

Professor: Ashun SIERRA-DIAZ

Course title: The Psychology of  
Contemporary Issues  
Spring Semester 2023-24

Number of contact hours: 20h  
ECTS: 5

## Syllabus

Sciences Po Toulouse

**INTERNATIONAL DIPLOMA – ENGLISH TRACK**  
International & Comparative Studies Diploma

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### **COURSE DESCRIPTION:**

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How are human beings coping with the increasingly fast and changing pace of modern society? Are our brains equipped to cope with the incessant drive for innovation and rapidly evolving scenarios? Do we really understand how our brains work and how we react in certain situations?

On this course we will examine and discuss the complex psychological mechanisms that drive human attitudes and behaviour in a wide range of contemporary issues. An insight into these mechanisms can help to shed light on social, economic, political and environmental issues that are currently predominant in our society and unlock some of the enigmas surrounding human behaviour.

Drawing on traditional psychological theories as well as up to date research, our aim will be to question the evidence supporting these models and theories and critically assess their validity.

Students will engage in discussions and debates on a wide range of topics such as eco-anxiety, online hate speech, exposure to violence, law enforcement, digital bystanders, discrimination, crowd manipulation, gaslighting, groupthink, obedience to authority and many others.

Throughout the course and in their assignments, students will also be encouraged to draw knowledge and examples from their own experience, focus on their own behaviour to ultimately gain in self-awareness.

### **COURSE OBJECTIVES:**

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- Gain an understanding of the current issues, debates and approaches in psychology
- Familiarise students with key psychology concepts and theories
- Critically evaluate psychological research and examine its limitations
- Evaluate the importance of psychology as a social science and the contribution it makes to other social scientific disciplines
- Conduct a psychological research and present the findings

**COURSE LAYOUT:**

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CLASSES WILL BE HELD IN THE SPRING SEMESTER OVER AN 8-WEEK PERIOD.

<b>WEEK 1</b>	<b>AN INTRODUCTION TO EXPERIMENTAL SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY</b>
<b>WEEK 2</b>	<b>ENVIRONMENTAL PSYCHOLOGY</b>
<b>WEEK 3</b>	<b>GROUP INFLUENCE</b>
<b>WEEK 4</b>	<b>EXPERIMENTAL PSYCHOLOGY AND ETHICS</b>
<b>WEEK 5</b>	<b>INTER-GROUP BEHAVIOUR</b>
<b>WEEK 6</b>	<b>CYBERPSYCHOLOGY AND THE MEDIA</b>
<b>WEEK 7</b>	<b>POLITICAL PSYCHOLOGY</b>
<b>WEEK 8</b>	<b>PRESENTATION OF GROUP EXPERIMENTS</b>

**TEXTBOOK: SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY (13TH EDITION) BY DAVID G. MYERS & JEAN M. TWENGE (ISBN: 978-1-260-39711-6 (REGULAR STUDENT EDITION); 978-1-259-91104-0 (LOOSE LEAF EDITION))**

**USING THE 10<sup>TH</sup>, 11<sup>TH</sup> OR 12<sup>TH</sup> EDITION OF THIS BOOK IS ALSO ACCEPTABLE.**

**EVALUATION:**

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- 1 GROUP PROJECT – 40%
- 1 INDIVIDUAL ASSIGNMENT – 40%
- CLASS PARTICIPATION – 20%

**GROUP PROJECT**

In groups, students will be asked to design a psychological experiment and present the findings on the last day of class.

**INDIVIDUAL ASSIGNMENT**

Students will be asked to complete an individual assignment based on a personal experience, relating it to the theories and concepts discussed in class.

**CLASS PARTICIPATION**

All students will be expected and actively encouraged to participate in class activities and discussions.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY:

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Students will be expected to read the corresponding chapter from the textbook before each class in some weeks, or recommendations from the following bibliography.

ALTER, A. (2018) *THE RISE OF ADDICTIVE TECHNOLOGY AND THE BUSINESS OF KEEPING US HOOKED*. PENGUIN PUTNAM INC.

BARTZ, J. & KLEIN, W. (2023) *A HISTORICAL REVIEW OF GASLIGHTING: TRACING CHANGING CONCEPTUALIZATIONS WITHIN PSYCHOLOGY AND PSYCHIATRY*. CANADIAN PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION ANNUAL CONVENTION.

CARR, N. (2011) *THE SHALLOWS – WHAT THE INTERNET IS DOING TO OUR BRAINS*. WW. NORTON & Co.

CIECIURA, J. (2016) *A SUMMARY OF THE BYSTANDER EFFECT: HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT AND RELEVANCE IN THE DIGITAL AGE*. INQUIRIES JOURNAL VOL. 8, N°11. PG 1/1

COTTAM, M.L., MASTORS E., PRESTON, T., & DIETZ.B (2016). *INTRODUCTION TO POLITICAL PSYCHOLOGY* (3<sup>RD</sup> ed.) ROUTLEDGE/TAYLOR & FRANCIS GROUP.

GERTNER, J. (2004) *WHY ISN'T THE BRAIN GREEN?* NY TIMES.

GILBERT, D. (2014) *IT'S THE END OF THE WORLD AS WE KNOW IT (AND I FEEL FINE)* TED TALK, ATHENS.

HARMAN, G. (2014) *YOUR BRAIN ON CLIMATE CHANGE: WHY THE THREAT PRODUCES APATHY, NOT ACTION*. THE GUARDIAN

HARRIS, T. (2017) *HOW A HANDFUL OF TECH COMPANIES CONTROL BILLIONS OF MINDS EVERY DAY*. TED TALK.

KAHNEMANN, D. (2011) *THINKING, FAST AND SLOW*. PENGUIN BOOKS.

LEMBKE, A. (2021) *DOPAMINE NATION*. HEADLINE.

MILGRAM, S (1965) *SOME CONDITIONS OF OBEDIENCE AND DISOBEDIENCE TO AUTHORITY*. HUMAN RELATIONS. VOL 18, N° 1, 57-76.

TAYLOR, S. (2020) *THE PSYCHOLOGY OF PANDEMICS*. CAMBRIDGE SCHOLARS PUBLISHING

WILLIAMS, M. (2022) *THE SCIENCE OF HATE*. FABER & FABER.