

Feeling in a Social World: Integrating Affective Science and Relationship Science

PSYC3665 Fall 2026

Tuesdays 4:10-6pm, Schermerhorn 200C

Essential Course Information

Instructor information:

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Office: Schermerhorn 324

Drop-in hours: TBD (or by appointment)

Course Description:

What is emotion regulation? What does it have to do with the social world? This course dives into the intimate links between our social relationships and emotional lives that unfold over time. We will draw from empirical and theoretical readings from a range of disciplines, primarily affective science and relationship science. This class will encourage students to lean into their personal experiences to identify consequential phenomena, and be rigorous about operationalizing them using quantitative methodologies. At the end of the course, students will be equipped with a researcher's mindset: a perceptive eye for observing relationships and emotions, a bold spirit for cross-pollinating ideas across subfields, an informed reviewer of study methodologies, and a clear science communicator of our profound interdependence with one another.

Learning Objectives:

- **Identify** consequential social-emotional phenomena to study
- **Describe** theories and findings from affective science and relationship science
- **Critique** study methodologies common in affective science and relationship science
- **Generate** an original answer to the question: what is the relationship between emotion, emotion regulation and the social world?
- Have epiphanies!

Role in the Psychology Curriculum:

This course fulfills the following requirements of the following programs:

- Psychology Majors & Post-Bacs: Seminar requirement or Group 3 requirement

Learning Philosophy

'Nothing is a mistake. There's no win and no fail. There is only make.' - *John Cage*

A class is a process, an independent organism with its own goals and dynamics. It is always something more than even the most imaginative lesson plan can predict. ~ *Thomas P. Kasulis*

Assessment

Course component	Points	Deadline
Pre-course survey	5	Sep 15

Attendance & Participation	15	-
Reading Log	25	Tuesday 12pm before class
Student Presentation	25	-
Mid-course Reflection	5	Nov 3
In-class Thought Paper	25	-

Pre-course Survey

Here, I will ask you about your goals for the class, how I can best support your learning and your understanding of how this course works.

Attendance & Participation

Attendance is mandatory. Everyone gets 2 free passes for missing class, no questions asked, but you do need to email me beforehand. Further absences need to be documented to be excused. Please reach out to me proactively to decide on a plan to make up the materials missed.

During class discussions, be respectful and kind to your peers. Listen actively when others are speaking. Let someone else speak if you have shared your thoughts a few times already in a class period.

Examples of participation/Some goals to work towards:

Ask questions that occur to you even if you think it's "stupid." Respond to what others have said and build a conversation. Address your comments to your peers and maintain eye contact with them. Whenever possible, cite specific evidence to back up what you're saying.

Listen actively to class discussion and try to capture the main points. Revisit the notes after class to fill in any gaps and make copy edits. Organize the notes visually, with a diagram or color codes to help classmates who are visual learners. Include photos of the

boardwork, posters, and other artifacts produced in class. Write a conclusion paragraph at the end, stating what the class has learned and further questions to investigate.

If you didn't speak up during class or have further thoughts to share, you can write a post-class reflection at the end of the shared class notes. You can take note of something that felt new and surprising to you in class, lingering questions, or link a news article and tell us how it relates to the work in our class, etc.

Reading log

You will be required to keep a reading log to record your thoughts while completing your readings. The reading log will exist in a Google document that can be viewed by the rest of the class, as well as by me. You should structure the reading log according to the provided template (*hyperlink to be posted*) as a starting point. For each week's readings, I will provide you with guiding questions that you will use to structure your thoughts. You can find these guiding questions in the Appendix (*hyperlink to be posted*). I will check the reading log each week for completion, timeliness and thoughtfulness of comments.

Think of the reading log as a weekly practice that builds up your annotated bibliography for the final [in-class thought paper](#).

Student Presentation

Each student will briefly present a chosen empirical paper during one class period. Your job as presenter is to be our "resident expert" on the topic for this week, so while you can assume everyone has read the paper, your presentation should help to clarify any particularly tricky methods or results from the studies, and address any questions that your fellow students have. I'll be there to help you with this both as you prepare your presentation and during class, so ask as many questions as you need, and feel free to send me drafts of your slides.

Mid-course Reflection

Halfway through the course, I will ask you to reflect on how you think you are doing in the course. What might you continue doing, and what might you do differently? Do you want to revise the goals you set for yourself at the beginning of the semester? Why? This reflection is graded on completion.

In-class Thought Paper

This two-hour, in-person exam is replacing the traditional 10-page paper that is often submitted as part of seminars. The thought paper will cover the full arc of the course (Weeks 1–13) and will be handwritten. You will demonstrate your ability to connect theories and methods about emotion, emotion regulation and social relationships. The exam will include:

- **One longer integrative essay** (chosen from multiple prompts) that ask you to bring together theories and evidence on topics such as social emotion regulation, self-in-relation-to-others representations, development, and dyadic effects.
- **One experimental design question** where you will propose a study testing a hypothesis about emotion, emotion regulation and social relationships.
- **One shorter creative essay** asking you to explain a core concept (e.g., emotion, attachment, emotion regulation) to a lay audience or apply theories to real-world social-emotional challenges.

While this may sound intimidating, you will have the preparation and resources you need to tackle this (see [Reading Log](#)). I will also be available for consultations. You may bring a 2-page, singled spaced annotated bibliography to the final exam (0.5 inch margins, 10 point Arial font). All other materials are closed-book. Grading will emphasize quality of argument, integration across readings, clarity of writing, and originality.

General Lesson Plan

4:10-4:50pm: Overview + Insight Labs*

4:50-5pm: Break

5pm-6pm: Presentations and Discussion

Insight Labs are a sandbox for active learning. I will offer exercises (both individual and small-group based) that will help us engage deeply with the material. Examples include: reading aloud an excerpt of the week's readings, answering questions that connect this week's readings to past readings, revising AI-generated summaries of the readings, and having small group discussions about limitations of the existing papers. Each week's insight lab may look different, but the goal is to try varied modalities to understand the topic in order to reveal what we know and don't yet know. Graded on completion.

Course Schedule

Week	Topic	Readings
Sep 8	Overview + Sign up for presentations	<i>to be updated</i>
Sep 15	What is an emotion?	
Sep 22	What is emotion regulation?	
Sep 29	Can emotion generation and emotion regulation be distinguished?	
Oct 6	Social emotion regulation	
Oct 13	Motivated emotion regulation	
Oct 20	Attachment	
Oct 27	Emotion regulation and mental health	
Nov 3	Fall Break	
Nov 10	Relationship Science	
Nov 17	Methods for studying dyadic processes	
Nov 24	Me, you and we-ness	
Dec 1	Interpersonal processes	
Dec 8	In-class Thought Paper	

Policies

Academic Integrity

Academic honesty includes presenting only your own work in exams and assignments, and correctly attributing others' ideas where appropriate. Taking credit for work that is not your own is a serious violation within the academic community, and anyone found to be cheating or plagiarizing in this class will be reported to the university. Detailed definitions and examples of academic dishonesty (and a rundown of the consequences) are available in Columbia's Guide to Academic Integrity (<http://www.college.columbia.edu/academics/integrity>).

Course Policy on AI. Generative AI tools like ChatGPT, Claude, and Gemini can do a lot of heavy lifting in academic contexts. Such tools aren't inherently good or bad—it's all up to how you use them. To visualize our course policy, imagine AI as something like an e-bike: the electric motor removes most of the effort that would have been required of the cyclist in order to get them to their destination. If the goal is to get somewhere with the least exertion (and sweat) possible, then the e-bike is a godsend. But if part of the goal in cycling was for the rider to get some exercise and build physical strength or endurance, then the e-bike works against those purposes. A recent study out of MIT supports this idea – researchers found that students using LLM-assisted essay writing (i.e., ChatGPT) engaged their cortical brain circuitry less than those using search engine-assisted (i.e., Google) and brain-only essay writing.

To dismount from this tortured metaphor: the purpose of this seminar is not primarily to teach you content (get you to some destination); our main goals are to give you experience in thinking critically, examining and critiquing past research and theories, and expressing your own ideas both orally and in writing. So: to the extent that AI can help you understand material, it can be useful—e.g., asking it to explain some of the statistical procedures or experimental design details in a paper you're reading. And if you find AI useful in helping to format or polish your presentations, that's fine too.

Ultimately, the ideas and words you share in class and in your written work for this course must all be either your own, or properly attributed to their source. In reading responses, I want to know how each student is thinking about the papers we're reading that week—reading a dozen AI reactions to our papers wastes my time while giving me no guidance for how to direct our next discussion. In presentations, although you're welcome to seek AI help in the aesthetics of your slides, the words presented in them should be your own. And in your policy paper and final papers, it's fine to get AI help with editing, but the ideas, wording, and thoughts on the page need to have been produced by you alone.

I assume you're all here because you're interested in the course topics and enthusiastic to learn as much as you can. But I know that in real life, stuff happens. I always prefer to deal with any issues before they get so bad that they become overwhelming, or so bad that a student feels that cheating or plagiarism is his or her best (or only) option. In the MIT study, students who used LLMs

(i.e., ChatGPT) to assist with essay writing had more trouble citing/quoting their sources accurately; this is improper scientific and academic conduct. So please do come to me if you have any questions about how to properly cite a source or build upon others' ideas, or if you're feeling stressed out about the class workload (or about anything else). If you have an issue that you'd rather not talk about with me, you might consider speaking with your academic advisor or dean; with one of the Psych Department's Directors of Undergraduate Studies; or with the counselors at Columbia's Counseling and Psychological Services (<http://health.columbia.edu/services/cps>).

Diversity & Inclusion

Every learning environment should accommodate a wide range of students' backgrounds, opinions, and identities. For seminars, it is even more crucial that everyone in the room feels able to freely express their thoughts, and is willing to respectfully listen to others'. This doesn't mean we all need to be perfectly aligned on everything—or even anything! In the area of our course discussions in particular, disagreement will challenge each of us to hone our own arguments, uncover our misconceptions, and expand our perspectives. But it's equally important to leave space for—and to learn from—non-academic forms of diversity, such as nationality, sex or gender, sexuality, race, class, religion, differences in ability, and many others. In the service of these goals, please let me know if any of the following is true:

- You have a name and/or set of pronouns that differ from those that appear in SSOL or on Canvas.
- Something that was said in class made you uncomfortable or unwelcome.
- Your ability to take part in our class is being affected by events or experiences outside of our class. Even if its something I cant help with directly, I can try to connect you with resources or support on or off campus.

Nobody is ever finished learning about diverse perspectives and identities, me included. I'm very open to feedback; on this topic (and many others) you can teach me as much as, if not more than, I can teach you.

Accommodations

Students with specific needs who may require accommodations should make an appointment to see me as soon as possible, at least by the end of the second week of class. If you have not already done so, stop by the Office of Disability Services (ODS) on the 7th floor of Lerner Hall to register for support services. ODS often requires two weeks to process an application, so please contact them as soon as you can, preferably before the course begins.

Wellness

All of us at some point experience challenges to our mental health and well-being. This is true at any time, and has been even more so in the past couple of years. I urge you to take care of yourselves—and of each other. Please prioritize your mental health and wellbeing and know that there are many resources available to you both within our classroom community and throughout the university:

<https://health.columbia.edu/content/counseling-and-psychological-services>

<http://blogs.cuit.columbia.edu/nightline/>

<https://universitylife.columbia.edu/student-resources-directory#health>

<https://columbiavirtualcampus.com/>

Please reach out for help if you need it, and if you see others who are struggling, please point them toward these or other sources of help, or encourage them to talk to me or one of the Directors of Undergraduate Studies in the Psychology Department.

Syllabus Credit

Many thanks goes to Dr. Anna Vannucci, Dr. Ana Digiovanni, Dr. Ben Silver, Prof. Katherine Fox-Glassman, Prof. Nim Tottenham, Prof. Kevin Ochsner and the Center for Teaching & Learning for their syllabus inspiration!