

Psychology 225: Psychological Perspectives on Self and Identity

Spring, 2008; MWF, 11:30-12:30 am; KINSC S217

Instructor Information

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Course Description

Who am I? How do I feel about myself? What is the story of my life? The answers people give to these kinds of questions, the factors that shape their answers, and how their answers affect them, both over time and across situations in their lives, are the issues that are at the heart of this course on self and identity. Through a combination of lecture and discussion, we will examine the literature on self and identity from multiple disciplinary perspectives (developmental, personality, social, and clinical) and attempt to apply scientific concepts to the analysis of socially important issues, current events, examples from literature and popular culture, and our own life experiences. Specific topics to be addressed include self-concept development in childhood and adolescence, self-esteem and its consequences, gender and the relational self, ethnic identity development, cultural and collective identities, stigmatized selves and prejudice, and the connection between self/identity and mental health.

Readings

We will be reading a diverse and integrative set of primary source readings from the scientific literature and (secondarily) the popular press. You are required to buy one book for this course, *Generation Me* by Jean Twenge, which is currently available at the bookstore. All other readings are (or will be) available on the course Blackboard site within the Course Documents folder. Example titles include:

- ❖ Harter, S., & Monsour, A. (1992). Developmental analysis of the conflict caused by opposing attributes in the adolescent self-portrait. *Developmental Psychology, 2*, 251-260.
- ❖ McLean, K. C., & Pratt, M. (2006). Life's little (and big) lessons: Identity statuses and meaning-making in the turning point narratives of emerging adults. *Developmental Psychology, 42*, 714-722.
- ❖ Crocker, J., et al. (2003). When grades determine self-worth: Consequences of contingent self-worth for male and female engineering and psychology majors. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 85*, 507-516.
- ❖ Brewer, M. B. (1991). The social self: On being the same and different at the same time. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 17*, 475-482.
- ❖ Wang, Q. (2006). Culture and the development of self-knowledge. *Current Directions in Psychological Science, 15*, 182-187.

Finally, please note that this course is designed as a reading intensive course. Thus, an important part of your participation and performance will be to complete readings prior to class and come prepared to discuss and evaluate their methods, results, and broader implications.

Course Requirements

- First Exam = 20%
- Second Exam = 20%
- Group presentation = 15%
- Research paper = 20%
- Homework (three self-reflection papers) = 15%
- Attendance and in-class participation = 10%

Exams

The midterm exam will be a take-home exam and will be distributed in class on Wednesday, 3/5 and due by 12:30 pm on Friday, 3/7. It will involve a combination of short answer and essay questions. The second exam will be non-cumulative and will be self-scheduled during finals.

Group Presentations

We will dedicate the last few weeks of this course to group presentations and student-led discussion. I will provide the class with several topic options for you to rank in terms of your interests for your group presentation topic. Sample topics include sexual orientation and identity development, trauma/abuse and the self-concept, and immigration and identity. I will create groups assign a topic to each group based on students' stated topic preferences. Once the groups are formed, I will schedule a meeting with each group to discuss your approach to your topic and provide you with readings to begin your research process. Your group will be given an entire class period to a) present relevant theory and research on the topic, and b) lead an engaging discussion about the topic. More detail will be provided in class regarding the specifics of what will be expected of your presentations and how they will be evaluated. Please note that presentation material will be included on second exam.

Research Paper

In your final paper for this course, you will develop a research proposal (8-10 pages) for a study that you would like to conduct on self and identity. In this proposal, you will cite sources from class readings and find some of your own through the Psycinfo database. You may develop a research proposal that builds on your presentation topic or you may choose something totally different. More detail on this paper assignment will be provided in class.

Homework: Self-reflection papers

This is a course on self and identity, so you will not get through it without spending a just little time in self-reflection! ☺ In order to facilitate this process, you will complete three brief self-reflection papers (2-3 pages) over the course of the semester (see schedule for due dates). These papers must be printed, stapled and brought to class on the dates specified. The specific topics for each of your self-reflection papers will be presented in class and will require you to apply course material to your understanding of yourself.

Class Participation

It is my hope that this course will include a lot of lively discussion to complement the lectures. Self and identity is a fascinating topic that lends itself to group discussion and social application. However, this course will only be as good as we make it. For my part, I pledge to dedicate every Friday entirely to discussion starting Friday, 2/15. We will discuss the topics of the week in-depth and do various non-lecture activities. For your part, it will be very important for you to do your reading on time and come prepared to participate each week. In order to facilitate your contribution, each of you will be assigned a set of Fridays for which you will contribute discussion questions for the class. Details about discussion questions will be provided in class.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Week	Dates	Topics and Activities	Readings
1	1/23-1/25	Intro to course: Basic conceptual issues	1/25: James (1890)
2	1/28-2/1	Theoretical perspectives / Normative development of self in childhood and adolescence	1/28: McAdams (2004); Didion (1979) 1/30: Markus & Nurius (1987) 2/1: Stipek, et al. (1990); Harter&Monsour (1992)
3	2/4-2/8	Identity formation during emerging adulthood **Class cancelled on 2/6 and 2/8**	2/4: Textbook excerpt by McAdams; McLean & Pratt (2006); <i>Adolescent Portraits</i> case study
4	2/11-2/15	Self-esteem 1: Development, gender differences, and the dynamics of low self-esteem **Self-analysis #1 is due on 2/11**	2/11: Harter (2003); Robins &Trzesniewski (2005) 2/13: Brown & Dutton (1995); Crocker, et al. (2003)
5	2/18-2/22	Self-esteem 2: Consequences and complexities of high self-esteem	2/18: Jordan, et al. (2003); NY Times piece 2/20: Excerpts from <i>Generation Me</i>
6	2/25-2/29	The self in adulthood 1: Self-complexity, self differentiation, and growth in the context of negative life events **Self-analysis #2 is due on 2/29**	2/25: Linnville (1987); Labouvie-Vief (2003) 2/27: King & Patterson (2000); Crossley (2000)
7	3/3-3/7	The self in adulthood 2: Self-verification in adult relationships **Take-home midterm distributed in class on 3/5 and due by 12:30 pm on 3/7 (no class)**	3/3: Swann (1997); Swann, et al (1994)
		Spring Break	
8	3/17-3/21	Personal, relational, and collective identities: Levels of social identification and situational variability in self	3/17: Brewer (1991) 3/19: Deaux, et al. (1999)
9	3/24-3/28	Culture and self: Individualism vs. collectivism	3/24: Heine, et al. (1999) 3/26: Wang (2006); Adams (2005)
10	3/31-4/4	Ethnic identity development in the United States / Bicultural identity integration **Homework #3 is due in class on 4/4**	3/31: Phinney & Rosenthal; <i>The Hatred Within</i> 4/2: Haritatos & Benet-Martinez (2002); Williams (1999); NY Times piece
11	4/7-4/11	The roles of stigma, stereotyping and prejudice in the self-concept **First group presentation on 4/11**	4/7: Krendl, et al. (2008); Sekaquaptewa, et al (2007) 4/9: D'Andrea (1999); Croteau (1999)
12	4/14-4/18	Group presentations	TBA
13	4/21-4/25	Group presentations	TBA
14	4/28-5/2	Group presentations on 4/28 and 4/30 Review and course wrap-up on 5/2 **Final papers due in class on 5/2** **Final exam will be self-scheduled during the final examination period**	