Social Psychology - Web course

COURSE OUTLINE

In the late 19th century when Psychology was beginning to establish itself as a scientific discipline, the focus was largely on conducting experiments to understand human mind, its structure and functions.

Very soon, a set of psychologists realized the need to include one important aspect of human life in the study of behaivour and it was social situation or environment.

Social psychology that began with studies on crowd behaviour and experiments on 'social facilitation' (enhancement of performance as a function of presence of others in immediate environment of the person) towards the end of 19th century remains.

Even today, a discipline that attracts the attention of common intellectuals, social scientists, activists, policy makers and psychologists in all the domains of the discipline due to its power to inform them in a scientific manner how human beings feel, think and behave in diverse social situations.

In contemporary times, however, social psychologists have also felt the much important need to understand the human experience and behaviour in their socio-historical context.

This has also brought about the inclusion of new paradigms like social constructionism, critical theory etc. in the discipline that has further broadened its vision and scope to understand social behaviour and experience of human beings in a further meaningful manner.

This introductory course not only provides insights into the major concepts, domains and methodologies of the discipline in the contemporary times but also motivates an undergraduate student to critically evaluate the knowledge received about human social behaviour regarding its social relevance.

The first topic introduces the basic nature, history, paradigmatic debates and methodologies of the discipline.

Topic 2, Self and Social Identity, helps to understand the understanding about our own selves vis-à-vis significant others in our lives.

Topics 3 to 6 are broadly concerning the way we understand and respond to the social situations through social perception and cognition, attitudes, aggression and prosocial behaviour.

Topic 7 and 8 are focused on the way we influence each other's behaviour the social psychological roots of power.

Topic 9, Group Dynamics, provides insights into the nature and functioning of a group and how a leader's contributions to it.

Topic 10, Inter-Group Relations provides the understanding about how inter-group harmony and conflicts may develop and how the conflicts and prejudice may be intervened with through social psychological interventions.

Finally, Topic 11 reflects back and evaluates the strengths and limitations of the discipline as far as its social relevance and application potential are concerned. It, finally, also stimulates and prepares the students to take up the challenge of conducting meaningful social psychological research through multi-paradigmatic approaches.

COURSE DETAIL

NPTEL

http://nptel.iitm.ac.in

Humanities and Social Sciences

Additional Reading:

1. Bakhurst, D., & Sypnowich, C. (Eds.) (1995). *The social self.* London: Sage.

2. Gergen, K. J. (1973). Social Psychology as history. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 26(2),* 309-320

Hyperlinks:

http://www.swarthmore.edu/x20604.xml

Coordinators:

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Department of Humanities and Social SciencesIIT Kanpur

TOPICS	No. of Hours
Topic 1: Introduction: 1. Nature and scope of Social Psychology 2. Brief history of the discipline: The origins and development 3. Social Psychology today: Debates and development of new paradigms 4. Research methods: Classical and contemporary	4
Topic 2: Self and social identity: 1. Definitions of self and identity 2. Aspects of self-functioning: Self-concept, self-esteem and self-efficacy 3. Formation and functions of social identity 4. Gender identity and stereotypes	4
Topic 3: Social Perception and Cognition: 1. Understanding others through non-verbal communication 2. Attribution: Understanding causes of others' behaviour 3. Impression formation 4. Impression management 5. Schema and prototypes: Frameworks for holding and using information 6. Sources of error in social cognition	5
Topic 4: Attitudes and Attitude Change: 1. Process of attitude formation 2. Persuasion: Changing others' attitude 3. Cognitive dissonance: Changing our own attitude 4. Factors leading to success or failure of attitude change	4
Topic 5: Aggression: 1. Perspectives on causes of aggression 2. Social determinant of aggression 3. Personal causes of aggression 4. Useful techniques to prevent aggression	4
Topic 6: Prosocial Behaviour: 1. Providing help in emergency: Who does it and when 2. Dispositional and social factors behind prosocial behaviour	4

3. Prosocial motivation: Other theoretical explanations 4. Evaluating prosocial motivation: Can we become more helpful?	
Topic 7: Social Influence: 1. Conformity: Going along the social norms and reasons for it 2. Compliance: The process of making other accept our request 3. Obedience: Social influence by demand and factors behind it 4. Critical evaluation of theories and research in social influence	4
Topic 8: Social Power: 1. Definition and theoretical perspectives 2. Informational, reward-coercive, expert, referent and legitimate bases 3. Comparison of various bases of social power 4. Evaluating application of theories of social power	4
Topic 9: Group Dynamics: 1. Definition, nature and functions of group 2. Social facilitation: Enhancement of performance in presence of others 3. Social loafing: Lack of motivation to contribute to group tasks 4. Leadership: Contrasting styles and approaches to influence the group	4
Topic 10: Inter-Group Relations: 1. Theories of inter-group relations 2. Prejudice and inter-group conflicts 3. Social psychology of countering prejudice and inter-group conflicts 4. Development of religious identities in India: Insights for potential intervention	4
Topic 11: Evaluating the Applications of Social Psychology: 1. Revisiting the meaning of 'social' in Social Psychology 2. Meaningful application of social psychology 3. Where social psychology has been found wanting 4. Future of the discipline: Promises of multi-paradigmatic approaches	4

	TOTAL	45
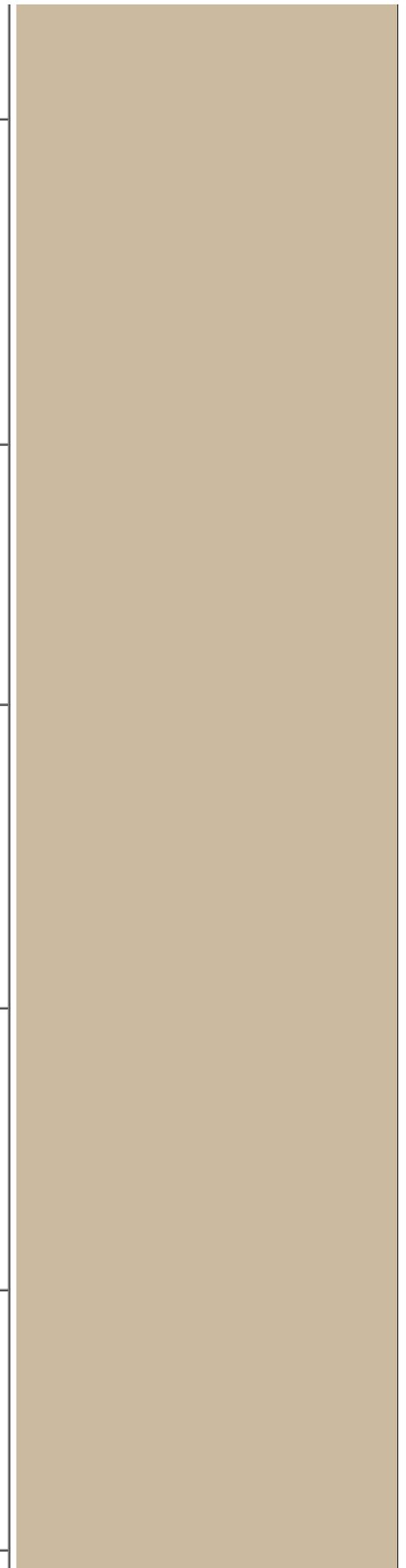
References:

1. Baron, R. A., Branscombe, N. R., & Byrne, D. (2009). *Social Psychology* (12th ed.). Boston, MA: Pearson/Allyn and Bacon.

2. Gergen, Kenneth J. (1999). *An invitation to social construction.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

3. McGarty, C. & Haslam, S. A. (Eds.) (1997). *The message of social psychology: Perspectives on mind in society*. Oxford, UK and Cambridge, MT: Blackwell.

4. Misra, G. & Dalal, A. K. (Eds.) (2006). *New directions in Indian psychology (Vol. 1): Social Psychology.* New Delhi: Sage.

5. Strickland, L. H., Aboud, F. E., & Gergen, K. J. (Eds) (1976). *Social psychology in transition*. Plenum: New York.