyses of the factors involved in the persuasion process, with special reference to the media, advertising and brand identity.

Social relations: Interpersonal communication: the role of language and non-verbal cues; the role of the internet and social networking in communication, relationships and cultural transmission; corporate communication, corporate social identity and reputation management. Diversity, with special reference to gender and culture. Relationships and theories of attraction. Prejudice and discrimination: the role of competition, social categorisation, social learning and social cognition. The work setting, organisational behaviour, job satisfaction, leadership. Personality assessment and personnel selection. Stress and illness; life events and work as sources of stress. Culture in organisations, multiculturalism, intercultural contact and globalisation.