



MASARYK UNIVERSITY  
FACULTY OF SOCIAL STUDIES

**PSY 268 Contemporary Issues in Psychology**  
***Syllabus***

Lecturers: Zuzana Petrovicova & Michaela Porubanova

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office hours: Wednesday 2-5pm or by appointment (room 2.51)

TIME: Monday, 6pm-7.30pm @P52

Online syllabus

- web link- IS ([is.muni.cz](http://is.muni.cz)) – STUDENT - ROPOT (**R**evision, **O**pinion **P**oll and **T**esting) - e-learning – STUDY MATERIALS
- provides up to date information about the course, please check regularly!
- reading materials will be sent via email by the respective instructor (make sure to provide correct email address)

Course objectives

- to introduce students to selected topics in psychology with new perspectives about those topics
- to improve students' ability to think critically about topics in psychology
- to teach students to locate and review recent empirical studies in psychology
- to teach students to write an academic papers and presentations

The course will provide students with the background information related to the current issues in psychology. Two blocks of topics will be presented (each taught by one instructor). Students will be assigned papers throughout semester to improve their knowledge about the research in the field. Feedback will be provided to the students to help them improve their writing and presenting skills.

Topics that will be covered in class:

**BLOCK1:**

- Brain behind the happiness and pleasure (Kringelbach & Berridge)
- Science of Happiness (Kahneman)
- The Paradox of Choice ( Barry Schwartz)

**BLOCK2:**

- Psychology of power: lesson from Zimbardo's experiment
- Banality of evil: Milgram and the phenomenon of obedience
- Empathy and Altruism: where did they come from?
- Bystander effect (Latane & Darley)





**Course format and content :** Once a week – 2 hrs (90 minutes)

The course will be held in the form of lectures and seminars, where students’ presentations and active participation are required. The lectures will cover the introduction of the topics and will be followed by the discussion about assigned reading materials/watched videos.

**Reflection Papers (2 x 10% = 20% of the final grade, i.e. 20 points)**

During the semester, two papers are required by each student dealing with the topic covered in the class and assigned reading. Each of the two papers will discuss a topic from each block of lectures (see the schedule). Students can choose the topics they prefer to write about, however they are to submit one paper at the end of each block. One way to approach this assignment is to take the readings covered in the class, propose the argument/question that either agree or disagree with what the author states and find support of the argument in supplementary literature. Other way is to take one of the “older” papers we covered in the class and find the more recent article about the topic and either compare the two, or discuss the progress that has been done in the field. There are no limitations about the approach you choose; however, the academic format of the paper is required. It goes without saying that students are required to use American Psychological Association (APA) style, which will be covered during first class (see also: <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/> ). The papers should not exceed 1200 words, double spaced, standard format (Times New Roman 12, *plus* the cover page with name of the student, name of the course, submission date, and the reference page at the end of the paper following APA citation manual).

**Presentation (30% of the final grade, i.e. 30 pts)**

At the end of the semester, students will also be required to present one topic of their choice (related to issues covered during semester) in the class. We will discuss further details about the assignment during the first class. Follow the general instructions on how to make an effective presentation (e.g. [http://www.slideshare.net/satyajeet\\_02/how-to-make-effective-presentation](http://www.slideshare.net/satyajeet_02/how-to-make-effective-presentation) , <http://www.microsoft.com/atwork/skills/presentations.aspx> , don’t hesitate to Google more tips!!!). Both the content and the format will be evaluated. You are welcome to consult the topic with us as well as the format of the presentation itself, but do not wait till the last minute.

**Exam (40% of the final grade, i.e. 40 pts)**

There will be one final exam held at the end of semester, accounting for 40% of the final grade. The exam will be a combination of an essay and multiple choice questions and will cover all the topics discussed in the class.

**Class evaluation**

The overall grade will consist of the following:

Final Exam	40%	40pts
2 Reflection Papers	20%	20pts
Presentation	30%	30pts
Participation in discussions/attendance	10%	10pts
<b>Total</b>	<b>100 %</b>	<b>100 PTS</b>
Bonus points -		10pts

There will be 2-3 *pop quizzes* during semester allowing students to earn 10 extra points.

100-93% = A, 92-85% = B, 84-77% = C, 76-69% = D, 68-61% = E, and below 60%=F





### Class Attendance Policy

Students 'participation in class discussion is valued and encouraged; it makes up for 10 % of the final grade. Therefore the class attendance is mandatory. Students can miss two classes without any deduction of points. In case you've already missed two classes and in the case of the illness or family emergency, please contact the instructors via email prior to the class.

WEEKLY ASSIGNMENTS		
Date	In class	Assignment
<b>WEEK 1</b>	Introduction, requirements (Monday 26.9.2011)	
<b>WEEK 2</b> 03/10/2011	Discussion 1 <a href="#">watch</a> Dan Gilbert asks, Why are we happy?	Reading 1: <b>Kringelbach, M.L., Berridge, K.C.</b> (2010). The Neuroscience of Happiness and Pleasure, <i>Social Research</i> , 70 (2),659-678
<b>WEEK 3</b> 10/10/2011	Discussion 2 <a href="#">watch</a> Daniel Kahneman: The riddle of Experience vs. memory	Reading 2: Schwarts, chapter 3,4 <b>Schawartz, B.</b> (2005). The paradox of choice: Why more is less. New York: Harper Perennial.
<b>WEEK 4</b> 17/10/2011	Discussion 3 <a href="#">watch</a> Barry Schwartz on happiness	Reading 3: Schwartz, chapter 5,6,7
<b>WEEK 5</b> 24/10/2011	Discussion 4 Psychology of power: lesson from Zimbardo's experiment Students will read 3 articles, a video will be watched during class	Reading 5: <b>Zimbardo, P.</b> The Psychology of Power and Evil: All Power to the Person? To the Situation? To the System? <b>Sunar, D.(2002).</b> Psychology of Morality. Online Readings in Psychology and Culture, Unit 2. <b>Haidt, J.</b> Elevation and Positive Psychology of Morality.
<b>REFLECTION PAPER 1 DUE</b>		
<b>WEEK 6</b> 31/10/2011	Discussion 5 Banality of evil: Milgram and the phenomenon of obedience Students will read 3 articles, a video will be watched during class	Reading 6: <b>Blass, T. (1991).</b> Understanding behavior in the Milgram Obedience Experiment. <i>Journal of Personality and Ind. Diff.</i> ,60,3,398-413. <b>Milgram, S (1973).</b> THE PERILS OF OBEDIENCE , Harper's, 247:1483, 62-73. <b>Slater, M., Antley, A., Davison, A., Swapp,D., Guger, C., et al. (2006)</b> A Virtual Reprise of the Stanley Milgram Obedience Experiments. <i>PLoS ONE</i> 1(1): e39. doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0000039





<b>WEEK 7</b> <b>07/11/2011</b>	<p>Discussion 6</p> <p>Empathy and Altruism: where did they come from?</p> <p>Students will read 3 articles, a video will be watched during class</p>	<p>Reading 7:</p> <p><b>De Waal, F.B.M.(2008).</b> Putting the altruism back to altruism: The evolution of empathy. <i>Annu. Rev. Psychol.</i> 59:279-300.</p> <p><b>Huebner, B., Dwyer, S., &amp; Hauser, M. (2009).</b> The role of emotion in moral psychology. <i>Trends in Cognitive Sciences</i>, xx, xx.</p> <p><b>Iacoboni, M. (2009).</b> Imitation, empathy, and mirror neurons. <i>Annu. Rev. Psychol.</i> 60:653-670.</p>
<b>WEEK 8</b> <b>14/11/2011</b>	Students' presentations	
<b>WEEK 9</b> <b>21/11/2011</b>	<b>Visiting lecturer- prof. Castello</b> <u>Understanding and communication</u>	
<b>REFLECTION PAPER 2 DUE</b>		
<b>WEEK 10</b> <b>28/11/2011</b>	Students' presentations	
<b>WEEK 11</b>	<b>Exam pre-term</b>	
<b>WEEK 12</b>	<b>Exam</b>	

