

## Social Influence Syllabus & Preassignment

- INSTRUCTOR:** Dr. Timothy J. Lawson  
Office Number & Hours: Room CL 12E; MWF 9-10 & 1-2  
Phone Number: 244-4376 E-mail: tim\_lawson@mail.msjs.edu
- CLASS MEETS:** Wednesday, 1:00 - 3:50 (**Meets only on 1/15, 1/29, 2/12, 2/26, 3/18, 4/1, & 4/15**)
- TEXTS:** Cialdini, R. (2009). *Influence: Science and practice* (5th ed.). New York: Pearson.
- Cialdini, R. (2016). *Pre-suasion: A revolutionary way to influence and persuade*. New York: Simon and Schuster.
- READINGS:** Additional required articles and book chapters will be distributed in reading packets

### COURSE DESCRIPTION, LEARNING OUTCOMES, & TEACHING METHODOLOGY:

This course is designed to familiarize you with the fascinating topic of social influence. You will gain an in-depth understanding of the different ways in which governments, marketers, salespeople, friends, and others influence our attitudes and behaviors. The course will be taught in a "seminar" format (as opposed to a "lecture" format). This means that class time will be dominated by discussion rather than lecture. Thus, each of you will be responsible for being prepared for each class and being ready to discuss the material and issues you have read. In addition to class discussions, some class periods will include films and exercises. In the table below, I list the objectives of this course and indicate how they fit with the learning outcomes and performance indicators of the Mount's core curriculum.

| Course Objectives  | Core Curriculum Learning Outcomes & Performance Indicators   | Activities and Assignments Used to Assess Outcomes   |
|--|--|--|
| 1. Describe the major principles of social influence, and how social and cultural forces influence human behavior  | <b>Cultural Competence</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Cultural self-awareness: Articulate the norms and biases of one's own culture</li></ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Exams throughout the course</li><li>Reaction papers</li></ul>  |
| 2. Explain how the scientific method is used by psychologists to gain knowledge about social influence principles  | <b>Critical Thinking</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Scientific Literacy: Apply scientific evidence or models to support a position</li></ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Exams throughout the course</li><li>Reaction papers</li></ul>  |
| 3. Apply social influence concepts and theories to your everyday life<br><br>4. Explain how theories and concepts from psychology and sociology can be integrated and applied to understand social influence practices in the realms of business, religion, and politics | <b>Integrative Learning</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Blending experience and knowledge: Connect experiences inside and outside the classroom</li><li>Connections across disciplines: Apply knowledge from more than one discipline to address a complex issue</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Exams throughout the course</li><li>Reaction Papers</li><li>Commitment/Consistency Exercise</li><li>Class Presentation</li></ul> |

## EXAMS:

Six essay exams covering the readings, class, and films will be given throughout the semester. All of these exams will be “take-home” tests that will be available in the Blackboard site for this course after each class, and they will cover the assigned material for that class. Exams are due on the following Monday by 10:00 a.m. **Late exams will be not be accepted.**

## REACTION PAPERS/DISCUSSIONS:

During the first six class sessions you will participate in an informal class discussion about the assigned readings. For each class session, you should write a reaction paper (approximately 2 pages, single-spaced & typed) on the group of chapters/readings you read for that class. You will **hand in the reaction paper on the day that material is discussed in class**, and I will grade the papers on their quality and on your participation in class (participation is worth 25% of the paper grade). Because reaction papers form the basis for your discussion, **late reaction papers will not be accepted.**

Your reaction paper must have the following sections:

1. *Main Points*: Write 1 - 2 brief paragraphs, in your own words, on what you thought were several of the most interesting **main** points, ideas, or concepts in the readings (focus on more than one reading).
2. *Your Reaction*: Describe your thoughts about the readings. You might include personal examples, points of agreement/disagreement, sections you found confusing, etc.
3. *Items for Class Discussion*: Write at least **six** questions designed to stimulate class discussion (see examples below). Your questions might reflect your thoughts, insights, or examples (from your personal experience or from the media). Whatever you choose to write must **reflect that you read and understood the material in the chapter(s)**, and it must **be designed to stimulate discussion among the other class members**. Each class discussion will involve class members sharing their thoughts & discussion items, thus each of you will be responsible for the class discussion.

Poor Discussion Questions: **1.** I thought that Milgram's conclusions about his first obedience study were very interesting. What do you think? (NOTE: This question would not stimulate much discussion). **2.** List 3 aspects of the situation in Milgram's study that led to obedience. (NOTE: This question is too similar to an exam question. Try to write questions that you would ask someone in an informal discussion on a topic).

Good Discussion Question: Miller says that "expressions of emotional conflict and tension were an important result" of Milgram's experiment. Why was it so important? (NOTE: This question suggests that you carefully read and thought about the readings, and it is likely to stimulate some discussion among class members).

## CLASS PRESENTATION:

During the last class, you will give an oral presentation. For your presentation you will describe how you applied some principle(s) of social influence to a real-life problem or goal. You may choose the principle(s) and the problem or goal. The problem or goal might be a personal problem or goal or it might be a problem or goal you would like to help someone else tackle. The presentation should last no longer than 15 minutes (make sure you practice it to be sure you can finish within this time frame). More specific presentation guidelines and grading criteria can be found on the Blackboard site for this course. You should develop your presentation idea prior to our fifth class and prepare to share your ideas with others during that class.

## EXAM AND FINAL GRADES:

Your grade for each exam will be based on the obtained percentage of the maximum score for that exam (i.e., 90%=A, 80%=B, 70%=C, etc.). Final course grades will be based on a weighted average of the percentage points you obtained on the 6 exams, 6 reaction papers, and class presentation. The quizzes will be worth a total of 66% (11% each) of your final grade. The 6 reaction papers/discussions will be worth a total of 24% (4% each) of your final grade. The class presentation will be worth 10% of your final grade.

*College Incomplete Grade Policy:* An "I" (incomplete) grade is only assigned by an instructor for a student who has made significant academic progress in the course (which I define as completing 75% of the course or more), but for a serious reason has not fulfilled all requirements. This petition may be approved or denied by the instructor. "I" Grade Petitions are available in each academic department. The request must be initiated by the last week of classes. For more details visit the [incomplete grade policy](#) in the college catalog.

## CLASS ATTENDANCE:

Because this is a seminar class that meets only seven times, class attendance is required of all students. A portion (25%) of the grade you receive for each reaction paper will be based on the extent of your class participation. Also, several of the exams contain questions specific to the films we will see in class.

## TEMPORARY ILLNESS, INJURY, OR PREGNANCY:

If a serious, but temporary, medical condition, or pregnancy or pregnancy-related condition, results in you anticipating missing more than one week of class (consecutive class sessions), you might be eligible to request modifications to the course syllabus. For more details, please read the [university policy on temporary illness, injury, or pregnancy](#).

## USE OF ELECTRONIC EQUIPMENT IN CLASS:

Because this course involves no lecture and will involve class discussions, you should not bring a laptop computer to class and should not use your cell phone during class.

## ACADEMIC HONESTY:

You should become familiar with the [Mount's policy on academic honesty](#). I assume that students approach exams and assignments in an honest manner (i.e., all of your work is your own and not copied or paraphrased from someone else's work). In all of your papers, make sure you **use your own ideas and words**. Do not share your paper with other students prior to handing it in. Copying or paraphrasing the information or language of another source is considered plagiarism (unless you use a direct quote with quotation marks and cite the author, year of publication, and page number for the quote; however, quotes should be used very sparingly). **For the exams, make sure you work independently from others to obtain and write your answers. You may use your books or other readings to help you answer the exam questions, but you should not obtain your answers by seeking input from other students.** I take academic dishonesty very seriously, and I will follow the Handbook guidelines for penalties if I discover any dishonesty.

## STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES:

If you have specific physical, psychological, or learning disabilities and require accommodations, please let me know early in the semester so that your learning needs may be appropriately met. The college provides academic adjustments and auxiliary aids for students with physical or mental impairments that substantially limit or restrict one or more major life activities such as walking, seeing, hearing, or learning. Students with disabilities should contact the Director of Learning Center &

Disability Services to present documentation and develop individualized accommodation plans (244-4524, Learning Center, Room 156 Seton). Students who have already registered with MSJ Disability Services are encouraged to discuss their accommodations with their course faculty at the beginning of each semester. Additional information can be found at the [Mount's web site for disability services](#).

#### COLLEGE COURSE WITHDRAWAL POLICY:

Students are responsible for dropping a course if they no longer intend to complete it. Please be aware of the following policy regarding the timing of dropping a course:

Week 1-5: No record of dropped class

Week 6-10: Grade of "W" for dropped class

Week 11+: No drops accepted

For more information on the course withdrawal policy, please consult the [Mount's web page on course withdrawal](#).

#### COURSE SCHEDULE:

| <u>Date</u> | <u>Class Topic</u>   | <u>Reading Assignment</u>  |
|-------------|--|--|
| Jan. 15     | Introduction & Obedience<br>Intuitive accounts/<br>Obedience experiments | Baron & Byrne (2006, Chapter 9; in packet)<br>Miller (1986) Chs. 1-3 (in reading packet) |
| Jan. 29     | Obedience: Extensions/<br>Genocide/Moral Disengagement                   | Miller (1986) Chs. 4 & 7 (in reading packet)<br>Bandura (1999; in reading packet)        |
| Feb. 12     | Weapons of Influence/<br>Reciprocation/Commitment/<br>Social Proof       | Cialdini (2009) Chs. 1-4   |
| Feb. 26     | Liking/Authority/Scarcity/<br>Instant Influence                          | Cialdini (2009) Chs. 5-8   |
| Mar. 18     | Pre-suasion<br>*Discuss presentation ideas                               | Cialdini (2016) Chs. 1-7   |
| Apr. 1      | Pre-suasion  | Cialdini (2016) Chs. 8-14  |
| Apr. 15     | Presentations  |  |

#### PREASSIGNMENT:

Read Baron & Byrne (2006; Chapter 9), and Miller (1986) Chs. 1-3. These readings can be found in the reading packet available inside the department office (CL 12). Also, write a reaction paper (see earlier section on reaction papers) on these readings, bring your paper to the first class, and be prepared to participate in a class discussion on the readings. **NOTE:** There are about 70 pages in these readings, so be sure to give yourself plenty of time to read them.