

## Psychology 246: Self & Identity in Social Context

---

**Instructor:** Dr. Nicola Curtin

**Office:** 352 Jonas Clark Hall

**Office hours:** Wednesday 9am–10:30am, & by appointment. I look forward to seeing you during office hours. Please stop by!

**E-mail:** [NCurtin@clarku.edu](mailto:NCurtin@clarku.edu)

**Meeting time and place:** Tu: 2:50-5:50, JC 343

**Preferred pronouns:** She/her/hers

---

**Course Description & Objectives:** What makes us who we are—what is a Self? Is our Self comprised of memory, a set of cognitive functions, or our personality? What are the narratives we use to understand our lives in a social world? How is our Self translated into identities, and how do those identities operate in the larger social world? How are those identities shaped by those around us, and how much can or do they change?

The first objective of this course is for you to understand how psychologists study each of the above questions and others, as well as how they have attempted to answer them. We will do this through discussions and reflections on empirical and theoretical readings in psychology, as well as readings from related fields, excerpts from novels (both traditional and graphic), and other sources. The second objective of this course is for you to produce a scholarly zine (a kind of self-made magazine) or blog that explores questions related to self and identity, and for which you have polished and self-reflective answers, informed by psychological and related theory.

**What you should leave this course with:**

- (1) The ability to read academic texts and extract key concepts;
- (2) An understanding of selective but central concepts in defining self and identity;
- (3) The ability to apply these concepts to “real-world” examples, including your own life;
- (4) The ability to identify the advantages and disadvantages of different research methodologies and theoretical approaches that are used to clarify complicated and abstract ideas (i.e., understand what is gained from introspection, theory-building, observation, and experimentation);
- (5) An expertise in a specific domain of interest related to self and identity that will be documented in a scholarly zine or blog;
- (6) Improved scholarly writing skills;
- (7) Improved peer-review and feedback skills; and
- (8) The ability to clearly and persuasively express yourself (via a series of small video talks).

**Grading:**

You must complete all of the requirements in order to pass the course:

Attendance/Participation/Facilitation: 10%

Video Assignments: 20%

Zine/Blog Project: 50%

Peer Review Grade: 20%

**Required Readings: All readings will be available on Moodle**

## Psychology 246: Self & Identity in Social Context

### Course Requirements

**Attendance:** You should attend every class. I understand that extenuating circumstances arise, but please let me know before class if you cannot attend. All make-up assignments are at my discretion and require that you contact me within 24 hours of missing a class and provide documentation.

**Participation:** Please come prepared to engage fully and respectfully; having read, and reflected upon, the weekly readings. Participation includes attendance, thoughtful contributions to discussion (via oral participation), active listening, and some short, in-class, writing assignments. *Note:* I realize that some people feel less comfortable or confident speaking up in class. If this applies to you, please let me know in person or via email. We can always talk through your ideas during office hours and discuss strategies that may help you with verbal participation.

**Video Assignments:** You will complete 4 video assignments for this course. These assignments require you to create a series of short videos (between 3-5 minutes long), where you reflect on some aspect of self/identity, as it relates to both your own experience and the course readings. These reflections will be viewed by all seminar members, and discussed during our seminar time the week following the assignment. Please note that these are not simply reflections, you will need to have a central thesis, and I recommend focusing on no more than 3 or 4 key ideas you want to discuss since your time is so limited. Since the talk is on video, you will have the unique opportunity to evaluate your own performance and give your speech multiple times to refine it before deciding upon the version you want graded by me, and viewed by your peers. **This is an opportunity for you to practice speaking persuasively and professionally, as though you were giving a mini-lecture or talk to an audience.** These are not expected to be “professional” video quality—you can record them using a laptop or smart-phone camera. I will provide the means for you to create such a video, if you do not have it. You may be creative with the content (within the context of appropriately addressing the assignment topic), but recall that you will be evaluated in terms of how polished, convincing, and articulate your video is.

**Zine/Blog Project:** Each student will work on an individual zine or blog throughout the semester. You will hand in components of this throughout the semester for both peer review and my review. Based on feedback from both your peers and me, you will edit your blog/zine before handing in the final version. Your final grade will be a combination of my assessment of your work, as well as your peer reviews and self-assessment. You will create 10 “entries.” Five of your entries will be related to “personal reflections” (described below) and five will be related to a “social issue reflection” on a particular social issue or problem that you select (all 5 of these reflections must be on the same social issue). **Please note that although we do not always think of either zines or blogs as traditional academic outlets, you will be expected to write in a scholarly fashion. I will provide a handout describing this assignment in greater detail, along with some examples of zines and blogs. Note that your zine or blog will be a little different, in that you will have to CITE your sources, in APA format—but you can still be creative, in terms of your presentation and writing. It’s important to note that clarity of argument does not have to be lost in creativity of presentation, nor vice versa. A summary of the assignment is provided here.**

## Psychology 246: Self & Identity in Social Context

**Personal reflection part of zine:** Each entry will consist of two components: The first component is a collage, poem, photo, image, etc. that you have found or created, that “speaks to you” about psychological self or identity in some way (does not have to be your own personal identity). The second component is an explanation of that image/poem, etc. using course readings and concepts. That is, you create or find a piece/image of media, art, nature, or anything else you want, that makes you think about the self or identity, and then you analyze it using concepts from the course. Each reflection must be between 500-600 words long (this is ~ 2 pages of a word-document, double spaced and **does not include the poem, image, etc.**). You will create 5 such entries.

**Social issue reflection part of zine:** Each entry will consist of a discussion of a particular social issue or problem, and the role self/identity plays in that problem. The 1<sup>st</sup> entry will be a description of the issue, the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> entries will be an analysis of the issue (can be from two different view-points, or can simply be two related entries; how do psychologists understand it, using self/identity in some way); the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> entries will be possible solutions to the issue/problem, via some intervention aimed at identity. This part of the assignment requires you to find and use at least **3 outside sources from peer-reviewed journals related to the issue (these sources must be approved by me in advance)**. You must use outside sources for at least 3 of the 5 entries. Each entry should be between 500-700 words long (this is ~ 2-2.5 pages, double spaced).

Some examples of social issues: war; genocide/mass violence; discrimination (educational or workplace, or any other domain of interest); interpersonal violence; bullying; inequality in a particular domain (under-representation of certain groups in the sciences, for example); people’s support/lack of support for particular social policies; family dynamics; community engagement or activism; any of the “-isms”; how to best facilitate healthy identity development in a particular domain; or any other issue that you feel passionately about and want to consider from an identity perspective.

**Peer Review Grade:** This course requires you to be an active participant in several different ways. In addition to coming to class having completed the readings, and ready to be engaged in discussion, you will be asked to provide in-depth (1/2 page - 1 page) peer-analysis of each other’s work throughout the semester. Your reviews will be given to both me and the person whose project you are reviewing. I will give each person a grade on the quality (e.g., content, clarity, depth of engagement) of the peer reviews they write throughout the semester. I will give you specific guidelines for the peer reviews.

**Reading:** This is a challenging course and, as such, the reading will be heavy. You are expected to complete all of the required reading for each week. Often, there will be optional readings (indicated by double asterisks \*\*). These are readings that: (1) you are not required to do, as I will cover the important “take home” points in sufficient detail during class (though of course you are encouraged to read them if you have the time/inclination), or (2) I won’t cover in class, but that may be of interest or useful for you in the final paper. All of these readings will be Moodle, in the “Supplemental Readings” folder.

## Psychology 246: Self & Identity in Social Context

### Course Policies

#### Assignment Submission Policy

1. **Special circumstances:** Please contact me by email within the first two weeks of class if you have any special circumstances that might affect your attendance, participation and/or comfort in class. These may include (but are not limited to) having a certified disability, involvement in upcoming religious observances, or speaking English as a second language. If you are especially uncomfortable with participating verbally, we can make alternative arrangements for your participation. Please note that you will still be expected to come to class and pay attention.

**Classroom Civility:** As people studying psychology, we should have a deep understanding of, and appreciation for the fact that social situations and the people around us matter! Your behavior in class affects me, you, and your fellow classmates (and vice versa). Therefore, please:

1. Put your cell phone on silent or turn it off.
2. Do not surf the internet or text during class
3. Respect each other's comments even if you disagree with each other's opinions; challenge the idea and the evidence presented to support it, not the person.
4. Remember: we all have conscious *and unconscious* beliefs, biases, and values. These shape how we react to and interpret the readings, course content, and each other. Please voice your ideas, reactions, and opinions, and be respectful of others' differences.

**Individual Circumstances:** Please contact me by email within the first two weeks of class if you have any circumstances that might affect your attendance, participation, and/or comfort in class. These may include (but are not limited to) having a certified/documented disability, involvement in upcoming religious observances, or involvement in school-related sports or extra-curricular activities. If you suspect you have a disability, or want to know more about Clark's policy on disabilities, please see: <http://www.clarku.edu/offices/aac/ada/>

**Academic Honesty & Plagiarism:** All work on exams, and individual projects must be your own, completed individually and for this course alone. Plagiarism is representing someone else's ideas, words, statements, or work as one's own without proper acknowledgment or citation. If you are ever unsure, please ask. Plagiarism is sometimes confusing, so don't be embarrassed to ask. I am a resource who is happy to provide clarification if you don't know. If you violate this policy, your name will be forwarded to the Office of Academic Affairs, and appropriate sanctions will apply. **If you find yourself even considering cheating, see it as a sign that you need assistance learning the course material and come see me.** For information on academic integrity, please visit: <http://www.clarku.edu/offices/aac/integrity.cfm>

#### Finally:

I look forward to working with you this semester, and I welcome your feedback! Never hesitate to ask questions. Please contact me if you require special accommodations due to religious practices, documented learning disabilities, physical requirements, medical needs, and so on.

## Psychology 246: Self & Identity in Social Context

### READING LIST

**\*\*Additional Readings- Available on Moodle- but not required**

August 27<sup>th</sup>

**Week 1: Introduction to course**

September 3<sup>rd</sup>

**Week 2: Conceptualizing the Self and Identity**

Goffman, E. (1959). Introduction to the presentation of the self in everyday life (pp. 14-27). Anchor Day: New York.

Leary, M.R. (2004). What is the self? A plea for clarity. *Self and Identity*, 3, 1-3.

Swann, W. B., & Bosson, J. K. (2010). Self and identity. *Handbook of social psychology*.

**NOTE: This is LONG chapter (40 pages) so give yourself time to read it thoroughly.**

***Video Assignment # 1: Who am I? Due Friday, September 6<sup>th</sup>, 5PM.***

**Using concepts from the readings and discussion this week, reflect on your own self and identity. Remember, this should NOT be stream-of-consciousness, use specific concepts and discuss your own sense of self in light of those concepts. The quality of the video need not be professional, but the quality of your thinking and articulation should be. Please recall that the entire class will have access to these videos, so do not disclose any information you are not comfortable sharing with your peers.**

**\*\*\*\*\*Additional (Non-required) Readings \*\*\*\*\***

\*\* Burkitt, I. (2011). Identity construction in sociohistorical context. In *Handbook of identity theory and research* (pp. 267-283). Springer New York.

\*\*Leary, M. R., & Tangney, J. P. (2003). The self as an organizing construct in the behavioral and social sciences. In M. R. Leary & J. P. Tangney (Eds.), *Handbook of self and identity* (pp. 3-14). New York: Guilford.

\*\*Vignoles, V. L., Schwartz, S. J., & Luyckx, K. (2011). Introduction: Toward an integrative view of identity. In *Handbook of identity theory and research*

September 10<sup>th</sup>

**Week 3: Self and Society**

Bronfenbrenner, U. (1977). Toward an experimental ecology of human development. *American psychologist*, 32(7), 513-531. **In this reading, pay closest attention to Brofenbrenner's definitions of microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, and macrosystems.**

## Psychology 246: Self & Identity in Social Context

Solomon, A. (2012). *Son*. Excerpt from: Far from the tree: Parents, children, and the search for identity (pp. 1-48).

**In Class:** Watch selections from 7-Up, a British documentary that followed 14 boys and girls across class strata, every 7 years. (pp. 1-27). Springer New York.

**START LOOKING FOR ARTICLES FOR THE SOCIAL ISSUE BLOG ENTRIES- REMEMBER- ALL ARTICLES HAVE TO BE APPROVED BY ME.**

### \*\*\*\*\*Additional Readings\*\*\*\*\*

\*\* Hochschild, A. R. (1979). Emotion work, feeling rules, and social structure. *American Journal of Sociology*, 551-575.

\*\*Felson, R.B. (1989). Parents and the reflected appraisal process: A longitudinal analysis. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 56, 965-971.

\*\*Markus, H.R., & Kitayama, S. (1991). Culture and the self: Implications for cognition, emotion, and motivation. *Psychological Review*, 98, 224-253.

\*\*Morgan, D. L. & Schwalbe, M. L. (1990). Mind and self in society: Linking social structure and social cognition. *Social Psychology Quarterly*, 53, 148-164.

**September 17<sup>th</sup>**

### **Week 4: Narratives and Identity Construction**

Bamberg, M., De Fina, A., & Schiffrin, D. (2011). Discourse and identity construction. In *Handbook of identity theory and research* (pp. 177-199). Springer New York.

McAdams, D.P. (2001). The psychology of life stories. *Review of General Psychology*, 5, 100-122.

### \*\*\*\*\*Additional Readings\*\*\*\*\*

Bruner, J. (2002). The Narrative Construction of Self. *Making Stories: Law, Literature, Life*. Chapter 3, 63-88.

**Zine/Blog Personal Entry # 1 DUE IN CLASS**  
**Bring two copies of your first personal entry for your blog/zine. You will hand one copy into me, and give one copy to your peer editing partner.**

**Video Assignment # 2: Reflection on 7-Up Due Friday, September 20<sup>th</sup>, 5PM.**

## Psychology 246: Self & Identity in Social Context

September 24<sup>th</sup>

### Week 5: Social Identification

Hogg, M. A. (2003). Social identity. In M. R. Leary and J. P. Tangney (Eds.) *Handbook of Self and Identity*, Guilford Press, NY, 462-479.

Brewer, M. B. (1991) The social self: On being the same and different at the same time. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 17, 475-482.

**Zine/Blog Personal Entry # 1 PEER REVIEW DUE IN CLASS**  
**Bring in 2 copies (one for me and one for your partner) of your ½ to 1 page review of your partner's 1<sup>st</sup> "personal" blog entry.**

\*\*\*\*\*Additional Readings\*\*\*\*\*

\*\* Ashmore, R. D., Deaux, K., & McLaughlin-Volpe, T. (2004). An organizing framework for collective identity: Articulation and significance of multidimensionality. *Psychological Bulletin*, 130(1), 80-114.

October 1<sup>st</sup>

### Week 6: Gender Identity Development

Bussey, K. (2011). Gender identity development. In *Handbook of identity theory and research* (pp. 603-628). Springer New York.

Diamond, L. M., Pardo, S. T., & Butterworth, M. R. (2011). Transgender experience and identity. In *Handbook of identity theory and research* (pp. 629-647). Springer New York.

\*\*\*\*\*Additional Readings\*\*\*\*\*

\*\*Addis, M. E., Mansfield, A. K., & Syzdek, M. R. (2010). Is "masculinity" a problem?: Framing the effects of gendered social learning in men. *Psychology of Men & Masculinity*, 11(2), 77 - 90.

\*\* Page, A. D., & Peacock, J. R. (2013). Negotiating Identities in a Heteronormative Context. *Journal of Homosexuality*, 60(4), 639-654.

\*\*Bussey, K., & Bandura, A. (1999). Social cognitive theory of gender development and differentiation. *Psychological review*, 106(4), 676 - 713.

**Zine/Blog SOCIAL ISSUE Entry # 1 DUE IN CLASS**  
**Bring two copies of your first social issue (description of the issue) entry for your blog/zine. You will hand one copy into me, and give one copy to your peer editing partner.**

## Psychology 246: Self & Identity in Social Context

October 8<sup>th</sup>

### Week 7: Race and Ethnic Identity Development

Phinney, J. S. (1990). Ethnic identity in adolescents and adults: Review of research. *Psychological bulletin*, 108(3), 499.

Rowe, W., Bennett, S. K., & Atkinson, D. R. (1994). White Racial Identity Models A Critique and Alternative Proposal. *The Counseling Psychologist*, 22(1), 129-146.

**Zine/Blog SOCIAL ISSUE Entry # 1 PEER REVIEW DUE IN CLASS**  
**Bring in 2 copies (one for me and one for your partner) of your ½ to 1 page review of your partner's 1<sup>st</sup> "social issue" blog entry.**

\*\*\*\*\*Additional Readings\*\*\*\*\*

\*\*Helms, J. E. (1997). Toward a model of white racial identity development. *College student development and academic life: Psychological, intellectual, social and moral issues*, 207-224.

\* \*Sellers, R. M., Smith, M. A., Shelton, J. N., Rowley, S. A., & Chavous, T. M. (1998). Multidimensional model of racial identity: A reconceptualization of African American racial identity. *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, 2(1), 18-39.

\*\* Vandiver, B. J. (2001). Psychological nigrescence revisited: Introduction and overview. *Journal of Multicultural Counseling and Development*, 29(3), 165-173.

October 15<sup>th</sup>

### Week 8: NO CLASS

October 22<sup>nd</sup>

### Week 9: Sexuality and Sexual Orientation

Diamond, L. M., Butterworth, M. R., & Allen, K. (2012). Sexual-minority development in the family context. *Adolescence and Beyond: Family Processes and Development*, 249-268.

Konik, J. & Stewart, A. (2004). sexual identity development in the context of compulsory heterosexuality. *Journal of Personality*, 72(4), 815-844.

Worthington, R. L., Savoy, H. B., Dillon, F. R., & Vernaglia, E. R. (2002). Heterosexual identity development: A multidimensional model of individual and social identity. *The Counseling Psychologist*, 30(4), 496-531.

\*\*\*\*\*Additional Readings\*\*\*\*\*

\*\* Savin-Williams, R. C., & Diamond, L. M. (2000). Sexual identity trajectories among sexual-minority youths: Gender comparisons. *Archives of sexual behavior*, 29(6), 607-627.

**Zine/Blog SOCIAL ISSUE Entry # 2 DUE IN CLASS**



## Psychology 246: Self & Identity in Social Context

**Bring two copies of your 2nd social issue (an analysis of the issue) entry for your blog/zine. You will hand one copy into me, and give one copy to your peer editing partner.**

**October 29<sup>th</sup>**

### **Week 10: Post-Modern Theories of Identity**

Martin, J., & Sugarman, J. (2000). Between the modern and the postmodern: The possibility of self and progressive understanding in psychology. *American Psychologist*, 55, 397-406.

Gergen, K. J. (1991). *The saturated self: Dilemmas of identity in contemporary life* (pp. 48-80, "Social saturation and the populated self"). New York: Basic Books.

McAdams, D. P. (1997). The case for unity in the (post)modern self: A modest proposal. In R. D. Ashmore & L. Jussim (Eds.), *Self and identity: Fundamental issues* (pp. 46-78). New York: Oxford University Press.

**Zine/Blog Social Issue Entry # 2 PEER REVIEW DUE IN CLASS**  
**Bring in 2 copies (one for me and one for your partner) of your ½ to 1 page review of your partner's 2<sup>nd</sup> "social issue" blog entry.**

**Video Assignment # 3: Reflection: What has been most interesting to you thus far in the semester? What do you want to talk about?**  
**Due Friday, November 1<sup>st</sup>, 5PM.**

**November 5<sup>th</sup>**

### **Week 11: Identity Performance**

Klein, O., Spears, R., & Reicher, S. (2007). Social identity performance. *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, 11, 1-18.

#### **\*\*\*\*\*Additional Readings\*\*\*\*\***

\*\*Rogers, C. (1961). To be that self which one truly is. In *On Becoming A Person*. London: Constable.

**November 12<sup>th</sup>**

### **Week 12: Identity Complexity**

Roccas, S., & Brewer, M.B. (2002). Social identity complexity. *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, 6, 88-106.

Morton, T.A., & Postmes, T. (2009). When differences become essential: Minority essentialism in response to majority treatment. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 35, 656-668.

Chua, A. (2011). Why Chinese mothers are superior. *Wall Street Journal* (book excerpt).

## Psychology 246: Self & Identity in Social Context

**Zine/Blog SOCIAL ISSUE Entry # 4 DUE IN CLASS**  
**Bring two copies of your 4<sup>th</sup> (yes, the 4<sup>th</sup>, not the 3<sup>rd</sup>) social issue (possible solutions to the issue) entry for your blog/zine. You will hand one copy into me, and give one copy to your peer editing partner.**

### November 19<sup>th</sup> Week 13: Self-Concept

Sedlovskaya, A., et al. Concealable stigma and the distinction between public and private selves: Implications for psychological well-being. Manuscript submitted for publication.

Townsend, S.S.M., et al. (2009). My choice, your categories: The denial of multiracial identities. *Journal of Social Issues*, 65, 185-204.

**Zine/Blog Social Issue Entry # 4 PEER REVIEW DUE IN CLASS**  
**Bring in 2 copies (one for me and one for your partner) of your ½ to 1 page review of your partner's 4<sup>th</sup> "social issue" blog entry.**

### November 26<sup>th</sup> Week 14: Self-Esteem

Leary, M.R., et al. (1995). Self-esteem as an interpersonal monitor: The sociometer hypothesis. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 68, 518-530.

*Excerpts from* Tesser, A. (1988). Toward a self-evaluation maintenance model of social behavior. *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology*, 21, 181-227.

Swann, W.B. (1987). Identity negotiation: Where two roads meet. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 53, 1038-1051.

Crocker, J., & Major, M. (1989). Social stigma and self-esteem: The self-protective properties of stigma. *Psychological Review*, 96, 608-630.

### December 3<sup>rd</sup> Week 15: Identity Threat

Steele, C.M. (1997). A threat in the air: How stereotypes shape intellectual identity and performance. *American Psychologist*, 52, 613-629.

Jost, J., et al. (2001). Conflicts of legitimation among self, group, and system: The integrative potential of system justification theory. In Jost & Major (Eds.), *The Psychology of Legitimacy: Emerging Perspectives on Ideology, Justice, and Intergroup Relations*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Stone (2002), Battling doubt by avoiding practice: The effects of stereotype threat on selfhandicapping in white athletes. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 28, 1667-1678.

**Psychology 246: Self & Identity in Social Context**

***Video Assignment # 4: Reflection: What are 1 or 2 new things about the self or identity (your own or others) that you have learned in this class?***

**Due Friday, December 6<sup>th</sup>, 5PM.**

***Final Zine/Blog Project Portfolio Due December 11<sup>th</sup> at noon. HARD COPY  
Outside Dr. Curtin's Door.***