

Social Psychology

Module Code	PSU12060
Module Name	Social Psychology
ECTS credit weighting	5 ECTS
Semester taught	Semester 2
Module Coordinator/s	Prof. Frédérique Vallières
Module Learning Outcomes with embedded Graduate Attributes	<p>LO1. Critically compare and evaluate major theoretical perspectives, seminal studies, and core concepts in social psychology, including critical approaches that (re-)examine concepts of power, identity, social cognition, and social relations.</p> <p>LO2. Critically evaluate various research methodologies used in social psychology, including their epistemological assumptions, strengths, limitations, and ethical implications.</p> <p>LO3. Critically analyse how social, historical, cultural, and political contexts shape attitudes, identities, behaviours, and experiences across diverse social groups and settings.</p> <p>LO4. Critically evaluate social psychological explanations of social phenomena, including the role of social cognition, heuristics, biases, and meaning-making processes, and assess their explanatory power and limitations.</p> <p>LO5. Critically examine how intersecting social locations and systems of power (including social class, race, gender, culture, sexuality, and other structural inequalities) influence social behaviour, identity, and lived experience.</p> <p>LO6. Critically evaluate the potential and limitations of applying social psychological theory and evidence to address contemporary societal and global challenges (e.g., inequality, prejudice reduction, climate action, conflict transformation, and sustainable development).</p>
Module Content	<p>This module introduces students to key theories, concepts, and methods in social psychology through a critical and contemporary lens. Moving beyond individual-level explanations of behaviour, the module examines how attitudes, identities, perceptions, and social action are shaped by social, cultural, historical, and political contexts. Students engage with both mainstream and critical traditions in social psychology, exploring topics such as social cognition, heuristics and biases, intergroup relations (incl. intergroup conflict and improving intergroup relations), identity, power, discourse, inequality, prosocial behaviour, and intersectionality.</p>

The module develops students' ability to critically evaluate social psychological research and its underlying assumptions, including methodological and ethical considerations. Students will consider how social psychological knowledge can contribute to understanding and addressing contemporary societal and global challenges including, but not limited to, prejudice reduction, social inclusion, collective action, health, and sustainable development, while critically reflecting on the opportunities and limitations of applying psychological approaches to social change.

Through engagement with diverse empirical and theoretical perspectives, students will develop analytical, reflexive, and ethically informed approaches to understanding social behaviour and social life in local and global contexts.

Teaching and Learning Methods¹

Teaching strategies

The selected teaching approaches align with the module learning outcomes by moving students from knowledge acquisition towards analysis, evaluation, application, and reflexive critique. Lecture content supports foundational understanding of theoretical perspectives and research methods in social psychology (LO1–2), while structured discussion will develop students' ability to critically analyse social processes and evaluate competing explanations (LO3–6). Applied examples and contemporary case studies encourage students to consider the relevance and limitations of social psychology in addressing societal and global challenges (LO6).

Given that assessment is through a 100% examination, teaching activities are designed to support the forms of learning and demonstration required in unseen written assessment. In particular:

- lectures provide conceptual coverage;
- discussion and application activities develop argumentation and evaluation skills;
- formative exam-style tasks familiarise students with the structure, depth, and critical engagement expected in examination responses;
- guided reading develops students' ability to integrate evidence and construct coherent written arguments under assessment conditions.

This approach aligns with the anticipated balance of contact hours and independent study, where contact time focuses on introducing and interrogating core concepts, and independent study supports consolidation, reading, critical reflection, and exam preparation.

This module is aligned to Education for Sustainable Development themes by encouraging students to critically examine the relationship between individuals, societies, and systems of power and inequality. Relevant ESD themes include:

¹ [Trinity-INC](#) provides tips and resources on how to make your curriculum more inclusive.

- Social determinants of health and wellbeing
- Equity and social justice
- Global citizenship and improving intergroup relations
- Cultural diversity and inclusion
- Sustainable communities

These competencies are embedded through discussion, case analysis, critical engagement with research, and application to contemporary social and global issues rather than taught as standalone content.

Assessment design

Assessment is a **100% examination assessment**, which requires students to demonstrate breadth and integration of knowledge, knowledge of prominent theories in social psychology, critical evaluation of evidence, and the ability to construct coherent arguments under examination conditions. Teaching activities therefore prioritise exposure to diverse perspectives, repeated practice in critical analysis, and opportunities to synthesise material across topics rather than producing incremental assessed outputs.

Assessment Details²

Please include the following:

- Assessment Component
- Assessment description
- Learning Outcome(s) addressed
- % of total

It is recommended that module co-ordinators consider assessment types used across the year to ensure varied assessment methods.

Assessment Component	Assessment Description	LO Addressed	% of total
Examination	Students complete a 100% end-of-semester examination, answering two questions from a choice of six, with both questions carrying equal weighting. The examination assesses students' ability to demonstrate critical understanding and application of key social psychological concepts, theories, and evidence. Students will be expected to critically compare and evaluate social psychological perspectives; analyse	All	100

² <https://www.tcd.ie/academicpractice/resources/assessment/>

	<p>how social, cultural, historical, and political contexts shape attitudes, identities, perceptions, and behaviour; and evaluate the contribution and limitations of social psychological explanations of social phenomena.</p> <p>Students may be asked to evaluate the opportunities and limitations of applying social psychological theory and evidence to issues such as prejudice reduction, social inclusion, health, sustainability, inequality, conflict, and social change.</p>		
--	--	--	--

As this module is assessed through a 100% in-person, invigilated examination, the assessment format has been intentionally selected to reduce opportunities for inappropriate use of generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) and to ensure that students demonstrate their own understanding and critical thinking.

The examination is designed to assess higher-order cognitive skills aligned with the learning outcomes, including critical analysis, evaluation, synthesis of evidence, and application of social psychology theory to real-world events. Questions require students to construct arguments, engage with competing perspectives, reflect on their own assumptions, live with ambiguity and uncertainty, and apply knowledge to rather than reproduce module content material.

While students may choose to engage with GenAI tools as part of independent study (e.g., for brainstorming or explanation of concepts where permitted), responsibility for understanding, interpretation, and preparation for examination remains with the student.

Contact Hours and Indicative Student Workload³

Contact hours: 22 lectures
Independent Study (preparation for course and review of materials): 66 hours

³ https://www.tcd.ie/academicpractice/resources/assessment_workload/

Independent Study (preparation for assessment, incl. completion of assessment): 37 hours

Inclusive Curriculum

All modules should be inclusive for all students who learn differently. Please respond to the following questions (i.e. ensuring the course supports engagement and representation of all students)

	PLEASE TICK
1. Have you reviewed the teaching / assessment methods and materials for possible barriers to learning, e.g. students with English as a second language, disabilities, significant external responsibilities, students with IT issues / requiring specific accessibility software etc.?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
2. Have you adapted your resources and teaching materials taking into account Trinity's Accessible Information Guidelines (https://www.tcd.ie/disability/teaching-info/TIC/materials.php)?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
3. Does the content of your module address diversity? For example, including a diverse demographic profile of authors, diversity of ideas and perspectives, or representation (e.g. pictures of conditions on different skin tones), or by acknowledgement of the homogenous context of the discipline/topic?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<p>4. Highlight at least two ways which your course/module incorporates principles of inclusivity and accessibility into the curriculum design</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Multiple means of engagement and representation: <i>The module uses a range of teaching methods, including interactive lectures, real world case-based learning, and structured discussion of real-world applications of social psychology theory.</i> ● Support for diverse perspectives and critical reflection: <i>The curriculum explicitly engages with issues of inequality, culture, gender, conflict, disability, discrimination in social psychology. This ensures that diverse lived experiences are embedded within the content rather than treated as peripheral. Students are encouraged to critically reflect on positionality, assumptions in theory and practice.</i> 	

Indicative Reading List (approx. 4-5 titles)

- Gould S. J. (1978). Morton's ranking of races by cranial capacity. Unconscious manipulation of data may be a scientific norm. *Science (New York, N.Y.)*, 200(4341), 503–509. <https://doi.org/10.1126/science.347573>

- Haslam N, Loughnan S, Perry G (2014) Meta-Milgram: An Empirical Synthesis of the Obedience Experiments. PLOS ONE 9(4): e93927.
- Marmot, M. G., Smith, G. D., Stansfeld, S., Patel, C., North, F., Head, J., White, I., Brunner, E., & Feeney, A. (1991). Health inequalities among British civil servants: the Whitehall II study. *Lancet (London, England)*, 337(8754), 1387–1393. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0140-6736\(91\)93068-k](https://doi.org/10.1016/0140-6736(91)93068-k)
- Motz, RT, Barnes, JC, Caspi, A, et al. Does contact with the justice system deter or promote future delinquency? Results from a longitudinal study of British adolescent twins. *Criminology*. 2020; 58: 307– 335. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1745-9125.12236>
- Pettigrew, T. & Tropp, L. (2006). A Meta-Analytic Test of Intergroup Contact Theory. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 90, 5.
- Tajfel, H. and Turner, J., 1979. An Integrative Theory of Intergroup Conflict. In: W. Austin and S. Worchel, ed., *The Social Psychology of Intergroup Relations*.. Monterey, CA: Brookes-Cole.

Module Pre-requisite	None
Module Co-requisite	None
Are other Schools/Departments involved in the delivery of this module? If yes, please provide details.	None