

Psych 451. Formation and Change of Attitudes

Spring 2011; Tuesdays and Thursdays, 10:00am-11:50am; SOS B52

Professor: Jesse Graham

Office: SGM804

Email: jesse.graham@usc.edu

Office Hours: email to make an appointment

Course Description:

What determines our likes and dislikes – our attitudes – about people, objects, and ideas? Are we in control of our attitudes? Are we responsible for them? How do we form attitudes about entire groups of people, and can those attitudes ever be changed? Is it possible to have attitudes we're not even aware of?

Social psychologists are beginning to find empirical answers to these age-old questions. This course will provide an overview of these findings, as well as the questions still left unanswered, regarding the attitude construct, measurement of attitudes, attitude change via persuasive communication, and the ways attitudes influence human thought and behavior. We will pay particular attention to deeply-held moral and political attitudes, and recent developments in implicit (i.e., non-self-report) attitude measures.

Course Goals:

1. Students will gain a thorough understanding of existing attitude research.
2. Students will gain an understanding of the types of methods that attitudes researchers use, and will be able to think critically about experimental methodologies in general.
3. Students will gain an understanding of current debates and unanswered questions in attitudes research.
4. Students will examine how basic research on attitudes can help explain and address social issues both in their personal lives and in society at large.
5. Students will come up with their own ideas for new research on attitudes and develop that idea into an APA-style paper.

Course Structure:

Tuesdays will be lecture days, and Thursdays will be discussion days. It is up to you whether you do the week's reading before or after Tuesday's lecture, but readings need to be done by mid-day Wednesday so you can get your discussion question/critique in by 2pm.

Course Assignments:

Requirements:

(1) Discussion Questions: 1 discussion question or critique on the week's readings (12 total), to be submitted to session organizer (via Blackboard) by Wednesday at 2pm. These should be between 300 and 500 words. These questions, plus class attendance and participation, make up 20% of the total grade.

(2) Leading Discussion: Two students in the class will be session co-organizers for each Thursday class meeting. This person will receive the week's discussion questions, organize the questions to promote class discussion, and lead off class discussion. A word document with the organized questions should be sent out to the class by 10pm Wednesday night. This task is worth 10% of the total grade.

(3) Exams: There will be three exams. Exam 1 (3/3, in class) will be worth 15% of the total grade, Exam 2 (4/14, in class) will be worth 15% of the total grade, and the Final Exam (5/10, 11am-1pm) will be worth 20% of the total grade.

(4) Research proposal: The research proposal should raise a question/problem inspired by the class content and propose an empirical study to address that question or problem. The paper should be presented as an empirical report (in the same APA format the journal articles are in). The paper should be 10 pages or less (double-spaced; normal margins; 11-12 point font). In addition to the introduction and methods, a brief results section should report the expected result (hypothetical data), and a discussion should present the implications of the expected finding. This paper is due by midnight May 5, but can be turned in at any point during the semester. This will count for 20% of the total grade.

Extra credit: Extra credit can be earned up to 6% of the total grade by participating in the department participant pool (1 participant pool credit = 1% added to your total course grade). Half of your credits must be earned through lab (as opposed to web) studies. Karan Singh will give more info about how this works in class on Tuesday, January 18, and more info will be posted on Blackboard. The alternate extra credit assignment will be one 2-page critique of an empirical article about attitudes for each 1% of bonus credit (up to 6%, or 6 critique papers).

For more info about grading policies and procedures, including policies covering cheating and plagiarism, see

http://www.usc.edu/dept/ARR/private/forms/Handbooks/Grade_Handbook_rev042010.pdf .

Course Materials: The primary text for this course is *The Psychology of Attitudes and Attitude Change* by Greg Maio and Geoffrey Haddock. New and used copies should be available at the USC bookstore. Each week you will be assigned one chapter from the book and one empirical journal article to read. The journal articles will be available on Blackboard.

Course Attendance and Preparation

Attendance at both Tuesday lectures and Thursday discussion classes is required.

Important Dates to Remember

Exam 1: March 3 (optional review on March 1)

Exam 2: April 14 (optional review on April 12)

Research proposal paper due: May 5 (email it by midnight)

Final Exam: Tuesday, May 10, 11am-1pm

Course Schedule:

<u>Week</u>	<u>Dates</u>	<u>Topic</u>	<u>Textbook Reading*</u>
1	1/11, 1/13	Course Overview	No Reading
2	1/18, 1/20	What is an attitude, and why is it important?	Chapter 1 (pp. 1-10)
3	1/25, 1/27	No class – Social Psych conference	No Reading
4	2/1, 2/3	Measuring attitudes, directly and indirectly	Chapter 1 (pp. 10-22), Chapter 9
5	2/8, 2/10	Attitude content, structure and function	Chapter 2
6	2/15, 2/17	Attitudes influence thought	Chapter 3
7	2/22, 2/24	Attitudes influence behavior	Chapter 4
8	3/1, 3/3	Exam 1 (review session Tuesday, exam Thursday)	No Reading
9	3/8, 3/10	Cognitive influences on attitudes	Chapter 5
10	3/15, 3/17	No Class – Spring Break	No Reading
11	3/22, 3/24	Emotional influences on attitudes	Chapter 6
12	3/29, 3/31	Behavioral influences on attitudes	Chapter 7
13	4/5, 4/7	Persuasion	Chapter 8
14	4/12, 4/14	Exam 2 (review session Tuesday, exam Thursday)	No Reading
15	4/19, 4/21	Relationships, groups, cultures	Chapter 10
16	4/26, 4/28	Moral and political attitudes; Course summary	Chapter 11

*Note: You will also have a journal article to read each week in addition to the assigned textbook chapter. Journal articles will be available on Blackboard.