The Self and Relationships Fall 2007: Undergraduate Syllabus

Instructor: Dr. Jeni L. Burnette
Email: jburnet2@richmond.edu
Class: W & F 11:15AM- 12:30PM
Phone: (804) 289 8124
Class: Richmond Hall 101
Office: Richmond Hall # 119
Course webpage: http://blackboard.richmond.edu
Office hours: Thursday 1:30-3:00PM

Required Text

Overview of the course
As Plato once wrote, “I must first know myself, as the Delphian inscription says; to be curious about that which is not my concern, while I am still in ignorance of my own self would be ridiculous.” In this seminar we will tackle issues dealing with the self before bridging self-oriented research with interpersonal relationship functioning. This highly discussion-oriented class exposes the student to theoretical perspectives and innovative research methodologies that illustrate both what makes us who we are and how that impacts relationship functioning. Topics include self-regulation and its role in shaping relationship outcomes, self-esteem and its effect on relationship strategies, an introduction into beliefs about the nature of relationships, and an evaluation of gender and cultural differences in self concept and relationships. We will read a number of empirical findings in these areas and critically evaluate the interplay of the self and relationships. We will examine the strengths and limitations of merging the self literature with the relationships literature and examine its place in the field of psychology. To supplement the empirical literature, we will draw from additional sources including our own experiences to broaden our understanding.

Goals of the course

1. Learning the content: Acquire a working knowledge of social psychology's theories, methods, and findings and apply them to issues related to the self and relationships.

2. Understanding psychology's methods: Knowing the content of the field is important, but I also hope that in studying the self and relationships, you learn to look at behavior through a psychologist's eyes. That is, you search for the social determinants of human action, puzzle over the cause of some anomalous social phenomenon and cast off common sense explanations when they fail to stand up to empirical tests.

3. Personal development & practical application: By gaining an understanding of the self and relationships, you may discover answers to problems you now face, or will face in the future.

4. Enjoyment: Knowing more about the self and the nature of close relationships is a delightful pursuit. The field examines important aspects of human behavior, sheds light on intriguing social processes we have all personally experienced, and yields conclusions that have tremendous practical value. I find that learning about social behavior, especially the self and relationships is a very enjoyable experience (but I am, of course, very biased).
**STRUCTURE OF THE SEMINARS**

Each week of seminar meetings after the first one (which I will lead) will consist of two partially overlapping components. The first component involves the “Reviewer” providing brief overviews of the three-four readings from the previous week. The goal is not to lecture on the readings but rather to provide a brief refresher for the class. The Reviewer will also review one article that offers a different perspective from the previous week’s topic. I suggest that the Reviewer prepare a very brief PowerPoint summary of each of the previous week’s articles and then move into the article they have chosen as representative of a contrasting viewpoint. The Reviewer will have 20-30 minutes for review, discussion, and wrap-up. The second component involves the Discussion Leader(s) facilitating discussion of the articles for that week’s class meetings. Although I will not be primarily in charge of leading the discussion, I will assist the Discussion Leader(s) in this task. The Discussion Leader(s) are to provide the class with a minimum of five discussion questions for the class to consider at least one week in advance (emailed to the class via blackboard). In addition, I encourage the discussion leaders to incorporate media, movie clips, newspaper articles and other related current events as examples.

**STUDENT EVALUATION**

1. Reviewer Presentation…………………………………....  25 points  
2. Discussion Leader Presentation………………………….   25 points  
3. General Discussion Involvement…………………………  65 points (5 points a day)  
4. Article Reviews (6 total, every other week)……………...  60 points (10 per review)  
5. Book Review and Presentation…………………………..   50 points  
6. Final Research Paper …………………………………….  100 points  

Total .............................................................................................. 325 Points

**Article Reviews:** Half of the class will have an article review (1-2 pages) due at the start of class on Wednesday. You will have one due every other week. Each week you write a review, you should include 2-3 questions to inspire discussion that week. The review should not only reiterate what was said but also serve as a critique and a way to stimulate critical thinking.

**Book Review:** You will write a 4-5 page review of a book that you choose from the list at the end of this syllabus. You will also convey your critique of the book to the class in a ten-fifteen minute presentation (you will present with other students who choose the same book as you).

**Final paper:** Students will develop their own research idea. They will write an 8-10 page APA-style paper consisting of an abstract, introduction, and proposed methods section. The Introduction should include a brief discussion of relevant theory and research and justification for the hypotheses. There is no need for an exhaustive literature review; 5-10 citations should be sufficient. The Method section should include a sufficient but succinct description of the procedures that will be employed to investigate the hypotheses. Procedures must involve at least one experimental manipulation (except in rare cases in which the procedure has been approved by me at least 72 hours before the paper is due).
Class policies

1. Arrive on time and plan to remain until the final minute of class. I am careful to make certain that class does not run over, but I expect your attention for the entire class period.

2. If you have problems attending class, withdraw. You are responsible for withdrawing if you fall behind.

3. Sensitivity. This course examines many aspects of human behavior, so students should realize that they may acquire insight into their own personalities, actions, and tendencies as a result of participation. All of us should strive to remain sensitive to the feelings and perspectives of others during these discussions.

Honor Code

All work submitted for this class will be your own original work and will require a pledge of adherence to the Honor Systems of University of Richmond. In addition, unless otherwise instructed, all of your efforts in this course should represent completely independent work.

Course Grades

Letter grades will be broken down as follows: 93.0-100% = A; 90-92.9999% = A-; 87.0-89.9999% = B+; 83.0-86.9999% = B; 80.0-82.9999% = B-; 77.0-79.9999% = C+; 73.0-76.9999% = C; 70.0-72.9999% = C-; 67.0-69.9999% = D+; 63.0-66.9999% = D; 70.0-72.9999% = D-; 59.9% and below = F. In selected circumstances, grades may be adjusted for students with borderline averages who show tremendous improvement and effort.
LIST OF TOPICS AND READINGS

Week 1. Intro & Self Regulation (Aug. 29th & 31st)

Assigned Readings (LEADER: Dr. Burnette)
1. Chapter 1 & 2: Introduction & Self Regulation

Week 2. Self-Regulation Applied (Sept. 5th & 7th)

A. Reviewer (Dr. Burnette)
B. Assigned Readings (LEADERS: Heather & Kaitlin)
1. Chapter 3: Self-Regulation and Interpersonal Relationships

Week 3. Self Concept (Sept. 12th & 14th)

A. Reviewers (Jenna & Alison)
B. Assigned Readings (LEADERS: Jenny & Trisha)
1. Chapter 5: Self Worth and Relationships

Week 4. Self Concept Applied (Sept. 19th & 21st)

A. Reviewer (Danielle)
B. Assigned Readings (LEADERS: Jeanette & Colleen)
Week 5. Attachment Theory & Application (Sept. 26th & 28th)
A. Reviewer (Tricia)
B. Assigned Readings (LEADERS: Madison & Aaron)
1. Chapter 7: Attachment and relationships

Week 6. Implicit (Self) Theories & Motivation (Oct. 3rd & 5th)
A. Reviewer (Jenny)
B. Assigned Readings (LEADERS: Danielle & Lin)

Week 7. (Oct. 10th & 12th) Research Project Week
A. Preliminary Research Idea Due
B. Discussion of Project Goals and Details

Week 8. Implicit Theories and Relationships (Oct. 17th & 19th)
A. Reviewers: (Lin)
B. Assigned Readings (LEADERS: Jenna & Brittany)
1. Chapter 8: Implicit Theories of Relationships

Week 9. Implicit Theories Applied (Oct. 24th & 26th)
A. Reviewers (Aaron & Colleen)
B. Assigned Readings (LEADERS: Meghan & Alison)
Week 10. Evolutionary Perspectives (Oct. 31st & Nov 2nd)
A. Reviewer (Heather & Madison)
B. Assigned Readings (LEADER: Danielle)
   1. Chapter 11: Evolutionary perspective

Week 11. Interdependence Theory (Nov. 7th & 9th)
A. Reviewers (Brittany & Meghan)
B. Assigned Readings (LEADER: Lin Li)
   1. Chapter 14 & 16

Week 12. Gender Differences: The Self and Relationships (Nov. 14th & 16th)
A. Reviewers (Jeanette & Kaitlin)
B. Assigned Readings (LEADER: Jenny)

Week 13. Cultural Perspectives (Nov. 28th & 30th)
A. Reviewers (Everyone)
B. Assigned Readings (LEADERS: Tricia)

Week 14. Review/Project Questions & Book Presentations (Dec. 5th & 7th)

**FINAL EXAM WEEK: Final Research Paper is due Exam Day**
Book List

   Amazon Review: “Mindset is "an established set of attitudes held by someone," says the Oxford American Dictionary. It turns out, however, that a set of attitudes needn't be so set, according to Dweck, professor of psychology at Stanford. Dweck proposes that everyone has either a fixed mindset or a growth mindset. A fixed mindset is one in which you view your talents and abilities as... well, fixed. A growth mindset, on the other hand, is one in which you see yourself as fluid, a work in progress. Dweck provides a checklist to assess yourself and shows how a particular mindset can affect all areas of your life, from business to sports and love. The good news, says Dweck, is that mindsets are not set: at any time, you can learn to use a growth mindset to achieve success and happiness. This is a serious, practical book. Dweck's overall assertion that rigid thinking benefits no one, least of all yourself, and that a change of mind is always possible, is welcome.”

   Amazon Review: “In their 2000 book, Millennials Rising, Neil Howe and William Straus argued that children born after 1982 will grow up to become America's next Greatest Generation—filled with a sense of optimism and civic duty—but according to San Diego State psychology professor Twenge, such predictions are wishful thinking. Lumping together Gen-X and Y under the moniker "GenMe," Twenge argues that those born after 1970 are more self-centered, more disrespectful of authority and more depressed than ever before. The real basis of her argument, however, lies in her 14 years of research comparing the results of personality tests given to boomers when they were under 30 and those given to GenMe-ers today. Her call to "ditch the self-esteem movement" in favor of education programs that encourage empathy and real accomplishment could spare some from the depression that often occurs when they hit the realities of today's increasingly competitive workplace.”

   Amazon Review: “Despite its obvious advantages, our ability to be self-reflective comes at a high price. Few people realize how profoundly their lives are affected by self-reflection or how frequently inner chatter interferes with their success, pollutes their relationships with others, and undermines their happiness. A great deal of unhappiness, in the form of addictions, overeating, and domestic violence, is due to people's inability to exert control over their thoughts and behavior. Is it possible to direct our self-reflection in a way that will minimize the disadvantages and maximize the advantages? Is there a way to affect the egotistical self through self-reflection? In this volume, Mark Leary explores the personal and social problems that are created by the capacity for self-reflection, and by drawing upon psychology and other behavioral sciences, offers insights into how these problems can be minimized.”

   Amazon Review: “Narcissistic men seem like the ultimate catch: self-confident, attractive, charming individuals who are often the life of the party. His attention is initially very flattering, but eventually his behavior is not: he becomes aloof and controlling and may cheat. He still seems somewhat interested, however, and often makes enough nice gestures to maintain a girl's interest, leaving all but him to wonder: what is going on? The country's leading expert on narcissism, Dr. W. Keith Campbell, explains how to identify a narcissist, what it means to love a man who loves himself and how to break the cycle of dating men with this personality disorder.”