SYLLABUS

BACKGROUND TEXTS:


COURSE GOALS:
The goal of this course, geared toward graduate students in social psychology, is to have students become familiar with some of the major issues and/or controversies that currently engage researchers interested in attitudes and persuasion. It is assumed that students have the knowledge equivalent of that provided in Psychology 630.

COURSE TOPICS:

Jan 7: Course Overview
Jan 14: New Directions in Mere Exposure Research (RHF) [A]
Jan 21: *MARTIN LUTHER KING HOLIDAY* (no class)
Jan 28: Implicit Attitudes and the IAT (RHF) [B]
Feb 4: Multi versus Single Process Theories of Attitudes (REP) [A]
Feb 11: Affective and Cognitive Bases of Attitudes (REP) [B]
Feb 18: Valence Asymmetries (RHF) [A]
Feb 25: Emotion, Information Processing, and Persuasion (REP) [B]
Mar 4: Assimilation and Contrast Phenomena (REP) [A]
Mar 11: What is an Attitude? (RHF) [B]

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:
Readings from original sources will be assigned each week. One copy of these readings will be placed on Joyce’s desk in the Lazenby Hall lobby. Students are responsible for making their own copies of these materials. Approximately every other week, students will prepare a “thought paper” of no more than 3 pages (typed, double spaced, 1 in. margins, 12 pt. type) in length. The topic of this paper will be assigned one week in advance. On the “off weeks,” students are responsible for turning in 3 to 5 “thought questions” about the readings (i.e., noting issues, questions, or observations they would like to see discussed in class). The thought papers (hard copies only) will be due at the beginning of class. The thought questions will be due NO LATER THAN MIDNIGHT on the day before class (e-mailed to petty.l@osu.edu AND fazio@psy.ohio-state.edu). The class will be divided into an “A” group and a “B” group. The group whose letter is listed above is the group that writes the paper for the week. The other group writes thought questions.

GRADING:
Based on weekly papers, thought questions, and class participation.
January 14 - CLASS 2: *The Mere Exposure Effect: Why and how does it occur?*

**Background Reading:**


**Main Readings:**


**Writing Assignment:**

Despite decades of research, the mere exposure effect is not well-understood. As is evident from the readings, numerous explanations as to why and how the effect occurs have been proposed. On the basis of what is known to date, how would you explain the mere exposure effect? That is, what do you regard as the mediating mechanism (or set of mechanisms) that underlies the phenomenon, and what leads you to favor this particular explanation?
January 28 - CLASS 3:

*The Implicit Association Test: What does it measure and how does it work?*

**Background Reading:**


**Main Readings:**


**Writing Assignment:**

The IAT has attracted a great deal of attention and has been used widely over the last few years. Yet, we only recently have begun to learn about the mechanism(s) that underlie performance on the IAT. Given what has been learned, what does the IAT measure? What would you conclude about the validity of the IAT as an implicit measure of attitudes? In other words, provide an assessment of the status and value of the IAT.
Psychology 873A  
Seminar in Attitudes and Persuasion (Winter, 2002)  
R. E. Petty and R. H. Fazio  


I. Single versus Dual Process Models of Persuasion  


II. Single versus Dual Process Models of Attitude-Behavior Processes  


**WRITING ASSIGNMENT:**  
The readings this week deal with single versus multi process models of persuasion and of attitude-behavior consistency. Your job is to formulate your OWN point of view on each controversy.  

You might find that you find the one process arguments in each case compelling, or the dual process argument in each case to be compelling, or it might be that you favor a one process argument in one case and a multi-process argument in the other. Just make your thoughts clear about this giving the PRIMARY reasons why you favor one approach over the other for each controversy. If there is "smoking gun" evidence that you see as existing or that might be collected, you should indicate this in your response.
February 11 - TOPIC 4: Affective and Cognitive Bases of Attitudes

BACKGROUND READING


Assessing Structural Bases


Implications of Affective-Cognitive Bases for Persuasion


WRITING ASSIGNMENT:

After outlining some issues with respect to the structural bases of attitudes, a controversy is presented regarding how to change attitudes that are primarily affectively versus cognitively based. Present your own take on the controversy. What do you make of it? How might it best be resolved?
February 18 – Topic 5:

Valence Asymmetries in Attention and Evaluation: Is negative > positive?

Readings:


Writing Assignment:

Consider the strength of the evidence regarding the existence of a valence asymmetry. Are you convinced? If not, why not? If so, critically evaluate at least two different mechanisms that might be responsible for the asymmetry. That is, assess two or more explanations as to why negatives appear more influential than positives.
February 25 - TOPIC 6: Assimilation and Contrast Phenomena


*(Optional reading for those who cannot get enough and want/need another perspective!)*


**WRITING ASSIGNMENT:**

There are many perspectives on assimilation and contrast effects. Stapel and Koomen provide an "interpretation/comparison model" that attempts to integrate the diverse literature. After explaining VERY briefly the essence of the model, outline its major strengths and weaknesses.
March 4 - TOPIC 7: Emotion, Information Processing, and Persuasion

Positive versus Negative Emotions (General Perspectives)


New Empirical Research on the Role of Specific Emotions


WRITING ASSIGNMENT:
The readings outline a number of ways in which our moods or emotions can affect our attitudes, judgments, and information processing activities. Your paper should focus on what is MISSING from theories of mood and emotion. Note one or two key missing elements (i.e., what do current theories NOT account for), and then provide your own conceptual account.
March 11 - Topic 8:

*The Attitude Construct: How shall we conceptualize an attitude?*

**Background Reading:**


**Main Readings:**


**Writing Assignment:**

Select either the Wilson et al. dual attitudes model or the Schwarz & Bohner constructivist model. Critically analyze the model. Do you believe it to offer a useful way of conceptualizing the attitude construct? Does the model fit with the empirical literature on attitudes? Finally, what does your assessment suggest about how attitudes might be best viewed?