



MASARYK UNIVERSITY
FACULTY OF SOCIAL STUDIES

PSY 268 Contemporary Issues in Psychology

Syllabus

Lecturers: Zuzana Petrovicova

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

Course Schedule: Monday, 6pm-7.30pm @U34

Online syllabus & study materials

- IS (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 for reading materials and news!

Course objectives – WHAT CAN YOU EXPECT ? :

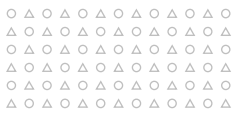
- Introduction to selected topics in psychology via multiple perspectives
- Improvement of students' ability to think critically about topics in psychology
- Learn to locate and review recent empirical studies in psychology
- Learn to write an academic papers and presentations

Course requirements – WHAT DO I EXPECT FROM YOU? :

- Reading. Students are required to read assigned materials (in the syllabus and additional ones assigned during semester)
- Writing. Two papers are required throughout the semester, plus final presentation at the end of semester.
- Think and talk. Most importantly, I expect the active involvement in the discussions, which are critical part of the class.

The course will provide students with the background information related to the current issues in psychology as well as present traditional psychological experiments in new perspective. Two blocks of topics will be presented. 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:

- Happiness – biological, psychological and social underpinnings:
 - o Science of Happiness (Kahneman), Brain behind the happiness and pleasure (Kringelbach & Berridge)
 - o The Paradox of Choice (Barry Schwartz)

BLOCK2:

- Classic experiments in psychology – impact and critique:
 - o Obedience and Conformity : Milgram’s Obedience experiment and its critique
 - o Psychology of power: lesson from Zimbardo’s experiment

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. Participation in class is required, students will receive 20% of their grade based in the active participation in the discussion.

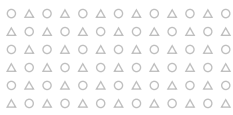
Reflection Papers (2 x 15% = 30% of the final grade, i.e. 30 points)

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 specific topic 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 briefly introduced 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). Both, content and the format are part of the overall evaluation. Therefore, students are advised to become familiar with APA citation manual, on the level required for the class papers (proper citation, reference list at the end of the paper, etc.).

Presentation (20% of the final grade, i.e. 20 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. Based on the size of the class, students will work in small teams of 2-3, or alone. 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.microsoft.com/atwork/skills/presentations.aspx> , don’t hesitate to Google more tips!!!). Both the content and the format will be evaluated. You are welcomed to consult the topic with me as well as the format of the presentation itself, but do not wait till the last minute. The main idea is to use one of the topics





covered during the semester and present new insight or related topics. Short overview of the presentation (about 300 words) will be submitted week before the presentations).

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

There will be one final exam held at the end of semester, accounting for 30% of the final grade. The exam will be a combination of an open ended 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	30%	30pts
2 Reflection Papers	30%	30pts
Presentation	20%	20pts
Participation in discussions/attendance	20%	20pts
Total	100 %	100 PTS

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

Extra points

There will be 2-3 short pop-quizzes (3-4 questions each) during the semester, based on the reading materials. These quizzes are designed to test the understanding of the reading materials and can help students earn additional points (up to 10 extra points).

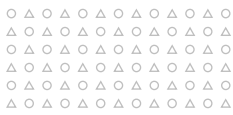
Class Attendance Policy

Students ‘participation in class discussion is valued and encouraged; it makes up for 20 % of the final grade. Therefore the class attendance is mandatory. Two missed classes are allowed, however I do appreciate the email in advance. 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.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism, defined as the "wrongful appropriation," "close imitation," or "purloining and publication" of another author's "language, thoughts, ideas, or expressions," and the representation of them as one's own original work, is a violation of copyrights. From the academic perspective, plagiarism is one of the basic academic offenses against morals, and therefore has its place among the disciplinary offenses at each faculty. To avoid plagiarism, do cite properly and enclose all of the recourses used in the reference list.

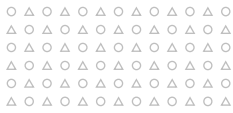




WEEKLY ASSIGNMENTS

Date	In class	Assignment
WEEK 1	No class (17/9/2012)	
WEEK 2 24/9/2012	Introduction to the course requirements (Monday 24.9.2012). Introduction to Block 1 – Happiness Methodological issues in research	No reading required.
WEEK 3 1/10/2012	LECTURE 1 Barry Schwartz: Happiness and decision making Daniel Kahneman: The riddle of Experience vs. memory	Reading 2: Schwarts, chapter 3,4 Schwartz, B. (2005). The paradox of choice: Why more is less. New York: Harper Perennial. Kahneman, D. (2000). Experienced Utility and Objective Happiness: A moment-based approach. In D. Kahneman and A. Tversky (Eds.), <i>Choices, Values and Frames</i> , New York: Cambridge University Press and the Russell Sage Foundation, p. 673-693
WEEK 4 8/10/2012	DISCUSSION 1	
WEEK 5 15/10/2012	LECTURE 2 Measuring Happiness Anchoring and Framing	Reading 3: Schwartz , chapter 5,6,7 Daniel Kahneman , et al (2006). Would You Be Happier If You Were Richer? A Focusing Illusion, <i>Science</i> 312, 1908-1910
WEEK 6 22/10/2012	DISCUSSION 2 -Cancelled	
REFLECTION PAPER 1 DUE		
WEEK 7 29/10/2012	DISCUSSION 2	
WEEK 8 5/11/2012	LECTURE 3 Obedience and Conformity	Milgram, S (1973) . The Perils of Obedience, Harper's, 247:1483, 62-73. Slater, M., Antley, A., Davison, A., Swapp,D., Guger, C., et al. (2006) A Virtual Reprise of the Stanley Milgram Obedience Experiments. <i>PLoS ONE</i> 1(1): e39. doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0000039
WEEK 9 12/11/2012	LECTURE 4 Psychology of Power	Zimbardo, P. The Psychology of Power and Evil: All Power to the Person? To the Situation? To the System? Sunar, D.(2002) . Psychology of Morality. Online Readings in Psychology and Culture, Unit 2.
WEEK 10 19/11/2012	DISCUSSION 3	
WEEK 11 26/11/2012	NO CLASS	





REFLECTION PAPER 2 DUE Short overview of the presentation due	
WEEK 12 3/12/2012	Student Presentations 1 & Class discussion about the topics
WEEK 13 10/12/2012	Student presentations 2 & Class discussion about the topics
WEEK 14 17/12/2012	Exam
To be decided	Exam

