

COURSE SYLLABUS PSYC 441: ADVANCED SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY FALL 2026 MONDAY 8:30-9:45 & THURSDAY 10:00-11:15 (U1/U2)

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Fall office hours: Mondays 2:30-4:00; Wednesdays 10:30-11:30, 1:00-3:00; Thursdays 2:30-4:00 (or by appointment)

Web site: <http://people.stfx.ca/ekoch>

Required readings: There is no text or course pack for this course. Instead, readings will be available on Moodle. (See pp. 8-9 of this syllabus.)

Course prerequisites: Restricted to honours students or students with a minimum average of 70 or permission of the Department Chair; PSYC 240/250/255 or 353 is **recommended**

COURSE DESCRIPTION

The purpose of this course is to examine in depth an advanced topic in social psychology. The topic for this year's course is **The Social Psychology of Belongingness**. Your goal in this course should be to critically evaluate the research in this area. Similar to graduate courses in Psychology, this course will permit a deep exploration of one topic, rather than surface coverage of multiple topics. Class will primarily involve student-led presentations and discussions. Most weeks will involve two articles to read and discuss, with one student presenting each article. Thought papers will also be due in most weeks to spark thought and discussion of the readings. The course will culminate in an original research proposal for an online study.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

- To engage in critical discussions of contemporary research in social psychology.
- To propose and design an online study on a social psychological topic of interest.
- To become proficient at thoroughly reading and critically evaluating psychological research.
- To enhance written and oral communication skills.

COURSE FORMAT

Classes will consist primarily of student-led presentations and discussions. I will also enter discussions and, when appropriate, present brief lectures. Class attendance is your responsibility, and you must attend class if you expect to succeed in this course. However, to support the health of your fellow students and me, please do **not** attend class if you have any symptoms associated with flu-like illnesses. If you must miss class, please do not ask me for class notes. **I do not give out class notes.** I recommend that you obtain any notes from a classmate. I will be happy to answer specific questions about class notes once you have obtained them. If you would like to inform your professors about an absence, please email Rita Myatt of the Office of the Assistant

Vice-President, Academic Affairs at ada@stfx.ca. Outside of class, I encourage you to meet with me during office hours (or set an appointment if those hours conflict with your schedule) to discuss any questions or concerns. **Email** is the best way to contact me outside of class. Refer to pages 5-6 of this syllabus for information on appropriate email communication. *Please note that to maintain and model appropriate work/life balance, I give myself an email break during evenings, weekends, and holidays.

CLASSROOM ETIQUETTE

I expect that each of you will respect your classmates and me by arriving to class on time, ready to listen and participate. Please turn **off** your phones when you arrive to class, and be sure to put away all phones and other personal devices (e.g., tablets). Devoting class time to non-academic activities such as texting or listening to music is disruptive and creates a negative impression of the students engaging in such activities. In addition, please do not disrupt the class by carrying on private conversations during class time. Talking and texting during class may distract you, your classmates, and me from our shared activities and goals.

DEPARTMENT LAPTOP POLICY

Because this course is a small seminar, I **strongly** prefer that all students not use their laptops/tablets in class, as the presence of laptops/tablets may hinder class discussions. Students who wish to use a laptop/tablet during class time must seek permission from the instructor in advance. If permission is granted, please note that your laptop/tablet is to be used only for notetaking, not recreational purposes (e.g., social media, checking email). Non-academic use of laptops/tablets might distract some of your classmates. Inappropriate classroom laptop/tablet usage will result in laptop/tablet privileges being revoked.

PAPERS

You will receive additional information in class and on Moodle. All students have the same amount of time to complete these paper assignments. This policy encourages fairness for all students in the class.

Thought papers: You are required to submit a minimum of **9** brief (i.e., at least **one** full page but not more than **two** pages) Thought Papers. These short papers have several purposes: 1) to ensure that students complete the reading, 2) to stimulate critical thinking in preparation for discussion, and 3) to sharpen writing skills. You will have **12** opportunities to submit Thought Papers. Thus, you may write 12 papers (which I **highly** recommend!), or you may choose to not submit a thought paper each time that you do a presentation. Thought papers are due at the **beginning** of class; Moodle will not allow submissions after class begins.

Final paper: Your final paper for this course will be a formal lab proposal in which you design an **original** study on the social psychology of belongingness OR a formal lab report in which you analyze an existing data set.

POP QUIZZES

Not completing readings when your classmates are leading discussions is unfair to the discussion leaders, as well as to classmates who completed the readings. I expect that all students will complete **all** readings before class. However, if the quality of thought papers or discussions suggests that students are not completing the readings, I will introduce pop quizzes randomly throughout the course. Pop quizzes would count as 5% of your final grade, and thought papers would count as 30% of your final grade. You may avoid pop quizzes by 1) completing all the

readings, 2) writing high-quality thought papers, 3) contributing effectively to discussions, and 4) encouraging your classmates to complete all the readings!

ARTICLE PRESENTATIONS/LEADING DISCUSSIONS

During most weeks, two students will be responsible for leading the seminar. Each student will present a single article from the assigned reading list, and both presenters should lead the discussion of the readings. Presentations will occur on **Mondays**; discussions will continue on **Thursdays**. You are welcome to meet with me during office hours to discuss your presentation. You will receive additional information in class and on Moodle.

UNIVERSITY POLICY ON ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

St. Francis Xavier values academic integrity. As the *Academic Calendar* (section 3.8) states, “An academic community flourishes when its members are committed to six fundamental values and ideals: honesty, trust, fairness, respect, responsibility, and courage...” (International Centre for Academic Integrity Fundamental Values document, 2021). All students must understand the meaning and consequences of such academic offences as plagiarism, cheating, fabrication and falsification, and tampering under the St. Francis Xavier University Policy on Academic Integrity. You are responsible for knowing and following this policy; please refer to the *Academic Calendar* (section 3.8) for details. You may find this site helpful:

<https://www.stfx.ca/applications-admissions/registrars-office/academic-integrity>. **I WILL NOT TOLERATE PLAGIARISM OR CHEATING OF ANY SORT.** The University’s *Academic Calendar* (section 3.8) notes that “Plagiarism is the intentional or unintentional misrepresentation of another’s work—whether ideas or words... as one’s own,” and that cheating “...is when a student or students seek credit or other advantages for themselves or disadvantage[s] [for] others through fraud, misrepresentation of work, or dishonest or disruptive” behavior. Any student suspected of violating the Academic Integrity Policy will be reported to the Chair of the Psychology Department, the Registrar’s office, and—when appropriate—the Academic Discipline Committee. To be fair to all students who are doing their own work and reading/citing properly, I will spot-check references in your final papers to ensure their accuracy.

STATEMENT ON THE USE OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

The use of generative AI tools (e.g., ChatGPT) in this course is strictly prohibited. Although these tools may have their uses, choosing not to use them spares you from making a judgment call about appropriate versus inappropriate use. One of the purposes of this course is to sharpen your critical thinking skills—something that AI cannot do for you! Students are not allowed to copy or paraphrase from any generative AI tools for the purpose of completing assignments (thought papers, final papers, presentations) in this course. In addition, AI tools such as ChatGPT have multiple problems, including (but not limited to):

- fabricating information (e.g., making up references and content; example: https://thebulletin.org/2026/05/why-are-so-many-scientific-articles-wrong-about-the-disease-i-study/?utm_source=ActiveCampaign&utm_medium=email&utm_content=%22Why%20

[are%20so%20many%20scientific%20articles%20wrong%20about%20the%20disease%2001%20study%3F%22&utm_campaign=20260504%20Monday%20Newsletter\)](https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/even-chatgpt-says-chatgpt-is-rationally-biased/)

- perpetuating biased information (e.g., using language models rooted in sexism, racism, heterosexism; example: <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/even-chatgpt-says-chatgpt-is-rationally-biased/>)
- using excessive amounts of energy, contributing to climate change (example: <https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-025-00616-z>)

STATEMENT ON PHOTOS, AUDIO, AND VIDEO-RECORDING

Other students may not wish to be photographed or recorded, so please refrain from taking photos or recordings in the classroom. Furthermore, I do not consent to being photographed, audio-, or video-recorded without prior permission. Seeking prior consent for photographs and recordings enhances trust.

The materials in this course are the property of the instructor unless stated otherwise by the instructor. Online posting or selling of this material to third parties for distribution without permission is subject to Canadian Copyright law and is strictly prohibited. Please visit the StFX copyright guide: <https://stfx.libguides.com/copyright>

GENERAL INFORMATION:

Course Drop Date: Students may drop a course, online in Banner, on or before Wednesday November 4. After this date, students are not permitted to drop courses without permission from their Dean. (Please see 3.1 in the Academic Calendar for policy regarding course drops).

Mental Health: As a student, you may experience a range of issues that can cause barriers to learning, such as strained relationships, increased anxiety, alcohol/drug problems, feeling down, difficulty concentrating, and/or lack of motivation. These mental health concerns or stressful events may lead to diminished academic performance and may reduce your ability to participate in daily activities. The StFX Health and Counselling Centre is available to help. More information can be found at <https://www.stfx.ca/student-life-support/health-counselling-centre>.

GRADING

Grades will be based on the scale presented below. Your final grade will be based **ONLY** on these elements. Please do **NOT** contact me once the course is complete to ask for an “extra assignment” to boost your grade.

Assignment	Value
Thought papers (and, if appropriate, pop quizzes)	35%
Class participation	10%
Seminar presentations and discussions	20%
Final paper	35%

DEPARTMENTAL POLICY ON LATE ASSIGNMENTS

As Moodle will not accept late thought papers, this policy applies to **final** papers only. Students will be penalized 5% for each calendar day that the final paper is late. **Any final paper submitted after 4:00pm on Wednesday, December 9 will be considered late.** Once 10 days

after the due date have passed, a mark of **zero** will be assigned. Only valid excuses, such as illness or personal emergency (which you must discuss with me), can effect a renegotiation of the due date. Note that technical failures, computer crashes, etc. are not valid excuses for failing to turn assignments in on time, nor are they valid excuses for turning in substandard work. **Back up your work!!!**

CLASS PARTICIPATION

Class participation makes up 10% of your final grade. Please respect your classmates and arrive to class on time and ready to participate. Part of the learning experience involves sharing your ideas and hearing the ideas of your peers. Articulating and defending your ideas is an important part of the learning process. If you typically have not been comfortable participating in classes, please take this opportunity to tackle your fears and learn to express your thoughts clearly. Regardless of the path you choose once you leave St. FX, such skills will be necessary for success. In your participation, quality is more important than quantity. In other words, students may score high marks in participation if they contribute even a few thoughtful comments throughout the term, rather than talk unnecessarily in response to each question posed. Your participation mark will start with a base grade of 75%. You will be able to maintain this grade with near-perfect attendance. Over the term, I will keep track of both attendance and participation and will add or deduct grades according to the following system:

Additions will be based on: 1) above-average participation in discussions, 2) making an effort to make your points concisely (i.e., not monopolizing discussion) and to stay on topic, 3) showing respect to others' contributions and facilitating discussion, 4) paying careful attention to others' presentations and offering constructive feedback, comments, and questions.

Deductions will be based on: 1) class absences (however, valid excuses will be taken into account), 2) arriving to class late or leaving early, 3) below-average participation in discussions, 4) talking inappropriately with classmates, note-passing, working on material for other courses during class time, engaging in non-academic activities (e.g., texting), 5) monopolizing class discussions, 6) interrupting or not showing sufficient respect to others' contributions.

APPROPRIATE EMAIL COMMUNICATION

You are expected to maintain a working St. FX email account; please check on that account regularly to ensure that it is not "full." Important notices may be sent to these email addresses. Writing to a course instructor is not the same as writing to a friend. Although the communication is not on paper, email still means that you are communicating with others who deserve consideration and respect. In addition, you may be expected to use email in future employment situations, and it might be helpful to develop good habits now. The guidelines below are NOT listed in order of priority but in the order in which you would need the information while writing an email or other electronic message.

1. Please do not email questions about the course that could easily be answered by referring to the syllabus or other course materials.
2. Please do not email requests for your grades, as email is not secure.
3. When writing an email, please write something in the "subject" line. If your email is about a specific topic, write the name of it (e.g., "normal distribution question"). I am likely to assume that an email without a subject line is spam and consequently may delete it.
4. Begin the communication with a salutation such as "Dear Dr. Koch."

5. Use proper English. Write complete sentences, which include the correct use of capital letters to begin a sentence and a period to end a sentence. Every email message should be properly spelled and punctuated, and it should be grammatically correct. A poorly written and misspelled message reflects poorly on the author.
6. Do **not** write in all capital letters or all lower-case letters.
7. Delineate separate ideas by using paragraphs.
8. RE-READ the message before sending and check for spelling errors, poor grammar, unclear sentences, or other organizational errors that happened during the first draft.
9. Sign the communication with **your first and last name** and the course in which you are enrolled. It is helpful (though optional) to have your email address and ID number underneath your name.
10. Politeness is important even in email. Demands such as “write back” are unnecessary and even rude. If your message requires a response, I will respond at my earliest convenience.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Note: The following is a tentative schedule. Readings are due on the date assigned, and Thought Papers are due **at the beginning of class**, beginning with the second week (i.e., the first full week) of classes. Class topics and order are subject to change. However, due dates will not change, except under unusual circumstances such as class cancellations due to inclement weather.

Readings below are listed by their authors. Note that most weeks have **two** readings. Please refer to the reading list (pp. 8-9 of this syllabus) for information on the readings.

* = Thought Paper due

DATE	TOPIC	READING/ASSIGNMENT
Thursday, Sept. 3	Introduction to course	<i>optional: Jordan & Zanna, 2000</i>
Monday, Sept. 7	LABOR DAY – NO CLASS	
*Thursday, Sept. 10	The Need to Belong	Baumeister & Leary, 1995 (<i>no student presenter</i>)
*Monday, Sept. 14 Thursday, Sept. 17	Intrapersonal effects of exclusion	Gonsalkorale & Williams, 2007; Lamer et al., 2015; Rudert & Greifeneder, 2016
*Monday, Sept. 21 Thursday, Sept. 24	Physiological effects of exclusion	Bernstein & Claypool, 2012; Nordgren et al., 2011
*Monday, Sept. 28 Thursday, Oct. 1	Cognition and exclusion	Gardner et al., 2000; Jauch et al., 2023
*Monday, Oct. 5 Thursday, Oct. 8	Belonging in Indigenous communities	Carter-Rogers et al., 2026; Melander et al., 2013
Monday, Oct. 12 Thurs., Oct. 15	FALL STUDY BREAK – NO CLASSES	
*Monday, Oct. 19 Thursday, Oct. 22	Effects of ostracism on aggression	Poon & Wong, 2019; Sprunger et al., 2020
*Monday, Oct. 26 Thursday, Oct. 29	Conspiracy theories and belonging	Poon et al., 2020; Graeupner & Coman, 2017
*Monday, Nov. 2 Thursday, Nov. 5	Importance of belonging in academic and career outcomes	Cheryan et al., 2009; Williams et al., 2020
*Monday, Nov. 9 Thursday, Nov. 12	Alternative paths to belonging	Drouin et al., 2022; McConnell et al., 2011
*Monday, Nov. 16 Thursday, Nov. 19	Creative strategies to cope with exclusion	Poon et al., 2016; Tai et al., 2011
*Monday, Nov. 23 Thursday, Nov. 26	Belonging in the community	Sandstrom et al., 2022; Sandstrom & Dunn, 2014
*Monday, Nov. 30	Applied day: Belonging on social media	Verduyn et al., 2022 (<i>no student presenter</i>)
Thurs., Dec. 3	X-RING – NO CLASSES	
Mon., Dec. 7	Wrapup/reflection/optional final paper consultations	
Wed., Dec. 9	FINAL PAPER DUE 4:00PM	

Article List

Articles are listed below in alphabetical order—**not** in the order in which we will cover them. Be sure to read the correct articles assigned for class! All articles are available on the course Moodle site. As a backup, all readings below are also available through the library's electronic resources.

- Baumeister, R. F., & Leary, M. R. (1995). The need to belong: Desire for interpersonal attachments as a fundamental human motivation. *Psychological Bulletin*, 117(3), 497-529. doi:10.1037/0033-2909.117.3.497
- Bernstein, M. J., & Claypool, H. M. (2012). Social exclusion and pain sensitivity: Why exclusion sometimes hurts and sometimes numbs. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 38(2), 185-196. doi:10.1177/0146167211422449
- Carter-Rogers, K., Smith, S. M., Tabvuma, V., & McGeer, R. (2026). Organizational exclusion amplified: Evidence of double jeopardy hypothesis in hiring bias against Indigenous men with criminal records. *Psychology, Public Policy, and Law*.
<https://doi.org/10.1037/law0000492>
- Cheryan, S., Plaut, V. C., Davies, P. G., & Steele, C. M. (2009). Ambient belonging: How stereotypical cues impact gender participation in computer science. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 97(6), 1045–1060. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0016239>
- Drouin, M., Sprecher, S., Nicola, R., & Perkins, T. (2022). Is chatting with a sophisticated chatbot as good as chatting online or FTF with a stranger? *Computers in Human Behavior*, 128. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2021.107100>
- Gardner, W. L., Pickett, C. L., & Brewer, M. B. (2000). Social exclusion and selective memory: How the need to belong influences memory for social events. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 26(4), 486-496. doi:10.1177/0146167200266007
- Gonsalkorale, K., & Williams, K. D. (2007). The KKK won't let me play: Ostracism even by a despised outgroup hurts. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 37(6), 1176-1186. doi:10.1002/ejsp.392
- Graeupner, D., & Coman, A. (2017). The dark side of meaning-making: How social exclusion leads to superstitious thinking. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 69, 218–222. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jesp.2016.10.003>
- Jauch, M., Büttner, C. M., Rudert, S. C., & Greifeneder, R. (2023). Expecting exclusion: Does bracing for the worst buffer the pain of social exclusion? *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 53(4), 746–765. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ejsp.2934>
- optional Jordan, C. H., & Zanna, M. P. (2000) How to read a journal article in social psychology. In R.F. Baumeister (Ed.), *The Self in Social Psychology* (pp. 457-466). Philadelphia: Psychology Press.
direct link: <http://www.uvm.edu/~dguber/POLS234/articles/read.htm>

- Lamer, S. A., Reeves, S. L., & Weisbuch, M. (2015). The nonverbal environment of self-esteem: Interactive effects of facial-expression and eye-gaze on perceivers' self-evaluations. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 56, 130–138. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jesp.2014.09.010>
- McConnell, A. R., Brown, C. M., Shoda, T. M., Stayton, L. E., & Martin, C. E. (2011). Friends with benefits: On the positive consequences of pet ownership. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 101(6), 1239–1252. doi:10.1037/a0024506
- Melander, L. A., Hartshorn, K. J. S., & Whitbeck, L. B. (2013). Correlates of bullying behaviors among a sample of North American Indigenous adolescents. *Journal of Adolescence*, 36(4), 675–684. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.adolescence.2013.05.003>
- Nordgren, L. F., Banas, K., & MacDonald, G. (2011). Empathy gaps for social pain: Why people underestimate the pain of social suffering. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 100(1), 120–128. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0020938>
- Poon, K.-T., Chen, Z., & Wong, W.-Y. (2020). Beliefs in conspiracy theories following ostracism. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 46(8), 1234–1246. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0146167219898944>
- Poon, K.-T., Teng, F., Wong, W.-Y., & Chen, Z. (2016). When nature heals: Nature exposure moderates the relationship between ostracism and aggression. *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, 48, 159–168. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jenvp.2016.10.002>
- Poon, K.-T., & Wong, W.-Y. (2019). Turning a blind eye to potential costs: Ostracism increases aggressive tendency. *Psychology of Violence*, 9(6), 634–643. <https://doi.org/10.1037/vio0000195>
- Rudert, S. C., & Greifeneder, R. (2016). When it's okay that I don't play: Social norms and the situated construal of social exclusion. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 42(7), 955–969. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0146167216649606>
- Sandstrom, G. M., Boothby, E. J., & Cooney, G. (2022). Talking to strangers: A week-long intervention reduces psychological barriers to social connection. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 102, 1–12. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jesp.2022.104356>
- Sandstrom, G. M., & Dunn, E. W. (2014). Is efficiency overrated? Minimal social interactions lead to belonging and positive affect. *Social Psychological and Personality Science*, 5(4), 437–442. doi:10.1177/1948550613502990
- Sprunger, J. G., Hales, A., Maloney, M., Williams, K., & Eckhardt, C. I. (2020). Alcohol, affect, and aggression: An investigation of alcohol's effects following ostracism. *Psychology of Violence*, 10(6), 585–593. <https://doi.org/10.1037/vio0000341>

- Tai, K., Zheng, X., & Narayanan, J. (2011). Touching a teddy bear mitigates negative effects of social exclusion to increase prosocial behavior. *Social Psychological and Personality Science*, 2(6), 618–626. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1948550611404707>
- Verduyn, P., Gugushvili, N., & Kross, E. (2022). Do social networking sites influence well-being? The extended active-passive model. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 31(1), 62–68. <https://doi.org/10.1177/09637214211053637>
- Williams, C. L., Hirschi, Q., Sublett, K. V., Hulleman, C. S., & Wilson, T. D. (2020). A brief social belonging intervention improves academic outcomes for minoritized high school students. *Motivation Science*, 6(4), 423–437. <https://doi.org/10.1037/mot0000175>