Psychological Aspects of the Holocaust

Instructor: Dr. Cari Stevenson  
Humanities and Social Sciences  
Office: L325  Phone: 815-802-8724

Class capacity: 32 Students

Course Description
Social Psychology is the scientific exploration of feelings, cognitions, and behavior of an individual within a social setting. Community Psychology considers the convergence of contextual factors and emphasizes community strengths, justice, and social action. This course will explore concepts of psychology through evaluation of the Holocaust, and students will initiate a social action project to positively influence their community.

Learning Standards
KCC College Strategic Goals
1) Promote an environment of excellence and innovation; 2) Improve understanding of community challenges; 3) Promote community prosperity; 4) Increase engagement and partnership development with community partners.

Council for the Advancement of Standards (CAS) in Higher Education Student Learning and Development Outcomes
The CAS outcomes include: 1) knowledge acquisition, construction, integration and application; 2) cognitive complexity; 3) intrapersonal development; 4) interpersonal competence; 5) humanitarianism and civic engagement; 6) and practical competence.

American Psychological Association
1) knowledge base in psychology; 2) scientific inquiry and critical thinking; 3) ethical and social responsibility in a diverse world; 4) communication; 5) professional development.

Global Competence Skills
1) Investigate the World, 2) Recognize Perspectives, 3) Communicate Ideas, 4) Take Action.

Course Learning Objectives
1. Discuss sociopolitical and cultural factors leading to the Holocaust.
2. Identify elements of persuasion employed in Nazi propaganda.
3. Consider the nature of prejudice, stereotyping, discrimination, and inequality in the context of various cultures present in Europe in the 1930s-40s.
4. Identify factors contributing to obedience, conformity, and aggression as they pertain to the Nazi regime.
5. Illustrate examples of altruism and discuss factors that motivate helping behavior.
6. Discuss influences leading to empowerment and resilience of Holocaust survivors.
7. Devise an action plan to positively impact social relations within the college or greater community.
8. Reflect on personal emotional and cognitive responses to course material and learning experiences.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learning Objective</th>
<th>Learning Method/Assessment</th>
<th>CAS</th>
<th>APA</th>
<th>Global Competence Skills</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Discuss sociopolitical and cultural factors leading to the Holocaust.</td>
<td>Read historical and sociological sources, Lecture, Discussion</td>
<td>Knowledge acquisition, Interpersonal</td>
<td>Critical thinking, Communication</td>
<td>Investigate world, recognize perspectives, Communicate ideas</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Identify elements of persuasion employed in Nazi propaganda.

Read psychology text on persuasion
Review and evaluate artifacts of Nazi propaganda
Discussion
Presentation of findings

Knowledge acquisition
Cognitive complexity
Interpersonal
Practical competence

Knowledge base
Critical thinking
Communication
Professional Development

Recognize perspectives
Investigate world
Communicate ideas

Consider the nature of prejudice, stereotyping, discrimination, and inequality in the context of various cultures present in Europe in 1930s-40s.

Read psychology text on Social Psych concepts
Read selections about distinct cultures
Discussion

Knowledge acquisition
Cognitive complexity
Interpersonal

Knowledge base
Critical thinking, ethical responsibility
Communication

Recognize perspectives
Investigate world
Communicate ideas

Identify factors contributing to obedience, conformity, and aggression as they pertain to the Nazi regime.

Read psychology texts on Social Psych concepts
Read related selections
Discussion

Knowledge acquisition
Cognitive complexity
Interpersonal

Knowledge base
Critical thinking, ethical responsibility
Communication

Recognize perspectives
Investigate world
Communicate ideas

Illustrate examples of altruism and discuss factors that motivate helping behavior.

Read psychology text on altruism and motivation
Read selections of examples of altruistic actions
Discussion

Knowledge acquisition
Cognitive complexity
Interpersonal

Knowledge base
Critical thinking, ethical responsibility
Communication

Recognize perspectives
Investigate world
Communicate ideas

Discuss influences leading to empowerment and resilience of Holocaust survivors.

Read psychology texts on empowerment and resilience
Read selections of survivor accounts
Discussion

Knowledge acquisition
Cognitive complexity
Interpersonal

Knowledge base
Critical thinking, ethical responsibility
Communication

Recognize perspectives
Investigate world
Communicate ideas

Devise an action plan to positively impact social relations within the college or greater community.

Visit Illinois Holocaust Museum and Education Center
Collaborate with group members
Develop an action plan
Presentation of plans

Knowledge acquisition, cognitive complexity
Interpersonal
Civic engagement
Practical competence

Critical thinking
Communication
Social responsibility
Professional development

Investigate world, Recognize perspectives
Communicate ideas
Take action
Communicate ideas

Reflect on personal emotional and cognitive responses to course material and learning experiences.

Journaling

Cognitive complexity, Intrapersonal

Critical thinking, social responsibility, communication

Communicate ideas, Recognize perspectives

Evaluation

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Assessments

Discussion - Due to the nature of this course, discussion will be an integral part of this class. Students will be expected to actively contribute to small group discussion as well as whole class dialog. In order to maximize discussion and practice critical thinking skills, students must be prepared by reading the assigned selections prior to class.

Journal and Applied Writing – Each week throughout the course, students will be expected to reflect upon their own emotional and cognitive reactions to the readings, discussions, and activities in one to two pages of typed
journaling. Additionally, each week for the first 11 weeks, students will respond to a writing prompt that will require analytical connections between the readings and current factors. Responses to writing prompts should be about one to two pages in length and include references to readings.

Community Project – Students will work either individually or collaboratively to execute a community project that addresses contemporary social issues such as prejudice, discrimination, and inequity and/or encourages resilience and empowerment. Examples of possible projects include (but are certainly not limited to): pairing mentors with children in underprivileged schools, forming a letter writing campaign to political representatives addressing biased legislation, organizing a collection of resources for an underserved organization (e.g., clothing for a women’s shelter). Students should begin thinking about potential projects early in the course, identifying community partners, and developing strategies.

Final Presentations – Students will present a 15 – 20 minute synopsis of their community projects as well as a brief analysis of how concepts covered in the course were related to the contemporary social issue being addressed. Community partners are welcomed and encouraged to attend the final presentations.

Course Calendar

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<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Concepts</th>
<th>Readings</th>
<th>Writing Prompts/Activities</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Historical background and introduction of psychological concepts</td>
<td>1) Byford &amp; Tileaga - Social Psychology, History, and the Study of the Holocaust 2) Mastroianni – Obedience in Perspective: Psychology and the Holocaust</td>
<td>Journal and Writing Prompt: What do you consider to be the primary antecedents to the acceptance of Hitler’s regime?</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Social and cultural antecedents</td>
<td>1) Tindale, et al. – Group Processes and the Holocaust 2) Bilewicz, et. al – The Structure and Consequences of Anti-Semitic Beliefs in Poland</td>
<td>Journal and Writing Prompt: Compare and contrast the factors in the readings to the current sociocultural climate in America.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Persuasion in propaganda</td>
<td>1) Welch – Restructuring the Means of Communication in Nazi Germany 2) Chilton – Manipulation, Memes, and Metaphors 3) Social Psychology Section 5.2</td>
<td>Journal and Writing Prompt: Find a current example of propaganda and compare persuasive elements used in Nazi propaganda.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Prejudice, stereotyping, discrimination, and scapegoating</td>
<td>1) Glick – Sacrificial Lambs Dressed in Wolves Clothing 2) Kranitz-Sanders- Ch 10 Anti-Semitism Accelerates 3) Social Psychology Ch 12</td>
<td>Journal and Writing Prompt: Is there a group (or groups) who are currently experiencing discrimination/scapegoating? If so, what factors are present? If not, what factors are different that insulate groups from discrimination.</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>Aggression and systemic oppression</td>
<td>1) Waite – The Perpetrator: Hitler and the Holocaust 2) Social Psychology Ch 12</td>
<td>Journal and Writing Prompt: Consider last week’s question in terms of aggression towards specific groups. What similar factors are involved in system oppression?</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>Obedience and conformity</td>
<td>1) Staub – Obeying, Joining, Following, Resisting… 2) Martin – Ernest Becker and Stanley Milgram 3) Social Psychology Ch 7</td>
<td>Journal and Writing Prompt: Identify an example of obedience or conformity from current events, and consider what factors mirror factors presented in the readings.</td>
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<td>Week</td>
<td>Topic</td>
<td>Reading Suggestions</td>
<td>Journal, Writing Prompt</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>Bystanders and complicity</td>
<td>1) Staub – Ch 6 Passivity 2) Social Psychology Section 9.3</td>
<td>What delineates bystanders from active resistors and what factors do you think would need to be present for you to take action?</td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Social justice and enacting change</td>
<td>1) Staub – Ch 22 The Roots of Helping, Heroism, and Resistance to and the Prevention of Mass Violence: Active Bystandership in Extreme Times and in Building Peaceful Societies 2) Social Psychology Ch 9</td>
<td>Considering contemporary social issues, what can you do to make a positive impact? Be specific, as this can serve as the beginning of your Community Project.</td>
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<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Sense of community, altruism and heroism</td>
<td>1) Gurewitsch – Mothers, Sisters, and Resisters 2) Smolenska &amp; Reykowski – Motivations of People who Helped Jews Survive the Nazi Occupation 3) Fagin-Jones – Holocaust Heroes 4) Social Psychology Ch 13</td>
<td>Find an example of a recent act of heroism (e.g. Vegas shootings) and consider what factors were present that precipitated altruistic behavior.</td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Resistance and activism</td>
<td>1) Laska – Non-Jews and Women in the Fight against Nazism 2) Monroe – Cracking the Code of Genocide: The Moral Psychology… 3) Social Psychology Ch 4</td>
<td>Considering your Community Project, what factors of activism are present that parallel the readings, and how does your project reflect your self-concept?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Self-concept</td>
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<td>11</td>
<td>Identity Development</td>
<td>1) Schwartzman – Sutured Identities in Jewish Holocaust Survivor Testimonies</td>
<td>What factors have influenced your own identity development?</td>
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<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Visit to Illinois Holocaust Museum in Skokie</td>
<td>No assigned readings this week</td>
<td>Journal, attend Museum and work on Community Project</td>
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<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Trauma and recovery</td>
<td>1) Goldenberg – The Hows and Whys of Survival 2) Zeidner &amp; Aharoni-David – Memories of Holocaust-related traumatic experiences…</td>
<td>Journal and work on Community Project</td>
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<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Resilience and Empowerment</td>
<td>1) Helmerich – Ch 8 Overcoming Tragedy 2) Paren – Autobiographical Study of Resilience 3) Greene &amp; Graham – Role of Resilience…</td>
<td>Journal and work on Community Project</td>
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<td>Inherited Trauma</td>
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<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Final presentations</td>
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<td>Present community projects</td>
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