



**Department of Psychology**  
**Psychology 441 (Lec 01)**  
**Social Psychology: Theory and Research**  
**Winter 2006**

<b>Instructor:</b>	Dr. S. Boon	<b>Lecture Location:</b>	SA 0145
<b>Phone:</b>	220-5564	<b>Lecture Days/Time:</b>	TR 12:30-13:50
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<b>Office Hours:</b>	TBA		

**Course Description:**

A review of current theory and research in the area of social psychology. Research projects will introduce methodologies used in this area. H(3-2)(Area II)

Prerequisites: Psychology 312 and 345. Note: Sociology 341 does not substitute for Psychology 345 as a prerequisite.

This course examines theory and research in social cognition concerned with error and bias in human judgment and decision-making. For the first two-thirds or so of the course we will consider intuitive strategies for processing information and compare them with normative principles for rational judgment. The final weeks of the course will focus on possible ways to reduce the occurrence of inferential errors, as well as a consideration of several critiques offered in objection to the viewpoint that social inference is fundamentally error-prone.

**Learning Objectives:** By the end of the course you should:

1. have a broadly based understanding of human inference strategies and their pitfalls, including how to avoid some common errors in judgment and decision-making
2. be familiar with the types of research questions and research designs common in studies in this area and able to critique research findings on relevant topics that you encounter in the media and elsewhere
3. gain hands-on experience conducting empirical research on error and bias in social judgment

**Textbooks:**

Gilovich, T. (1991). *How We Know What Isn't So: The Fallibility of Human Reason in Everyday Life*. The Free Press..

Plous, S. (1993). *The Psychology of Judgment and Decision Making*. McGraw-Hill.

Supplemental readings required for the lectures and lab will be placed on reserve at MacKimmie Library.

**Evaluation and Distribution of Credit**

Distribution of Credit:

lab assignments throughout term	33.3%
midterm exam Feb. 28 (in class)	33.3%
final exam due April 20 (take home)	33.3%

**Exams:**

The midterm and final exams will be short answer/essay in format. The final exam will be cumulative; final examination questions will be posted on blackboard no later than April 13. Answers will be due no later than 4:30 on April 20. All sources must be appropriately cited and you must do your own work. Answers must be typewritten.

**Lab Component:**

You will receive a detailed lab outline during the first lab. The lab will require considerable group work.

**Grades**

Percentages below indicate the maximum standard required for each letter grade; these may be lowered but will not be raised.

**Grading Scale**

A+	96-100%	B+	80-84%	C+	67-71%	D+	54-58%
A	90-95%	B	76-79%	C	63-66%	D	50-53%
A-	85-89%	B-	72-75%	C-	59-62%	F	0-49%

N.B. To pass the course you must earn passing grades in BOTH the laboratory and the lecture components. An F in either the lab or the lecture will result in an F in the course.

As stated in the University Calendar, it is at the instructor's discretion to round off either upward or downward to determine a final grade when the average of term work and final examinations is between two letter grades. To determine final letter grades, final percentage grades will be rounded up or down to the nearest whole percentage (i.e., 89.5% will be rounded up to 90%; 89.4% will be rounded down to 89%, etc.). In light of opportunities you have to earn bonus credit and in the interests of being fair to all students in the class, I will not entertain requests to raise grades for any reason.

### **Tentative Topic Outline**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Text</b>
Jan. 10, 12	Introduction and overview of course	Gilovich ch. 1, 8-10 Part I Intuitive Strategies of Inference
Jan. 17, 19	The role of context in judgment and decision-making	Plous ch. 1-6
Jan. 24, 26	Judgmental heuristics and knowledge structures	Plous ch. 10-11
Jan. 31, Feb. 2	Assigning weights to the data: the vividness criterion	Part II Inferential Tasks: Normative Principles and Lay Practice
Feb. 7, 9	Characterizing the datum, sample, and population	
Feb. 14, 16	Assessment of covariation	Gilovich ch. 2-3 Plous ch. 14-15
Feb. 21, 23	No classes - Reading Week	
Feb. 28	MIDTERM EXAM (IN CLASS)	
Mar. 2	Causal analysis	Plous ch. 16
Mar. 7, 9	Causal analysis cont'd; Decision-making and prediction	Plous ch. 7-9, 12-13, 19, 21
Mar. 14, 16	Decision-making and prediction cont'd	supplemental reading: Dawes
Mar 21, 23	Theory maintenance and theory change	Gilovich ch. 4-5 Plous ch. 20

Mar. 28, 30	Theory maintenance and theory change cont'd	Part III Inferential Error: Improving Social Inference and Critiques of the Errors/Biases Viewpoint
April 4, 6	Improving Social Inference: Strategies and Barriers to Change	Gilovich ch. 11 Plous Afterword
April 11, 13	Critiques of the error/biases viewpoint and a rebuttal; final exam questions posted on blackboard	supplemental reading: Funder
Apr. 20	Final Exam Due (take home)	

**N.B. The above schedule and procedures in this course are subject to change in the event of extenuating circumstances.**

Students' learning experiences in this course support the following University of Calgary Curriculum Redesign Features:

1. Research Integration: Students will conduct research projects as part of the course.

#### Core Competencies

University of Calgary Core Competencies facilitated by successful completion of this course include:

1. Critical and creative thinking through application of course concepts to everyday experience.
2. Effective written communication through preparation of lab reports and written examinations.

#### Reappraisal of Grades

A student who feels that a piece of graded term work (term paper, essay, test, etc.) has been unfairly graded, may have the work re-graded as follows. The student shall discuss the work with the instructor within fifteen days of being notified about the mark or of the item's return to the class. If not satisfied, the student shall immediately take the matter to the Head of the department offering the course, who will arrange for a reassessment of the work within the next fifteen days. The reappraisal of term work may cause the grade to be raised, lowered, or to remain the same.

If the student is not satisfied with the decision and wishes to appeal, the student shall address a letter of appeal to the Dean of the faculty offering the course within fifteen days of the unfavourable decision. In the letter, the student must clearly and fully state the decision being appealed, the grounds for appeal, and the remedies being sought, along with any special circumstances that warrant an appeal of the reappraisal. The student should include as much written documentation as possible.

#### Plagiarism and Other Academic Misconduct

Intellectual honesty is the cornerstone of the development and acquisition of knowledge and requires that the contribution of others be acknowledged. Consequently, plagiarism or cheating on any assignment is regarded as an extremely serious academic offense. Plagiarism involves submitting or presenting work in a course as if it were the student's own work done expressly for that particular course when, in fact, it is not. Students should examine sections of the University Calendar that present a Statement of Intellectual honesty and definitions and penalties associated with Plagiarism/Cheating/Other Academic Misconduct.

### **Academic Accommodation**

It is a student's responsibility to request academic accommodation. If you are a student with a disability who may require academic accommodation and have not registered with the Disability Resource Centre, please contact their office at 220-8237. If you are seeking academic accommodation, please notify your instructor no later than fourteen (14) days after the commencement of the course. Note that the lecturer must approve any tape recordings of lectures.

### **Absence From A Test**

Make-up exams are NOT an option without an official University medical excuse (see the University Calendar). You must contact the instructor before the scheduled examination or you will have forfeited any right to make up the exam. At the instructor's discretion, a make-up exam may differ significantly (in form and/or content) from a regularly scheduled exam. Except in extenuating circumstances (documented by an official University medical excuse), a makeup exam is written within two (2) weeks of the missed exam.

A completed Physician/Counselor Statement will be required to confirm absence from a test for health reasons. The student will be required to pay any cost associated with the Physician Counselor Statement.

### **Bonus Course Credits for Research Participation**

Students in most psychology courses are eligible to participate in Departmentally-approved research and earn credits toward their final grades. A maximum of two credits (2%) per course, including this course, may be applied to an individual's final grade. Information about current experiments is on the Experimetrix website at <http://experimetrix.com/uc>. The read.me link at that site provides a guide to using the system and assigning your credits. The last day to participate in research and **ALLOCATE YOUR CREDITS TO YOUR COURSES** is April 12, 2006.

### **Student Organizations**

Psychology students may wish to join the Psychology Undergraduate Students' Association (PSYCHS). They are located in the Administration building, room 170 or may be contacted at 220-5567.

**Student Union VP Academic:** Phone: 220-3911 [suvpaca@ucalgary.ca](mailto:suvpaca@ucalgary.ca)  
**Student Union Faculty Rep.:** Phone: 220-3913 [socialscirep@su.ucalgary.ca](mailto:socialscirep@su.ucalgary.ca)

### **Important Dates**

The last day to drop this course and still receive a fee refund is January 20, 2006. The last day to withdraw from this course is April 13, 2006.