

## Syllabus

### Psych 3905-003 Mode of Learning: Writing and Communication in Psychology Linking to Social Psychology 3410-001 Spring 2006

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○ **Mode Meeting:** Thursdays 2.00-3.20 PM, Rm. 109 Beh Sci.

#### **Mode Goals:**

- 1) To improve your ability to communicate your ideas clearly through writing and presentations.
- 2) To develop your ability to examine your own and other's writing critically, and to provide constructive feedback.
- 3) To develop your ability to describe research clearly to people outside the field.

#### ○ **Mode Structure:**

- We will meet bi-weekly.

Mode meetings are the time for us to work together for practicing and improving your writing and communication skills. Thus, your participation is essential and it will be counted 5% of your grade in our class.

- You will predominantly be working in rotating pairs.

In the mode periods that are discussions, you have to bring your 1<sup>st</sup> draft of assigned paper to be critiqued. You are required to work in pairs, critiquing each other's papers and provide useful feedback to each other. After receiving the feedback from your partner, you will have some ideas for revising your paper. In order to receive and provide constructive feedback from different perspectives, you are required to find different partner for each discussion meeting.

- You have to give 1 presentation of your paper.

In order to give you an opportunity to practice communicating your ideas, in the presentation mode periods, you are required to complete 1 presentation as part of this mode of the course (see page 2 for more detail). You are responsible for signing up for the presentation within the 2<sup>nd</sup> mode day. Also, you have to prepare any materials accompanying your presentation and provide it to the audiences on the day of your presentation.

### ○ Mode requirements:

1) **3 Papers.** There will be 3 papers required in this writing mode, covering major areas in social psychology: social cognition, social influence, and social relations. You are required to complete all 3 assignments. More detailed information sheet about each assignment will be given when it is assigned. All papers should be between 4-5 pages long in 12-point type, with double spacing and 1-inch margins all around. Completed papers have to be handed in the presentation day of the class.

2) **1 Presentation.** The presentation will consist of presenting the ideas discussed in your 1 of 3 papers to the other students enrolled in our writing and communications mode of the course. Each student has to choose for which assigned paper that he/she would like to give the presentation. Ideally, there should be comparable numbers of students signing up for presentation in each topic. Each student's presentation should be approximately 10 minutes in length.

3) **Participation.** Providing useful comments on other students' papers is a very important part of learning about effective communications. Students are responsible for participation in the class which is 5% of the total score.

### ○ Grading:

You will receive a letter grade for the mode of learning portion of the course.

3 Papers	25 pts. each	75 pts.
1 Presentation	20 pts.	20 pts.
Participation	5 pts.	5 pts.
<b>Total</b>		<b>100 pts.</b>

A	= 92 or greater	C	= 72-77
A-	= 90-91	C-	= 70-71
B+	= 88-89	D+	= 68-69
B	= 82-87	D	= 62-67
B-	= 80-81	D-	= 60-61
C+	= 78-79		

### ○ Suggestion for Good Writing and Critiquing Papers:

#### 1) **Spelling, Grammar and Punctuation:**

Spelling, grammar, and punctuation are not the primary areas of concern for this course. However, these fundamental aspects of writing can have an important impact on the readability of a piece of writing. Additionally, writers often lose credibility with their readers as a result of serious or multiple errors in spelling, grammar, and punctuation. As you critique someone else's writing for this course, the point is not to be overly picky about these errors, but to help the writer become aware of how these aspects of writing affect their ability to communicate their ideas effectively.

a) **Problem:** The paper is hard to read or the writer's ideas are difficult to follow due to multiple spelling errors. (This is a pet peeve of many instructors because of the existence of spell check tools on most word processing programs.)

**Critique:** Circle some of the misspelled words so that the reader can become aware of the extent of spelling errors in the paper.

b) **Problem:** The paper is cumbersome to follow because of problems with grammar.

**Critique:** Underline areas of the paper with grammar problems and give some suggestions of grammatically correct ways to express the same ideas. Circle incorrect punctuation marks, add in punctuation marks where needed, or cross out unneeded punctuation marks.

## 2) **Organization of Ideas in Paper:**

Another important aspect of any piece of writing concerns how well information in the paper is organized. Organization is one of the most difficult aspects of writing to learn well, but it is one of the most important. The first issue of organization concerns whether ideas within the paper are presented in a logical order. For example, if background information is required to understand a particular concept or idea discussed in the paper, the writer should provide that background information before discussing the concept or idea. A second issue concerns whether the author transitions between different ideas smoothly. A paper that jumps around from idea to idea without clear develop each idea, and does not provide a connection or transition between ideas is very difficult to read and comprehend. A third issue concerns whether ideas are placed in the order that maximizes their impact or clarity. Sometimes a writer can say all the right things, but the order in which they are said can dampen the impact of the ideas.

- a) **Problem:** The ideas presented are difficult to follow because they are not presented in a logical order.

**Critique:** Indicate which sections of the paper might benefit from being rearranged. Also give a brief description of why the original order of the paper was difficult to follow, and why presenting the information in the new order might add to the clarity or impact of ideas.

- b) **Problem:** Paper could benefit from smoother transitions between ideas.

**Critique:** Underline sections where transitions need to be added or where transitions are not smooth. Provide some suggestions for how to make the transition between ideas smoother.

## 3) **Clarity:**

Good writing clearly communicates one's ideas to the reader. A common pitfall to clear writing is insufficient elaboration of one's ideas. Often we assume that others will know what we are intending to say, when in fact we should be providing more information to elucidate our ideas. In many cases, providing concrete examples, or giving further description of a concept is the difference between clear expression and ambiguity.

- a) **Problem:** Ideas in paper are not clearly expressed due to insufficient explanation.

**Critique:** Circle or highlight sentences or ideas that need elaboration. Indicate what type of information (descriptive information, background information, concrete examples, etc.) would be most helpful in making the writer's ideas clear. Provide some example to illustrate how elaboration would be helpful.

## 4) **Conciseness:**

The ability to express ideas clearly without providing extraneous or distracting information is also a huge asset to good communication. A common mistake many students make when writing papers is taking a "shotgun" approach in the information they present. When students spill out all the information they know about a topic without keeping a clear focus on the idea they are trying to communicate, the end result is often a paper that lacks clarity or has serious organizational

problems. A piece of writing that is concise provides enough information that it clearly communicates one's ideas, without distracting or confusing the reader with extra information.

- a) Problem: Concepts or ideas within the paper are unclear because there is extraneous or redundant information.

Critique: Circle or highlight areas where a more concise description of an idea/concept could increase the impact of the communication. Be sure to specify which pieces of information should be retained and which might be extraneous.

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## Course Outline

### for Writing and Communication Mode of Learning 3905-003

<b>Dates</b>	<b>Topics</b>	<b>Paper/Discussion Topic Assigned</b>
1/19	Introduction to Our Class	<b>Paper# 1 on Social Cognition: Attributions</b> (Application of Theory to Your Own Experiences)
2/02	Discuss on Attribution Paper	NONE
<b>2/16</b>	Presentations for Attributions <b>(and Paper# 1 Dues)</b>	<b>Paper# 2 on Social Influence: Techniques Used for Gaining Compliance</b> (Explaining and Evaluating Research)
3/02	Discuss on Compliance Paper	NONE
3/16	<b>SPRING BREAK- NO CLASS</b>	<b>NONE</b>
<b>3/23</b>	Presentations for Compliance Paper <b>(and Paper# 2 Dues)</b>	<b>Paper# 3 on Social Relations: Role of Media on Aggression</b> (Application of Knowledge in Explaining How Media Influence People's Aggressions)
4/06	Discuss on Aggression Paper	NONE
<b>4/20</b>	Presentations for Aggression Paper <b>(and Paper# 3 Dues)</b>	NONE