

# **Psychology & Society: Insights into Individual Behaviour Within Social Context**

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## **Course Description:**

The course provides an overview of the field of social psychology—the study of human interactions within groups. The concepts (e.g., stereotypes, biases, groupthink, conformity, totalitarianism, agency) will be examined within the context of the Czech society to mitigate students' broader cultural understanding.

The course covers a range of topics to instigate students' insight and awareness of these at large. It focuses on different factors constituting a society and a culture. For students coming to the Czech Republic, an emphasis on Czech culture and its transition from the communist system to a liberal “western” style democracy provides a unique experience for cultural enrichment as well as for a more in-depth understanding of the social and historical context of the contemporary Czech society.

## **Course Objectives/Learning Outcomes:**

Upon the completion of the course, students

- will demonstrate their understanding of the most famous social-psychology experiments that have shed light into human behaviour and human nature,
- through the lens of critical thinking, will have identified psychological challenges that arise from cultural differences,
- will have acquired a basis for critical thinking and learn to form new perspectives to approach the problematic through informal environment facilitating the share of views and ideas;
- will have developed reading-comprehension skills adequate for scholarly literature in the field through reading texts representing different research approaches and methodologies, and an ability to engage in an academic dialogue;
- will have enhanced their cultural understanding and adaptability to new cultural situations,
- will reflect on major historical influences on the Czech population to lessen some of the possible culture shock;
- and will foster their cultural self-awareness, other culture awareness and the dynamics between them.

## Course Requirements:

### 1. Reflections for a portfolio

A total of four reflection entries will be required from each student, each 500-words long. The paper should reflect on the course topics, readings, discussions, etc. pertaining to the content of the class and should examine a theme beyond the reading and/or class discussion. The choice of the readings or themes is up to each student, although the instructor is ready to consult the topics with students. Intellectual queries are welcome but a reflection based on one's own application of the knowledge gained on to one's personal experience will suffice.

### 2. Individual Class Presentation

Each student is required to present and lead a discussion on one of the course themes of their own choice relating to the topic of the course and the students' interests. Upon an agreement with the instructor, the student will present their topic to the class for about 20-minute long. It will be followed by a discussion lead by the presenting student.

### 3. Peer Reviews

Students are required to review five different presentations of their choice and write a constructive criticism to help their peer to reflect on the delivery and the content of their presentation. To get a full score, the review should include both the positive aspects of the presentation, as well as suggest avenues for improvement of concrete facets of the presentation.

### 4. Final academic paper

The final course work consists of writing a research paper in which an analysis of the constituent parts and their subsequent synthesis will be assessed. One of three topics suggested by the instructor will be graded as to whether the thesis of the paper is well defended and counterarguments are dealt with equally (Grade A), whether the thesis is supported sufficiently (Grade B), whether the thesis is clearly constructed without sufficient arguments presented for either the arguments or counter-arguments to the thesis (Grade C), or whether the paper only marginally touches on the theme of the course and at least some part of an argument is present (Grade D). A total of 2000-2500 words with an adequate list of scholarly references will be required.

### 5. Class participation

Class participation will consider the students' familiarity with the course readings and the willingness to either spur or join a class debate on a particular class topic. Online discussions will allow for a further engagement in virtual space to elaborate on the topics raised in class.

### Assessment and Final Grade:

1.Four reflections for a class portfolio, 4x5%	20%
2.Individual class presentation	20%
3.Peer reviews of 5 presentations, 5x2%	10%
4.Final Academic paper	30%
5.Class participation	20%

### Mandatory Completion Policy

Note that all mandatory assignments and exams must be completed to the best of your ability in order for your final grade to be issued. Failure to complete a mandatory assignment or exam may result in a failing grade.

Letter Grade	Percentage	Description
A+	97-100	Excellent Work
A	93-97	Outstanding Work
A-	90-92	
B+	87-89	Good work
B	83-86	
B-	80-82	
C+	77-79	Acceptable Work
C	73-76	
C-	70-72	
D+	67-69	Work that is significantly below average
D	63-66	
D-	60-62	
F	0-59	Work that does not meet the minimum standards for passing the course

#### **AEP Academic Integrity Policy**

Plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty are not tolerated. The use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) for the development of knowledge and learning is encouraged at many stages of the learning process. While we value technology for educational purposes, we also value originality and the retainment of knowledge, and thus using AI for assignments and examinations, even if rephrased, is strictly prohibited and considered an academic integrity violation, unless the instructor explicitly allows for it in the context of evaluated work

#### **AEP Non-Discrimination/Harassment Policy**

The AEP program in Prague promotes a diverse learning environment where the dignity, worth, and differences of each individual are valued and respected. Discrimination and harassment, whether based on a person's race, gender, sexual orientation, color, religion, national origin, age, disability, or other legally protected characteristics, are repugnant and completely inconsistent with our objectives. Retaliation against individuals for raising good faith claims of harassment and/or discrimination is prohibited.

#### **AEP Diversity Policy**

AEP is committed to fostering an inclusive and welcoming community that values diversity in all its forms. We believe that one of the most meaningful lessons of studying abroad is learning to navigate and appreciate differences with curiosity and an open mind. While engaging across differences can sometimes be challenging or uncomfortable, these moments are essential for growth and learning. We recognize that every member of our community, even with the best intentions, may occasionally make missteps. Our commitment is to provide a supportive environment where respectful and honest dialogue helps us learn from these experiences, ensuring that every student has the opportunity to thrive and broaden their perspective.

## Weekly Schedule

### Week 1

*CEE Introductory Lecture Series*

AEP Introductory Lecture Series

### Week 2

#### **Course Introduction**

*Course content, course requirements, grading and syllabus overview*

*Key concepts defined*

#### Readings due:

- Course syllabus
- Journal databases through students' home university library access

### Week 3

#### **Social behavior as a result of social mapping**

*Social thinking; social cognition, inherent social and cultural influences*

#### Readings due:

- Aival-Naveh et al. 2019, 1-25.

### Week 4

#### **Social judgments & cognitive shortcuts**

*Bias, stereotypes, prejudice*

#### Readings due :

- Plous 2003, 3-48.

Deliverables: Journal entry 1 due

## **Week 5**

### ***Exchanges between social groups***

*Cultural dimensions and their validity*

#### Readings due:

- Hofstede et al. 2010, 89-134.
- Gerlach & Eriksson 2021

## **Week 6**

### ***History and its relationship to the cultural psyche:***

*the case of the Czech Nation*

Possible guest lecture, TBC

#### Readings due:

- Serran 2013, pages TBC

Deliverables: Journal entry 2 due

## **Week 7**

### ***Social norms; conformity***

*Motivations and attitudes as constraints of conformity*

#### Readings due:

- Hollingworth & Barker 2019 Berry, Lewis & Sowden 2021, 321-326.

## **Week 8**

### ***Groupthink & Obedience***

*Stanford Prison Experiment, its value and its critique*

#### Readings due:

- Nicholson 2019, 99-115.

Deliverables: Journal entry 3 due

## **Week 9**

### ***Social transitions***

*From communism to liberal democracy*

Vaclav Havel Library visit, date TBC

#### Readings due:

- Klicperova et al. 1997, 39-52

## **Week 10**

### ***Culture of totalitarian and post-totalitarianism regimes***

#### Readings due:

- Havel 1978, 'The Power of the Powerless', Sections I–VIII Roubal 2003, 1-25.

Deliverables: Journal entry 4 due

## **Week 11**

### ***Social change, Individual and collective agency***

*Martin Kuciak and the ultimate value of one's voice*

#### Readings due:

- Dixon et al. 2016, 481–499
- Miller et al. 2017

## **Week 12**

### ***Human rights and democracy***

#### Readings due:

- Potucek 2000, 107-121

Deliverables: Peer reviews due

## Week 13

### *Controversial issues in contemporary Czech society*

#### Readings due:

- Strnad, Marek 2014, 121-130
- Winkler et al. 2015

#### Deliverables: Final paper due

## Readings:

Aival-Naveh, E., Rothschild-Yakar, L., & Kurman, J. (2019). "Keeping culture in mind: A systematic review and initial conceptualization of mentalizing from a cross-cultural perspective." *Clinical Psychology Science and Practice*, 26, 1-25.

Berry, Z., Lewis, N. A., & Sowden, W. J. (2021). The double-edged sword of loyalty. *Current Directions of Psychological Science* 30, 321-326.

Dixon, J., Durrheim, K., Stevenson, C., Cakal, H. (2016). "From prejudice reduction to collective action: Two psychological models of social change (and how to reconcile them)." In: Sibley, Chris G. and Barlow, Fiona Kate (Eds.) *Cambridge Handbook of the Psychology of Prejudice*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 481–499.

Hofstede, G., Hofstede, G.J. & Minkov, M. (2010). "I, we, and they." In G. Hofstede, G.J. Hofstede, & M. Minkov (Eds.) *Cultures and organizations: Software of the mind: Intercultural cooperation and its importance for survival*, 3rd ed. New York: McGraw-Hill, 89-134.

Gerlach, P. & Eriksson, K. (2021). Measuring Cultural Dimensions: External Validity and Internal Consistency of Hofstede's VSM 2013 Scales. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 12: 662604. doi:10.3389/fpsyg.2021.662604

Hollingworth, C. Baker, L. (2019) "New frontiers: social norms and conformity", Opinion 22 May 2019 online: <https://www.research-live.com/article/opinion/new-frontiers-social-norms-and-conformity/id/5054112>

Klicperova, M., Feierabend, I. K., & Hofstetter, R. (1997). „In the Search for a Post-Communist Syndrome: A Theoretical Framework and Empirical Assessment." *Journal of Community & Applied Social Psychology*, 7, 3952.

MacLeod, E. L. (2017). "Unraveling the evolution of uniquely human cognition." *PNAS*, 113 (23), 6348-6354.

Nicholson, I. (2019). "A Tale of two Methods: Gustave Gilbert, Stanley Milgram, and the 'Mysterious Nazi Mind' (1945-1965)." *Qualitative Psychology* 6, 99-115. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/qup0000098>

Miller, J. et al. (2017). A Cultural Psychology of Agency: Morality, Motivation and Reciprocity. *Perspectives on Psychological Science*.



Plous, S. (2003). "The psychology of prejudice, stereotyping, and discrimination: An overview." In S. Plous (Ed.), *Understanding prejudice and discrimination*. New York: McGraw-Hill, pp. 3-48. Available online at <http://www.understandingprejudice.org/apa/english/>

Potůček, M. (2000). The Uneasy Birth of Czech Civil Society. *Voluntas: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations*, 11(2), 107 - 121.

Roubal, P. (2003). "Politics of Gymnastics. Mass gymnastic displays under communism in Central and Eastern Europe." *Body and Society*, 9(2), 1-25.

Strnad, A., Marek, J. (2014). "Homelessness in the Czech Republic." *Housing, Care and Support*, 17(3), 121-130.

Winkler, P., Csémy, L., Janoušková, M., Mladá, K., Motlová, L. B., & Evans-Lacko, S. (2015). Reported and intended behaviour towards those with mental health problems in the Czech Republic and England. *European Psychiatry*, 30(6), 801–806.

### Professor's profile:

Eva Filippova, PhD	
Nationality	Slovak & Canadian
Academic degrees	Hons. B.A., M.A., PhD (University of Toronto)
Research interests	Human development, social cognition, language, non-literal communication, irony, atypical development