The Social Psychology Specialty Exam:
Reading List and Instructions for Preparing
Sociology Department, University of Maryland, College Park

Fall 2013

This information is provided for PhD students in the Sociology Department at the University of Maryland, College Park, who are preparing to take the Department's specialty exam in Social Psychology. For more information, see the description of the Social Psychology Specialty Area or contact any member of the Sociology Department Social Psychology faculty: Jeff Lucas, Melissa Milkie, Stanley Presser, Rashawn Ray, and John Robinson.

Definition of the Area. Our department describes the specialty area of Social Psychology as follows: “Within the discipline of Sociology, Social Psychology refers to theory and research that take the individual, small group, or interpersonal relationship as the unit of analysis.” Essentially, any topic can be studied with a social psychological lens; examining the micro-level aspects of say, family or the military.


Required Courses. We offer seven graduate level courses in Social Psychology. One of these, SOCY 660, Theories of Social Psychology, must be taken by all students taking the Social Psychology exam. In addition, students must take at least two of the following:

SOCY 632 Personality and Social Structure
SOCY 634 Attitudes and Public Opinion
SOCY 642 Sociology of Mental Health
SOCY 645 Sociology of the Self Concept
SOCY 647 Group Processes
SOCY 624 Lives and Times: Socialization Across the Life Course
SOCY 719 Advanced Special Topics in Social Psychology (Offered occasionally and needs committee approval)

Two graduate level methods courses are particularly recommended for students specializing in Social Psychology:
SOCY 604 Survey Methods
SOCY 702 Research Design and Measurement
Purpose of the Specialty Exam. The purpose of the exam is to give students the opportunity to review, extend, and integrate their reading in the field of social psychology, and to do additional reading that will contribute to their own research and/or teaching expertise.

All students must read all the materials in section I. For sections IIA -IIF, choose two research areas; these must be approved by the committee. In these research subareas, students should have sufficient knowledge to design and carry out original research, referee manuscripts by other researchers, or teach a graduate course covering this topic. To work toward this level of expertise, students must read extensively in current books and journals.

The Format of the Exam. The sociology department’s PhD exams are open-book take home exams, with 48 hours allowed for writing the exam. Typical page length for an exam answer is about 20-25 double spaced pages, not including any additional references you’ve added. You may turn in up to a maximum of 100 double spaced pages not including bibliography and references. The exam normally consists of three questions. Section I is Theory (which includes defining the field and a general overview of methods). Section II is Research, which requires answering two questions related to current research. There is some choice of questions provided in each section. The kinds of questions for the Theory section are similar across exam years, but attempts are made to tailor the Research subarea questions to the examinees’ particular areas of expertise. The Research questions will often have a methodological subcomponent to the question, so that the student can demonstrate a level of expertise on reviewing methodological issues in empirical papers, and/or in framing research within their specialty area.

References should be in ASR format.

Preparing for the Exam. First, take at least three graduate level Sociology courses in Social Psychology, including SOCY 660. At least six months before you plan to take the exam, consult the chair of the current Social Psychology exam committee or coordinator of the area and get a copy of the current reading list from the website.

Preparing to cite research. You can anticipate that some exam questions will ask you to “cite research.” This normally means that you should be prepared to mention, describe, and provide references to at least a dozen publications on the topic. You should be able to describe the theoretical significance of a body of work, how the research has grown and developed, and how it fits with or contrasts with other research. You should also be able to describe samples, design, variables, hypotheses, conclusions for key pieces of research.

Preparing to discuss theory, concepts, and methods. It is important to give specific definitions of key concepts and to explain theoretical assumptions or methodological procedures. A citation to a publication in which definitions or explanations are given is not sufficient.

Preparing to answer the questions asked. Be very sure you read the questions on the exam and provide answers to the questions asked, not some other related question. If the question gives a specific kind of assignment (analyze, compare and contrast, speculate, apply) be sure you do that. You may wish to use outlines and/or introductory and concluding summaries to make sure you have covered what the questions ask.
How interdisciplinary? Social psychology is and has always been an interdisciplinary field. However, you are getting a degree in sociology, so you need to be able to approach your material sociologically even if you are using research and theory from psychology or other fields. All students should know something about the early work in social psychology by psychologists such as Asch, Lewin, Heider, Festinger, Allport and Hovland. In recent decades, the two disciplines of sociology and psychology have diverged. For more recent work, the specific material you will need to know from psychology will depend on the areas of research you are developing (for example, if you are working on mental health, you need to know something about the DSM-IV, while if you are working on group processes you need to know something about group decision making). The most recent edition of the *Handbook of Social Psychology* (the Psychological version, edited by Gilbert, Fiske and Lindzey—not the one edited by Delameter) referred to below is a good source for current psychological social psychology work.

Avoiding plagiarism. Since the exam is open-book, open-note, it is important that you be scrupulous in avoiding plagiarism. *Any material you include in your answers to this exam that was not written by you alone during the 48 hours of the exam must be enclosed in quotation marks and have appropriate citations.* This includes appropriate citations to and quotes around published material, but also includes unpublished material previously written by you or anyone else (e.g., term papers, research proposals and reviews). For example, if you think a paragraph from a term paper you wrote is relevant to your answer, you may use it but be sure you include it in quotes and give a reference to the paper. This applies to anything you may have prepared and stored in a computer file as you prepared for this exam. Also, you must not consult in any way with any other person about your exam at any time during the 48 hours. (If you have a question relating to the format of the exam, bring that question to the Director of Graduate Studies). In case of any conflict between these instructions and those sent out by the Graduate Office, the Graduate Office has precedence. However, if you notice an apparent contradiction please bring it to our attention.

FAQs about the List. 1. Is everything I need to read on this list? The social psychology faculty create the list, and update it regularly. You should read recent top journals for very new useful additions to the literature that can aid in your study. For your two Section II research subareas, you may, but are not required to, add any recent or compelling articles or books that are specifically tied to your interests. 2. Can I create a Section II research subarea not listed? Yes, but the committee must approve it in advance. 3. Where do the references come from? The items on this list are *not* taken from course syllabi alone. If you have taken one of the courses, you will have read some of the references or their equivalents already. But there are other important works on the lists that are typically not part of a class syllabus.
Introduction to the Reading list:
The following are great references, but should not constitute the bulk of your analysis, thinking, or writing. In other words, these are overviews and syntheses that other authors have created, and you may benefit from reading them. However, you are expected to do your own reading, thinking and analyzing from the classic and contemporary original materials cited elsewhere on the list.


Additional good sources for reviews and references to original research articles, include: the *Annual Review of Sociology* (especially recent volumes). See also recent issues of *Social Psychology Quarterly, Society and Mental Health, American Journal of Sociology, American Sociological Review, Journal of Health and Social Behavior, Personality and Social Psychology, Social Forces*, etc.

Google Scholar and similar search engines are useful tools to explore the development of classical articles in the field. Based on the scholars who cite the classic article, you are able to see the progression of the subject over time.
Section I. THEORY (Includes THE FIELD OF SSP, THEORY, and METHODS (ALL readings from A-E are required for all students)

see also the most recent syllabi for SOCY 660 and special editions of journals such as the 2011 50th Anniversary edition of British Journal of Social Psychology (vol. 50), and the 2010 special edition of Social Psychology Quarterly (vol. 73) on “Bridging Social Psychologies.”

A. The nature and history of the field of sociological social psychology, relationship to other areas in sociology and to psychology


**B. Theory: Symbolic Interaction and Role Perspectives**


C. Theory: Group Process Theories


**D. Theory: Social Structure and Personality Perspectives**


Wheaton, Blair. 2001. “The Role of Sociology in the Study of Mental Health...and the Role of Mental Health in the Study of Sociology.” *Journal of Health and Social Behavior* 42:221-34.

**E. Methods**


Section II SPECIALITY AREAS: Choose TWO (from IIA, B, C, D, and E).

IIA. ATTITUDES AND PUBLIC OPINION

Most of these references are from the latest syllabus. However, it is your responsibility to be certain that a more recent syllabus with additional citations is reflected here (see SOCY 634 and methodology references, especially to sampling and measurement).

References:


IIB. MENTAL HEALTH

see also most recent syllabus for SOCY 642

References:


255:946-952.

Eckenrode, J., & S. Gore. 1990. “Stress and Coping at the Boundary of Work and Family.” Ch 1-
16 In *Stress Between Work and Family*, edited by J. Eckenrode and S. Gore. New York:  
Plenum.

George, Linda K and Scott M. Lynch. 2003. “Race Differences in Depressive Symptoms: A  
Dynamic Perspective on Stress Exposure and Vulnerability.” *Journal of Health & Social  
Behavior* 44:353-369.


Hagan, John and Holly Foster. 2003. “S/He's a Rebel: Toward a Sequential Stress Theory of  
Delinquency and Gendered Pathways to Disadvantage in Emerging Adulthood.” *Social Forces*  
82:53-86.

and Coping: A Panel Study of Autoworkers.” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*  

Vulnerable People: Initial Effects of Plant Closing on Autoworkers' Mental Health.” *Journal of  
Health and Social Behavior* 31:123-140.

Forces* 79:969-1004.


Holzer, Charles E., Brent Shea, Jeffrey Swanson, Phillip Leaf, J Myers, L George, M Weissman,  
and P Bednarinski. 1986. “The increased risk for specific psychiatric disorders among persons of  


Horwitz, Allan V. 2002. “Outcomes in the Sociology of Mental Health and Illness: Where Have  
We Been and Where are We Going?” *The Journal of Health and Social Behavior* 43:143-51.

of Partner Relationships Affect the Mental Health of Young Married People.” *Journal of Health  
and Social Behavior* 39:124-36.


Wheaton, Blair. 2001. “The Role of Sociology in the Study of Mental Health...and the Role of Mental Health in the Study of Sociology.” *Journal of Health and Social Behavior* 42:221-34.


II.C. SELF CONCEPT

see also most recent syllabus for SOCY 645

References:


27


IID. GROUP PROCESSES

See also most recent syllabus for SOCY 647

References:


II. THE LIFE COURSE

See also most recent syllabus for SOCY624


