

Department.: Psychology

Course Number: PSYC 241W

Course Title: Current Topics in Social Psychology

Credits: 3

Contact Person: John Rickards

Catalog Copy: 241W. Current Topics in Social Psychology.

Semester by arrangement. Three credits. Prerequisite: PSYC 240 and consent of instructor; ENGL 105 or 110 or 111 or 250. With a change in content, this course may be repeated for credit. Selected topics (e.g., psychosocial mechanisms of bias, communication of prejudice, self-in social psychology, psychosocial aspects of the HIV epidemic) vary with each offering.

Course Information: -. This Current Topics course aims to provide detailed knowledge of a specific sub area of social psychology in a relatively small class (less than twenty students) in which intensive discussion is possible. Depending on the professor and the semester, Current Topics in Social Psychology may focus on: psychological mechanisms of bias, communication of prejudice, the self in social psychology, or psychosocial aspects of the HIV epidemic, among other topics. Across all topic areas, relevant conceptual and empirical work are examined, and methodological issues are explored. In addition to learning a specific area in depth, goals are to improve students' writing, presentation, and discussion skills.

Course requirements vary by topic and instructor. Nevertheless, weekly reading (one or more articles) is required; readings are discussed in class, and brief papers are generally assigned. There is often a major paper, and there is a final exam. Writing is extensively critiqued, involves fifteen pages or more, and comprises at least 50% of students' final grade.

Depending on the professor and the semester, the major focus of the course may be on psychological mechanisms of bias (Agocha), communication of prejudice (Pratto), the self in social psychology (Quinn), psychosocial aspects of the HIV epidemic (Fisher), or another topic of the instructor's choosing.

W Criteria: Regardless of the Professor or the specific Psychology 241 topic in any given semester, writing assignments are designed to enhance learning and content of the course. In many sections, students write "reaction" papers to current reading assignments that demonstrate their mastery of it. For most sections, longer research and term papers are required that involve a much deeper level of research than the material covered in class. Written assignments vary across instructor from brief (1-2 pages), to medium length (4-5 pages), to term paper length. For each course there is extensive written feedback and also opportunities for referral to the writing center for serious problems. There may also be formal class instruction when consistent, pervasive writing problems exist across many students. There is always the expectation

that students' writing will improve in response to the feedback, and over the course of the semester. Across all sections of the course, the student must pass the W component to pass the course, the written assignments enhance and expand on overall learning, there are a minimum of 15 pages of revised, edited writing, and the course syllabus informs students of these requirements, and how they need to be met.

Role of Grad Students: N/A