

# 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.

| <b>Learning Objective</b>   | <b>Learning Method/Assessment</b>                                 | <b>CAS</b>                                 | <b>APA</b>                             | <b>Global Competence Skills</b>                                     |
|---|---|--|--|---|
| Discuss sociopolitical and cultural factors leading to the Holocaust. | Read historical and sociological sources<br>Lecture<br>Discussion | Knowledge acquisition<br><br>Interpersonal | Critical thinking<br><br>Communication | Investigate world, recognize perspectives,<br><br>Communicate ideas |

|   |   |  |   |   |
|---|---|--|---|---|
| Identify elements of persuasion employed in Nazi propaganda.  | Read psychology text on persuasion<br>Review and evaluate artifacts of Nazi propaganda<br>Discussion<br>Presentation of findings          | Knowledge acquisition<br>Cognitive complexity<br>Interpersonal<br>Practical competence                   | Knowledge base<br>Critical thinking<br>Communication<br>Professional Development        | Recognize perspectives<br>Investigate world<br>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 texts on Social Psych concepts<br>Read selections about distinct cultures<br>Discussion                                   | Knowledge acquisition<br>Cognitive complexity<br>Interpersonal   | Knowledge base<br>Critical thinking, ethical responsibility<br>Communication            | Recognize perspectives<br>Investigate world<br>Communicate ideas                                      |
| Identify factors contributing to obedience, conformity, and aggression as they pertain to the Nazi regime.  | Read psychology texts on Social Psych concepts<br>Read related selections<br>Discussion   | Knowledge acquisition<br>Cognitive complexity<br>Interpersonal   | Knowledge base<br>Critical thinking, ethical responsibility<br>Communication            | Recognize perspectives<br>Investigate world<br>Communicate ideas                                      |
| Illustrate examples of altruism and discuss factors that motivate helping behavior.   | Read psychology texts on altruism and motivation<br>Read selections of examples of altruistic actions<br>Discussion                       | Knowledge acquisition<br>Cognitive complexity<br>Interpersonal   | Knowledge base<br>Critical thinking, ethical responsibility<br>Communication            | Recognize perspectives<br>Investigate world<br>Communicate ideas                                      |
| Discuss influences leading to empowerment and resilience of Holocaust survivors.  | Read psychology texts on empowerment and resilience<br>Read selections of survivor accounts<br>Discussion                                 | Knowledge acquisition<br>Cognitive complexity<br>Interpersonal   | Knowledge base<br>Critical thinking, ethical responsibility<br>Communication            | Recognize perspectives<br>Investigate world<br>Communicate ideas                                      |
| Devise an action plan to positively impact social relations within the college or greater community.  | Visit Illinois Holocaust Museum and Education Center<br>Collaborate with group members<br>Develop an action plan<br>Presentation of plans | Knowledge acquisition, cognitive complexity<br>Interpersonal<br>Civic engagement<br>Practical competence | Critical thinking<br>Communication<br>Social responsibility<br>Professional development | Investigate world,<br>Recognize perspectives<br>Communicate ideas<br>Take action<br>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,<br>Recognize perspectives  |

## Evaluation

|                             |     |
|-----------------------------|-----|
| Discussion                  | 20% |
| Journal and Applied Writing | 40% |
| Community Project           | 30% |
| Final Presentation          | 10% |

|          |   |
|----------|---|
| 90 – 100 | A |
| 80 – 89  | B |
| 70 – 79  | C |
| 60 – 69  | D |
| < 60     | F |

## 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

| Week | Concepts   | Readings   | Writing Prompts/Activities  |
|------|--|--|---|
| 1    | Historical background and introduction of psychological concepts | 1) Byford & Tileaga - Social Psychology, History, and the Study of the Holocaust<br>2) Mastroianni – Obedience in Perspective: Psychology and the Holocaust. | Journal and Writing Prompt: <i>What do you consider to be the primary antecedents to the acceptance of Hitler’s regime?</i>   |
| 2    | Social and cultural antecedents                                  | 1) Tindale, et al. – Group Processes and the Holocaust<br>2) Bilewicz, et. al – The Structure and Consequences of Anti-Semitic Beliefs in Poland             | Journal and Writing Prompt: <i>Compare and contrast the factors in the readings to the current sociocultural climate in America.</i>  |
| 3    | Persuasion in propaganda   | 1) Welch – Restructuring the Means of Communication in Nazi Germany<br>2) Chilton – Manipulation, Memes, and Metaphors<br>3) Social Psychology Section 5.2   | Journal and Writing Prompt: <i>Find a current example of propaganda and compare persuasive elements used in Nazi propaganda.</i>  |
| 4    | Prejudice, stereotyping, discrimination, and scapegoating        | 1) Glick – Sacrificial Lambs Dressed in Wolves Clothing<br>2) Kranitz-Sanders- Ch 10 Anti-Semitism Accelerates<br>3) Social Psychology Ch 12                 | Journal and Writing Prompt: <i>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.</i> |
| 5    | Aggression and systemic oppression                               | 1) Waite – The Perpetrator: Hitler and the Holocaust<br>2) Social Psychology Ch 12   | Journal and Writing Prompt: <i>Consider last week’s question in terms of aggression towards specific groups. What similar factors are involved in system oppression?</i>  |
| 6    | Obedience and conformity   | 1) Staub – Obeying, Joining, Following, Resisting...<br>2) Martin – Ernest Becker and Stanley Milgram<br>3) Social Psychology Ch 7                           | Journal and Writing Prompt: <i>Identify an example of obedience or conformity from current events, and consider what factors mirror factors presented in the readings.</i>  |

|    |  |  |   |
|----|--|--|---|
| 7  | Bystanders and complicity                    | 1) Staub – Ch 6 Passivity<br>2) Social Psychology Section 9.3  | Journal, Writing Prompt: <i>What delineates bystanders from active resisters and what factors do you think would need to be present for you to take action?</i>                               |
| 8  | Social justice and enacting change           | 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<br>2) Social Psychology Ch 13                          | Journal, Writing Prompt: <i>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.</i> |
| 9  | Sense of community, altruism and heroism     | 1) Gurewitsch – Mothers, Sisters, and Resisters<br>2) Smolenska & Reykowski – Motivations of People who Helped Jews Survive the Nazi Occupation<br>3) Fagin-Jones – Holocaust Heroes<br>4) Social Psychology Ch 9                      | Journal, Writing Prompt: <i>Find an example of a recent act of heroism (e.g. Vegas shootings) and consider what factors were present that precipitated altruistic behavior.</i>               |
| 10 | Resistance and activism<br>Self-concept      | 1) Laska – Non-Jews and Women in the Fight against Nazism<br>2) Monroe – Cracking the Code of Genocide: The Moral Psychology...<br>3) Social Psychology Ch 4   | Journal, Writing Prompt: <i>Considering your Community Project, what factors of activism are present that parallel the readings, and how does your project reflect your self-concept?</i>     |
| 11 | Identity Development                         | 1) Schwartzman – Sutured Identities in Jewish Holocaust Survivor Testimonies   | Journal, Writing Prompt: <i>What factors have influenced your own identity development?</i>   |
| 12 | Visit to Illinois Holocaust Museum in Skokie | No assigned readings this week   | Journal, attend Museum and work on Community Project  |
| 13 | Trauma and recovery                          | 1) Goldenberg – The Hows and Whys of Survival<br>2) Zeidner & Aharoni-David – Memories of Holocaust-related traumatic experiences...   | Journal and work on Community Project   |
| 14 | Resilience and Empowerment                   | 1) Helmerich – Ch 8 Overcoming Tragedy<br>2) Parens – Autobiographical Study of Resilience<br>3) Greene & Graham – Role of Resilience...   | Journal and work on Community Project   |
| 15 | Generational impact<br>Inherited Trauma      | 1) Flanzbaum – The Trace of Trauma: Third-Generation Holocaust Survivors<br>2) Kliger & Hollander-Goldfein – Holocaust Narratives and Their Impact on Adult Children<br>3) Iliceto, et al. – Hopelessness..in Survivors' Grandchildren | Journal and work on Community Project   |
| 16 | Final presentations                          |  | Present community projects  |

- Bilewicz, M., Winiewski, M., Kofta, M., Wojcik, A. (2013). Harmful ideas, the structure and consequences of anti-Semitic beliefs in Poland. *Political Psychology*, 34(6), 821 – 839.
- Byford, J. & Tileagi, C. (2014). Social psychology, history, and the study of the Holocaust: The perils of interdisciplinary “borrowing”. *Peace and Conflict: Journal of Peace Psychology*, 20(4), 349-364.
- Chilton, P. (2005). Manipulations, memes, and metaphors. In Saussure & Schulz (Ed.) *Manipulation and Ideology in the Twentieth Century*. Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company.
- Fagin-Jones, S. (2017). Holocaust heroes: Heroic altruism of non-Jewish moral exemplars in Nazi Europe. In Allison, S.T., Goethals, G.R., & Kramer, R.M. (Ed.) *Handbook of Heroism and Heroic Leadership*. New York: Routledge.
- Glick, P. (2002). Sacrificial lambs dressed in wolves’ clothing: Envious prejudice, ideology, and the scapegoating of Jews. In Newman & Erber (Ed.) *Understanding Genocide: The Social Psychology of the Holocaust*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Goldenberg, J. (2012). The Hows and whys of survival: Causal attributions and the search for meaning. In Hollander-Goldstein, B., Isserman, N., & Goldenberg, J. (Ed.) *Transcending Trauma: Survival, Resilience, and Clinical Implications in Survivor Families*. New York: Routledge.
- Greene, R.R. & Graham, S.A. (2009). Role of resilience among Nazi Holocaust survivors: A strength-based paradigm for understanding survivorship. *Family and Community Health*, 32(18), 875-882.
- Gurewitsch, B. (1998). *Mothers, Sisters, and Resisters: Oral Histories of Women Who Survived the Holocaust*. Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press.
- Helmreich, W. B. (1996). *Against all odds: Holocaust survivors and the successful lives they made in America*. New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers.
- Iliceto, P., Candilera, G., Funaro, D., Pompili, M., Kaplan, K. J. (2011). Hopelessness, temperament, anger, and interpersonal relationships in Holocaust (shoah) survivors’ grandchildren. *Journal of Religious Health*, 50, 321-329.
- Kliger, H. & Hollander-Goldstein, B. (2012). Holocaust narratives and their impact on adult children of survivors. In Hollander-Goldstein, B., Isserman, N., & Goldenberg, J. (Ed.) *Transcending Trauma: Survival, Resilience, and Clinical Implications in Survivor Families*. New York: Routledge.
- Kranitz-Sanders, L. (1984). *Twelve Who Survived: An Oral History of the Jews of Lodz, Poland, 1930-1954*.
- Laska, V. (1997). Non-Jews and women in the fight against Nazism. In Michalczyk, J. (Ed.) *Resisters, Rescuers, and Refugees: Historical and Ethical Issues*. Kansas City: Sheed & Ward.
- Martin, J. (2016). Ernest Becker and Stanley Milgram: Twentieth-Century students of evil. *History of Psychology*, 19(1), 3-21.
- Mastoianni, G. R. (2015). Obedience in perspective: Psychology and the Holocaust. *Theory & Psychology*, 25(5), 657-669.
- Monroe, K. R. (2008). Cracking the code of genocide: The moral psychology of rescuers, bystanders, and Nazis during the Holocaust. *Political Psychology*, 29 (5), 699 – 736.
- Parens, H. (2008). An autobiographical study of resilience: Healing from the Holocaust. In Parens, H., Blum, H.P. & Akhtar, S. (Ed.) *The Unbroken Soul: Tragedy, Trauma, and Resilience*. Lanham, MD: Jason Aronson.
- Principles of Social Psychology*. (2015). University of Minnesota.
- Schwartzman, R. (2015). Sutured identities in Jewish Holocaust survivor testimonies. *Journal of Social Issues*, 71(2), 279-293.

- Staub, E. (2014). Obeying, joining, following, resisting, and other processes in the Milgram studies, and in the Holocaust and other genocides: Situations, personality, and bystanders. *Journal of Social Issues, 70*(3), 501-514.
- Staub, E. (2015). *The roots of goodness & resistance to evil*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Tindale, R.S., Munier, C., Wasserman, M., Smith, C., (2002). Group processes and the Holocaust. In Newman & Erber (Ed.) *Understanding Genocide: The Social Psychology of the Holocaust*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Waite, R.G. (1981). The perpetrator: Hitler and the Holocaust. In Ryan, M.D., (Ed). *Human Responses to the Holocaust: Perpetrators and Victims, Bystanders and Resisters*. New York: The Edwin Mellen Press.
- Welch, D. (2006). Restructuring the means of Communication in Nazi Germany. In Jowett & O'Donnell (Ed.) *Reading in Propaganda and Persuasion: New and Classic Essays*. London: Sage Publications.
- Zeidner, M., Aharoni-David, E. (2015). Memories of Holocaust-related traumatic experiences, sense of coherence, and survivors' subjective well-being in late life: some puzzling findings. *Anxiety, Stress, & Coping, 28*(3), 254-271.