

SUBSTANTIVE AREA: Social Psychology

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OVERALL SCOPE OF AND EXPECTATIONS FOR THE EXAM

Social psychology is an interdisciplinary field that spans sociology and psychology. This exam focuses on the sociological literature and the distinct perspective that sociology brings to the field. That said, some material from psychology will be included because psychological theories and evidence have often provided the background for sociological developments.

The field of sociological social psychology is characterized by competing orienting strategies and theoretical perspectives, a multiplicity of theories that address similar issues, and empirical research relevant to theoretical formulations. The committee expects students to demonstrate (1) a firm grasp of metatheoretical and theoretical issues, (2) the capacity to discuss those issues critically, (3) familiarity with recent research in the field and (4) the ability to assess research evidence with respect to its fit with existing theory and hypotheses.

Many of the great debates and controversial issues raised in the classics are unresolved. Students will not be able to reach closure on all issues or resolve these debates, but they should be able to discuss what is at issue and identify various viewpoints. Students should also be familiar with the strengths and weaknesses (including ethical issues) of the various investigative techniques used in social psychology and with the kinds of research questions for which each is appropriate.

EXAM PREPARATION

USE OF READING LISTS

This is a transition year for the Social Psychology exam with regard to reading lists. Students who take the exam during the 2008-2009 school year will not be given an official list. Students planning on taking the exam after that time will be provided a general reading list with which to organize their studies.

REQUIRED/RECOMMENDED COURSES

The department offers a semester overview of the field on a regular basis (Social Psychology – SOC 63740). While the committee does not require that students take this course before taking the exam, we strongly recommend doing so.

EXAM FORMAT

The exam will be comprised of two, four-hour sessions with a different set of questions offered in each of the sessions. The first session will focus on sociological social psychology broadly and the second on more specific theories and research. For each set of questions, students will be given some leeway regarding which questions to answer. However, the committee may also **require** students to answer specific questions. Students can submit ideas for potential questions, but students will not be responsible for constructing their own exams.

EXAM SCHEDULING

The committee will write and offer only one exam per semester. If students fail the exam, they must wait until the next semester before they retake the exam.

EXPECTATIONS REGARDING CITATIONS

The committee prefers that students follow ASA guidelines regarding citations: author(s) and year of publication are preferable. To prevent students from focusing on memorizing this information, students may submit a list of references electronically to the committee chair that will be printed out for the students along with his/her exam questions. If the student wishes to use such a list, it is important the committee chair receives it at least a week in advance.

EXAM RESULTS

POLICIES REGARDING RE-WRITES

Students will be assigned one of three grades for their exam: pass with distinction, pass, or fail. Students will **not** be allowed to rewrite parts of their exams in order to change a failing grade to a passing one. They will, however, be encouraged to retake the area exam the next semester (or another appropriate time).

FEEDBACK

After the committee renders its decision, the student will be notified of the results by e-mail. The student will then be asked to schedule a meeting with the committee chair to discuss both strengths and weaknesses of the students' performance. This meeting will be scheduled for all students, regardless of whether they pass or fail the exam. Other committee members may provide written feedback to each student, or they may set up a separate meeting to discuss the students' exam performance. This decision will be left at the discretion of faculty on the committee.