

## SEMESTER AT SEA COURSE SYLLABUS

**Voyage: Spring 2015**

**Discipline: Psychology**

**PSYC 2600-501 and 502: Introduction to Social Psychology (Sections 1 and 2)**

**Division: Lower**

**Faculty Name: Scott Plous**

**Prerequisites: None**

**Office Hours: 12:15-1:15 pm on B days in the Garden Lounge Dining Room**

### **COURSE DESCRIPTION**

Every person is unique, yet we all face similar questions when it comes to human behavior. What makes for a happy life? How do friendships and romantic attraction work? What are the best ways to address violence, prejudice, climate change, and other social problems? In a course designed especially for Semester at Sea, we'll explore these and other questions through a cross-cultural introduction to classic and contemporary social psychology: the scientific study of how people think about, influence, and relate to one another. For example, we'll cover topics such as decision making, persuasion, group behavior, personal attraction, and life satisfaction. Throughout the semester, our focus will be on surprising, entertaining, and intriguing research findings that are easy to apply in daily life. As part of this focus, several assignments will encourage you to experiment with your life, observe the results, and analyze what took place. The course will also consider the role of culture in shaping human behavior and will include opportunities to integrate your cultural experiences off the ship with topics discussed in class.

### **COURSE OBJECTIVES**

The general goal of this course is to offer a cross-cultural introduction to classic and contemporary research in social psychology. Students who complete the course satisfactorily will:

1. Learn how psychological research is conducted and interpreted
2. Become familiar with a wide range of social psychological topics and investigations
3. Understand the role of culture, gender, and social categories in shaping behavior
4. Be able to apply social psychology principles, theories, and research findings to:
  - a. improve individual and group decision making
  - b. reduce interpersonal and intergroup conflict
  - c. enhance human health and well-being
  - d. address social, societal, and global challenges
  - e. cultivate empathy in oneself and others

### **REQUIRED TEXTBOOK**

**AUTHOR:** David G. Myers

**TITLE:** *Social Psychology*

**PUBLISHER:** McGraw-Hill

**ISBN #:** 0078035295

**DATE/EDITION:** 2012 / 11th

**E-TEXT:** This text is available in [Kindle](#) format and as a downloadable e-text from [CourseSmart](#).

## TOPICAL OUTLINE OF THE COURSE

The following schedule may be modified to suit student interests or take advantage of special opportunities that arise during the voyage. All submitted work is due at the beginning of class on the day of the deadline, but reading assignments should be completed *after* class session listed below (except for assignments immediately before an exam, which may be read early if you prefer).

Class	Date	Topic, Activity, and/or Assignment
	Jan 7	Depart Ensenada, Mexico
1	Jan 10	Introduction <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Myers Chapter 1—Introducing Social Psychology</li> </ul>
2	Jan 12	The Social Construction of Reality <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Myers Chapter 2—The Self in a Social World</li> </ul>
	Jan 14	Hilo, Hawaii
3	Jan 15	Interpreting Behavior ("Interpersonal Perception Task") <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Milgram, S. (2010). Cyranoids. In T. Blass (Ed.), <i>The individual in a social world: Essays and experiments</i> (3rd ed., pp. 402-409). London: Pinter &amp; Martin.</li> <li>• Rosenhan, D. L. (1973, January 19). On being sane in insane places. <i>Science</i>, 179, 250-258 (edited and abridged).</li> <li>• Dunning, D., Johnson, K., Ehrlinger, J., &amp; Kruger, J. (2003). Why people fail to recognize their own incompetence. <i>Current Directions in Psychological Science</i>, 12(3), 83-87.</li> </ul>
4	Jan 17	Attributional Biases <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Myers Chapter 3—Social Beliefs and Judgments</li> </ul>
	Jan 20	No Classes: Study Day
5	Jan 21	The Relationship Between Attitudes and Behavior <p>➤ Due: Random Assignment Assignment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Myers Chapter 4—Behavior and Attitudes (pp. 118-134)</li> <li>• Optional: Larrick, R. P., &amp; Soll, J. B. (2008). The MPG illusion. <i>Science</i>, 320, 1593-1594.</li> </ul>
6	Jan 23	Cognitive Dissonance and Self-Perception <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Myers Chapter 4—Behavior and Attitudes (pp. 134-148)</li> <li>• <a href="#">Tips on Taking Multiple-Choice Tests</a> (to help prepare for the upcoming exam)</li> </ul>

Class	Date	Topic, Activity, and/or Assignment
7	Jan 25	Deindividuation and Dehumanization ("Quiet Rage" Video) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Myers Chapter 5—Genes, Culture, and Gender</li> <li>• Optional: Baird, V. (2003). Transgender identities: Like stars in the sky. In S. Plous (Ed.), <i>Understanding prejudice and discrimination</i> (pp. 414-420). New York: McGraw-Hill.</li> </ul>
	Jan 26-27	Yokohama, Japan
	Jan 28	In Transit
	Jan 29-31	Kobe, Japan
8	Feb 2	➤ <b>First Exam</b>
	Feb 3-4	Shanghai, China
	Feb 5-6	In Transit
	Feb 7-8	Hong Kong
9	Feb 10	Obedience to Authority ("Obedience" Video) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ <b>Watch <i>Fog of War</i> video (19-minutes) by this class session</b></li> <li>• Burger, J. M. (2009). Replicating Milgram: Would people still obey today? <i>American Psychologist</i>, 64, 1-11.</li> </ul>
	Feb 11-16	Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam
10	Feb 18	Conformity in the East and West ("Candid Camera" Video) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Myers Chapter 6—Conformity and Obedience</li> </ul>
	Feb 19-20	Singapore Arrive on the <a href="#">Chinese New Year</a> —how cool is that? 
	Feb 21	No Classes: Study Day
11	Feb 23	Persuasion: An Overview of Tactics <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ <b>Due: Paper on Building Cultural Bridges</b></li> <li>• Myers Chapter 7—Persuasion</li> </ul>
	Feb 24-Mar 1	Rangoon, Burma

Class	Date	Topic, Activity, and/or Assignment
12	Mar 3	Compliance Techniques <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cialdini, R. B. (2003, August). Crafting normative messages to protect the environment. <i>Current Directions in Psychological Science</i>, 12(4), 105-109.</li> <li>• Optional: Cialdini, R. B., &amp; Schroeder, D. A. (1976). Increasing compliance by legitimizing paltry contributions: When even a penny helps. <i>Journal of Personality and Social Psychology</i>, 34, 599-604.</li> </ul>
13	Mar 5	Negotiation and Group Dynamics ("Abilene Paradox" Video) ➤ Due: Vietnam Field Lab Paper (Section 501)
	Mar 6-11	Cochin, India
14	Mar 13	Individual Versus Group Performance (Class Experiment) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Myers Chapter 8—Group Influence</li> </ul>
	Mar 14	No Classes: Study Day
15	Mar 16	Intergroup Relations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Myers Chapter 9—Prejudice</li> <li>• Optional: Equal Justice Initiative. (2010). <a href="#"><i>Illegal racial discrimination in jury selection: A continuing legacy</i></a>. Montgomery, AL: Author.</li> </ul>
	Mar 18	Port Louis, Mauritius
16	Mar 19	The Faces of Prejudice ("A Class Divided" and "Blue Eyed" Videos) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Glick, P., &amp; Fiske, S. T. (2003). An ambivalent alliance: Hostile and benevolent sexism as complementary justifications for gender inequality. In S. Plous (Ed.), <i>Understanding prejudice and discrimination</i> (pp. 225-231). New York: McGraw-Hill.</li> </ul>
	Mar 21	No Classes: Study Day
17	Mar 22	Before Cape Town: A Discussion of Apartheid and Other Forms of Discrimination (20/20 Video on Prejudice) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Myers Chapter 15—Social Psychology in Court</li> <li>• Optional: Plous, S. (2003). <a href="#"><i>Is there such a thing as prejudice toward animals?</i></a> In S. Plous (Ed.), <i>Understanding prejudice and discrimination</i> (pp. 509-528). New York: McGraw-Hill.</li> </ul>
18	Mar 24	Violence and Aggression ("Bobo Doll" and "Does TV Kill?" Videos) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Myers Chapter 10—Aggression</li> </ul>
	Mar 25-30	Cape Town, South Africa

Class	Date	Topic, Activity, and/or Assignment
19	Apr 1	➤ <b>Second Exam</b>
	Apr 2-6	Walvis Bay, Namibia
20	Apr 8	Attraction and Intimacy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Myers Chapter 11—Attraction and Intimacy</li> <li>• Optional: American Psychological Association. (2011). <a href="#"><i>Resolution on marriage equality for same-sex couples</i></a>. Washington, DC: Author.</li> </ul>
21	Apr 10	Bystander Intervention ("Brother's Keeper" Video) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ <b>Due: Paper on the Diet and Lifestyle Choices Interview</b></li> <li>• Myers Chapter 12—Helping</li> </ul>
	Apr 11	No Classes: Study Day
22	Apr 13	International Peace and Conflict Resolution <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ <b>Due: South Africa Field Lab Paper (Section 502)</b></li> <li>• Myers Chapter 13—Conflict and Peacemaking</li> </ul>
23	Apr 15	Tips on Leading a Happy Life: A Global Perspective <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Myers Chapter 14—Social Psychology in the Clinic</li> <li>• Required video (available via Loop): <a href="#"><i>How to Buy Happiness</i></a></li> <li>• Optional: Taylor, P., Funk, C., &amp; Craighill, P. (2006, February 13). <a href="#"><i>Are we happy yet?</i></a> Washington, DC: Pew Research Center.</li> </ul>
	Apr 16	No Classes: Study Day
24	Apr 18	Empathy—A Magic Bullet? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Myers Chapter 16—Social Psychology and the Sustainable Future</li> </ul>
	Apr 19-23	Casablanca, Morocco
	Apr 24	Global Lens Exams and Study Day
25	Apr 26	➤ <b>Third Exam</b>
	Apr 29	Southampton, England

## FIELD WORK

This course includes an 8-hour field lab on the psychology of peace, reconciliation, and forgiveness. Participation in the field lab is required for all students in the course, so please don't make any travel plans or sign up for a Semester at Sea trip on the day of our field lab. The lab for students in Section 1 will take place in Vietnam, and the lab for students in Section 2 will take place in South Africa. Both labs include a 3-5 page paper assignment worth 100 points (20% of your final course grade).

 *Warning:* Both field labs include graphic coverage of events and topics that you may find disturbing. Please consider this fact when deciding whether to enroll in the course, and if you have any questions or concerns, contact me as early in the semester as possible.

### FIELD LAB – Section 1

#### *Location and dates:*

The lab for Section 1 will take place in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam, on Wednesday, February 11, and the paper based on this lab will be due on March 5.

#### *Description:*

The Vietnam War—known as the "American War" in Vietnam—took the lives of 58,000 Americans and millions of Vietnamese people. How are peace, reconciliation, and forgiveness possible after so much killing, and what can we learn from the Vietnam War today? To explore these questions, we'll begin with a behind-the-scenes tour of the War Remnants Museum (one of the most frequently visited museums in Vietnam) and view the Vietnam War from the perspective of people critical of the United States and its allies. In the words of LonelyPlanet.com, "There are few museums in the world that drive home so well the point that war is horribly brutal and that many of its victims are civilians." After learning about the Vietnam War, we will then meet with representatives of the Vietnam Association of Victims of Agent Orange/Dioxin, including people who have experienced the effects of chemicals sprayed by U.S. planes during the war. Throughout the lab we'll examine the psychological dimensions of forgiveness and reconciliation, not only in an extreme case such as the Vietnam War, but in day-to-day conflicts that all of us experience.

### FIELD LAB – Section 2

#### *Location and dates:*

The lab for Section 2 will take place in Cape Town, South Africa, on Monday, March 30, and the paper based on this lab will be due on April 13.

#### *Description:*

Apartheid was a South African system of legalized racial discrimination that ended in 1994, when Nelson Mandela became South Africa's first Black president. The following year, President Mandela made history by creating a Truth and Reconciliation Commission to help the country come to terms with its past and promote healing. To mark the Commission's 20th anniversary, this field lab will begin with a visit to Robben Island, where Nelson Mandela was imprisoned from 1964 to 1982. The excursion will be made by

ferry boat and will include a prison tour and an opportunity to speak with a former political prisoner. The lab will then continue with a visit to the Institute for Justice and Reconciliation, which was founded in 2000 as successor to the Commission. At the Institute, we'll meet with a representative to discuss the psychological aspects of promoting social justice and reconciliation in post-apartheid South Africa. During our visit, we'll also explore techniques for practicing forgiveness and reconciliation in daily life.

## FIELD ASSIGNMENTS

### (1) Field Lab Paper

After your field lab, you'll have three weeks to write a 3-5 page paper in which you use social psychology to answer these questions: What have I learned about myself as a result of this field lab? What have I learned about other people and other cultures? What are the psychological benefits of forgiveness? Is there anything that can't be forgiven? What the most effective ways to help myself and others forgive acts that seem unforgivable? Papers will be graded on depth of insight, originality, reasoning, factual accuracy, application of course material, and stylistic factors such as clarity, organization, grammar, punctuation, and freedom from errors (so please be sure to proofread all work before submitting it).

*Note:* You must attend the field lab to receive credit for the associated paper.

### (2) Building Cultural Bridges (short paper due before your field lab)

How can social psychology be used to build cultural bridges and leave the people you meet in port cities with positive feelings toward Americans? This assignment, which ends with a 1-2 page paper due at the beginning of the 11th class session, challenges you to (a) apply research findings when visiting East Asian port cities, and (b) write about the results. Relevant findings include research on impression formation, social perception, behavioral confirmation, causal attribution, attitude change, cognitive dissonance, gender, and culture, to name just a few. In your paper, please describe what you did to foster intercultural understanding and goodwill, how you felt when carrying out the assignment, how others responded, how you used social psychology, and what you learned from the assignment. The bridges you build can be through brief interactions (e.g., with store clerks), extended dialogue with people you meet, or deeds that you perform, and they should include a comparison of experiences in at least two port cities.

When completing papers for the two field assignments, please:

- Be original rather than playing it safe and saying what's obvious
- Use specific examples rather than being abstract and general
- Cite research findings when applicable, either from class or other sources
- Consider the role of culture and draw on multiple port experiences
- Check your work carefully for spelling and grammatical errors
- Use 12-point font, 1" inch margins, and do not exceed the page limit
- Print your paper at least one day before the deadline (there are no extensions)

What you'll be graded on includes:

- How factually correct your paper is
- How well you applied social psychology
- How creative, insightful, or original the work is
- How logical and well reasoned your conclusions are
- How clear and well organized the writing is
- How well you incorporated the role of culture

*Tip:* Because the assigned papers are brief, please skip lengthy introductions or restatements of material from the course lectures or readings. Instead, dive in to your own content after a sentence or two of opening context, and don't let your paper stray from its main points.

## **WEB ASSIGNMENTS**

In addition to the field assignments, there will be two web-based assignments: (1) the Random Assignment Assignment, and (2) the Diet & Lifestyle Choices Interview. I will provide a detailed description of the web assignments in class.

## **METHODS OF EVALUATION / GRADING RUBRIC**

To avoid the stress of grades based solely on a midterm and final examination, the course will include three examinations and five assignments (the third exam will take place on the Final Exam day but will not be longer or count more than the exam before it). All exams will cover material from class as well as the readings, and all will contain a mixture of multiple choice and true-false items. Before you turn in a completed exam, please check that no items have been accidentally skipped. In the event that a full page of items is skipped, 50% credit will be given for true-false items and 25% for multiple choice items (the average value that would be received by chance responding), and the resulting exam score will be rounded up or down to the nearest whole point. If an exam is scored incorrectly or you feel that your answer to an exam item marked wrong should actually be considered correct, you have 24 hours to bring the problem to my attention, after which the exam score will be considered final.

***Note:* Make-up exams or extensions will not be given, except in the event of an emergency or serious illness, which must be documented before the exam. Also, cell phones and computers must be turned off during exams; anyone found using a mobile device or computer during an examination will automatically receive a score of zero for that exam.**

Because students often take awhile to develop a study strategy for the exams, the first exam will count less than the later two exams. Specifically, the first exam will count for 60 course points (1 point for each of 60 items on the test), and the later two exams will each count for 120 points (2 points per test item). Final letter grades will be determined by adding together points from four different sources: (1) the three exams (worth a total of 300 points), (2) three assignments (worth a total of 50 points), (3) the field lab (worth 100 points), and (4) class participation (worth 50 points). The following table contains a breakdown of all course points.

<b>Course Component</b>	<b>Class Session</b>	<b>Points</b>
The Random Assignment Assignment	5	10
Examination 1	8	60
Field Assignment: Building Cultural Bridges	11	20
Examination 2	19	120
Web Assignment: Diet & Lifestyle Choices Interview	21	20
Examination 3	25	120
Class Participation	All	50
Field Lab		100
<b><i>Total points possible</i></b>		<b><i>500</i></b>

Once the course ends, your point total will be converted to a final letter grade using cutoffs (rather than rounding numbers up or down). Because the exams in this class have not been given before, it's difficult to specify in advance how various scores will translate into particular letter grades. Nonetheless, you may use the following cutoffs as a rough guide in translating course point totals into letter grades (the final cutoffs will be different from these, but not by much). These cutoffs are based on Peterson's—the most common method of matching letter grades to 100-point scales:

<u>Letter Grade</u>	<u>Cumulative Point Total</u>
A+	97.0% and above
A	94.0% and above
A-	90.0% and above
B+	87.0% and above
B	84.0% and above
B-	80.0% and above
C+	77.0% and above
C	74.0% and above
C-	70.0% and above
D+	67.0% and above
D	64.0% and above
D-	60.0% and above
F	below 60.0%

## **CLASS PARTICIPATION**

The value of this course depends in part on what you bring to it—each member of the class is personally responsible for the quality of our time together, and I welcome your contributions. To participate fully, please: (1) arrive punctually to all sessions and course events, (2) complete all required readings on time, (3) contribute to the group without dominating the discussion, and (4) help create a climate in which others can comfortably share their opinions. At the end of the course, I'll ask you to submit a self-appraisal of your class participation, and I'll assign a score of up to 50 points based on my own assessment of how well you participated.

## RESERVE BOOKS AND DOCUMENTARY FILMS

### Books

AUTHOR: David G. Myers  
TITLE: *Social Psychology*  
PUBLISHER: McGraw-Hill  
ISBN #: 0078035295  
DATE/EDITION: 2012 / 11th

AUTHOR: Stanley Milgram  
TITLE: *Obedience to Authority: An Experimental View*  
PUBLISHER: Harper Perennial Modern Classics  
ISBN #: 006176521X  
DATE/EDITION: 2009 / Reprint edition

AUTHOR: Philip G. Zimbardo  
TITLE: *The Lucifer Effect: Understanding How Good People Turn Evil*  
PUBLISHER: Random House  
ISBN #: 0812974441  
DATE/EDITION: 2007

### Documentary Films

*A Class Divided* (1986/2003)  
*Fog of War* (2003)  
*Mandela: Son of Africa, Father of a Nation* (1996)  
*Obedience* (1965)  
*Quiet Rage: The Stanford Prison Experiment* (1988/2004)  
*The Abilene Paradox* (2002; 2nd edition)  
*This Emotional Life* (2010)  
*Winter Soldier: First Marine Division* (1971/2006)

## ELECTRONIC COURSE MATERIALS

American Psychological Association. (2011). *Resolution on marriage equality for same-sex couples*. Washington, DC: Author.

Baird, V. (2003). Transgender identities: Like stars in the sky. In S. Plous (Ed.), *Understanding prejudice and discrimination* (pp. 414-420). New York: McGraw-Hill.

Burger, J. M. (2009). Replicating Milgram: Would people still obey today? *American Psychologist*, 64, 1-11.

Cialdini, R. B. (2003, August). Crafting normative messages to protect the environment. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 12(4), 105-109.

- Cialdini, R. B., & Schroeder, D. A. (1976). Increasing compliance by legitimizing paltry contributions: When even a penny helps. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 34, 599-604.
- Dunning, D., Johnson, K., Ehrlinger, J., & Kruger, J. (2003). Why people fail to recognize their own incompetence. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 12(3), 83-87.
- Equal Justice Initiative. (2010). *Illegal racial discrimination in jury selection: A continuing legacy*. Montgomery, AL: Author.
- Glick, P., & Fiske, S. T. (2003). An ambivalent alliance: Hostile and benevolent sexism as complementary justifications for gender inequality. In S. Plous (Ed.), *Understanding prejudice and discrimination* (pp. 225-231). New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Larrick, R. P., & Soll, J. B. (2008). The MPG illusion. *Science*, 320, 1593-1594.
- Milgram, S. (2010). Cyranoids. In T. Blass (Ed.), *The individual in a social world: Essays and experiments* (3rd ed., pp. 402-409). London: Pinter & Martin.
- Plous, S. (2003). Is there such a thing as prejudice toward animals? In S. Plous (Ed.), *Understanding prejudice and discrimination* (pp. 509-528). New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Rosenhan, D. L. (1994). On being sane in insane places. In S. L. Ellyson and A. G. Halberstadt (Eds.), *Explorations in social psychology: Readings and research* (pp. 37-46). New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Taylor, P., Funk, C., & Craighill, P. (2006, February 13). *Are we happy yet?* Washington, DC: Pew Research Center.

## **COURSE POLICIES**

**ATTENDANCE**—Because our class sessions will cover material that goes beyond the readings, class attendance is absolutely essential. Repeated late arrivals to class, or talking while the instructor or other students are speaking, may result in lengthy prison sentences. Please be punctual and refrain from talking in class when others are speaking.

**ASSIGNMENTS**—All assignments you submit must be original (not reprinted, excerpted, or adapted from existing work such as papers for other classes, books, articles, web pages). Similarly, all text, tables, figures, and images reproduced from other sources must include clear reference citations, and all quoted passages must use quotation marks to indicate that they are quotations. If you're not sure about how to properly cite a source, please ask me rather than running the risk of an honor code violation. Also, please note that late assignments will not be accepted except in the event of a serious illness or emergency; please backup your work and print a copy of your assignments at least one day before they're due.

**LAPTOPS**—Laptops are permitted, but studies suggest that they tend to lower student performance (from surfing the web in class, answering email, and other multitasking) and that they distract nearby students, so please don't bring one to class unless you truly need it. In fact, research on multitasking has even found that texting during class is associated with lower grades, which suggests that the smartest mode for "smart" phones may be *off*.

**CELL PHONES AND OTHER DEVICES**—Before each class session begins, please turn off all mobile phones, recording devices, video games, portable hair dryers, chainsaws, jet engines, and nuclear reactors.

**RECORDINGS**—Audio or video recording of lectures or class sessions without permission is expressly forbidden.

## **HONOR CODE**

Semester at Sea students enroll in an academic program administered by the University of Virginia, and thus bind themselves to the University's honor code. The code prohibits all acts of lying, cheating, and stealing. Please consult the Voyager's Handbook for further explanation of what constitutes an honor offense.

Each written assignment for this course must be pledged by the student as follows: "On my honor as a student, I pledge that I have neither given nor received aid on this assignment." The pledge must be signed, or, in the case of an electronic file, signed with your name typed and followed by "[signed]" (including the square brackets) after your name.

Social psychology is the scientific study of how people's thoughts, feelings, and behaviors are influenced by the actual, imagined, or implied presence of others (Allport 1998). By this definition, scientific refers to the empirical method of investigation. The terms thoughts, feelings, and behaviors include all of the psychological variables that are measurable in a human being. Social psychology is a branch of psychology that studies cognitive, affective, and behavioral processes of individuals as influenced by their group membership and interactions, and other factors that affect social life, such as social status, role, and social class. Social psychology examines the effects of social contacts on the development of attitudes, stereotypes, and so forth. Social psychology has continued to grow throughout the twentieth century, inspiring research that has contributed to our understanding of social experience and behavior. Our social world makes up such a tremendous part of our lives, so it is no wonder that this topic is so fascinating to many. How Is Social Psychology Different From Other Disciplines? It is important to differentiate social psychology from a few similar and related subjects. Social psychology is often confused with folk wisdom, personality psychology, and sociology.