

COURSE SYLLABUS SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY (PSYC 255:13) FALL 2026 MONDAY 11:30-12:45 & THURSDAY 12:45-2:00 (U4/U5)

Instructor:	Erika Koch, Ph.D.	Phone:	867-3950 (voice mail only)
Email:	ekoch@stfx.ca	Office:	Nicholson Annex 108
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 Text: Gilovich, T., Keltner, D., Chen, S., & Nisbett, R.E. (2024). *Social Psychology* (6th Edition). New York, NY: W. W. Norton & Company.

Textbook web site: <https://ncia.wwnorton.com/socialpsych6> Selected digital resources are also available on Moodle (<https://moodle.stfx.ca/login/index.php>).

Course prerequisite: PSYC 101/102 (6 credits of Introduction to Psychology)

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course is designed to introduce students to the major areas of social psychology. Social psychology involves the study of how other people (real, imagined, or implied) influence thoughts, feelings, and behavior. This course will focus on research in areas such as the self, social cognition, attitudes, persuasion, social influence, relationships, stereotyping & prejudice, groups, aggression, and prosocial behavior.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

- To gain a basic knowledge of the history of social psychology
- To learn about research methods and findings in the main areas of social psychology
- To learn about fundamental concepts and theories in social psychological research
- To apply social psychological theories and research to personal, political, and social issues

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 put your phones away and turn them—any other personal electronic devices (e.g., smartwatches)—on **silent** (or airplane mode) when you arrive to class. 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.

LAPTOP/TABLET 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.

This course has **two** paper assignments.

1. Analyze the Claim (ATC): This assignment is designed to help you build your research literacy and information literacy skills. You will choose **one** ATC assignment (from Chapter 3, 4, 6, or 7), which involves reading a popular media report of social psychological research, reading the journal article that the report was based on, and then writing a brief paper about your observations. The purpose is to sharpen your abilities to identify research claims, evaluate the evidence for those claims, determine whether an alternative explanation for the results also makes sense, and assess how generalizable the results are. This paper is due on **Monday, November 2 at 4pm.**
2. Final paper: You have **two** options for your final paper. The due date for either option is **Monday, November 30 at 4pm.**
 - a. **Digital Detox**
In this paper, you will refrain from using electronic media (beyond what is necessary) for four days and make note of your experience. You will use these notes to write about this experience, relating it to social psychological concepts, and to a journal article that you find on media usage.
 - b. **Applied Persuasion**
In this paper, you will 1) Read an article that applies a social psychological theory to the problem of climate change, 2) develop a persuasion/influence attempt aimed at fostering pro-environmental behavior, 3) draw from **both** the textbook/lecture material and the journal article to support your attempt.

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., ATC papers, final papers) in this course. In addition, generative 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%20are%20so%20many%20scientific%20articles%20wrong%20about%20the%20disease%20I%20study%3F%22&utm_campaign=20260504%20Monday%20Newsletter%20)
- perpetuating biased information (e.g., using language models rooted in sexism, racism, heterosexism; example: <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/even-chatgpt-says-chatgpt-is-racially-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 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. 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
Midterm quiz	20%
Analyze the Claim writing assignment	15%
Final paper	30%
Final exam	35%

POLICY ON LATE ASSIGNMENTS

Please submit all papers through the designated assignment portals in **Moodle** as **WORD** documents; other formats are not acceptable. Students will be penalized **5%** for each calendar day that a 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 submitting 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 texting or emailing 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.

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. 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.
7. Sign the communication with **your first and last name** and the course in which you are enrolled.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Note: The following is a tentative schedule. Readings are due on the date assigned. 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.

DATES	TOPICS	READING/ASSIGNMENT
Thurs., Sept. 3	Introduction to Social Psychology	Chapter 1
Mon., Sept. 7	LABOR DAY – NO CLASSES	
Thurs., Sept. 10 Mon., Sept. 14	The Methods of Social Psychology	Chapter 2
Thurs., Sept. 17 Mon., Sept. 21	Social Cognition: Thinking about People and Situations	Chapter 4
Thurs., Sept. 24 Mon., Sept. 28	The Social Self	Chapter 3
Thurs., Oct. 1 Mon., Oct. 5	Attitudes, Behavior, and Rationalization	Chapter 6
Thurs., Oct. 8	Persuasion	Chapter 7
Mon., Oct. 12 Thurs., Oct. 15	STUDY BREAK – NO CLASSES	
Mon., Oct. 19	Persuasion (continued)	Chapter 7
Thurs., Oct. 22	Social Influence	Chapter 8
Mon., Oct. 26	MIDTERM QUIZ	Will cover chapters 1-4; 6-7
Thurs., Oct. 29	Social Influence (continued)	Chapter 8
Mon., Nov. 2 Thurs., Nov. 5	Relationships and Attraction	Chapter 9; ATC paper due
Mon., Nov. 9 Thurs., Nov. 12	Stereotyping, Prejudice, and Discrimination & <i>Living in a Prejudiced World</i>	Chapter 10 <i>Chapter 11: OPTIONAL</i>
Mon., Nov. 16 Thurs., Nov. 19	Groups	Chapter 12
Mon., Nov. 23 Thurs., Nov. 26	Aggression	Chapter 13
Mon., Nov. 30	Morality, Altruism, and Cooperation	Chapter 14; Final paper due
Thurs., Dec. 3	X-RING – NO CLASSES	
Mon., Dec. 7	Morality...(continued)	Chapter 14
TBA	FINAL EXAM	will cover ALL course material