BUSF 38903 / PSYC 38903
Current Topics in Behavioral Science III
Winter 2016

Course time: Wednesdays, 8:30 – 11:30
Course location: Harper Center (Booth School of Business), Room 3A
Course website: https://chalk.uchicago.edu

INSTRUCTORS
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BRIEF COURSE DESCRIPTION
This is a graduate seminar for Ph.D. students interested in behavioral science. The course will be divided into two parts. The first part (taught by Ed O'Brien) will cover the basic assumptions of social cognition that pervade typical research questions in behavioral science. The focus will be on core psychological principles, so to utilize them in understanding a variety of domains like wellbeing, social judgment, and social prediction. The second part (taught by Anuj Shah) will consist of readings and discussions about how to apply insights from behavioral science in the world. We will consider how psychology's greatest applied hits are used in the field, as well as ideas that are becoming more common in applied settings, and ideas that have been overlooked. The focus will be on parsing the psychology, rather than on field experiment methods.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS
The two main course components are the weekly class discussions and a Research Proposal.

Class Participation: ~50% All students and auditors are expected to:
-Complete all of the assigned readings before class
-Prepare a short (~one paragraph) thought paper each week
-Discuss your reactions to the readings during class
-Lead class discussion by synthesizing thought papers and generating discussion questions (actual number of times depends on course enrollment)

Research Proposal: ~50% All students taking the course for credit are expected to:
-Think of two original research ideas that are (at least somewhat) related to a topic covered in class. One idea should relate to the topics covered by Ed O'Brien in Weeks 1-4. One idea should relate to the topics covered by Anuj Shah in Weeks 6-9.
-Prepare two short presentations to get feedback from the class in Weeks 5 and 10.
-Write one short (8-page minimum) research proposal on one of your two original ideas. The paper should describe the topic and the design of at least one study to test the hypotheses empirically (due March 16th at 12:00pm).

COURSE POLICIES

This Ph.D. seminar is intended to help you advance your own research interests. We will work together to further our understanding of how to conduct good research in psychology, how to raise interesting questions about what we read, how to present and explain that information to others, and how to develop an original research idea that adds to our knowledge of psychology.

Specifically, you are expected to:
1. <u>Attend class</u>. It's hard to contribute and learn from others if you're not in class.
2. <u>Do the reading</u>. This is not a lecture course. Discussion with your classmates is crucial for learning, so you will need to come to class prepared to discuss something with the rest of us. You will not be asked to memorize any terms, concepts, or formulas; rather, you should spend your time thinking of interesting questions or implications of the papers you read.
3. <u>Respect others' time</u>. This includes getting to class on time and handing in your thought papers on time so that the discussion leaders can prepare for the in-class discussion each week.

All readings are available in the Course Documents folder on the Chalk course website.
Note that some of the readings will be working papers, some of which our colleagues have asked us not to distribute beyond the class. So please do not cite any working paper outside of class without checking with us first.

COURSE DEADLINES
<u>Mondays, 5:00pm</u>: By 5:00 each Monday in Weeks 1-4, you should email your thought paper to Ed and the discussion leader(s). By 5:00 each Monday in Weeks 6-9, you should email your thought paper to Anuj and the discussion leader(s). A schedule of who is leading each week will be posted on Chalk.

NOTE: There is one exception to the weekly thought papers. For Week 6, you will instead write about three real-world problems. Find three popular press articles or identify three policies or businesses that either (1) Discuss applying psychology and behavioral science to solve a problem or (2) Describe a problem where you see the potential to use psychology and behavioral science to solve the problem. That is, you'll identify three distinct problems where psychology might be applicable or has been applied. Write a short paragraph for each article that describes (a) The problem and (b) Potential "psychological bottlenecks" driving the problem. Do not merely restate what the article says, but brainstorm on your own instead.

For example, as many of you know, OPower works with utility companies to help lower energy usage by sending reports of how much energy you are using relative to your neighbors. The problem? How to reduce energy usage. The psychological bottlenecks? People do not really understand how much energy they are using (what does a kilowatt-hour even mean?). OPower provides meaningful feedback on how much energy people are using and leverages social norms to make people care. But other bottlenecks might be that people forget to set their thermostats, or the concrete consequences of high energy usage are not salient.

<u>Wednesday, March 16th, 12:00pm</u>: Email final proposals to Ed and Anuj.

READING LIST FOR FIRST HALF

Week 1 (1/06/2016): Mental construal and thinking yourself happy

Suppose I ask you to just "be happy" with your life. What would you do? How would you go about making your life look as good as possible, without actually getting to change anything about it? In Week 1, we'll discuss the basics of how the mind works, thinks, and evaluates the world, using judgments of wellbeing as a case study.

(1) Schwarz, N., & Strack, F. (2004). How to think (and not to think) about your life: Some lessons from social judgment research. In S. Neiman (Ed.), *Zum Glück* (pp. 163-182). Berlin, Germany: Akademie Verlag. [English translation]
(2) Kahneman, D., & Riis, J. (2005). Living, and thinking about it: Two perspectives on life. In F. A. Huppert, N. Baylis, & B. Keverne (Eds.), *The Science of Wellbeing* (pp. 285-304). Oxford University Press.
(3) Robinson, M. D., & Clore, G. L. (2002). Belief and feeling: Evidence for an accessibility model of emotional self-report. *Psychological Bulletin, 128*(6), 934-960.
(4) O'Brien, E., Ellsworth, P. C., & Schwarz, N. (2012). Today's misery and yesterday's happiness: Differential effects of current life-events on perceptions of past wellbeing. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology, 48*(4), 968-972.

In-class handout (no need to read beforehand):
(5) Nisbett, R. E. (1990). The anti-creativity letters: Advice from a senior tempter to a junior tempter. *American Psychologist, 9*, 1078-1082.

Week 2 (1/13/2016): Thinking dynamically

Next, in Week 2, we'll situate these basic processes under the light of actual daily experience. People don't merely think about the world in static isolation; things change, and evaluative impressions must be updated accordingly. We'll discuss roadblocks to keeping things straight.

(1) Ross, L., & Ward, A. (1996). Naïve realism in everyday life: Implications for social conflict and misunderstanding. In E. S. Reed, E. Turiel, & T. Brown (Eds.), *Values and knowledge* (pp. 103–135). Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.
(2) Higgins, E. T. (1998). The aboutness principle: A pervasive influence on human inference. *Social Cognition, 16*, 173-198.
(3) Gilbert, D. T. (1991). How mental systems believe. *American Psychologist, 46*, 107-119.
(4) Heath, C., & Heath, D. (2006, December). *The curse of knowledge*. Harvard Business Review.

Finally, these two papers may suggest opposing fixes. Most interesting to read back to back:
(5) Campbell, T., O'Brien, E., Van Boven, L., Schwarz, N., & Ubel, P. A. (2014). Too much experience: A desensitization bias in emotional perspective taking. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 106*(2), 272-285.
(6) Gilbert, D. T., Killingsworth, M. A., Eyre, R. N., & Wilson, T. D. (2009). The surprising power of neighborly advice. *Science, 323*, 1617-1619.

Week 3 (1/20/2016): Bias, and what it means

Behavioral scientists love to talk about "biases" in how people think, feel, and behave. In Week 3, we'll examine a few such factors (some classic, some recent) that do appear to alter the basic principles covered so far, and we'll more generally discuss the meaning of the term "bias" itself.

(1) Rozin, P., & Royzman, E. B. (2001). Negativity bias, negativity dominance, and contagion. *Personality and Social Psychology Review, 5*, 296-320.
(2) O'Brien, E., & Klein, N. The tipping point of hedonic change: Asymmetric thresholds in perceiving improvement versus decline. Working paper.
(3) Mann, T., & Ferguson, M. J. (2015). Can we undo our first impressions? The role of reinterpretation in reversing implicit evaluations.
(4) Loewenstein, G. (1987). Anticipation and the valuation of delayed consumption. *The Economic Journal, 97*, 666-684.
(5) Dunning, D., & Balcetis, E. (2013). Wishful seeing: How preferences shape visual perception. *Current Directions in Psychological Science, 22*, 33-37.
(6) Schwarz, N., Strack, F., Hilton, D., & Naderer, G. (1991). Base rates, representativeness, and the logic of conversation: The contextual relevance of "irrelevant" information. Social cognition, 9, 67-84.

Week 4 (1/27/2016): The "social" of social cognition

For better and for worse, everyday life inevitably involves other people; one's own mind can never think in a vacuum. Finally, in Week 4, we'll discuss the uniquely powerful role that other people play in how we come to ultimately perceive and navigate the world, including wrapping things back into the psychology of happiness.

(1) Wilson, T. D., Reinhard, D. A., Westgate, E. C., Gilbert, D. T., Ellerbeck, N., Hahn, C., Brown, C. L., & Shaked, A. (2014). Just think: The challenges of the disengaged mind. *Science, 345*, 75-77.
(2) Shteynberg, G. (2015). Shared attention. *Perspectives on Psychological Science, 10*, 579-590.
(3) Boothby, E. J., Clark, M. S., & Bargh, J. A. (2014). Shared experiences are amplified. *Psychological Science, 25*, 2209-2216.
(4) Mogilner, C. (2010). The pursuit of happiness: Time, money, and social connection. *Psychological Science, 21*, 1348-1354.
(5) Chopik, W. J., & O'Brien. E. Happy others promote a healthy self. Working paper.
(6) Christakis, N. A., & Fowler, J. H. (2007). The spread of obesity in a large social network over 32 years. *New England Journal of Medicine, 357*, 370-379.
(7) Cikara, M., & Fiske, S. T. (2011). Stereotypes and schadenfreude: Affective and physiological markers of pleasure at outgroup misfortunes. *Social Psychological and Personality Science*, 3, 63-71.

READING LIST FOR SECOND HALF

We'll start by reading about some of the most often used theories in an applied behavioral scientist's toolkit. We will then move on to explore other theories that are emerging as useful in applied settings, as well as theories that have been overlooked. I have loosely organized these as a tour through psychologies of the self, of others, and of how we think about the situation.

Each week, there will be at least three goals in the discussion. We'll start by parsing the psychological theories themselves, considering the strengths and weaknesses of the ideas and the experiments behind the ideas. We'll then consider how these ideas have been applied, and how they could be sharpened or supplemented. We'll then think about other ways to apply these psychologies (drawing on the list of problems you generate prior to Week 6).

Week 6 (2/10/2016): The greatest hits
(1) Gollwitzer, P. M., & Brandstätter, V. (1997). Implementation intentions and effective goal pursuit. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 73*, 186-199.
(2) Rogers, T., Milkman, K., John, L. K., & Norton, M. I. (in press). Making the best laid plans better: How plan-making prompts increase follow-through. *Behavioral Science & Policy*.
(3) Goldstein, N. J., Cialdini, R. B., Griskevicius, V. (2008). A room with a viewpoint: Using social norms to motivate environmental conservation in hotels. *Journal of Consumer Research,* 472-482.
(4) Allcott, H. Social norms and energy conservation. *Journal of Public Economics, 95*, 1082-1095. [**do not worry about the economics, read it for the psychology and experiment**]
(5) Johnson, E. J., & Goldstein, D. G. (2013). Decisions by default. In E. Shafir (Ed.), *The behavioral foundations of public policy* (pp. 417-428). Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
(6) Karlan, D., McConnell, M., Mullainathan, S., Zinman, J. Getting to the top of mind: How reminders increase saving. *NBER Working Paper No. 16205*. [**do not worry about the economics, read it for the psychology and experiment**]
(7) Bryan, G., Karlan, D., & Nelson, S. (2010). Commitment devices. *Annual Review of Economics,* 671-698.

Week 7 (2/17/2016): Thinking about ourselves
(1) Stephens, N. M., Hamedami, M. G., & Destin, M. (2014). Closing the social-class achievement gap: A difference-education intervention improves first-generation college students' academic performance and all students' college transition. *Psychological Science, 25*, 943-953.
(2) Yeager, D. S., & Dweck, C. (2012). Mindsets that promote resilience: When students believe that personal characteristics can be developed. *Educational Psychologist, 47*, 302-314.
(3) van Gelder, J-L., Hershfield, H. E., & Nordgren, L. F. (2013). Vividness of the future self predicts delinquency. *Psychological Science, 24*, 974-980.
(4) Bryan, C. J., Walton, G. M., Rogers, T., & Dweck, C. S. (2011). Motivating voter turnout by invoking the self. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, 108*, 12653-12656.
(5) Hall, C. C., Zhao, J., & Shafir, E. (2014). Self-affirmation among the poor: Cognitive and behavioral implications. *Psychological Science, 25*, 619-625.

(6) LeBoeuf, R. A., Shafir, E., & Bayuk, J. B. (2010). The conflicting choices of alternating selves. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes, 111*, 48-61.
(7) Miller, R. L., Brickman, P., & Bolen, D. (1975). Attribution versus persuasion as a means for modifying behavior. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 31*, 430-441.

Week 8 (2/24/2016): Thinking about others
(1) Waytz, A., Heafner, J., & Epley, N. (2014). The mind in the machine: Anthropomorphism increases trust in an autonomous vehicle. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology, 52*, 113-117.
(2) Waytz, A., Gray, K., Epley, N., & Wegner, D. M. (2010). Causes and consequences of mind perception. *Trends in Cognitive Sciences, 14*, 383-388.
(3) Gerber, A. S., Green, D. P., & Larimer, C. W. (2008). Social pressure and voter turnout: Evidence from a large-scale field experiment. *American Political Science Review, 102*, 33-48.
(4) Feinberg, M., Willer, R., & Schultz, M. (2014). Gossip and ostracism promote cooperation in groups. *Psychological Science, 25*, 656-664.
(5) Paluck, E. K., & Shepherd, H. The salience of social referents: A field experiment on collective norms and harassment behavior in a school social network. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 103*, 899-915.
(6) Yoeli, E., Hoffman, M., Rand, D. G., & Nowak, M. A. (2013). Powering up with indirect reciprocity in a large-scale field experiment. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, 110*, 10424-10429.

Week 9 (3/2/2016): Thinking about the situation
(1) Heller, S. B., Shah, A. K., Guryan, J., Ludwig, J., Mullainathan, S., & Pollack, H. A. Thinking, fast and slow? Some field experiments to reduce crime and dropout in Chicago. Working paper.
(2) Langer, E. J., & Piper, A. I. (1987). The prevention of mindlessness. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 53*, 280-287.
(3) Abelson, R. P. (1981). Psychological status of the script concept. *American Psychologist, 36*, 715-729.
(4) Liberman, V., Samuels, S. M., & Ross, L. (2004). The name of the game: Predictive power of reputations versus situational labels in determining prisoner's dilemma game moves. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 30*, 1175-1185.
(5) Ross, L. (2013). Perspectives on disagreement and dispute resolution: Lessons from the lab and the real world. In E. Shafir (Ed.), *The behavioral foundations of public policy* (pp. 108-125). Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.