

University of Nebraska - Lincoln

DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln

UNL Faculty Course Portfolios

Peer Review of Teaching Project

2019

Peer Review of Teaching Portfolio: Psychology of Social Behavior (PSYC 288)

Ashley M. Votruba

University of Nebraska-Lincoln, ashley.votruba@unl.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/prtunl>



Part of the [Higher Education Commons](#), and the [Higher Education and Teaching Commons](#)

Votruba, Ashley M., "Peer Review of Teaching Portfolio: Psychology of Social Behavior (PSYC 288)" (2019). *UNL Faculty Course Portfolios*. 149.

<https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/prtunl/149>

This Portfolio is brought to you for free and open access by the Peer Review of Teaching Project at DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln. It has been accepted for inclusion in UNL Faculty Course Portfolios by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln.



**PEER REVIEW OF
TEACHING PORTFOLIO
Psychology of Social
Behavior (PSYC 288)**

Ashley M. Votruba, J.D., Ph.D.
Assistant Professor
Department of Psychology
University of Nebraska – Lincoln
Spring 2019

Abstract

This course portfolio assesses student learning in the Psychology of Social Behavior course, PSYC 288. This course introduces students to the field of social psychology—the scientific study of the way in which people’s thoughts, feelings, and behaviors are influenced by the real or imagined presence of other people. This course covers the fundamental principles, theories, methods, experiments, and people of social psychology. Student enrollment for this course consists of 200 to 250 undergraduates from a variety of majors with diverse educational backgrounds and familiarity with social psychology. The course portfolio outlines the goals, learning outcomes, and assessments for this course. It then offers a reflective and evidence based analysis of student learning to reflect on whether the learning outcomes were achieved. Finally, the portfolio concludes with my reflections on the successes and challenges presented throughout the semester and planned future changes.

Table of Contents

Objectives of Peer Review Course Portfolio	4
Description of the Course	5
Course Information	5
Course Goals and Learning Outcomes	5
Student Enrollment and Demographics.....	7
Why This Course?.....	8
Teaching Methods, Course Materials, and Course Assessments	9
Teaching Methods and Rationale	9
Course Materials and Rationale.....	10
Course Assessments and Rationale	11
Exams	11
Writing Assignments	11
Revel Reading Quizzes	12
In-Class Research Exercises.....	12
Analysis of Student Learning.....	14
Learning Outcome 1: Learn the fundamental principles, experiments, and people of social psychology.	14
Learning Outcome 2: Identify and apply the underlying theoretical perspectives associated with social psychology.	17
Learning Outcome 3: Understand basic scientific methodology and study design utilized in social psychology and become a critical consumer of research.	18
Learning Outcome 4: Practice applying the fundamental principles covered in this course to social behavior in everyday life.....	19
Reflection on the Course	21
Successes	21
Challenges and Planned Revisions.....	22
Benefits from Developing the Course Portfolio.....	23
Appendices.....	24
Syllabus	24
Sample “Low Stakes” Writing Assignment Prompts.....	33
Writing Assignment 1.....	33
Writing Assignment 2.....	33
Writing Assignment 3.....	33

Writing Assignment 4.....	34
Writing Assignment 5.....	34

Objectives of Peer Review Course Portfolio

This course portfolio serves several interrelated purposes:

First, it will provide an opportunity to critically examine (1) the course learning outcomes; (2) whether the course materials and assignments help to achieve those outcomes; and (3) if the outcome assessments are appropriate for this specific course.

Second, the course portfolio will aid in intentionally and purposefully transitioning this course from a 300-level course with 30-35 students (as taught at a former institution) to a 200-level course with over 200 students. It will then provide a benchmark for future changes to the course.

Third, the process of creating the course portfolio promotes a reflective teaching practice benefitting future teaching for this course as well as other course I will teach. As pre-tenured faculty, I believe this early timing is especially opportune to my development as an instructor.

Fourth, this portfolio provides a broad overview of the course documented in an online repository for: (1) my department in its evaluation of undergraduate education, (2) other instructors of this course at my institution, (3) instructors of social psychology courses at other colleges and universities; and (4) inclusion my promotion and tenure materials.

Description of the Course

Course Information

The Psychology of Social Behavior (PSYC 288; see “[Syllabus](#)” in the Appendix) introduces students to the field of social psychology—the scientific study of the way in which people’s thoughts, feelings, and behaviors are influenced by the real or imagined presence of other people. This course covers the fundamental principles, theories, methods, experiments, and people of social psychology. Some of the classic social psychological topics covered include: social cognition, self-understanding, social influence, conformity, group processes, interpersonal relationships, helping, aggression, and prejudice. These topics are examined from different theoretical perspectives including the sociocultural, evolutionary, social learning, and social cognitive perspectives. In addition to covering key empirical findings, relevant methodology, and basics of study design, this course will emphasize thoughtful examination of social behavior and critical consumption of research findings.

As part of the Psychology Department’s curriculum at The University of Nebraska – Lincoln, this course is a 200-level introductory course. It is offered every semester (and on occasion there are multiple sections in a semester) with class sizes of 200-250 students. This course has no prerequisites and can be taken by both psychology majors and students outside of psychology. It is a “core requirement” for psychology majors. Further, it is a prerequisite for Advanced Social Psychology (PSYC 483/883). In addition, this course is an Achievement Centered Education (ACE) class and has been approved for Learning Outcome #6 (“Use knowledge, theories, methods, and historical perspectives appropriate to the social sciences to understand and evaluate human behavior.”). The course is often a launching point for psychology majors who will take more advanced 300- and 400-level psychology courses, thus it is important that this course builds a strong foundation in psychological theory, principles, and methods. Psychology majors who have completed all core requirements should have the background knowledge and skillsets to succeed in advanced psychology courses. Further, this course also needs to be substantively beneficial to non-psychology majors who wish to learn more about the psychology of social behavior.

Course Goals and Learning Outcomes

One of the difficulties associated with the Psychology of Social Behavior course is that the field of social psychology investigates seemingly mundane or common behavior. Thus, students often believe this course will be easy, they have “heard this all before”, and they can rely on intuition or common sense. Unfortunately—as students learn as they progress through the course material—common sense can be heavily biased and seriously misleading. As discussed during the course, this is a common finding in the area of social cognition. To be successful in the course students must often relinquish their intuitions and develop an appreciation of the empirical, or scientific, approach to understanding human social psychology. However, this is difficult to do. Students often struggle at the beginning of the

course to put aside their intuition about human nature and think more like a psychological researcher engaged in the research process.

The learning outcomes for the course are driven by three overarching goal. The first goal is challenging students to overcome their incorrect or biased intuitions regarding human nature and understand the social aspects of people’s thoughts, feelings, and behaviors through the scientific discipline of social psychology. By the end of the course, students should be able to adopt a social psychology perspective when thinking about and questioning social behavior. The learning outcomes are also driven by the corresponding goal of providing a strong foundation for advanced psychology courses as a core requirement for psychology majors. Students should gain the knowledge and skillsets necessary to succeed in advanced psychology courses. Finally, the learning outcomes must satisfy the ACE requirement of encouraging students to “use knowledge, theories, methods, and historical perspectives appropriate to the social sciences to understand and evaluate human behavior.”

Keeping these overarching course goals in mind, I created the following learning outcomes for the course. These outcomes were designed with consideration of the students’ background and educational level (200-level course without prerequisites). The four learning outcomes include:

Learning Outcome 1: Learn the fundamental principles, experiments, and people of social psychology.

By the completion of this course, students should have a strong foundation in social psychology. This includes being knowledgeable about the key principles, classic experiments, and influential researchers in the field. This knowledge is the foundation for allowing students to adopt a social psychological perspective when examining the social aspects of people’s thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. It is also necessary knowledge for advanced psychology courses.

Learning Outcome 2: Identify and apply the underlying theoretical perspectives associated with social psychology.

Scientific research within social psychology is often driven by hypotheses formed by one of four underlying theoretical perspectives: the sociocultural, evolutionary, social learning, and social cognitive perspectives. This outcome focuses on teaching students to connect these theoretical perspectives with the key principles and experimental findings covered under Learning Outcome 1. This is important for answering the “why” and “how” research questions at the heart of social psychology. This learning outcome touches on all three of the overarching goals: adopting a social psychological perspective, providing a strong foundation for advanced psychology courses, and addressing the ACE requirement.

Learning Outcome 3: Understand basic scientific methodology and study design utilized in social psychology and become a critical consumer of research.

To fully understand the social psychological perspective, students must also study the scientific methodology utilized in its research. It is important for students to understand the principles of research and potential limitations. This will allow students to be critical consumers of social psychological research and science more generally. Having the knowledge and skills to evaluate the validity of evidence is crucial as a social scientist and human in our information rich world. This learning outcome primarily connects to the overarching goals of providing a strong foundation for advanced psychology courses and addressing the ACE requirement.

Learning Outcome 4: Practice applying the fundamental principles covered in this course to social behavior in everyday life.

The final learning objective moves beyond developing knowledge about and understanding of the material. It pushes students to attempt applying that knowledge with the goal of understanding social behavior in everyday life. Connecting theory and research to everyday life is a difficult task, thus in this course students are primarily expected to practice this application in a “low stakes” writing assignment format. This will develop skills that can be built upon in advanced psychology courses.

Student Enrollment and Demographics

The Psychology of Social Behavior course in recent years has allowed registration of 200 to 250 students. In this semester (Spring 2019) 196 students enrolled in the course. Table 1 provides a breakdown of the student’s academic level. The majority of students are sophomores and juniors, comprising 65.8% of the total number of students. Importantly, 20.9% of the students in the course are freshman. These numbers suggest significant variability with regards to when students take this course during their academic career, and that some students may still be largely unfamiliar with psychological science.

Table 1.

Student’s Academic Level Information

Academic Level	# of Students	Percent (%) of Students
Freshman	41	20.9%
Sophomore	59	30.1%
Junior	70	35.7%
Senior	25	12.8%
Post-Bachelors	1	0.5%

As a core requirement course for a psychology major, slightly over half the students had declared a psychology major (102 students, 52.0%). In addition, there were 27 students who had declared a psychology minor (13.8%). However, a large portion of the students in the course were neither psychology majors nor minors (34.2%). These non-psychology students included majors such as marketing, math, biology, Spanish, business, and nursing. This suggests that students in this course had varied educational backgrounds and familiarity with psychological science.

Although not statistically documented, my conversations with students suggested that the majority were Nebraska residents who had grown up in Nebraska. However, there was also a notable number of students who were from out of state (primarily the states surrounding Nebraska). Taken together, this demographic information suggests student in this course have academically diverse backgrounds. The large number of underclassmen and non-psychology majors suggest that students might not have much familiarity with the study of psychological science. However, there are also students (psychology majors who are upperclassmen) who might be well versed in the field. It is also important to note that there are no prerequisite for entry into this course. Thus, this course must cater to diverse students with highly variable educational backgrounds.

Why This Course?

In part, I chose this course for the course portfolio because it presents a number of challenges and opportunities. Although I have taught this material before, I am redesigning the course for a section of 200 to 250 students. Large courses such as this present challenges for promoting student engagement, implementing thought provoking activities, and assessing learning. This challenge is augmented by the student's diverse academic background and experience learning about psychological science. The course portfolio process offers an opportunity to carefully consider course design features that promote beneficial outcomes even in large, lecture based courses. Through this process, I hope to gain additional insight into what practices encourage student engagement and thoughtfulness from diverse students. I also wish to use this opportunity to create a benchmark for this course and then identify features of the course that need continued improvement. For example, I hope to continue to refine my learning outcomes and better align the assessments (graded activities, exams, etc.) to those learning outcomes.

I also chose this course because I plan to continue teaching it regularly throughout my career. Social Psychology is an important component of my background expertise and is strongly connected with my research program. Teaching this course is a key feature of my academic identity. As such I want the course—and the student—to excel. I also find teaching the Psychology of Social Behavior course and working with students who are learning about social psychology for the first time extremely enjoyable. Consequently, I see this course portfolio as a valuable initial investment in creating a benchmark for this course. I hope this investment will be the first of many as I continue to polish this course over the next few years.

Teaching Methods, Course Materials, and Course Assessments

The following subsections will review my teaching methods, course materials, and course assessments. In addition, I will discuss the rationale for when I chose specific design features.

Teaching Methods and Rationale

There are two key features of this course that influence the adopted teaching method. As my previous iteration of this course is being redesigned for a class of 200 to 250 students, I first considered necessary modifications for the large class size. Second, because of the student's diverse academic background and experience learning about psychological science, I also need to adopt teaching methods that are flexible and appeal to a diverse group of students. Thus the primary teaching method I adopted includes lecture with built-in activities, demonstrations, and peer discussions (e.g., think, pair, share).

In the interest of promoting engagement and decreasing distractions in the classroom, I decided to restrict the use of cellphones, laptops, and other technology. This was the first time I made this restriction in a classroom. This was an important pedagogical decision and I spent a great deal of time contemplating it prior to the start of the semester. However, the research suggests that devices are distracting not only to the students who are using them, but also the students around them. Further, additional research suggests that hand written notetaking is linked to deeper understanding of course material. I explained this to the students during our first class, and I did not implement the policy until the second class, allowing students to prepare for a change in notetaking method. I also included an Electronic Devices statement in my syllabus (see [Syllabus](#) in the Appendix) explaining the rationale. Finally, I posted my lecture slides after class with slide numbers that students could reference in their class notes.

To help facilitate a smooth administrative process for this large course, I organized the course around my chosen textbook (see [Course Materials and Rationale](#) below). The covered topics and assignments coordinated with textbook chapters and a preliminary schedule was provide to the students in advance of the course starting. Although some deviations occurred (e.g., because of a university snow day), I did my best to ensure that the class stayed on schedule. This allows students to plan ahead—and when necessary, catch up—without relying on additional information from myself or the teaching assistant. I believe sticking to this lecture schedule helps create administrative efficiencies, so that I and the teaching assistant had more time available to focus on course material and helping students learn.

For this course, my teaching method incorporated a combination of learning through textbook readings and class time. Students were asked to complete textbook readings prior to covering a topic in class. This preparation provided students with background on the topics covered in class, helping them to more easily follow class lecture and discussion. Lectures, activities, demonstrations, and peer discussions were designed to complement the text by

highlighting and building on important concepts, clarifying difficult or confusing concepts with in depth examples, and developing connections between the material and the student's lives.

During the course, I attempted to maintain a similar class structure every class. Each class would begin with announcements including class business and upcoming due dates. Then, I would begin by providing a brief overview of the material I intended to cover and the specific learning outcomes for the class. This conceptual overview was intended to provide students with a "roadmap" for the days lecture. The core section of the class would then consist of approximately 40 to 50 minutes of lecture and 15 to 25 minutes of activities, demonstrations, and peer discussions. Most classes would break the lecture time into several small sections with short activities, demonstrations, or peer discussions in between. Because this class was an 8:00am course, I worked especially hard to keep switching the formats in the hopes that it would keep the students awake and engaged.

The material covered throughout the semester follows the same basic structure as the textbook. We began the course with introductory material. Then I spent extra time covering research methods in social psychology (Learning Outcome 3). The textbook provides very little information regarding research methods, so I supplemented that material with extra lecture and activities. Throughout the semester, I reinforced that material as we discussed specific studies. The rest of the semester was spent covering specific topics within social psychology. Within each topic, we covered aspects of each of the learning outcomes. Thus, students received information and worked toward achieving the learning outcomes throughout the semester. The graded assignments (writing assignments, Revel reading quizzes, and in-class research exercises) and exams were spread throughout the semester (see [Course Assessments and Rationale](#) for a description). In addition to class, exam review sessions (two sessions per exam) were provide outside of class prior to each of the exams. These sessions were led by the teaching assistant.

Course Materials and Rationale

For this course I chose the textbook *Social Psychology: Goals in Interaction 6th Edition* by Kenrick, Neuberg, and Cialdini (see [Syllabus](#) in Appendix). This textbook covers the fundamental principles, experiments, and people of social psychology (Learning Outcome 1). It also does an excellent job of explaining the underlying theoretical perspectives in social psychology and applying those perspectives throughout the text (Learning Outcome 2). Based on past experience, I have also received feedback from students that they find this textbook well organized and engaging. For the first time, I am using the Revel online version of the textbook (students also have the option of purchasing a hardcopy loose-leaf version). The online version of the textbook has several additional features including: (1) video content produced by the textbook authors; (2) interactive graphs and figures; and (3) reading quizzes after each section of material to check comprehension.

As mentioned, students also had access to the lecture Powerpoint materials. These presentation slides were numbered so that students could easily supplement the lecture slides with their own class notes. The Powerpoint materials were posted after each class on the Canvas page for the course. The lecture materials were also supplemented with video clips, popular press articles about social psychology, and online resources. When appropriate, the course used video clips as demonstrations of key principles. These clips were provided to students online through Canvas so they had access to these materials for review purposes. Popular press articles and online resources were also used as background and discussion points for the “low stakes” writing assignments in which students practiced applying the fundamental principles covered in this course to social behavior in everyday life (Learning Outcome 4).

Course Assessments and Rationale

This course had four graded components weighted accordingly: exams (70%), writing assignments (10%), Revel reading Quizzes (10%), and in class research exercises (10%). The following paragraphs described each of the assessments and their relationship with the learning outcomes.

Exams

There were three midterm exams for this course. All exams were non-cumulative and covered material presented in course lectures, class discussions, and textbook reading assignments. Each exam consisted of 50 multiple-choice questions and were closed-book to encourage students to understand and memorize the information. The exam questions were weighted appropriately between the topics covered and covered a wide breadth of topics. Questions focused primarily on the overlapping material between the textbook and lecture, however a few questions on each exam would focus on material covered only in the textbook or only during lecture. This encouraged students to both read and attend class. The questions were also balanced in terms of difficulty between recalling studies or definitions; understanding and identifying concepts; and applying key principles.

To allow students more flexibility with regards to when they took the exam, the exams were administered under electronic supervision at the Digital Learning Center (DLC) on the University of Nebraska – Lincoln’s campus. Students were given a six day window to schedule and take the exam. Students reported that they appreciated this flexibility, especially during weeks when they had multiple exams scheduled. The exams primarily assessed Learning Outcomes 1, 2, and 3.

Writing Assignments

The students were asked to complete five “low stakes” writing assignments throughout the semester (see [Writing Assignments](#) in the Appendix for the writing prompts). Each of the writing assignments asked students to practice applying the fundamental principles covered in

this course to social behavior in everyday life (Learning Outcome 4). For example, the third writing assignment asked students to pick their favorite television or movie couple and analyze their relationship focusing on adult attachment styles and the stability of their relationship (Gottman’s “four horsemen of the apocalypse”).

The writing assignments were relatively short (two to three pages, double-spaced) and graded on the rubric in Figure 1. Because the learning outcome focused on “practicing” application, the assessment was designed to focus on the attempted application and reward students for their effort rather than the sophistication of their analysis and writing ability.

Figure 1.

Writing Assignment Grading Rubric

- 2 points - Student (1) adequately completed the assignment, (2) responded to all basic requirements of the assignment, and (3) conformed to basic writing conventions regarding grammar, sentence structure, organization, etc.
- 1 point - Student turned in an assignment but failed to adhere to the requirements.
- 0 points - Student failed to complete the assignment.

Revel Reading Quizzes

The online textbook contained quizzes at the end of each section of material. These questions allow the students to assess their understanding of the material as they are reading it, and the questions exposed the students to the types of questions they would see on the exams. The students could take each quiz up to three times, though the amount of points they could earn reduced with each quiz attempt. This format was to encourage students to go back and review the material if they missed any questions and then reward answering the question correctly on future attempts. I instructed students to take the quizzes as they initially completed the readings. However, they were also allowed the flexibility to use the quizzes as a study aids for the exams. I wanted the students to have autonomy to complete the quizzes at a time that would must benefit their personal learning. Thus, the quizzes were not due until the end of the exam week for the chapters tested over on that exam. The Revel reading quizzes assessed Learning Outcomes 1, 2, and 3.

In-Class Research Exercises

Throughout the semester the students were provided four opportunities to completed in-class research exercises and were awarded credit for up to three of those exercises (students were allowed to miss one exercise without penalty to their grade). The primary objective of these exercises was to provide students with hands on experiences connecting the findings within social psychology to the methods and study design used in the field. Often, the students

acted as participants in the experiments. These exercises provided assessment of Learning Outcome 3. These exercises also had the additional benefit of incentivizing class attendance. The exercises were completed without advanced notice of when they would be occurring.

Analysis of Student Learning

This portion of the portfolio seeks to analyze assessments of student learning with regards to the learning outcomes for the Psychology of Social Behavior course. My specific interest is in determining if the evidence suggests that the course is achieving the desired learning outcomes. Although evidence can take many forms, for this analysis I will focus on my self-reflections from the last semester as well as quantitative data from the course assessments. I did not collect data regarding student perceptions. Nor do I have baseline comparison data from previously taught versions of this course. Although baseline data would be extremely useful, I have not taught an appropriately similar comparison course at the University of Nebraska – Lincoln. My hope is that this course portfolio will provide a benchmark for when I teach this course in the future. For the sake of brevity and focus, I only discuss findings that are central to the learning outcomes for this course.

Learning Outcome 1: Learn the fundamental principles, experiments, and people of social psychology.

My first learning outcome focused on whether students build a strong foundation of knowledge concerning social psychology. My self-reflection is based on individual student conversations and our interactions during class. Overall, students seem to learn many of the fundamental principles covered in this course. Throughout the semester, students were better able to understand, recall, and make connections between the concepts. Class discussions improved in terms of their quality and students become more comfortable responding to knowledge based questions. In my lectures, I felt I was able to cover the material I wanted to. However, there were certainly lectures and activities I think I can still improve. For example, I think the section on “friendship” could benefit from going into more in depth discussion of a couple of key studies.

To quantitatively exam student learning for this outcome, I focused on exam and Revel quiz grades. The exam scores for this course are a good indicator of whether students have mastered Learning Outcome 1. The exams were written with an eye toward the breadth of knowledge the students should master. Further, the exams include a range of question difficulty levels addressing the student’s ability to recall studies or definitions; understand and identify concepts; and apply key principles. Students who score well on this exam demonstrate mastery of the material. The descriptive statistics for the three exams are reported in Table 2. Overall, the exam averages were as expected for the course, based on my past experience teaching this class to a smaller section at a different institution. Although I would like to see higher exam scores, I recognize that I have written a difficult exam that requires mastery of a large amount of material. A Within-Subjects Analysis of Variance indicates that there is a significant difference between the exam scores, $F(1.88, 345.94) = 8.47, p < .001$. Since the exams are written to be equally as difficult, this suggests that students show some improvement in mastering the material as the course progresses. Further the means suggest the greatest improvement occurred between the second and third exam.

Table 2.

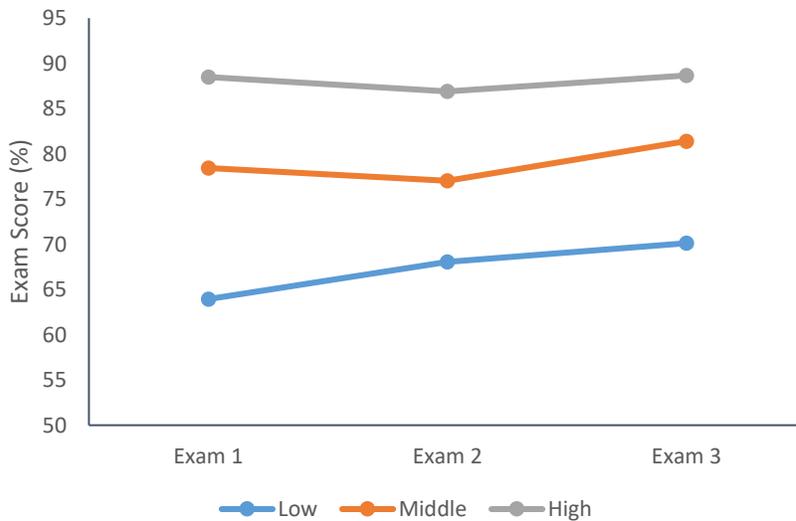
Exam Grades Descriptive Statistics

Exam	Mean	Standard Deviation	Minimum Score	Maximum Score
Exam 1	38.47 (76.9%)	5.70	21	49
Exam 2	38.69 (77.4%)	6.39	18	50
Exam 3	40.03 (80.1%)	7.19	22	50

In addition, I graphed trends in exam grades depending on how student’s scored on their first exam. First, I broke all of the students into three approximately even groups based on their Exam 1 score: students who scored less than 72% (64 students), students who scored between a 72.1% and an 82% (62 students), and students who scored over 82% (64 students). Their results across all three exams are noted in Figure 2. This “binned” analysis highlights that much of the improvement in exam scores between Exam 1 and Exam 3 was in the lowest scoring one-third of the students. Their exam average improved from 63.9% to 70.1%. This suggests that students who initially struggled with the exams in the course were able to improve their exam grades as the semester progressed, indicating increased mastery of the material over time. The trends also suggests that all three groups showed at least some improvement in exam scores between the first and third exam.

Figure 2.

Exam Scores by Low, Middle, and High Scores on First Exam



I also analyzed the Revel quiz grades. Open-book quiz grades are less directly related to mastery of the material than exam scores. However, I believe that successfully reading the

course material and completing the quizzes are necessary activities for mastering the material. I expected that students would perform well on these quizzes, especially since the quiz is open-book and the student could attempt to answer the question 3 times for at least partial credit. I examined quiz scores by aggregating the textbook chapters to parallel the material covered on each exam. The total number of points for the aggregate quizzes varied (see Maximum Score in Table 3). The descriptive statistics for the three aggregate quiz grades are reported in Table 3. As expected, the mean quiz grades were high (91.7 %, 90.4%, and 92.8%). A Within-Subjects Analysis of Variance indicates that there is a significant difference between the aggregate quiz scores, $F(1.96, 372.17) = 59.53, p < .001$. Quiz scores were the highest for the third set.

Table 3.

Aggregate Quiz Grades Descriptive Statistics

Quiz Set	Mean	Standard Deviation	Minimum Score	Maximum Score
Quiz Set 1	325.49 (91.7%)	55.46	0	355
Quiz Set 2	379.65 (90.4%)	55.87	0	420
Quiz Set 3	338.63 (92.8%)	69.14	0	365

Finally, I also examined the relationship between the exam scores, the aggregate quiz scores, and each exam and its corresponding quiz set. I expect that student performance on the quizzes should correlate with student exam grades. Table 4 displays the correlations. The findings suggest that the highest correlations were between the three exam scores (highlighted in blue in Table 4; *Pearson's r* ranged from 0.60 to 0.69). This suggests that students who perform well on one exam tend to also perform well on other exams. The correlations between the aggregate quiz sets were significant, but tended to be not as high (highlighted in green in Table 4). The correlations between each quiz set and its corresponding exam were also significant (highlighted in yellow in Table 4; *Pearson's r* ranged from 0.25 to 0.34). This suggests that there is a relationship between each quiz set and its corresponding exam, but this relationship was not as strong as the relationship between the exams.

Table 4.

Correlations between Exam Scores and Aggregate Quiz Scores

Assessment	1	2	3	4	5
1. Exam 1	—				
2. Exam 2	.69**	—			
3. Exam 3	.60**	.68**	—		
4. Quiz Set 1	.25**	.10	.23**	—	
5. Quiz Set 2	.24**	.35**	.44**	.16*	—
6. Quiz Set 3	.29**	.26**	.35**	.28**	.45**

Note. ** $p < .01$; * $p < .05$

Learning Outcome 2: Identify and apply the underlying theoretical perspectives associated with social psychology.

Learning Outcome 2 is heavily discussed within the first few classes and first chapter of the textbook. These underlying theoretical perspectives create a foundation for lectures and activities throughout the rest of the semester. Reflecting on relevant in-class activities, students seemed to understand the basics of the theoretical perspectives. However, some of the nuances were difficult and students struggled to fully grasp their implications. For example, some students struggled with understanding concepts like “adaptation” related to the evolutionary perspective. When I teach this course in the future, I would like to improve this section of the lecture and spend a little more time going through the key nuances.

To quantitatively assess Learning Outcome 2, I focused on specific exam questions from the introductory section that assessed knowledge of the underlying theoretical perspectives in social psychology. Again, discussion and assessment of the theoretical perspectives were focused on in the introductory course material because it is essential knowledge for the findings discussed throughout the course. On Exam 1, there were five questions that directly address theoretical perspectives. Across those five questions, on average students got those questions correct 85.6% of the time. This suggests that students largely understood the underlying theoretical perspectives.

In the latter part of the course, students demonstrated their mastery of the theoretical perspectives during activities and discussions. However, I had no formal re-assessment of their mastery of this topic in the second half of the course. It might be useful to add a mid-semester assessment to ensure that students still remember the key aspects of the theoretical perspectives.

Learning Outcome 3: Understand basic scientific methodology and study design utilized in social psychology and become a critical consumer of research.

Although scientific methodology and study design is discussed throughout the course in the context of the studies we discuss in great detail, I taught an intensive section on social psychology research methods within the first few weeks of the semester. This is an additional section added to this updated version of the course. At my prior institution, this course was an upper-division class with the prerequisites of statistics and research methods. However, at this institution there are no prerequisites for this course. As such, students may have no familiarity with social psychological research methods. This ended up being one of my favorite topics covered this semester. I believe that adding an in depth discussion of research methods solidifies for students that the material we are covering is not intuition, but actual scientific findings. I find that research methods is a topic I am very comfortable teaching because I have a lot of experience teaching it. But I found that the students struggled with the terminology, especially if they had no methods background. I found that students seemed to initially grasp the material, but they struggled to remember the terminology throughout the semester.

To quantitatively assess Learning Outcome 3, I look at specific exam questions from Exam 1 that assessed knowledge of social psychological methodology and scores in Writing Assignment 1. Again, the discussion and assessment of knowledge concerning social psychology methodology was primarily covered in the introductory course material because it is essential knowledge for the findings discussed throughout the course. On Exam 1, there were five questions that directly address research methods. Across those five questions, on average students correctly answered those questions correct 87.2% of the time. This suggests that students largely understood the discussed research methods.

I also examined scores from Writing Assignment 1 (see [Writing Assignment 1](#) in the Appendix for more details on the assignment). Again, this was a “low stakes” assignment which was graded for attempted application. Scores on the assignment ranged from 0 to 2. The mean score was 1.71. The vast majority of students (155, 80.7%) received the highest possible score, suggesting they were able to correctly design a study, identify the dependent and independent variables, and write a research hypothesis.

As with the previous learning outcome, in the latter part of the course students showed some mastery of the research methods during activities and discussions. However they also demonstrated some lack of terminology recall as the semester continued. I also had no formal re-assessment of their mastery of research methods in social psychology in the second half of the course. It might be useful to add such an assessment to ensure that students still remember—and encourage them to review if they have forgotten—research methods terminology throughout the semester.

Learning Outcome 4: Practice applying the fundamental principles covered in this course to social behavior in everyday life.

Learning Outcome 4 involves the higher order task of apply fundamental principles to social behavior in everyday life. Learning about social psychological findings, theory, methods, etc. and applying that knowledge are very different skills and application is often much more difficult for students. However, application is a necessary skill for upper-level coursework and my discussions with instructors of those courses suggest they would like students to get more application practice in the introductory courses. Thus, I asked students to practice applying the fundamental principles of social psychology, even if they did not master the application skills in this course. Upon reflection, I think the “low stakes” assignment did a lot to advance this goal. Through this assignment, students moved beyond answering exam questions and began considering implications of this material for everyday like. I believe students also appreciated having an opportunity to complete short writing assignments without the stress associated with a long research style paper.

The final Learning Outcome is quantitatively assessed using the five writing assignments. In each of these “low stakes” assignments, students are asked to apply a fundamental principle in social psychology to social behavior in everyday life. Each assignment provides a prompt and some basic structure, but largely allows the student to be creative in their chosen application. The descriptive statistics for each of the writing assignments is reported in Table 5. The average score for the writing assignments remained fairly consistent throughout the semester (between 1.70 and 1.84). Further, a large majority of the students received full credit on the assignment, between 80.7% and 91.7% across the five assignments. This supports the conclusion that the vast majority of students are successfully achieving Learning Outcome 4.

Table 5.

Writing Assignment Descriptive Statistics

Writing Assignment	Mean Score	# of Students who scored “0”	# of Students who scored “1”	# of Students who scored “2”
Assignment 1	1.71	20	16	155
Assignment 2	1.77	18	9	164
Assignment 3	1.84	15	0	176
Assignment 4	1.70	29	0	162
Assignment 5	1.70	29	0	162

There were a few interesting trends that emerged in the frequencies. First, the number of students who scored a “1” (indicating students who had turned in the assignment but failed to adequately respond to the prompt) dropped to zero after the second writing assignment. This might suggest that students who initially struggled with this application assignment eventually improved and were better able to apply social psychological principles to social

behavior in everyday life. However, this conclusion is muddied by the increased number of students who scored a “0” on Writing Assignments 4 and 5, indicating that they failed to turn in the assignment. I’m not sure why more students would fail to complete the assignment. One possibility is that more students failed to turn in those assignments because they occurred at the end of the semester. These assignments were worth a very small proportion of the final grade for the course, so some students might have prioritized heavily weighted coursework from other class. I might consider adjusting the due dates of the final writing assignments in future versions of this course.

Reflection on the Course

The final sections of this course portfolio contain my reflection on the Psychology of Social Behavior course I taught Spring 2019. In my reflection, I focus on the overarching successes the semester brought. I also take advantage of the opportunity to reflect on challenges and any planned revisions I might use to address those challenges in future versions of the course. Finally, I conclude with a few thoughts on how developing this course portfolio has been a beneficial experience.

Successes

Although it is easy to get caught up in the various challenges, I believe there are a number of successes worth commenting on. First, I have successfully converted this course to a format appropriate for a class of 200 to 250 students. In my experience, any major revision of this sort is a large undertaking. Although there are some small tweaks I would like to make to specific lectures and activities, I was happy with how the course materials turned out. Important, I have documented the necessarily tweaks so they can be easily implemented moving forward. Overall, I believe my lectures are more engaging, organized, and polished than they were in previous versions of this course.

Over the course of the semester, I have also become more comfortable and confident lecturing to a large class. Although I am generally comfortable teaching and public speaking, I was unexpectedly nervous the first few classes about instructing such a large course. It was probably the little things that made me nervous, such as having to wear a microphone and not being able to walk freely around the classroom. I also felt that the students were less engaged in the course, and provided less verbal and non-verbal feedback throughout the class because of their own perceived anonymity. But, as the semester progressed, I become more comfortable, and I believe my comfort and confidence had a positive effect on student engagement.

With this course, I felt more focused on the learning outcomes throughout the semester than I had in previous semesters of teaching. I believe this focus had the benefit of keeping the lectures and course content organized as well. This increased focus and organized seemed to provide the students with a better a sense of the scope and direction of the material during each class period. I also feel the assessments that I designed for this course ended up being fairly appropriate for the learning outcomes. As I was creating the exams and writing assignments, it was with a sense of purpose and direction.

Finally, I also believe the transition to the online Revel version of the textbook was a good decision. Students provided feedback that they liked the online version of the textbook as well as the supplemental materials (e.g., videos, quizzes, study tools, etc.) it provided. Students who preferred to read a paper textbook appreciated that they could purchase a loose-leaf copy

for a small additional charge. Since the textbook was a success, I plan to continue using it in the future.

Challenges and Planned Revisions

Throughout the semester there were a few unexpected challenges. Having never taught a course this large, I was somewhat unprepared for feeling unconnected from the students. In smaller sections, I am able to learn student's names and a little about them. There is less physical distance between us in the classroom and I feel that I am able to read the students non-verbal communication and pick up on when they are confused. However, with nearly 200 students, I felt extremely disconnected and distant from the students. I felt that affected my interactions with students during class and outside of class. It was an extremely strange and uncomfortable feeling to not recognize students when they dropped by my office for individual meetings or office hours. It was also difficult to call on students during class when I did not know their name. I found myself identifying student's by the color of their clothing, and it felt rude. I also had a difficult time reading the non-verbal cues from the students, probably because they were providing fewer cues in an anonymous environment. In future semesters, I will try to spend time getting to know the students better during the small group activities and discussions. I will also attempt bringing a roster to class to assist with calling on students using their names.

Another unexpected challenge was the early class start time. The Psychology of Social Behavior has historically only been offered at 8:00am on Tuesday and Thursdays. Students seemed to struggle with the early start. At the beginning of the semester, I had the students respond to a few informal questions. One prompted students to list their primary concern about the course. The overwhelming majority of students listed "not waking up on time to get to class" as their primary concern. This concern was echoed in emails I received from students who had missed class because they had slept through their alarm. I also noticed decreased attendance as the semester continued and on bad weather mornings. Unfortunately, I cannot change the start time of the class or influence the success of student's alarm clocks. But, I would like to try creating additional incentives for coming to class. For example, I could increase the number of in class graded activities.

Another challenge this course presented was the increased administrative needs of teaching a large class. Having 200 to 250 students consumes a lot of instructor time with grading, responding to emails, working individually with students, etc. Although my teaching assistant and I managed this semester, I think the course would benefit for additional administrative help. One improvement could include hiring an undergraduate grading teaching assistant. This individual could take over the bulk of the grading responsibilities for the course. This would free up more time for the graduate teaching assistant to assist with instruction and help undergraduate students. For example, the graduate teaching assistant could attend class and assist with in class activities and demonstrations. The graduate teaching assistant could also spend more time meeting individual with students or small groups of students to work on

study skills. It might also allow the graduate student to reach out to students who begin falling behind, with the hope that no students fall through the cracks unnoticed. This would allow me to engage more with students about substantive course material.

Finally, another potential revision focuses specifically on Learning Outcome 3. I propose incentivizing students to participate in psychological studies. Participant is an excellent means of learning more about the research process and research methods within social psychology. It may also help students develop an appreciation for the types of studies psychologists conduct.

Benefits from Developing the Course Portfolio

As an assistant professor, one of my biggest struggles is having too many urgent tasks that demand immediate attention. Often, that means less urgent—but often still important—matters get put off until completion becomes an emergency. I believe the biggest benefit of developing this course portfolio was having a reason and dedicated time to devote to purposefully and reflectively considering the design features of the Psychology of Social Behavior course and whether they promote the desired learning outcomes. I feel that this course has benefitted from my careful engagement in purposeful design and reflection. I also believe that by engaging in the course portfolio process and I have developing better course design habits and procedures that will also benefit future courses, even those unrelated to this course.

I think an unexpected benefit of completing this course portfolio is that I am extremely excited to continue making changes to this course and to quantitatively evaluate those potential improvements. I already have a list of documented changes I would like to make to the course for Fall 2019. I still need to carefully consider which of those changes I would actually like to make, but I am looking forward to implementing some changes and then comparing the outcomes to those from this semester. I feel that going through this process and completing this portfolio has provided a good benchmark for evaluating future iterations of this course.

Appendices

Syllabus

Psychology of Social Behavior– Spring 2019

Course: PSYC 288

Instructor: Prof. Ashley Votruba, J.D., Ph.D.

Office Hours:

Mondays 9:30 – 10:30am

Tuesdays 9:30 – 11:00am

By appointment

Class Room: LPH-102

Office: Burnett 338

Email: Ashley.votruba@unl.edu

TA: Abbey Riemer

Email: ariemer@huskers.unl.edu

Office Hours:

Wednesdays 3:00 – 4:30pm (Burnett 15)

Course Description

The purpose of this course is to introduce students to the field of social psychology. This course focuses on the (often surprising) things that make people tick. Social psychology refers to *the scientific study of the way in which people's thoughts, feelings, and behaviors are influenced by the real or imagined perspective of other people* (Allport, 1985). This is primarily a course on normal, rather than dysfunctional, social cognition and behavior but at times we will discuss aspects of abnormal psychology to illustrate a concept.

In this course we will examine the classic topics in social psychology including: social cognition, self-understanding, social influence, conformity, group processes, interpersonal relationships, helping, aggression, and prejudice. We will examine these topics from a variety of perspectives including the sociocultural, evolutionary, social learning, and social cognitive perspectives. This class will have a strong focus on empirical findings and will discuss the relevant methodology and study design as well as the influence of methodology on the conclusions we can draw from the finds.

One caveat before we begin – because social psychology investigates seemingly mundane or common behavior, students often believe that they can rely on intuition or “common sense” to learn the material. Unfortunately, one core finding in social cognition is that common sense can be heavily biased and seriously misleading. At best, common sense may suggest multiple explanations of some process that actually contradict each other; at worst, common sense may be completely wrong. As a result, students must relinquish their intuitions, and develop an appreciation of the empirical, or scientific, approach to understanding human social psychology.

Learning Outcomes

1. Learn the fundamental principles, experiments, and people of social psychology.
2. Identify and apply the underlying theoretical perspectives associated with social psychology.
3. Understand basic scientific methodology and study design utilized in social psychology and become a critical consumer of research.
4. Practice applying the fundamental principles covered in this course to social behavior in everyday life.

Textbook

Kenrick, D. T., Neuberg, S. L., & Cialdini, R. B. (2015). *Social Psychology: Goals in Interaction (6th Edition)*.

- You are required get the Revel (online) version of the textbook. You will be able to access the Revel version of the course through Canvas. Here is a video on setting up your account: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4q0xk55tU5w>.
- If you would like a loose-leaf of the text, you can order that online as well. All reading will need to be completed in Revel (online), as there are videos, activities, and quizzes built into the textbook.

Student Assessment and Grades

Grading Scheme

Exams (3)	70%
Writing Assignments (5)	10%
Revel Reading Quizzes	10%
In-class Research Exercises (3)	10%

Grading Scale

Grade cut-offs are presented below. I do not round grades and I do not provide opportunities to earn points in this class that are not presented on the syllabus. It would be unethical for me to ‘bump up’ your grade or provide you with a unique opportunity to improve your grade.

Grade	Percent	Grade	Percent
A+	97% - 100%	C+	77% - 79.99%
A	93% - 96.99%	C	73% - 76.99%
A-	90% - 92.99%	C-	70% - 72.99%
B+	87% - 89.99%	D+	67% - 69.99%
B	83% - 86.99%	D	63% - 66.99%
B-	80% - 82.99%	D-	60% - 62.99%
		F	less than 60

Exams: 70%

Assessment of Outcomes 1 – 3: Learn the fundamental principles, experiments, and people of social psychology; identify and apply the underlying theoretical perspectives associated with social psychology; understand basic scientific methodology and study design utilized in social psychology and become a critical consumer of research.

There will be three midterm exams for this course. All exams are non-cumulative and cover material presented in course lectures, class discussions, and textbook reading assignments. Each exam will consist of 50 multiple-choice questions. All exams will be closed-book. Exams for this course will be taken under electronic supervision at Digital Learning Center (DLC), which is located in the Adele Coryell Hall Learning Commons. All testing times are pre-scheduled and exams will be completed on a computer. Before you begin an exam, you must place your personal items in your pre-assigned locker and check-in with Digital Learning Center staff at the front desk. When you have completed your exam, you must check-out at the front desk.

Guidelines:

- 1) All testing times are pre-scheduled by students. All students are responsible for self sign-up and early sign-up is recommended. Time slots fill up quickly.
- 2) All students are required to have their current N-Card to test. Other forms of ID will not be accepted as a substitute for N-Cards. DLC staff reserve the right to ask for a second ID if needed for identity verification.
- 3) All students will receive two pieces of barcoded scratch paper for their exam. This paper will be scanned in to students upon check-in and scanned out upon check-out.
- 4) Only permitted items are allowed at your computer station during testing, including your N-Card, DLC provided barcoded scratch paper, and writing utensils. Nothing else is allowed at your computer station unless your instructor has made prior arrangements with the DLC.
- 5) All exams must be submitted for grading at the posted closing time. Students will not be given additional time to finish their exams past the posted closing time.
- 6) To schedule your exam, please visit: <http://dlc-reserve.unl.edu>. For more information about the Exam Commons location, operating hours and student guidelines, please visit <http://dlc.unl.edu>.

You will not be allowed to take exams at times other than those specified. Please, please, please do not forget to take the exam during the specified time. ☺ You will NOT be able to make this up later and will get a 0 for that exam. See the schedule below. Schedule to take your exams today!

Exam 1: February 6 – February 11

Exam 2: March 27 – April 1

Exam 3: April 25 – May 3

Writing Assignments: 10%

Assessment of Outcome 4: Practice applying the fundamental principles covered in this course to social behavior in everyday life.

Throughout the semester, you will be asked to complete five (5) writing assignments. The details of each writing assignment will be posted on Canvas at least one week prior to the due date. You will be responsible for turning in an electronic copy to Canvas prior to the start of class on the day that it is due. Detailed requirements for each assignment will be posted on Canvas.

Revel Reading Quizzes: 10%

Assessment of Outcomes 1 – 3: Learn the fundamental principles, experiments, and people of social psychology; identify and apply the underlying theoretical perspectives associated with social psychology; understand basic scientific methodology and study design utilized in social psychology and become a critical consumer of research.

Your textbook will be online and includes quizzes at the end of each section. These questions ensure that you understood the material and also expose you to the types of questions you will have on your exams. You can take each quiz up to three times, though the amount of points you can earn are reduced with each quiz attempt. Quizzes for each chapter are due at the end of the exam week in which that chapter is tested over. These deadlines will be posted on Revel.

In-Class Research Exercises: 10%

Assessment of Outcome 3: Understand basic scientific methodology and study design utilized in social psychology and become a critical consumer of research.

Like psychology more generally, social psychology is a social science. Consequently, social psychological theories are tested through experiments. In fact, almost all of the findings that will be presented in class and in your book are from experiments. Given the complexity of social behavior, designing studies and interpreting the results is a challenging task, but it is important to fully understand social behavior. For this reason, we will be completing three (3) social psychological experiments as a class, during class. *You must be present in class to receive credit for these assignments.* Dr. Votruba will design the experiments to represent some typical social psychological studies. Members of the class will then “participate” in the experiments. There will be four opportunities throughout the semester to complete the three required experiments. This means that you can miss one exercise (but only one) and still receive full credit for this portion of your course grade.

Course Policies

Attendance

By being enrolled in the course, you are making a commitment to attend lecture at the scheduled times and to actively participate in class discussion. Given the nature of the subject matter, all

materials are highly interconnected and it is important that you show up for lectures to do well for the course. Additionally, class time will be a combination of lecture, discussion, and demonstrations. Active involvement with the material is necessary to become a critical consumer of research in social psychology. For this reason, you are expected to read the assigned chapter *before* the scheduled class period, so that you can actively participate in lecture. Active involvement involves asking questions and contributing to class discussions. Research has shown that active learning helps learners process the information at a deeper level, which aids in the understanding, subsequent recall, and critical questioning of the materials.

Late Work

Late work will not be accepted. If you are going to miss class, please hand in your work ahead of time. Work is considered “late” if it is not handed in or uploaded to Canvas at the beginning of the class period (by 8:00 a.m.) on which it is due.

Electronic Devices

Although technology can be very helpful in the classroom, it can also be very distracting for both your peers and me. Phones are strictly prohibited during class. Any cell phone which rings audibly, is seen out, or is in use during class will be confiscated until the end of the class. Further, **the use of computers is not allowed during class**. My reason for this is twofold, 1) research demonstrates that computers provide a distracting temptation, often interrupting learning (<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/28182528>), and 2) taking notes by hand has been linked to a deeper understanding of class material (<http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/0956797614524581>). In select situations, this policy may be modified at the instructor’s discretion (requires prior approval).

Honor Code

Strict adherence to the University Honor Code is expected at all times. Academic dishonesty, and cheating, including inappropriate collaboration, is a very serious issue and will not be tolerated. For a detailed explanation of UNL’s policies, please see the University of Nebraska’s Student Code of Conduct (<https://studentconduct.unl.edu/student-code-conduct>) regarding academic dishonesty.

Academic Integrity: Academic integrity is a basic guiding principle for all academic activity at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, allowing the pursuit of scholarly activity in an open, honest, and responsible manner. It is assumed that students have read and understand the Academic Honesty Policy as of the first day of class. You must not engage in or tolerate academic dishonesty. This includes, but is not limited to cheating, plagiarism, fabrication of information or citations, facilitating acts of academic dishonesty by others, unauthorized possession of exams, submitting work of another person, or work previously used without informing the instructor, or tampering with the academic work of other students. Violations of academic integrity will result in a failing grade on the exam, assignment, or the course.

Plagiarism: Plagiarism of papers from published sources (e.g., your textbook, journal articles, the internet, Wikipedia) or unpublished sources (e.g., my lecture slides, a classmate’s paper, a paper from another course) is a violation of academic integrity and will result in a failing grade

on the assignment and possibly the course. Failure to acknowledge other people's work by using quotes or appropriately referencing the author's work (even from the textbook or my lectures) constitutes plagiarism. Also, every assignment requires that you write in your own words, not my words, not the words of the authors you read or heard about, and not the words of your fellow students (from current or previous semesters).

Accommodations for Students with Special Needs

Students with disabilities are encouraged to contact the instructor for a confidential discussion of their individual needs for academic accommodation. It is the policy of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln to provide flexible and individualized accommodation to students with documented disabilities that may affect their ability to fully participate in course activities or to meet course requirements. To receive accommodation services, students must be registered with the Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) office, 132 Canfield Administration, 472-3787 voice or TTY.

Canvas & Communication

A course website has been created for students on the Canvas system. Course materials, grades, and other resources will be available to students on this website, accessible through your login at <https://canvas.unl.edu/>. Most questions about the course can be answered by consulting the course website. Additionally, the website is the hub of communication for this course and must be checked regularly. Canvas will also be used to turn in official assignments.

Emailing is the appropriate and preferred means of communication regarding the class. I am frequently on my email and will do my best to get back to you as soon as possible. Please note that although I frequently check my email, I will not be answering emails after business hours (5:00pm) the day an assignment is due. This is to encourage you to not wait until the last minute to complete assignments. If you have questions, please email them to me sufficiently in advance. Please address your emails with "PSYC 288" in the title so they do not end up in my spam folder. Also, I will occasionally need to email the class with important information so please make sure that your UNL email account works and check your email often.

I have official office hours Monday and Tuesday. You are also welcome and encouraged to schedule an appointment outside of that time if you cannot make those office hours. Sometimes, I want to procrastinate on my work, so please stop by! I am happy to chat about course material and really anything else related to research, graduate school, bicycles, pets, etc.

Diversity Statement

In learning about Social Psychology we will explore a variety of ways in which people are diverse and how that diversity affects how people think, feel, and behave. This classroom will be an environment committed to respect and the consideration of diverse perspectives. I welcome individuals of all backgrounds, beliefs, ethnicities, genders, gender identities, gender expressions, national origins, religious affiliations, sexual orientations, ability, and other visible and nonvisible differences. All members of this class are expected to contribute to a respectful,

welcoming, and inclusive environment for every other member of the course. During this course we will discuss topics that some of you may find uncomfortable. Our conversations may sometimes be awkward. But, with patience and respect we can enrich our learning environment and become better critical thinkers and consumers of social science research.

Achievement Centered Education (ACE) information

Learning Outcome

Psyc 288 has been approved for Learning Outcome #6 (“Use knowledge, theories, methods, and historical perspectives appropriate to the social sciences to understand and evaluate human behavior.”)

Reinforcements

The curriculum of this course has been structured to encourage you to engage in ***critical thinking***. This is accomplished by learning the key theories, methods, hypotheses, and findings from social psychology and applying this knowledge to improve your own rational thinking, problem solving and decision making in your everyday life. Critical evaluation of social psychological theories, methods, and findings is a daily activity in this course. Psyc 288 reinforces ***writing*** by means of 5 two-page written assignments you will complete during the course.

Opportunities for Learning the Outcome

- 1) The course consists of approximately 25 lectures and associated readings that are structured to facilitate your understanding of the knowledge, theories, methods, and history of the study of social behavior.
- 2) Each lecture is accompanied by reading in the textbook.
- 3) There are 3 experimental research demonstrations throughout the semester to help you understand and critically examine social psychology methodology.
- 4) Each review session has at least 3 “sample multiple choice questions” that you can use to assess your mastery of the learning outcomes as well as obtaining an idea of the type of questions that will appear on exams. Each question’s correct answer is provided during the review session with a verbal explanation of why that answer is correct.
- 5) Instruction will be provided regarding appropriate writing style for the assignments.
- 6) You are encouraged to consult with Dr. Votruba or the TA at any time about the concepts covered in the course. This is especially valuable after you have received feedback regarding your performance on exam questions.

How your achievement of the outcome will be assessed

There are three exams of 50 questions each (worth 70% total). Exams will be focused on your understanding of the knowledge, theories, methods, and history of the social psychological study of social behavior. All the questions are multiple choice. Most of the questions are designed to measure your comprehension of course concepts at high cognitive levels. That is, many

questions require you to use information to identify a phenomenon, reach a conclusion, make predictions, and derive assessments. Relatively few questions are concerned with vocabulary or basic information alone. Your ability to use course concepts and analyze experiments addressing basic social psychology issues will also be assessed by your written assignments.

Course Schedule

Date	Reading	Topic
Tuesday 1/8	Textbook Ch. 1	Class introduction, “Introduction to Social Psychology”
Thursday 1/10	Textbook Ch. 1	“Introduction to Social Psychology”, continued
Tuesday 1/15		Research Methods in Social Psychology
Thursday 1/17	Textbook Ch. 2	“The Person and the Situation”
Tuesday 1/22	Textbook Ch. 2	“The Person and the Situation”, continued
Thursday 1/24	Textbook Ch. 3	“Social Cognition: Understanding Ourselves and Others”
Tuesday 1/29	Textbook Ch. 4	“Presenting the Self”
Thursday 1/31	Textbook Ch. 4	“Presenting the Self”, continued
Tuesday 2/5	Textbook Ch. 5	“Attitudes and Persuasion”
Thursday 2/7	No Class	2/6 – 2/11 Midterm Exam #1 (Chapters 1, research methods, 2, 3, & 4)
Tuesday 2/12	Textbook Ch. 5	“Attitudes and Persuasion”, continued
Thursday 2/14	Textbook Ch. 6	“Social Influence: Conformity, Compliance, and Obedience”
Tuesday 2/19	Textbook Ch. 6	“Social Influence: Conformity, Compliance, and Obedience”, continued
Thursday 2/21	Textbook Ch. 7	“Affiliation and Friendship”
Tuesday 2/26	Textbook Ch. 7	“Affiliation and Friendship”, continued
Thursday 2/28	Textbook Ch. 8	“Love and Romantic Relationships”
Tuesday 3/5	Textbook Ch. 8	“Love and Romantic Relationships”, continued
Thursday 3/7	Textbook Ch. 9	“Prosocial Behavior”

Tuesday 3/12	Textbook Ch. 9	“Prosocial Behavior”, continued
Thursday 3/14	Textbook Ch. 10	Aggression
3/19, 3/21		Spring Break– no class!
Tuesday 3/26	Textbook Ch. 10	“Aggression”, continued
Thursday 28	No Class	3/27 – 4/1 Midterm Exam #2 (5, 6, 7, 8, & 9)
Tuesday 4/2	Textbook Ch. 11	“Prejudice, Stereotyping, and Discrimination”
Thursday 4/4	Textbook Ch. 11	“Prejudice, Stereotyping, and Discrimination”, continued
Tuesday 4/9	Textbook Ch. 12	“Groups”
Thursday 4/11	(Class meets at Symposium)	Nebraska Symposium
Tuesday 4/16	Textbook Ch. 12	“Groups”, continued
Thursday 4/18	Textbook Ch. 13	“Social Dilemmas: Cooperation vs. Conflict”
Tuesday 4/23	Textbook Ch. 13	“Social Dilemmas: Cooperation vs. Conflict”, continued
4/25	No Class	4/24 – 5/3 Midterm Exam #3 (10, 11, 12, & 13)

* **Please note:** the course schedule is tentative and subject to change at my discretion. I will post an updated version of the syllabus on Canvas should any changes occur.

Note: You will have 1 week to take exams at the Digital Learning Center.

Exam 1: February 6 – February 11

Exam 2: March 27 – April 1

Exam 3: April 25 – May 3

Sample “Low Stakes” Writing Assignment Prompts

Writing Assignment 1

Writing Assignment 1 – Due February 1, 2019

As we stroll through our daily lives we encounter countless examples of Person and Situation interactions. I want you to think of an interesting example that you have encountered and then briefly describe a study design that would allow you to test this explanation. Including the following in your study design:

Dependent Variable: What outcome will you measure?

Environment Variable: What is the aspect of the situation that you will experimentally manipulate?

Person Variable: What characteristic of the person do you think will moderate how people respond?

Hypothesis: Describe the person x environment interaction you expect to see predicting the DV

Writing Assignment 2

Writing Assignment 2 – Due February 22, 2019

Imagine that you are contracted as a social psychologist to consult on a public service announcement (PSA) encouraging people to use alternative forms of transportation (such as walking, biking, and public transit) in order to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. This announcement will be a 30 second advertisement that airs during the 2020 Super Bowl. The PSA should include 4 of the influence techniques we discussed in class. I want you to write a description of the proposed PSA for the organization which includes:

1. A clear, yet brief description of the theme of the PSA.
2. A thorough explanation of the 4 techniques you plan to use in the PSA; again remembering that you are writing this description for someone who is not a social psychologist.
3. A discussion of how you plan to implement each of the techniques and why you believe they will be effective (e.g., is there a study that supports this idea?).

Writing Assignment 3

Writing Assignment 3 – Due March 15, 2019

Television and movies offer countless examples of romantic relationships. For this assignment, I want you to pick your favorite television or movie couple and analyze their relationship focusing

on adult attachment styles and the stability of their relationship (Gottman’s “four horsemen of the apocalypse”).

Your examination of the romantic relationship should include the following three parts:

1. Tell me briefly about the couple you picked. Include information about the television show or movie they are in, whether they are married (or if they are in a long term committed relationship, etc.), and briefly describe what their relationship is like.
2. For each of the characters (so you are going to do this twice), tell which attachment style best fits their personality and why. In the process, please describe the key features of the attachment style and provide examples for how the individual’s behavior reflects that style.
3. Finally, make a prediction about the stability of the couple’s relationship based on Gottman’s research on the “four horsemen of the apocalypse”. Do you think they will stay together for the long term? Be sure to root your predictions in the findings we discussed in class.

Writing Assignment 4

Writing Assignment 4 – Due March 19, 2019

The Nebraska Symposium on Motivation occurs every year. This year, the theme is *Nature and Psychology: How the Natural World Shapes Our Cognition* (see: <https://psychology.unl.edu/symposium/nebraska-symposium-motivation>). Your assignment is to attend one of the sessions on April 11th or 12th (see schedule: <https://psychology.unl.edu/symposium/symposium-schedule-2019>) and write a summary of the research presented during this session. Attendance will collected at the front entrance of the symposium. Be sure to sign the attendance sheet.

In your description of the session you attend, be sure to include the following:

1. State one research question and/or hypothesis presented on. Even if the research question and/or hypothesis is not directly labeled as such, you should be able to infer it from the context of the presentation.
2. State the results of the identified research question and/or hypothesis. Was the hypothesis supported? What do the results indicate?
3. State one overarching conclusion from the research. What is one take home point? Is there a message the speaker is trying to convey?

Writing Assignment 5

Writing Assignment 5 – Due March 26, 2019

In our discussion of “groups” we covered the topic of groupthink. For your last writing assignment I want you to find and discuss an example (current or historic) of groupthink. The example should be of a specific decision-making group. You cannot use an example we discussed in class (Bay of Pigs, Challenger explosion, or Titanic sinking).

In your description of the groupthink example, be sure to include the following:

1. Describe the group and its decision-making purpose. Provide enough context information for the reader to fully understand the example.
2. Identify the specific features of the decision-making group that make it vulnerable to groupthink.
3. Discuss one tactic that the decision-making group could undertake to combat groupthink tendencies.