

COURSE SYLLABUS
PSYC 341: THE SELF
FALL 2025
MONDAY 10-11:15 & WEDNESDAY 8:30-9:45 (W1/W2)

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

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

Required readings: Although the structure and some course content draw from the book *The Self* (Sedikides & Spencer, 2007), this course has **no required textbook**. Required **readings** are available on Moodle. (See p. 7.) The book *The Self Explained* is on reserve at the library as an **optional** resource.

Course prerequisites: Social Psychology (one of PSYC 240, 250, 255); a minimum of 6 credits of PSYC at the 200 level.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

The purpose of this course is to explore theory and research on the Self within social psychology. The overarching question that the course aims to address is “How do people view themselves, and how do those self-views relate to emotions and behavior?” We will address a variety of self-relevant questions that do not have “right” or “wrong” answers. Your goal in this course should be to evaluate critically the evidence for different perspectives. Course topics include the structure of the self, self-esteem, narcissism, social exclusion, relationships, and culture. Class will involve both lecture and discussion. Students will write brief thought papers designed to spark discussion of readings. The course will culminate in an APA-style research proposal.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

- To engage in critical discussions of contemporary topics on the Self in psychology.
- To reflect upon existing research and propose future research on a Self topic of interest.
- To become proficient at thoroughly reading and critically evaluating psychological research.
- To enhance written and oral communication skills.
- To connect concepts learned across various subfields in psychology.

COURSE FORMAT

Classes will include lecture, discussion, and activities. 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 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 page 5 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 put your phones on **silent** (or airplane mode) when you arrive to class, and be sure to put away all phones and turn off any other personal electronic devices (e.g., smartwatches). 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 or texting during class may distract you, your classmates, and me from our shared activities and goals.

DEPARTMENT LAPTOP POLICY

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, 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.

MIDTERM AND EXAM POLICY

Check the course schedule on your syllabus **before** making travel plans (e.g., purchasing airline tickets); exams and quizzes will **not** be rescheduled in the event that they conflict with such travel plans or other personal events. Midterms and exams will be rescheduled on the basis of valid excuses (e.g., illness, personal emergency) only. I reserve the right to administer a unique midterm or exam for any make-up.

In cases where you miss a midterm, please inform me of the absence and the reason for your absence as soon as possible. You may make up a midterm only if you missed it for medical or other legitimate reasons. In cases where you have missed a midterm for **valid** reasons, you must write a make-up midterm within **seven (7)** calendar days following the date of the missed midterm. If you cannot write the midterm within this period for medical or other legitimate reasons, I will pro-rate your final grade (i.e., calculate it without the midterm).

In cases where you miss a Registrar-scheduled Final exam, you must report the absence and the reason for the absence to your **Dean's Office**. In these cases, the Dean's Office will inform your professors of the absence. The Dean's office will specify a time frame for your make-up.

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 promotes fairness to all students in the class.

Thought papers: You are required to submit a minimum of **three** 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 **four** opportunities to submit Thought Papers. Thus, you may write four papers (which I **highly** recommend!) and drop your lowest grade, or you may opt to skip one paper. Thought papers are due at the **beginning** of class; Moodle will not allow submissions after class begins.

Final paper: To apply what you learn about the social psychology of the Self while considering directions for future research on the Self, you will write a formal research proposal. The final paper is due **November 24 at 4:00pm**.

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 (i.e., thought papers, final papers) 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://www.scientificamerican.com/article/chatgpt-isnt-hallucinating-its-bullshitting/>)
- 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.cbc.ca/radio/quirks/ai-energy-consumption-1.6995014>)

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 5. After this date, students may not 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. You may wish to record your grades here. 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	Grade
Midterm	20%	_____
Final paper	30%	_____
Final exam	35%	_____
Thought papers	15%	_____

DEPARTMENTAL POLICY ON LATE ASSIGNMENTS

Please submit all papers through the designated assignment portals in **Moodle** as **WORD** documents; other formats are not acceptable. As Moodle will not accept late thought papers, the late policy applies to **final** papers only. Students will be penalized **5%** for each calendar day that a final paper is 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 with the professor. 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!

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.

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**. Class topics and order are subject to change. However, **midterm** and **exam** dates and **paper** due dates will not change, except under unusual circumstances such as class cancellations due to inclement weather.

Readings are listed by their authors. Please refer to the reading list (page 7 of this syllabus) for information on where to find these readings.

* = Thought Paper due and class discussion

DATE	TOPIC	READING/ASSIGNMENT
Wed., Sept. 3 Mon., Sept. 8	Introduction to the Self	<i>optional:</i> Jordan & Zanna, 2000
Wed., Sept. 10 Mon., Sept. 15	Research Methods	
*Wed., Sept. 17	Conceptualization of the Self	Leary, 2004
Mon., Sept. 22	Implicit self-esteem	
Wed., Sept. 24	Autobiographical memory	
Mon., Sept. 29	Self and social comparison	
Wed., Oct., 1	Self in non-human animals	
Mon., Oct. 6	Narcissism	
Wed., Oct. 8	MIDTERM	will cover all course material through Non-Human Animals
Mon., Oct. 13	THANKSGIVING – NO CLASS	
*Wed., Oct. 15	Narcissism (continued)	Andersson et al., 2022
Mon., Oct. 20	Self-regulation	
Wed., Oct. 22	Self-conscious emotions	
Mon., Oct. 27 Wed., Oct. 29 *Mon., Nov. 3	Self-esteem	Rivera & Young, 2024
Wed., Nov. 5	Self in relationships	
Mon., Nov. 10 Wed., Nov. 12	FALL STUDY BREAK – NO CLASSES	
Mon., Nov. 17 *Wed., Nov. 19	Self and social exclusion	Kudryk et al., 2025
Mon., Nov 24 Wed., Nov. 26	Self and culture	Final paper due 4:00pm
Mon., Dec. 1	Wrap-up/review	
TBA	FINAL EXAM	will cover ALL course material

Readings List

Readings are listed below in alphabetical order—not in the order in which we will cover them. Be sure to complete the correct reading assigned for class! All readings are available on the course Moodle site. As a backup, journal articles below are also available through the university's library via links in PsycINFO.

Andersson, I., Persson, J., & Kajonius, P. (2022). Even the stars think that I am superior: Personality, intelligence and belief in astrology. *Personality and Individual Differences, 187*.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2021.111389>

Jordan, C. H., & Zanna, M. P. (2000) How to read a journal article in social psychology. In C. Stangor (Ed.), *Stereotypes and prejudice: Essential readings* (pp. 457-466). Philadelphia: Psychology Press.

direct link: <http://www.uvm.edu/~dguber/POLS234/articles/read.htm>

*Note: This assigned article is an optional resource; please do not write a Thought Paper on this article.

Kudryk, S. M., Richter Powell, A., Ho, J. T. K., & Moscovitch, D. A. (2025). Positive social autobiographical memory recall enhances positive affect, self-esteem, and social reward seeking after exclusion in individuals with high social anxiety. *Journal of Applied Research in Memory and Cognition*. Advance online publication. <https://dx.doi.org/10.1037/mac0000234>

Leary, M. R. (2004). *The curse of the self: Self-awareness, egotism, and the quality of human life* (pp. 3-24). New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

*Note: The above page numbers refer to Chapter 1; please read only this chapter.

Rivera, L. M., & Nicole Young, D. (2024). Revisiting Black Americans' self-protective strategies: The effect of negative intelligence feedback on implicit (vs explicit) self-esteem. *Cultural Diversity & Ethnic Minority Psychology, 30*(3), 577–586. <https://doi.org/10.1037/cdp0000584>