

# IDS 2935: Community or “Cult”?

## Quest 2

### I. General Information

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#### **Class Meetings**

- Spring 2024
- In-Person, 35 students
- MWF, Period 4 (10:40-11:30 a.m.), Little Hall 127

#### **Instructor**

- Dennis N. McCarty, PhD
- Office: Rolfs 414
- Office Hours: Mondays 1-4 p.m. (also on Zoom)
- Email: [d.mccarty@ufl.edu](mailto:d.mccarty@ufl.edu)

*For your own organization and well-being, be sure to check your UF email daily.*

#### **Course Description**

We live with an abundance of information sources and opinion leaders, and the choice of where to turn for guidance can be difficult and dangerous. The past decade has seen an increased interest in the phenomena of political polarization, misinformation, and toxic cults of personality. Generally, we listen to trusted figures of authority and the communities that have nurtured us, but the time comes for every adult when authority must be questioned and communities reconsidered. Growing as citizens and individuals, when and how do we make those decisions?

This interdisciplinary Quest 2 course invites students to closely reflect upon and assess the concepts of group belonging, normative influence, group centrism, indoctrination, and patterns of domination and dependency. This course stimulates students to interrogate the communication experiences that define not only their membership in particular organizations and social groups, but also the extent to which that membership has informed their attitudes, beliefs, and values. In summary, this course provokes the following pressing questions: When am I in a community, and when am I in a cult? When is conformity good for me, and when is it not?

Beyond the contemplation of their relationships with social groups and organizations, students in this course will confront objects of public discussion around social influence, such as patterns of dependency in multi-level marketing and political conspiracy groups. Students will engage in research, synthesis, and analysis concerning not only the patterns of conformity observable in

their lives, but also ways in which they can alter their communication strategies and reach goals of individuated belief, dissent, and personal agency.

These course goals will be addressed via high-engagement class discussion around social influence research and case analyses, as well as peer-to-peer evaluation surrounding students' personal reflections and observation of groups and organizations. Students will analyze influence patterns systematically with social theory as their guide, summarizing their course work in a seminar presentation at the semester's end.

## Quest and General Education Credit

- Quest 2
- Social & Behavioral Sciences

*This course accomplishes the [Quest](#) and [General Education](#) objectives of the subject areas listed above. A minimum grade of C is required for Quest and General Education credit. Courses intended to satisfy Quest and General Education requirements cannot be taken S-U.*

## Required Readings and Works

Sunstein, C. (2019). *Conformity: The Power of Social Influences*. New York University Press: New York.

Other resources for readings will be provided on Canvas. Specific sources are described in the annotated schedule.

*\*Note: This course features texts with which you may or may not agree. Generally, **your instructor will guide you to work through them critically**. You are not expected to adopt at face value any of the conclusions represented: Instead, carefully analyze the data within as you simultaneously examine your own relationships and personal epistemology. Learn to critique in good faith and honestly interrogate your own and others' perspectives.*

Materials and Supplies Fees: n/a

## II. Graded Work

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### Description of Graded Work

#### 1. Quizzes

Beyond the syllabus quiz, quizzes in this course, taken in the classroom, serve to facilitate questions about content covered thus far in the course, and students may discuss each others' answers after the quiz time is finished. Quizzes include comprehension questions for the readings and some questions asking students to synthesize what they have experienced.

- a. Syllabus Quiz (10 pts)
- b. Unit 1 Quiz (50 pts)

c. Unit 2 Quiz (50 pts)

## 2. Reflection Papers

Reflection papers will be assessed on their effortful presentation of students' devised research questions, their thorough report on actions taken regarding accompanying activities and readings, and their specific elaboration of ideas and plans for further investigation in the course. All reflection papers will be written in TNR, 12 pt font, double-spaced, with the student's name and the paper's title accounting for only one line of the text. Each reflection paper is expected to make use of and cite (in APA or MLA style) a prescribed number of peer-reviewed sources, their references included in a reference section. Reflection papers will be submitted on Canvas.

a. **Reflection Paper No. 1** (50 pts):

For the first reflection paper (600+ words, at least 1 peer-reviewed source cited) students will reflect upon their own social identities, how they define themselves, and, by comparison, how they feel others define them. Additionally, students will begin exploring ideas of how to detect sources of normative influence evinced in their personal experiences.

b. **Reflection Paper No. 2** (100 pts):

For the second reflection paper (600+ words, at least 2 peer-reviewed sources), students will elaborate on the results of the personal social influence experiment they undertook outside of class. This experiment involves the students creatively devising a way they could test whether or not they become more influential (i.e. more persuasive or more capable of gaining compliance) when expressing shared group identity with someone else. Furthermore, this paper calls for students to reflect upon the mechanisms of control that they know or suspect may often control their own behavior.

c. **Final Reflection Paper** (150 pts):

For the last reflection paper (900+ words, minimum 4 peer-reviewed sources), students will elaborate upon an experience they had in trying to apply their Plan for Praxis (See Below), which usually amounts to their attempting the expression of dissent in their group or approaching an individual about their epistemic relationship with their social group. Students will elaborate upon the outcomes of their experience, and how they may further explore avenues of both seeking personal agency for themselves and investigating how social groups influence conformity (for good or ill). The reflection paper will end with students' self-judgments of their own conformity and social group relationships in comparison to how they felt at the beginning of the course.

## 3. Group Presentation

Students, after the drop/add deadline, will be assigned into groups of ~5. These groupings will facilitate peer review and class discussions/activities. Mainly, however, these groups will be given the task of presenting on a course theme of social power and influence (from a provided list). Each presentation will occupy 20 minutes of class time (4 minutes per individual), and will require the development of a group-shared slides presentation with references included at the end. The planning and development phases will feature individual assignments, and the group performance will represent a group grade (elaborated below).

a. **Group Development Meeting** (Individual Assignment, 50 pts)

- i. Students will be arranged into groups by the instructor and assigned an in-class task of deciding upon their theme of investigation regarding conformity processes. Outside class, students will meet with their group to determine how the group will work together to present and address the theme. Individually, via worksheet, students will be graded on what they report to the instructor regarding their contributions to the group decision making, role in rendering support to their teammates, and what their initial plans are for their part of the presentation.
    - b. **Investigation Plan** (Individual Assignment, 50 pts)
      - i. Individually, students will check in with the instructor on their particular part of the group presentation, sources/themes, and their report on expectations of the final product. Students will prepare a plan for systematic research (i.e. a list of questions) of their presentation focus. Additionally, students will update the instructor on the group's cohesion and teammates' intra-group support.
    - c. **Group Presentation** (Group Assignment, 250 pts)
      - i. Everyone in the group is required to take part in contributing to the group's performed cohesiveness, which includes participating in transitional statements between speakers (when applicable). Similarly, everyone in the group is responsible for the attractiveness and utility of the slides presentation, and everyone is responsible for lending support to students who struggle with presenting.
      - ii. Everyone in the group will be assessed on a) the clarity of main points for the presentation (i.e. topic statements and signposts), b) the support of those main points with authoritative sources and substantive information (i.e. statistics, narratives), c) the explicit relation of information to both the chosen theme and course content, and d) the crafting of emphatic, conclusive statements by each group member in their presentation section.
      - iii. The group presentation should present a report of the data individual group members collected from their own investigation of the theme. These investigations generally represent either analyses of publicly notable cases, analyses of media content, or analyses of one-on-one interview content (preferred). In this report, students should a) thoroughly summarize their central questions and mode of investigation, b) specifically and thoroughly summarize the information yielded, and c) specifically relate what they found to a general conclusion relevant to the theme and course content.
      - iv. After action, group members will qualitatively (and privately) report on each other's contributions to intra-group support via a worksheet.
4. **Peer Evaluations**
- Students will respond to each others' writing and presentations with further ideation, specifically a) questions unanswered, b) perspectives not considered, and c) potential applications of the information. Peer reviews are meant to be constructive responses to students' processing of course content – not analyses of writing or presentation skill.
- a. Three peers per reflection paper (on Canvas; 10 pts x 3 peers x 3 papers for 90 pts)

- b. One per other group presentation (Total for all, 100 pts, divided as needed depending on class size)
5. **Plan for Praxis** (50 pts)  
 In lieu of a Unit 3 Quiz, students will instead compile and turn in an outline of strategies, in response to course content, of persuasion and groupthink resistance, dissent expression, and intergroup civility, in addition to any other relevant ideas they may personally uncover. These strategies should take the form of clear coping statements, research questions, arguments, and interaction plans, and they should represent a degree of specificity and concreteness that would make them easy to communicate as advice to others. This plan will inform the final reflection paper.

6. **Summary:**

Quizzes:

Syllabus Quiz	10
Unit 1 Quiz	50
Unit 2 Quiz	50

Reflection Papers:

No. 1	50
No. 2	100
Final Reflection	150

Group Development Meeting	50
Investigation Plan	50
Group Presentation	250

Peer Evaluations:

Reflection Paper 1	30
Reflection Paper 2	30
Reflection Paper 3	30
Group Presentation	100

Plan for Praxis:	50
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**Total Point Value: 1000**

**Missing Assignments:** Deadlines for assignments will always be communicated in advance on Canvas and included in the Course Calendar there. If an assignment is missed for a substantiated reason, students must communicate with the instructor to receive an extension and turn in the missing work (or perform the missed presentation) within a week of the deadline.

## Grading Scale

For information on how UF assigns grade points, visit: <https://catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/academic-regulations/grades-grading-policies/>

A	94 – 100%		C	74 – 76%
A-	90 – 93%		C-	70 – 73%
B+	87 – 89%		D+	67 – 69%
B	84 – 86%		D	64 – 66%

B-	80 – 83%		D-	60 – 63%
C+	77 – 79%		E	<60

### III. Annotated Weekly Schedule

Week	Topics, Homework, and Assignments
Week 1	<p><b>UNIT 1: The Groups to Which We Belong (and Cling)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Topic:</b> Fundamentals of Normative Influence and Group Identities</li> <li>• <b>Summary:</b> Students will confront the ways in which social norms are informed by our group memberships, and how we all make decisions in favor of normative influence, especially when facing uncertainty. Students will begin reflecting upon their own identity development as it relates to group affiliation.</li> <li>• <b>Required Readings/Works:</b> Schultz, P. W., Tabanico, J. J., &amp; Rendón, T. (2008). Normative beliefs as agents of influence: Basic processes and real-world applications. <i>Attitudes and attitude change</i>, 385-409.</li> <li>• <b>Assignment:</b> Syllabus Quiz</li> </ul>
Week 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Topic:</b> Communication That Builds Conformity (and Sometimes Cults)</li> <li>• <b>Summary:</b> Students will follow through from last week’s introduction into understanding how communication experiences drive processes of conformity, and the role those processes play in decision making and the achievement of belongingness goals. In class, students will work together to establish collective norms for civility in class discussion and encountering the readings. Additionally, students will encounter common markers of cult behavior as they are assigned groups for the course who must choose a presentation focus.</li> <li>• <b>Required Readings/Works:</b> Sunstein (2019): “How Conformity Works”, p. 11-34</li> <li>• <b>Assignment:</b> Reports due on the <u>Group Development Meeting (50 pts)</u>. This begins the process for developing the <u>Group Presentation</u> major assignment. From a list of concepts and processes (briefly defined) related to conformity (e.g. groupthink, authoritarian leadership, extremism, etc.), student groups will work together to choose a theme for investigation and start developing a timeline for their work, roles for members, and the final product goals for composition and presentation of their findings and ideas. For the <u>Group Development Meeting</u>, individual students will turn in a work sheet</li> </ul>

Week	Topics, Homework, and Assignments
	(typed) on Canvas reporting their contributions to decision making, their role in rendering group support, and a detailed outline of their initial plans for their part of the presentation.
Week 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Topic:</b> Conformity and Desperation: When does it become unhealthy?</li> <li>• <b>Summary:</b> Everyone has a need for belongingness and accuracy, and everyone pursues greater certainty when faced with anxiety-inducing uncertainty. In what ways does that uncertainty lead us down darker paths? Students will reflect upon their own values development and discuss concepts from the readings concerning the more antisocial elements of some group relationships.</li> <li>• <b>Required Readings/Works:</b>  Dugas, M., Schori-Eyal, N., Kruglanski, A. W., Klar, Y., Touchton-Leonard, K., McNeill, A., ... &amp; Roccas, S. (2018). Group-centric attitudes mediate the relationship between need for closure and intergroup hostility. <i>Group Processes &amp; Intergroup Relations</i>, 21(8), 1155-1171.  Hogg, M. A., Kruglanski, A., &amp; Van den Bos, K. (2013). Uncertainty and the roots of extremism. <i>Journal of Social Issues</i>, 69(3), 407-418.</li> <li>• <b>Assignment:</b> <u>Reflection Paper No. 1</u> (50 pts; 600+ words)  What is your social identity, how do you define yourself, and, in comparison, how do others define you? In what ways has normative influence affected your behavior and decisions?</li> </ul>
Week 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Topic:</b> The Developmental Processes of Conformity and Abusive Dependency</li> <li>• <b>Summary:</b> Shared experience groups individuals together, and we build communities around those experiences and the beliefs they cultivate. Reflecting upon the needs group relationships fulfill, how are our beliefs the result of our dependency on others, and when does this relationship become abusive?</li> <li>• <b>Required Readings/Works:</b>  Sunstein (2019): "Cascades", pp. 35-78  Coates, D. D. (2012). "Cult commitment" from the perspective of former members: Direct rewards of membership versus dependency inducing practices. <i>Deviant Behavior</i>, 33(3), 168-184.</li> <li>• <b>Assignment:</b> <u>Peer Evaluations for Reflection Paper No. 1</u> (30 pts); <u>Unit 1 Quiz</u> (50 pts)  In evaluating your peers, attend to a) perspectives not considered, b) questions unanswered, and c) potential applications of the information they have conveyed.</li> </ul>
Week 5	<p><b>UNIT 2: Those Who Guide Belief</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Topic:</b> Epistemic Confusion and De-Individuation</li> <li>• <b>Summary:</b> This week we'll look at two notable cases of how individuals doubled down on their beliefs and devoted their resources to a group that claimed to fulfill their needs. We will transition to the next unit, regarding patterns of influence, indoctrination, and domination, by examining the effects of individuals' social environments on their maintenance of belief and commitment.</li> </ul>

Week	Topics, Homework, and Assignments
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Required Readings/Works:</b> Festinger, L., Riecken, H. W., &amp; Schachter, S. (1956). <i>When Prophecy Fails: A Social and Psychological Study of a Modern Group that Predicted the Destruction of the World</i>. University of Minnesota Press: Minneapolis, MN. Pp. 193-215. Raine, S. (2021). Reinventing the self: NXIVM’s promises, secrets and lies. <i>International Journal of Coercion, Abuse and Manipulation, 1</i>, 60-81.</li> </ul>
Week 6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Topic:</b> How Power Functions and Falters</li> <li>• <b>Summary:</b> Humans exert power over each other in all avenues of life, and this takes particular categorical forms, especially where leadership is concerned. Students will encounter a moral philosophical and socio-psychological approach to “vicious” and “harsh” forms of power. Discussion will focus on how power affects membership and exchanges in communities of practice.</li> <li>• <b>Required Readings/Works:</b> Raven, B. H. (2008). The bases of power and the power/interaction model of interpersonal influence. <i>Analyses of social issues and public policy, 8</i>(1), 1-22. Kidd, I. J. (2020). Epistemic corruption and social oppression. In <i>Vice epistemology</i> (pp. 69-86). Routledge.</li> </ul>
Week 7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Topic:</b> The “Us vs. Them” Approach: Its Uses &amp; Consequences</li> <li>• <b>Summary:</b> Students will critically encounter content on social influence enacted through the fostering of sharp group division. Students will also examine social influence processes that count on group commitment’s role in decision making.</li> <li>• <b>Required Readings/Works:</b> Sunstein (2019): “Group Polarization”, pp. 79-100 Harton, H. C., Gunderson, M., &amp; Bourgeois, M. J. (2022). “I’ll be there with you”: Social influence and cultural emergence at the capitol on January 6. <i>Group Dynamics: Theory, Research, and Practice, 26</i>(3), 220.</li> <li>• <b>Assignment:</b> Students will be assigned homework (a “personal experiment”) relevant to the completion of <u>Reflection Paper No. 2</u>. The “personal experiment” will involve the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- With the instructor’s help, students will devise a message meant to persuade or gain compliance from a message target.</li> <li>- Also, students will determine realistic ways in which they can add references to their own group affiliation to the communication of the persuasive or compliance gaining message, e.g. wearing in-group friendly clothing, using jargon, referencing shared history, reinforcing distinctiveness, etc.</li> <li>- Then, students will choose two message targets (outside class, on their own time) with whom they share the relevant social identity. They will then communicate the persuasive or compliance gaining message with identity cued for one, but not cued for the other. After this episode, students will compare responses from the message target, as well as reflect upon how they felt in comparison between the episodes regarding their level of communication satisfaction.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>



Week	Topics, Homework, and Assignments
Week 8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Topic:</b> Are We as Gullible as We Want to Be?</li> <li>• <b>Summary:</b> Students will examine their motivations to derive meaning and attribute competence to messages and message sources that rely on equivocation and ambiguity for the maintenance of power. As we transition to Unit 3, concerning praxis, we will examine our own habits and strategies for individuation and goal achievement.</li> <li>• <b>Required Readings/Works:</b> Spicer, A. (2020). Playing the bullshit game: How empty and misleading communication takes over organizations. <i>Organization Theory</i>, 1(2), 2631787720929704.</li> <li>• <b>Assignment:</b> <u>Unit 2 Quiz</u> (50 pts); <u>Reflection Paper No. 2</u> (600+ words; 100 pts) This reflection paper pertains to the “personal experiment” from the week before, specifically concerning students’ satisfaction with the communication episode, the nature and execution of their communicating shared identity with another person, and their views regarding how shared identity and norms are leveraged, in their experience, for the purposes of maintaining control (or even facilitating deception).</li> </ul>
Week 9	<p><b>UNIT 3: Praxis: Facing Your Collective Angels &amp; Demons</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Topic:</b> Deprogramming</li> <li>• <b>Summary:</b> Students will identify the ways individuals escaping abusive group relationships have found clarity and reconciliation with non-abusive support systems. This introduction to the unit will allow students to critically analyze relationship repair strategies and potential methods for challenging beliefs in themselves and others.</li> <li>• <b>Required Readings/Works:</b> Giambalvo, C., &amp; Henry, R. (2010). ICSA recovery workshops: the Colorado model. <i>ICSA Today</i>, 10(1), 3-9. Bell, V., Raihani, N., &amp; Wilkinson, S. (2021). Derationalizing delusions. <i>Clinical Psychological Science</i>, 9(1), 24-37.</li> <li>• <b>Assignment:</b> <u>Peer Evaluations for Reflection Paper No. 2</u> (30 pts)</li> </ul>
Week 10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Topic:</b> Unpopular Opinions and Healthy Conflict</li> <li>• <b>Summary:</b> Students will encounter theory regarding the question “Why do people not stand up for themselves?” As Plans for Praxis enter into development, students will analyze examples of online argumentative behavior.</li> <li>• <b>Required Readings/Works:</b> Gearhart, S., &amp; Zhang, W. (2018). Same spiral, different day? Testing the spiral of silence across issue types. <i>Communication Research</i>, 45(1), 34-54. Garner, J. T., &amp; Peterson, B. L. (2020). A chorus of dissent: Exploring the aims and audiences of online dissent. <i>Communication Quarterly</i>, 68(1), 73-93.</li> </ul>

Week	Topics, Homework, and Assignments
Week 11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Topic:</b> Groupthink vs. Teamwork</li> <li>• <b>Summary:</b> Students will update the instructor and each other on their progress in the Group Presentation assignment. The class will encounter group decision making that is beset by an abundance of cohesion and leader dependence. In an activity, students will experience the factors that facilitate groupthink. Students will then plan for groupthink’s prevention.</li> <li>• <b>Required Readings/Works:</b> Solomon, M. (2006). Groupthink versus the wisdom of crowds: The social epistemology of deliberation and dissent. <i>The Southern journal of philosophy</i>, 44(S1), 28-42. Sunstein (2019): “Conclusion: Conformity and Its Discontents”, pp. 147-152</li> <li>• <b>Assignment:</b> Investigation Plan (50 pts) This is pertaining to the larger Group Presentation assignment. Students will update the instructor on their progress and revisions of their presentation focus – their role, their sources/themes, and their expectations for the final product. Also, students will map out their plan for research, involving questions asked, keywords searched, and key ideas, scholars, and/or ties to current events that could constitute the ingredients of their presentation. Finally, students will update the instructor on the support and cohesion of their group.</li> </ul>
Week 12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Topic:</b> Preventative Measures: Resisting Influence</li> <li>• <b>Summary:</b> Students will identify and develop strategies for persuasion resistance as part of their Plans for Praxis. Students will encounter an example of inoculation against counter-attitudinal information in the form of a misinformation game.</li> <li>• <b>Required Readings/Works:</b> Barbati, J. L., Rains, S. A., Ivanov, B., &amp; Banas, J. A. (2021). Evaluating classic and contemporary ideas about persuasion resistance in inoculation theory: argument strength, refutation strength, and forewarning. <i>Communication Research Reports</i>, 38(4), 272-281.</li> </ul>
Week 13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Topic:</b> Crossing Barriers and Belonging to Many Groups</li> <li>• <b>Summary:</b> Students will reflect upon the conformity process elements of intergroup antagonism and examine strategies for crossing boundaries of in-group/out-group prejudice. Looking at high quality contact as a starting point, students will use this information to contribute to an understanding of praxis.</li> <li>• <b>Required Readings/Works:</b> Giles, M., Pines, R., Giles, H., &amp; Gardikiotis, A. (2018). Toward a communication model of intergroup interdependence. <i>Atlantic Journal of Communication</i>, 26(2), 122-130. Fredman, L. A., Buhrmester, M. D., Gomez, A., Fraser, W. T., Talaifar, S., Brannon, S. M., &amp; Swann Jr, W. B. (2015). Identity fusion, extreme pro-group behavior, and the path to defusion. <i>Social and Personality Psychology Compass</i>, 9(9), 468-480.</li> <li>• <b>Assignment:</b> <u>Plan for Praxis</u> (50 pts)</li> </ul>

Week	Topics, Homework, and Assignments
	<p>Students will compile and turn in an outline of strategies for persuasion and groupthink resistance, dissent expression, intergroup civility, and any other ideas they have uncovered through the process of the course. As informed by course content, these strategies will involve coping statements, research questions, arguments, and interaction plans.</p>
Week 14	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Topic:</b> Group Presentations</li> <li>• <b>Summary:</b> Students will present their Group Presentations and offer critical, constructive feedback to their peers.</li> <li>• <b>Required Readings/Works:</b> None</li> <li>• <b>Assignment:</b> <u>Group Presentations</u> (250 pts) will start; <u>Peer evaluations</u> (100 pts) of presentations will be submitted right after presentations conclude. These presentations are described in greater detail in the Graded Work section of the syllabus. Presentations showcase student groups' cohesion and depth of understanding of the themes they chose and researched. Everyone in the group is responsible for the aesthetics, credibility (i.e. sources cited), and content relevance and specificity of the presentation. The presentation mainly, however, concerns reports on the data collected and analyzed by group members – case analyses, media content analyses, and/or (preferably) interview analyses of information pertaining to encounters with conformity processes. Members will report on each others' group contributions post-presentation.</li> </ul>
Week 15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Topic:</b> Workshopping Praxis</li> <li>• <b>Summary:</b> The last Group Presentations will occupy the first part of this week. Subsequent class time will involve student groups evaluating each other's simulations of their Plans for Praxis.</li> <li>• <b>Required Readings/Works:</b> None</li> <li>• <b>Assignment:</b> <u>Group Presentations</u> will conclude; <u>Final Reflection Paper</u> (900+ words; 150 pts) due; <u>Final Reflection Paper Peer Evaluations</u> due by the week's end. For the <u>Final Reflection Paper</u>, prior to writing, students will have attempted to put their <u>Plan for Praxis</u> into practice. This final paper concerns the outcomes of that exercise, what further plans may be developed, and how students feel about their own conformity and social group relationships in comparison to how they felt at the course's start.</li> </ul>

## IV. Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs)

This course is a [Social and Behavioral Sciences \(S\)](#) subject area course in the UF General Education Program.

Social and behavioral science courses provide instruction in the history, key themes, principles, terminology, and underlying theory or methodologies used in the social and behavioral sciences. Students will learn to identify, describe and explain social institutions, structures or processes. These courses emphasize the effective application of accepted problem-solving techniques. Students will apply formal and informal qualitative or quantitative analysis to examine the processes and means by which individuals make personal and group decisions, as well as the evaluation of opinions, outcomes or human behavior. Students are expected to assess and analyze ethical perspectives in individual and societal decisions.

At the end of this course, students will be expected to have achieved the [Quest](#) and [General Education](#) learning outcomes as follows:

SUBJECT AREA	CONTENT	COMMUNICATION	CRITICAL THINKING	CONNECTION
STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES				
<b>Social &amp; Behavioral Sciences</b>	<b>Identify, describe, and explain</b> key themes, principles, and terminology; the history, theory and/or methodologies used; and social institutions, structures and processes.	<b>Communicate</b> knowledge, thoughts and reasoning clearly and effectively.	<b>Apply</b> formal and informal qualitative or quantitative analysis effectively to examine the processes and means by which individuals make personal and group decisions. <b>Assess and analyze</b> ethical perspectives in individual and societal decisions.	
<b>Quest 2</b>	<b>Identify, describe, and explain</b> the cross-disciplinary dimensions of a pressing societal issue or challenge as represented by the social sciences and/or biophysical sciences incorporated into the course.	<b>Develop and present,</b> in terms accessible to an educated public, clear and effective responses to proposed approaches, policies, or practices that address important societal issues or challenges	<b>Critically analyze</b> quantitative or qualitative data appropriate for informing an approach, policy, or praxis that addresses some dimension of an important societal issue or challenge.	Connect course content with <b>critical reflection</b> on their intellectual, personal, and professional development at UF and beyond
<b>This course's SLOs</b>	<b>Identify, describe, and explain</b> the factors of social life evincing normative influence's presence in everyday decisions.	<b>Develop and present in writing</b> personal analyses of conformity phenomena in public and media examples, as well as examples from	<b>Critically analyze</b> how communication processes (evinced in notable historical and media examples) and the exertion of power in different categorical ways can lead to	<b>Reflect</b> on the sources of their personal attitudes and beliefs.  <b>Reflect</b> on what they do or do not

	<p><b>Identify, describe, and explain</b> how conformity represents the outcome of communication experiences in the context of personal and group relationships</p> <p><b>Identify, describe, and explain</b> processes of influence, domination, and resulting patterns of dependency inherent in abusive group relationships.</p> <p><b>Identify, describe, and explain</b> processes of belief reconsideration, persuasion resistance, dissent expression, and the crossing of group boundaries</p>	<p>students' own social lives.</p> <p><b>Develop in group presentation</b> the analysis of data collected in investigation of conformity and group relationship phenomena.</p> <p><b>Develop and present in writing</b> investigation plans and judgments of praxis for addressing abusive group relationships and/or epistemic vice.</p>	<p>more or less abusive relationships, epistemic confusion, and in-group/out-group hostility.</p> <p><b>Critically analyze</b>, in their peers and other examples, methods for individuation, group identity defusion, persuasion resistance, and intergroup reconciliation.</p> <p><b>Critically analyze</b> their own group processes and influence behaviors.</p>	<p>question and why adherence is habituated.</p> <p><b>Describe</b> ways in which they may systematically address communication phenomena related to influence and conformity.</p> <p><b>Reflect</b> upon influence tactics that work on them, and that they use.</p> <p><b>Describe</b> a plan for praxis in encouraging individuation and personal agency in themselves and others.</p>
<b>Assessment of SLOs</b>	<p>Unit 1 Quiz Unit 2 Quiz Reflection Paper No. 1 Reflection Paper No. 2 Group Presentation Final Reflection Paper Plan for Praxis</p>	<p>Reflection Paper No. 1 Reflection Paper No. 2 Group Presentation (&amp; Plan for Investigation) Final Reflection Paper Plan for Praxis</p>	<p>Reflection Paper No. 1 Reflection Paper No. 2 (accompanying "Personal Experiment" activity) Group Presentation (&amp; Plan for Investigation) Final Reflection Paper Plan for Praxis Peer Evaluations</p>	<p>Reflection Paper No. 1 Reflection Paper No. 2 (accompanying "Personal Experiment" activity) Plan for Investigation Final Reflection Paper Plan for Praxis</p>

# V. Quest Learning Experiences

## 1. Details of Experiential Learning Component

### Classroom Activities and Discussions

Course discussions will involve not only students responding passively to distant examples of influence and conformity, but also addressing conformity processes within civil conversations in

class. The students in this class will, in Week 2, establish collective standards of civility with each other following jigsawed discussion of mutual needs for respect of each individual's belief system and values.

Furthermore, some activities represent direct simulations of conformity and influence phenomena. In Week 11, students will engage in a teamwork exercise in which the groupthink phenomenon will be induced. In Week 12, students will engage with a game simulating the keys to presenting misinformation online (<https://www.getbadnews.com/books/english/>).

As part of the information gathering leading to Reflection Paper No. 2, students will be assigned a "Personal Experiment" for homework, in which they must enact persuasion and/or compliance gaining strategies with strangers while manipulating expressions of shared group identity. Students will represent the main planners in designing this personal experiment, and will report on their experiences in the Reflection assignment.

### **Investigation Component of the Group Presentation**

As part of the larger Group Presentation, students are expected to develop a plan for investigating the particular dimension of conformity, influence, or group relationships under consideration. This involves the development of questions for interviewing (preferred) or analyzing content, which students will then undertake. This research activity will then be cast into their presentations.

### **Plan for Praxis and Peer Workshops**

Students will develop plans for action and communication with the understood purpose of aiding the individuation and personal agency of other people. The Final Reflection Paper will request that students report on the practicality and use of this plan, and students, in the class's last day, will workshop the plans and advice with their peers.

## **2. Details of Self-Reflection Component**

### **Reflection Papers**

Reflection papers in this course allow students to match course content to their own experiences, but also systematically compare/contrast and synthesize experience with investigation. Reflection papers will be assessed on their effortful presentation of students' devised research questions, their thorough report on actions taken regarding accompanying activities and readings, and their specific elaboration of ideas and plans for further investigation in the course. All reflection papers will be written in TNR, 12 pt font, double-spaced, with the student's name and the paper's title accounting for only one line of the text. Each reflection paper is expected to make use of and cite (in APA or MLA style) a prescribed number of peer-reviewed sources, their references included in a reference section.

## **VI. Required Policies**

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## **Attendance Policy**

Requirements for class attendance and make-up exams, assignments, and other work in this course are consistent with university policies that can be found at:

<https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance.aspx>

You are expected to attend every class meeting, including the first. Per the official UF policies linked above, only certain conditions may merit excuses for absences, and any excuse must be brought to the instructor's attention in writing:

- If planned or known in advance, then the reason should be communicated with the instructor in writing prior to the missed class. If students forget to communicate in writing about a planned or known absence, then the excuse will not be recognized.
- If unplanned/incidental, then the reason should be communicated with the instructor in writing within 7 days of the missed class (the first day missed, if multiple are missed). Your instructor may ask for more information, and the response to that request must also occur within a week of the message. For excuses to be accepted, written approval from the instructor must be received.
- In the case of extended absences, students are advised to communicate with the Dean of Students Office and/or the Disability Resource Center.
- Communication with the instructor must be reasonably specific and, depending on the nature of the reason for absence, substantiated with the instructor or another authority recognized by UF, such as the Dean of Students Office, who then communicates with the instructor.

Excessive absences will result in falling behind, lower scores, and potential failure of the course. Excessive absences, lateness, and disruptiveness to classmates' ability to learn will affect the possibility of success in the course.

## **Students Requiring Accommodation**

Students with disabilities who experience learning barriers and would like to request academic accommodations should connect with the Disability Resource Center by visiting <https://disability.ufl.edu/students/get-started/>. It is important for students to share their accommodation letter with their instructor and discuss their access needs, as early as possible in the semester.

## **UF Evaluations Process**

Students are expected to provide professional and respectful feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing course evaluations online via GatorEvals. Guidance on how to give feedback in a professional and respectful manner is available at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/students/>. Students will be notified when the evaluation period opens, and can complete evaluations through the email they receive from GatorEvals, in their Canvas course menu under GatorEvals, or via <https://ufl.bluera.com/ufl/>. Summaries of course evaluation results are available to students at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/public-results/>.

## **University Honesty Policy**

UF students are bound by The Honor Pledge which states, “We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honor and integrity by abiding by the Honor Code. On all work submitted for credit by students at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied: “On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment.” The Honor Code (<https://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/process/student-conduct-honor-code/>) specifies a number of behaviors that are in violation of this code and the possible sanctions. Furthermore, you are obligated to report any condition that facilitates academic misconduct to appropriate personnel. If you have any questions or concerns, please consult with the instructor or TAs in this class.

## **Counseling and Wellness Center**

Contact information for the Counseling and Wellness Center: <http://www.counseling.ufl.edu/>, 392-1575; and the University Police Department: 392-1111 or 9-1-1 for emergencies.

## **The Writing Studio**

The writing studio is committed to helping University of Florida students meet their academic and professional goals by becoming better writers. Visit the writing studio online at <http://writing.ufl.edu/writing-studio/> or in 2215 Turlington Hall for one-on-one consultations and workshops.

## **The Public Speaking Lab**

Located on the fifth floor of Rolfs Hall, the Public Speaking Lab offers free assistance to those seeking to develop their speaking skills. During the Spring session, some lab hours will take place in person and some on Zoom. Your instructors will post lab Zoom links on their canvas sites.

Staffed by Public Speaking instructors and trained undergraduate peer consultants, the lab welcomes walk-ins during the hours posted at: <https://cwoc.ufl.edu/programs/public-speaking-lab-2/>. For optimal success, and to ensure available assistance, please plan speeches well in advance.

Students can choose to have their speeches recorded, get feedback on outlines, ask questions about supporting their points, and get ideas about handling speech anxiety. We also offer assistance in preparing for interviews, preparing speeches for other courses, or preparing to speak in special occasions. Please note that students currently enrolled in SPC2608 are responsible for taking the guidance offered by consultants in the lab and making sure they still meet all requirements of their own instructor.



## **In-Class Recordings**

Students are allowed to record video or audio of class lectures. However, the purposes for which these recordings may be used are strictly controlled. The only allowable purposes are (1) for personal educational use, (2) in connection with a complaint to the university, or (3) as evidence in, or in preparation for, a criminal or civil proceeding. All other purposes are prohibited. Specifically, students may not publish recorded lectures without the written consent of the instructor.

A “class lecture” is an educational presentation intended to inform or teach enrolled students about a particular subject, including any instructor-led discussions that form part of the presentation, and delivered by any instructor hired or appointed by the University, or by a guest instructor, as part of a University of Florida course. A class lecture does not include lab sessions, student presentations, clinical presentations such as patient history, academic exercises involving solely student participation, assessments (quizzes, tests, exams), field trips, private conversations between students in the class or between a student and the faculty or lecturer during a class session.

Publication without permission of the instructor is prohibited. To “publish” means to share, transmit, circulate, distribute, or provide access to a recording, regardless of format or medium, to another person (or persons), including but not limited to another student within the same class section. Additionally, a recording, or transcript of a recording, is considered published if it is posted on or uploaded to, in whole or in part, any media platform, including but not limited to social media, book, magazine, newspaper, leaflet, or third party note/tutoring services. A student who publishes a recording without written consent may be subject to a civil cause of action instituted by a person injured by the publication and/or discipline under UF Regulation 4.040 Student Honor Code and Student Conduct Code.