

**Psychology 52**  
**Self & Identity**  
Spring 2011

Dr. Jessica Salvatore

Merrill 313 / 413.542.5183

Office hours: Monday afternoon, 2 to 4 p.m., and right after class on Wednesday (non-AC priority)

Self and identity are central topics of interest within social psychology. This course will examine contemporary research into the inherently social, dynamic, and multifaceted nature of selves and identities.

**Class format and readings**

Each seminar will consist of a short lecture, in some cases an in-class writing activity, and then extended discussion of readings. You must carefully read ahead of class and participate actively. Required readings will be on the course management system; reference texts are on reserve at the Keefe Science Library.

**Assignments and grading**

There will be no exams in this class.

|  |                                       |
|--|---------------------------------------|
| Weekly responses – 10 x 3% each  | 30%                                   |
| These should be e-mailed by <b>noon on Tuesday</b> ; I will count your top 10 (you can skip up to 2) |                                       |
| In-class writings and engaged participation  | 30%                                   |
| Responsibility for (co-)leading one week's discussion  | 10% (this will be partly self-graded) |
| Papers: one short paper, one longer final paper  | 30% total                             |
| Submit to <i>Identity</i> magazine   | not graded                            |

**Honor code**

I expect that each student will engage in honest academic work during this class, while also helping to foster an atmosphere of cooperative learning. Students should complete each writing assignment independently. I will provide more guidance about the written assignments later in the semester, and will be available to answer any questions you may have about adhering to Amherst's honor code. I take cheating very seriously, and will take steps to prevent it and determine whether it has occurred. I will report all suspected cheating to the Dean of Student's office immediately.

**Late work policy**

I will give you advance warning about all due dates, so I expect that you will be able to complete assignments on time. If you anticipate any conflicts (e.g., athletic events, jobs or workload in other classes, job interviews, etc.), feel free to turn assignments in as early as you would like to avoid such conflicts.

**No extensions for any reason will be given without permission from your class/university dean.**

## SCHEDULE & READING LIST

### JANUARY 26: BUILDING A FRAMEWORK

Where to start with our study of self and identity? As Fiske (2004) rightly notes about social psychology as a whole, “the enterprise is rich but may be overwhelming without an intellectual framework” (544). In this session, we will contrast ways of defining and conceptualizing “self” and “identity” and briefly compare various disciplinary approaches.

*No readings required prior to this session, but the following may be useful for later reference:*

James, W. (1890). Chapter 10: “Consciousness of Self.” In Principles of Psychology, Vol 2. Dover.

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

Wegner, D. M. (2008). Self is magic. In J. Baer, J. C. Kaufman, & R. F. Baumeister (Eds.), Are we free? Psychology and free will. New York: Oxford University Press.

*New Yorker* article on procrastination (to be handed out in class)

### FEBRUARY 2: DEVELOPMENT OF SELFHOOD

In this session we will discuss the childhood origins/sources of our enduring sense of self. The trait self-concept is a social and cultural product, but this is not to imply that the self is a passive receptacle for social influence; it is also an active personal achievement. We will use Kenji Yoshino’s memoir as a case study.

*Send your response to the following readings to me only.*

McAdams, D.P. (2001). The psychology of life stories. *Review of General Psychology*, 5, 100-122.  
*Focus particularly on the first half of this piece, up to where the section on cognitive psychology starts.*

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.

Yoshino, K. (2006). An uncovered self. In Covering: A Hidden Assault on Our Civil Rights. New York: Random House.

### FEBRUARY 9: COLLECTIVE IDENTIFICATION

We will talk about the nature and dynamics of social identification among adults: what types of groups you can identify with, why identification occurs, what it looks like, and what consequences follow from it.

*Responses should also be sent to sfinucane12@amherst.edu and ryorke11@amherst.edu.*

Baumeister, R.F., & Leary, M.R. (1995). The need to belong: Desire for interpersonal attachments as a fundamental human motivation. *Psychological Bulletin*, 117, 497-529.

Jetten, J., et al. (2001). Rebels with a cause: Group identification as a response to perceived discrimination from the mainstream. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 27, 1204-1213.

Swann, W.B., et al. (2009). Identity fusion: The interplay of personal and social identities in extreme group behavior. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 96, 995-1011.

## FEBRUARY 16: ORGANIZATION OF THE SELF-CONCEPT

This session will focus on how the self-concept is structured cognitively, and on the consequences of this structure for well-being and mental health. (This session also foreshadows a later one on the multiplicity of identity.)

*Responses should also be sent to yhernandez11@amherst.edu and ktezanos12@amherst.edu.*

Linville, P.W. (1987). Self-complexity as a cognitive buffer against stress-related illness and depression. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 52, 663-676.

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.

## FEBRUARY 23: THE MOTIVATED SELF-CONCEPT

How well do we achieve the ancient imperative to “know thyself”? In this session, we’ll talk about self-deception and self-justification – the need to see oneself in a positive light, though one may not even be aware of these pressures, and resulting “bias” in sense of self.

*Responses should also be sent to bevans11@amherst.edu and houle@student.umass.edu.*

Festinger, L. (1954). A theory of social comparison processes. *Human Relations*, 7, 117-140.

Greenwald, A.G. (1980). The totalitarian ego: Fabrication and revision of personal history. *American Psychologist*, 35, 603-618.

Batson, D., et al. (1999). Moral hypocrisy: Appearing moral to oneself without being so. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 77, 525-537.

“This American Life,” Episode 384, Act 2, “Be Careful Who You Love”

## MARCH 2: SELF-ESTEEM

Why do we self-evaluate, especially when the insights we arrive at are painful or threatening? How much is the “right” amount of self-esteem to have? We’ll compare different motives that people might have when they self-evaluate and look for evaluations from others, and ask when/why certain motives are dominant.

*Responses should also be sent to yhernandez12@amherst.edu and kholmes11@amherst.edu.*

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.

## MARCH 9: NORMS AND DEVIANCE

In this session, we consider self in the context of groups. When you enter or come to identify with a social group, how do you manage deviance from the group's pre-existing norms and prototypes?

*Responses should also be sent to [clong11@amherst.edu](mailto:clong11@amherst.edu) and [emincer@smith.edu](mailto:emincer@smith.edu).*

Blanton, H., & Christie, C. (2003). Deviance regulation: A theory of action and identity. *Review of General Psychology, 7*, 115-149.

Prentice, D.A., & Miller, D.T. (1993). Pluralistic ignorance and alcohol use on campus: Some consequences of misperceiving the social norm. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 64*, 243-256.

Wood, W., et al. (1997). Conformity to sex-typed norms, affect, and the self-concept. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 73*, 523-535.

## MARCH 16: Have a great spring break!

## MARCH 23: SELF-PRESENTATION

We sometimes attempt to manage others' impressions of us in the service of social goals; Chris Rock jokes that for the first three months of a relationship, "my representative is dating your representative." In this session we'll consider the balance between strategic and "authentic" self-presentation, as well as ask when/why we feel safe to express the "secret self."

*Responses should be also sent to [cclarke11@amherst.edu](mailto:cclarke11@amherst.edu) and [lking11@amherst.edu](mailto:lking11@amherst.edu).*

Cialdini, R.B., et al. (1976). Basking in reflected glory: Three (football) field studies. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 34*, 366-375.

Murray, S. L., Holmes, J. G., & Collins, N. L. (2006). Optimizing assurance: The risk regulation system in relationships. *Psychological Bulletin, 132*, 641-666.

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

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

In addition, please take a look at the PostSecret blog before we meet.

## MARCH 30: CONTENDING WITH DEVALUATION

How do people cope with socially stigmatized identities and/or status inequality between groups?  
On balance, are devalued collective identities primarily a vulnerability or a resource for the individual?

*Responses should also be sent to [ccroak13@amherst.edu](mailto:ccroak13@amherst.edu) and [msadams@student.umass.edu](mailto:msadams@student.umass.edu).*

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.

Huddy, L. (2004). Contrasting theoretical approaches to intergroup relations. *Political Psychology, 25*, 947-967.

## APRIL 6: MAJORITY IDENTITY & IDENTITY POLITICS

In this session, we'll talk about the cultural dynamics of majority backlash against minority collective action. Topics will include privilege, majority identity movements, and resistance to affirmative action.

*Responses should also be sent to rborsellino12@amherst.edu and bginsburg11@amherst.edu.*

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

Postmes, T., & Smith, L.G.E. (2009). Why do the privileged resort to oppression? A look at some intragroup factors. *Journal of Social Issues*, 65, 769-790.

Leach, C. W., Snyder, S., Iyer, A. (2002). "Poisoning the consciences of the fortunate": The experience of relative advantage and support for social inequality. In I. Walker & H.J. Smith (Eds.), *Relative Deprivation: Specification, Development and Integration* (pp. 136-163). New York, NY: Cambridge University.

Short *New Yorker* piece on "the pipeline" to be handed out in class; please also take a look at webpages like [www.malestudies.org](http://www.malestudies.org), nationalist organizations, etc.

## APRIL 13: THE SPOTLIGHT OF SELF-AWARENESS

Antonio Damasio argues that "consciousness" is, in essence, the addition of self-processes to the mind. In this session we will consider the reflexive self-awareness that results and how it functions.

*Responses should also be sent to kcl09@hampshire.edu and dsolarte12@amherst.edu.*

Bem, D.J. (1967). Self-perception: An alternative interpretation of cognitive dissonance phenomena. *Psychological Review*, 74, 183-200.

Aries, E., Olver, R., et al. (1998). Race and gender as components of the working self-concept. *Journal of Social Psychology*, 138, 277-290.

Gilovich, T., et al (2000). The spotlight effect in social judgment: An egocentric bias in estimates of the salience of one's own actions and appearance. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 78, 211-222.

Optional: Damasio (2010). Chapter 11 in *Self Comes to Mind: Constructing the Conscious Brain*.

## APRIL 20: SELF-REGULATION

How does self-regulation work to achieve personal and collective goals?

*Responses should also be sent to ecarbone12@amherst.edu and ajkenned@student.umass.edu.*

Higgins, E.T. (1987). Self-discrepancy: A theory relating self and affect. *Psychological Review*, 94, 319-340.

Muraven, M., & Baumeister, R.F. (2000). Self-regulation and depletion of limited resources: Does self-control resemble a muscle? *Psychological Bulletin*, 126, 247-259.

Reicher, S. (1987). Crowd behaviour as social action. Chapter 8 in Rediscovering the Social Group: A Self-Categorization Theory. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

## APRIL 27: MULTIPLICITY OF IDENTITIES

In "Song of Myself," Walt Whitman writes, "Do I contradict myself?/ Very well, then, I contradict myself./ (I am large, I contain multitudes.)" This assertion is at the center of an ongoing debate about selfhood: is self really stable and unitary, as we usually experience it? Do we need to perceive it that way, and if so, why? We will discuss the issue of contemporary "self-fragmentation" and the human tendency to essentialize selves and social groups.

*Responses should also be sent to mgary11@amherst.edu and auem08@hampshire.edu.*

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

Gergen, K.J. (1991). From self to relationship. Chapter 6 in The Saturated Self. Basic Books.  
*Also re-read McAdams (2001), pp. 115-117, to put this chapter in a larger perspective.*

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).

Chapter by Sherry Turkle on the online multiplication of selves to be handed out in class (or I may replace this with a chapter from her just-published book Alone Together).

## MAY 4: Presentations and course wrap-up