



MASARYK UNIVERSITY  
FACULTY OF SOCIAL STUDIES

**PSY 268 Contemporary Issues in Psychology**

***Syllabus***

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office hours: Wednesday 2-5pm or by appointment (room 2.51)

Course Schedule: Monday, 6pm-7.30pm @U32

Online syllabus & study materials

- IS ([is.muni.cz](http://is.muni.cz)) – STUDENT - ROPOT (**R**evision, **O**pinion **P**oll and **T**esting) - e-learning – STUDY MATERIALS
- Provides up to date information about the course, please check regularly for reading materials and news!

Course objectives – WHAT CAN YOU EXPECT ? :

- Introduction to selected topics in psychology via multiple perspectives
- Improvement of students' ability to think critically about topics in psychology
- Learn to locate and review recent empirical studies in psychology
- Learn to write an academic papers and presentations

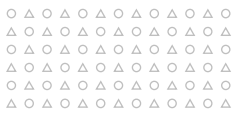
Course requirements – WHAT DO I EXPECT FROM YOU? :

- Reading. Students are required to read assigned materials (in the syllabus and additional ones assigned during semester) – part of final grade
- Writing. Two papers are required throughout the semester, plus final presentation at the end of semester.
- Think and talk. Most importantly, I expect the active involvement in the discussions, which are critical part of the class.

**General info:**

The course will provide students with the background information related to the phenomena of happiness as well as present traditional (social) psychological experiments in new perspective. Students will be assigned papers throughout semester to improve their knowledge about the research in the field. Feedback will be provided to the students to help them improve their writing and presenting skills.





Topics that will be covered in class:

**BLOCK1:**

- Happiness – biological, psychological and social underpinnings:
  - o Science of Happiness (Kahneman), Brain behind the happiness and pleasure (Kringelbach & Berridge)
  - o The Paradox of Choice ( Barry Schwartz)

**BLOCK2:**

- Classic experiments in psychology – impact and critique:
  - o Obedience and Conformity : Milgram’s Obedience experiment and its critique
  - o Psychology of power: lesson from Zimbardo’s experiment

**Course format and content:** Once a week – 2 hrs (90 minutes)

The course will be held in the form of lectures and seminars, where students’ presentations and active participation are required. The lectures will cover the introduction of the topics and in the following week will be followed by the discussion about assigned reading materials. Participation in class is required; students will receive 5% of their grade based in the active participation in the discussion and 10% for preparation (see below).

**Reflection Papers (2 x 15% = 30% of the final grade, i.e. 30 points)**

During the semester, two papers are required by each student dealing with the topic covered in the class and assigned reading. Each of the two papers will discuss a topic from each block of lectures (see the schedule). Students can choose the specific topic they prefer to write about, however they are to submit one paper at the end of each block. One way to approach this assignment is to take the readings covered in the class, propose the argument/question that either agree or disagree with what the author states and find support of the argument in supplementary literature. Other way is to take one of the “older” papers we covered in the class and find the more recent article about the topic and either compare the two, or discuss the progress that has been done in the field. There are no limitations about the approach you choose; however, the academic format of the paper is required. The paper should not be simple description or summary of read materials, it should be analytical, evaluative, and synthetic – authors are expected to make a clear argument, find supportive literature and present evidence for their argument, indicating strengths and weaknesses of used pieces of literature.

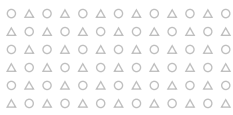
It goes without saying that students are required to use American Psychological Association (APA) style, which will be briefly introduced during first class (see also:

<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/> ). The papers should not exceed 1500 words (here comes the challenge), double spaced, standard format (Times New Roman 12, *plus* the cover page with name of the student, name of the course, submission date, and the reference page at the end of the paper following APA citation manual). Both, content and the format are part of the overall evaluation. Paper needs to have a clear, guiding structure. Students are advised to become familiar with APA citation manual, on the level required for the class papers (proper citation of academic journals, books, book chapters, reference list at the end of the paper, etc.).

**Peer review (5%, 5pts)**

These papers will be evaluated by the lecturer and also anonymously by one other fellow student(I will match the students into pairs and circulate papers among them as well as evaluation form to students). Peer evaluations should summarize the paper’s main contributions and point out main strengths and weaknesses.





The aim of this exercise is improve critical thinking, evaluation skills, allow students to think deeper about given problem and react to other's perspectives on the issue. Students should be prepared that their papers will be read by others and fragments of the texts can be used in the class as examples.

### **Presentation (20% of the final grade, i.e. 20 pts)**

At the end of the semester, students will also be required to present one topic of their choice (related to issues covered during semester) in the class. We will discuss further details about the assignment during the first class. Based on the size of the class, students will work in small teams of 2-3, or alone.

Follow the general instructions on how to make an effective presentation (e.g.

[http://www.slideshare.net/satyajeet\\_02/how-to-make-effective-presentation](http://www.slideshare.net/satyajeet_02/how-to-make-effective-presentation) ,

<http://www.microsoft.com/atwork/skills/presentations.aspx> , don't hesitate to Google more tips!!!). Both the content and the format will be evaluated. You are welcomed to consult the topic with me as well as the format of the presentation itself, but do not wait till the last minute. The main idea is to use one of the topics covered during the semester and present new insight or related topics. Keep in mind who your audience is (you are not required to impress the lecturer, but to inform other students about interesting new studies in the field, or other perspective on the issue we covered in the class). Keep your presentation simple and clear! Short overview of the presentation (about 300 words) will be submitted week before the presentations).

### **Exam (30% of the final grade, i.e. 30 pts)**

There will be one final exam held at the end of semester, accounting for 30% of the final grade. The exam will be a combination of an open ended and multiple choice questions and will cover all the topics discussed in the class. Exam covers all reading materials from the class.

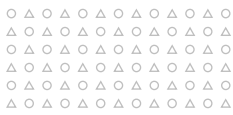
### **Preparation (10%, 2.5 pts each\*4=10 pts)**

Students will upload short overview (about 200 words) of the reading materials **2 days prior** to discussion class. These summaries are intended to ensure students' understands of the reading materials and lectures. At the end, students will produce three discussion questions. These questions should be thoughtful and insightful. Questions can be "multi-part" and should go beyond simple inquire such as "What is prospect theory?"

### **Participation in discussions/attendance (5%, 5 pts)**

Students are expected to attend the lectures and seminar, attendance and active participation makes up for 5 % of the final grade. Two missed classes are allowed, however I do appreciate the email in advance. In case you've already missed two classes and in the case of the illness or family emergency, please contact me via email prior to the class. There can be no discussion when there are no students present. Please come prepared. Questions are encouraged and expected! I will try to create an environment where students feel free to inquire and react to each other.





**Class evaluation**

The overall grade will consist of the following:

|                              |              |                |
|------------------------------|--------------|----------------|
| Final Exam                   | 30%          | 30pts          |
| 2 Reflection Papers          | 30%          | 30pts          |
| Peer evaluation              | 5%           | 5 pts          |
| Presentation                 | 20%          | 20pts          |
| Preparation                  | 10%          | 10pts          |
| Participation in discussions | 5%           | 5pts           |
| <b>Total</b>                 | <b>100 %</b> | <b>100 PTS</b> |

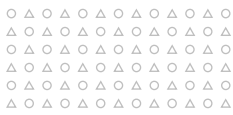
100-93% = A, 92-85% = B, 84-77% = C, 76-69% = D, 68-61% = E, and below 60%=F

**No credit (points) will be earned for late work!**

**Plagiarism**

Plagiarism, defined as the "wrongful appropriation," "close imitation," or "purloining and publication" of another author's "language, thoughts, ideas, or expressions," and the representation of them as one's own original work, is a violation of copyrights. From the academic perspective, plagiarism is one of the basic academic offenses against morals, and therefore has its place among the disciplinary offenses at each faculty. To avoid plagiarism, do cite properly and enclose all of the recourses used in the reference list.

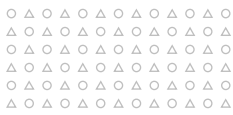




## WEEKLY ASSIGNMENTS

| Date                               | In class  | Assignment   |
|------------------------------------|---|--|
| <b>WEEK 1</b><br><b>16/9/2013</b>  | Introduction to the course requirements (Monday 16.9.2013).<br>Introduction to Block 1 – Happiness and Block 2 – social psychology<br>Methodological issues in research | No reading required.   |
| <b>WEEK 2</b><br><b>23/9/2012</b>  | LECTURE 1<br>Barry Schwartz: Happiness and decision making<br>Daniel Kahneman: The riddle of Experience vs. memory  | Reading 2: Schwartz, chapter 3,4<br><b>Schwartz, B.</b> (2005). The paradox of choice: Why more is less. New York: Harper Perennial.<br><b>Kahneman, D.</b> (2000). Experienced Utility and Objective Happiness: A moment-based approach. In D. Kahneman and A. Tversky (Eds.), <i>Choices, Values and Frames</i> , New York: Cambridge University Press and the Russell Sage Foundation, p. 673-693 |
| <b>WEEK 3</b><br><b>30/09/2013</b> | DISCUSSION 1<br><b>Preparation due 28/9/2013</b>  |  |
| <b>WEEK 4</b><br><b>7/10/2013</b>  | LECTURE 2<br>Measuring Happiness<br>Anchoring and Framing   | Reading 3: <b>Schwartz</b> , chapter 5,6,7<br><b>Daniel Kahneman</b> , et al (2006). Would You Be Happier If You Were Richer? A Focusing Illusion, <i>Science</i> 312, 1908-1910   |
| <b>WEEK 5</b><br><b>14/10/2013</b> | DISCUSSION 2<br><b>Preparation due 12/10/2013</b>   |  |
| <b>WEEK 6</b><br><b>21/11/2013</b> | LECTURE 3<br>Obedience and Conformity   | <b>Milgram, S (1973)</b> . The Perils of Obedience, Harper's, 247:1483, 62-73.<br><b>Slater, M., Antley, A., Davison, A., Swapp,D., Guger, C., et al. (2006)</b> A Virtual Reprise of the Stanley Milgram Obedience Experiments. <i>PLoS ONE</i> 1(1): e39.<br>doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0000039  |
| <b>WEEK 7</b><br><b>28/10/2013</b> | NO CLASS – Bank holiday   |  |
| <b>REFLECTION PAPER 1 DUE</b>      |   |  |
| <b>WEEK 8</b><br><b>4/11/2013</b>  | DISCUSSION 3<br><b>Preparation due 02/11/2013</b><br><b>Peer evaluation of Paper 1 due 8/11/2013</b>  |  |
| <b>WEEK 9</b><br><b>11/11/2013</b> | LECTURE 4<br>Psychology of Power  | <b>Zimbardo, P.</b> The Psychology of Power and Evil: All Power to the Person? To the Situation? To the System?<br><b>Sunar, D.(2002)</b> . Psychology of Morality. Online Readings in Psychology and Culture, Unit 2.   |





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|-------------------------------------|--|
| <b>WEEK 10</b><br><b>18/11/2013</b> | DISCUSSION 4<br><b>Preparation due 16/11/2013</b>  |
| <b>WEEK 11</b><br><b>25/11/2013</b> | NO CLASS<br><hr/> <b>REFLECTION PAPER 2 DUE</b><br><b>Short overview of the presentation due</b>                   |
| <b>WEEK 12</b><br><b>02/12/2013</b> | Student Presentations 1<br>& Class discussion about the topics   |
| <b>WEEK 13</b><br><b>9/12/2013</b>  | Student Presentations 2<br>& Class discussion about the topics<br><b>Peer evaluation of Paper 2 due 13/12/2013</b> |
| <b>WEEK 14</b><br><b>16/12/2013</b> | Student presentations 3<br>& Class discussion about the topics   |
| <b>WEEK 15</b><br><b>17/12/2013</b> | Exam   |

