

# Social Psychology in Film

Psy 392F *Honors Only*  
Spring Semester, 2006



- Instructor:** Professor Kipling D. Williams, PSYC 2165  
E-mail: [kip@psych.purdue.edu](mailto:kip@psych.purdue.edu)  
Webpage: <http://www.psych.purdue.edu/~kip/>  
Course Webpage: <http://www.psych.purdue.edu/~kip/392F/index.htm>
- Class times:** Tuesdays, 6:00pm – 8:50pm; PRCE 277
- Office hours:** Thursdays: 9:30 a.m. – 12 or by appointment.
- Texts:** No text; assigned reading to be handed out the week before paper is due.

In this course, we examine current cutting-edge theory and research in experimental social psychology and use popular (and some that are not so popular) films to assist in provoking thought and analysis of the theory and research.

*Aims.* This course is different from most. I'm not interested in how well you remember material, but I am interested in how well you *think* and in how well you *articulate* your ideas.

*Structure.* Each week, readings (journal articles, chapters) will be assigned. We will view a film that has some conceptual relation to the reading topic. Your thought paper, due at 4pm the day before the class meeting, should be sent to me within an email (not as an attachment). Your paper should support a thesis of your choice (I will be giving you advice as to how to write your papers). These papers can be *no longer than 500* words in length. Late papers will *not be accepted*. You will receive feedback and a score for each paper (0-10) by class time, where we will discuss the papers and the film. New readings will be assigned, another film viewed, and so on.

*Grading.* I will grade each paper from 1 (not so good) to 10 (excellent). Although thirteen papers and films will be assigned, you are only required to write six of them. If you write seven or more papers, the six papers with the highest scores will be counted. Whether you write the paper or not, you are expected to read the assigned paper(s), view the film, and take part in the discussion. Class participation will be taken into account for borderline grades. Course marks will be based on the five papers (80%), and attendance/class participation (20%).

Purdue's standard grading policy will be used to assign final letter grades:

|           |   |   |
|-----------|---|---|
| 100 – 90% | = | A |
| 89 - 80%  | = | B |
| 79 - 70%  | = | C |
| 69 - 60%  | = | D |
| < 60%     | = | F |

*Purdue Student Code of Honor:* Know it and follow it. For your own sake, do your own work. Plagiarism is a serious offense, and is easily detectable with the advent of search engines. Here is a useful website to understand the definition and issues surrounding plagiarism: [http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/research/r\\_plagiar.html](http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/research/r_plagiar.html)

*Exceptions.* Some films contain nudity, offensive language, and/or violence. If you feel that a selected film is personally objectionable, then please see me about selecting an alternative film (and you can view this on your own).

| Date   | Reading  | Film  |
|--------|--|---|
| Jan 10 | Organizational meeting   |   |
| Jan 17 | MacDonald, G., & Leary, M. (2003). Why does social exclusion hurt? The relationship between social and somatic pain. <i>Psychological Bulletin</i> .<br><br>Eisenberg, N. I., Lieberman, M. D., & Williams, K. D. (2003). Does rejection hurt? An fMRI study of social exclusion. <i>Science</i> , 302, 290-292. | <b>AN ANGEL AT MY TABLE</b> (1990) C-158m. D: Jane Campion. A: Kerry Fox, Alexia Keogh, Karen Fergusson, Iris Chum.                           |
| Jan 24 | <i>No class</i>  | <i>No class</i>   |
| Jan 31 | Florian, V., Mikulincer, M., & Hirschberger, G. (2002). The anxiety-buffering function of close relationships: Evidence that relationship commitment acts as a terror management mechanism. <i>Journal of Personality and Social Psychology</i> , 82, 527-542.   | <b>AI</b> (Artificial Intelligence) (2001) C-145m. D: Steven Spielberg. A: Haley Joel Osment, Jude Law, Frances O'Connor, William Hurt.       |
| Feb 7  | Greenwald, A. G. (1980). The totalitarian ego. <i>American Psychologist</i> , 35, 603-618.   | <b>RASHOMON</b> (1950) B/W-85m. D: Akira Kurosawa. A: Toshiro Mifune, Machiko Kyo, Masayuki Mori, Takashi Shimura.                            |
| Feb 14 | Snyder, M., & Stukas, A. A. (1999). Interpersonal processes: The interplay of cognitive, motivational, and behavioral activities in social interaction. <i>Annual Review of Psychology</i> , 50, 273-303.  | <b>BEING THERE</b> (1979) C-130m. D: Hal Ashby. A: Peter Sellers, Shirley MacLaine, Melvyn Douglas, Jack Warden.                              |
| Feb 21 | Ellemers, N., Spears, R., & Doosje, B. (2002). Self and social identity. <i>Annual Review of Psychology</i> , 53, 161-186.   | <b>EUROPA EUROPA</b> (1990) C-112m. D: Agnieszka Hollan. A: Marco Hofschneider, Julie Delpy, René Hofschneider.                               |
| Feb 28 | Langlois, J. H., Kalakanis, L., Rubenstein, A. J., Larson, A., Hallam, M., & Smoot, M. Maxims or myths of beauty? Meta-analytic and theoretical review. <i>Psychological Bulletin</i> , 126, 390-423.  | <b>SHREK</b> (2001) C-88m. D: Andrew Adamson, Vicky Jenson. V: Mike Myers, Eddie Murphy, Cameron Diaz.  |
| Mar 7  | Penner, L. A., Dovidio, J.F., Piliavin, J.A., & Schroeder, D.A. (2005). Prosocial behavior: Multilevel perspectives. <i>Annual Review of Psychology</i> .  | <b>HOTEL RWANDA</b> (2004) C-121m. D: Terry George. A: Don Cheadle, Nick Nolte, Xolan Mali, Desmond Dube, Hakeem Kae-Kasim, Fana Mokoena.     |
| Mar 14 | <i>Spring Break</i>  | <i>Spring Break</i>   |
| Mar 21 | Hewstone, M., Rubin, M., & Willis, H. (2002). Intergroup bias. <i>Annual Review of Psychology</i> , 53, 575-604.   | <b>AUSTRALIAN RULES</b> (2002) C-95m. D: Paul Goldman. A: Nathan Phillips, Luke Carroll, Lisa Flanagan, Tom Budge.                            |
| Mar 28 | Steele, C. (1997). A threat is in the air: How stereotypes shape intellectual identity and performance. <i>American Psychologist</i> , 52, 613-629.  | <b>THE BELIEVER</b> (1975) C-98m. D: Henry Bean. A: Ryan Gosling, Summer Phoenix, Billy Zane, Theresa Russell.                                |
| Apr 4  | Dovidio, J. F., & Gaertner, S. L. (2004). Aversive racism. <i>Advances in Experimental Social Psychology</i> , Vol.36 (pp. 4-56). NY: Academic Press.  | <b>CRASH</b> : (2004) C-122m. D: Paul Haggis. A: Don Cheadle, Matt Dillon, Jennifer Esposito, Thandie Newton, Sandra Bullock, Brendan Fraser. |
| Apr 11 | Wood, W. (2000). Attitude change: Persuasion and social influence. <i>Annual Review of Psychology</i> , 51, 529-570.   | <b>12 ANGRY MEN</b> (1957) B/W-95m. D: Sidney Lumet. A: Henry Fonda, Lee J. Cobb.   |
| Apr 19 | Fitness, J. (2001). Betrayal, rejection, revenge, and forgiveness. In M. R. Leary (Ed.), <i>Interpersonal rejection</i> (pp. 73-104)   | <b>LANTANA</b> (2001) C/B&W-121m. D: Ray Lawrence. A: Anthony LaPaglia, Geoffrey Rush, Barbara Hershey, Kerry Armstrong.                      |
| Apr 25 | Anderson, C. A., & Bushman, B. J. (2002). Human aggression. <i>Annual Review of Psychology</i> , 53, 27-51   | <b>BOWLING FOR COLUMBINE</b> 1975) C-125m. D: Michael Moore. (Documentary) A. Charlton Heston, Marilyn Manson, Matt Stone.                    |



### How to Write Your 2-Page Thought Papers

I realize that 500 words may seem unreasonably restricting to you, preventing you from adequately expressing your ideas. In scientific journals, psychology included, writing is necessarily concise. Specific page restrictions are enforced. Redundancy, flowery writing, and ambiguity are to be edited out. This *is* a difficult exercise. Your first draft for each paper will probably be 3-4 pages long, so your subsequent draft(s) will involve editing your paper down to size. (If, on the other hand, you're having a difficult time coming up with 500 words, then you may not be putting enough *thought* into your *thought* papers).

You will then go through a thorough editing stage. Ask yourself these questions: Is this sentence necessary? Is this word necessary? Can I combine these two sentences? Am I straying from my main thesis?

- 1) State your thesis early and explicitly. Underline it, so I know where it is (or *italicize* it or put it in ALL CAPS).
- 2) Do not settle for a wishy-washy thesis. Be brave enough to take a stance and argue for it. Avoid the obvious (i.e., this movie is a perfect example of this phenomenon). I am looking for clever insights, particularly about the theory (or theories) and/or research (not so much about the film).
- 3) Select a thesis with a narrow focus. It should be in some way an extension of the reading (not the movie). Critically analyze the reading. Take issue with the theory, the generalizations, or the way the idea was tested. Use the movie to help come up with your idea or to help illustrate your point.
- 4) Do not necessarily select a thesis that is the central focus of the movie or the reading. It could be a tangential issue that piqued your interest.
- 5) Support your thesis with persuasive arguments based upon examples from the reading and the movie.
- 6) Use each paragraph to make a point that will provide strength to your thesis. The point should be clear and the paragraph should be organized around it. Do not write a paragraph that drifts from one point to another to another. Just have one point per paragraph.
- 7) Avoid quotes, especially long ones.
- 8) Define important or esoteric terms. Do not assume I know what you are talking about.
- 9) Remember that spelling, grammar, sentence structure and organization ARE important and figure into the grading.
- 10) Do not end your paper with a platitude.

#### *Other tips:*

Some students need an introductory sentence or two to get the ball rolling, but these sentences can often be discarded before submitting the final draft.

Often students talk about more than one thesis, which always results in a lower grade. There is not enough space to write and defend more than one thesis within the 500-word limit. Choose your most provocative and well-argued thesis, and use the entire paper to elaborate upon it.

I cut-and-paste your paper into a word document, and the first thing I do is get a word count. If your paper is over 500 words, I stop reading after I reach the 500<sup>th</sup> word. Seriously. So, you should do a word count before submitting it, and make sure it is no more than 500 words.