Instructor: Dr. Jay J. Van Bavel (You can call me Dr. Jay, if you wish)
E-mail: jay.vanbavel@nyu.edu (preferred form of contact)
Office: Room 506, 6 Washington Place (Meyer Building)
Office Hours: Grab me after class if you would like to talk (or email for appointment)
Course Website: On NYU Classes
Instructor Website: http://psych.nyu.edu/vanbavel/
Twitter: @jayvanbavel

You can think of this syllabus as a contract: by continuing in this class, we are both agreeing to abide by the guidelines of the syllabus. I have tried to make it as comprehensive as possible to address most of your questions. As such, please read the syllabus during the first week of class. If you find any errors, please let us know. If you are unable to accept the terms of the syllabus, you should drop the class as soon as possible to receive a full refund. To learn how to withdraw from this course go to this website.
Course Description

Attitudes are positive or negative views of a person, place, thing, or event that guide our judgments and behavior. In 1935, Gordon Allport claimed that attitudes were the most 'indispensable concept' in social psychology. The concepts in the attitude literature provide a basic foundation for many of the main topics in social psychology, including social cognition, stereotypes and prejudice, self-regulation, group processes, personal relationships and individual differences. The pre-requisite for this course is Introduction to Social Psychology.

This course will highlight several major ideas and studies in the area of attitudes and persuasion. Students in this class will be directly exposed to many of the core ideas in attitude research by reading summaries of some of the main ideas and current thinking on the topics. The readings are designed to be accessible for a broad audience of non-experts. This course will also prepare students to apply these concepts to everyday life, with a focus on how they can persuade and influence others using the strategies discussed in the course.

Learning Outcomes

1. Know what attitudes are and see how many different aspects of psychology are “attitudes” at their core.
2. Understand the qualities an attitude can have and what their consequences are.
3. Be able to predict whether a message is likely to be persuasive for a given person.
4. See how people’s behavior can be driven by their attitudes.

Course format and grades

The work in this course includes active participation, in-class presentations, and a final exam. Class assignments are designed to develop your ability to think critically and creatively, engage in discussion, learn how to do research, and present ideas—fundamental skills in whatever career path you decide to take. These are the central learning outcomes.

Participation (20%): Each student is expected to read the assigned articles before each class and participate in discussion and class activities. Students are graded on their ability to understand and integrate the material and to actively engage during class. We are especially interested in your ability to add constructively to the dialogue, participate in activities, and challenge others by building on a discussion. Although we are looking for your critical perspectives on the course material, we are equally interested in your ability to understand the historical and contemporary value of the material, including how you might apply it to the real world. You will also be graded on your ability to help your classmates by providing useful suggestions during
their presentations. Every student is allowed to miss one lecture for personal reasons without having it affect your participation grade (e.g., you have a medical problem, family issues, or you simply need to focus on something else in your life). However, if you miss more than one date I will need a doctor’s note or other formal documentation.

**Debate (20%)**: Students will be assigned to a group to debate a topic. We will debate the topic discussed in this comic. Students will be randomly assigned to a side for the debate and do additional research to determine whether or not fact checks can effectively change attitudes. Students will be graded on their preparation and ability to integrate material from the course (as well as material from outside the course) and formulate an argument. You will grade all your teammates and they will grade you on your contribution. The whole class will participate the debate discussion. I will share more details on the debate format closer to the debate.

**Presentation (20%)**: Students will conduct a short presentation to the entire class (10-12 minutes). You will be asked to identify a social problem (e.g., low voting among young people) and a solution based on attitudes and persuasion (e.g., using persuasive techniques to increase voting on campus). The problem can be any issue we discussed in the class or in your community. The solution should be based on the lessons we learned in class (e.g., changing implicit attitudes, improving cooperation, etc). Standard presentation format involves PowerPoint or Keynote, but you are free to use any format necessary to communicate. You will be marked on your ability to clearly and elegantly communicate your main points and respond constructively to questions. You must submit your presentation topic by **November 7th**.

**Midterm exam (20%)**: The first exam will include multiple choice, short answer and a few long answer questions that cover materials from the first half of the course. The midterm exam is on **October 17th**.

**Final exam (20%)**: The second exam will include multiple choice, short answer and a few long answer questions that cover materials from the second half of the course. The final exam is on a date determined by the University Registrars’ Office.

Make-up assignments will be scheduled only in the event of a documented emergency (e.g., serious illness, death in the family). Excused absences must be documented. In such cases, you must contact the instructor(s) prior to the exam. Penalties will be imposed for late papers. Students who are unable to complete the required work on time are advised to drop the course.

**Social media bonus marks (up to 4%)**: This is your one-and-only opportunity to bolster your grade. I will not let one person complete an “extra assignment” or let them turn in a “revision” if they did a bad job because it is not fair to the rest of the class. Instead, every single person has the same opportunity to earn bonus marks. To take advantage of this opportunity, email me all of your extra credit activities in a single email by 11:59pm EST on the last day of class (December 12th). No late work
will be accepted for bonus marks. If you are concerned about your mark, please complete all of these activities.

**Wikipedia (1%)**: Compose (or *substantively* edit) a wiki entry directly related to the course. Add scientific content you learned in the course. Email me a screen capture of the entry before *and* after your edits to get this mark.

**Twitter (1%)**: Compose and post one tweet about a recently published *research article* related to the content we have covered in class. Your tweet must communicate the core point of the paper, provide a link to the article, and include my twitter handle (@jayvanbavel). Email me a copy of your tweet to get this mark.

**Blog (2%)**: Compose and email me a blog post based on the one of the articles you read in class (ideally, you would connect it to contemporary issue). You get one point for doing a decent job, two points for doing a great job (i.e., something that I would actually post on a blog website). Email me a copy of your blog post. To get this mark.

**GRADING SCHEME**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Points</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>20</td>
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<tr>
<td>Debate</td>
<td>20</td>
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<tr>
<td>Presentation</td>
<td>20</td>
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<td>Midterm Exam</td>
<td>20</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Exam</td>
<td>20</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
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A  93-100
A-  90-92
B+  87-89
B   83-86
B-  80-82
C+  77-79
C   73-76
C-  70-72
D+  67-69
D   60-66
F   <60

Note that all final grades will be rounded before they are submitted to the University (e.g., if you have a final average of 86.50% it will be rounded up to a B+, but a 86.49% will be rounded to a B). To ensure fairness and transparency, this is not negotiable. I will not curve the grades down, but reserve the right to curve them up if the class average is significantly lower than past classes.

Some of the material covered on tests will be from your assigned readings, and other material will come from lectures (not in your reading). Thus, attending lectures regularly is important in order to do well in the course. Although lecture slides for each week’s lectures will be posted on the class website, these are for review
purposes only and will not substitute for regular attendance at class sessions in terms of preparation for exams.

Make-up exams will be scheduled only in the event of a documented emergency (e.g., serious illness, death in the family). Excused absences for University sponsored events (field trips, athletic trips) and medical / personal emergencies must be documented. In such cases, you must contact me by phone or email prior to the exam. Penalties will be imposed for late papers. Students who are unable to complete the required work on time are advised to drop the course.

If you have questions or concerns about your grades you should meet with me during office hours (or by appointment) to discuss them. I will not debate grading concerns during or immediately after class (unless I made a simple adding error). However, I will be happy to re-grade any assignment or exam.

To have your assignment or exam re-graded you need to submit a brief one-page typed description of your concerns and why you deserve a better mark. You must submit this request within one week of receiving your grade on an assignment (e.g., don’t wait until you receive your final grade in the course to ask me to re-grade your mid-term from two months ago). Please bear in mind that you must have a substantive argument for why you deserve a better grade. It is not convincing to argue that you “worked hard”. At a top university like NYU, almost everyone is working hard. As such, hard work is necessary, but not sufficient for a top grade. Also note that I will re-grade the entire assignment and your grade on any part can go up or down. Also please do not request any grade changes that are not based on clear factual errors. In the past, students have requested changes because they want to get into medical school, because they want to keep a scholarship, because their parents paid a lot of money in tuition, and countless other reasons that have nothing to do with their work in the course. It is unfair and unethical for a professor to change one student’s grade or offer them additional assignments that are not offered to all the other students. Please do not ask your instructor or the teaching staff to engage in unethical behavior and change your grade for any of these reasons. As such, any requests to contest grades one week after the grades have been posted or based on reasons that are unethical will be returned with a copy of this paragraph.

I use this policy for two reasons: (1) This policy keeps it fair for students who don’t ask for a new grade, and (2) most students only want to select certain questions to be re-graded, but there are often other questions where a grade was generous. This policy usually means that only students who truly deserve a better grade will usually ask to be re-graded. This policy only applies if you want me to re-grade your assignment or exam. I will be happy to meet with you to discuss your exam and why you received any grade.
Topic and Assignment Schedule

As with any course, I encourage you to read the course material before the corresponding lecture. That way, the material covered in lecture will serve as a review, and you’ll be in a better position to ask informed questions and to seek clarification on any confusing aspects of the material. This is especially true in this course because the articles are often dense and complex source material.

September 5: Introduction to attitudes
- Reading: Introduction to Attitudes
- Activity: Introductions

September 12: Explicit attitude measures
- Reading: Measuring attitudes
- Activity: Pepsi Taste Test

September 19: Attitude change—persuasion
- Reading: The Elaboration Likelihood Model + The Science of Influencing People
- Activity: Persuade someone you know

September 26 (JAY IN MIAMI): Attitude change—compliance
- Reading: Rethinking the Infamous Stanford Prison Experiment + Would I pull that switch?
- Activity: Watch the Stanford Prison Experiment

October 3: Implicit attitude measures
- Reading: Our biased brains + The roots of implicit bias
- Activity: Complete Implicit Association Test (ProjectImplicit.edu)

October 10: Identity & Prejudice
- Reading: Experiments in intergroup discrimination + Sci-Fi Morality
- Activity: Creating Minimal Groups + Brown Eyes/Blue Eyes Video

October 17 (JAY IS AT SESP): MIDTERM

October 24: Morality and Politics
- Reading: The key to political persuasion + How Political Opinions Change
- Activity: Create Fake News + Watch Video of attitude change

October 31: DEBATE—Does fact checking work? (Halloween!)
- Reading: Read this comic, listen to the 4 “I Am So Smart” podcasts on the backfire effect and the controversy around it, and then do a literature search of your own to find additional evidence
- Activity: Debate!
November 7: Cognitive Dissonance & Attitude Structure
- Reading: Cognitive dissonance
- Activity: Propose persuasive topic (must obtain approval)

November 14: Attitude Function
- Reading: Twitter’s passion politics + What’s the point of moral outrage?
- Activity: Compose an online message (Tweet, Facebook Update, Instagram Post) designed to change attitudes

November 21: Impact on Cognition and Behavior
- Reading: The psychology of insiders and outsiders can explain why we have such a hard time agreeing on reality + In what circumstances do attitudes predict behavior
- Activity: Design a plan to change your own behavior

November 28: NO CLASS—THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY

December 5: Persuasion Presentations
- Reading: No readings
- Activity: Students will present their ideas

December 12: Persuasion Presentations
- Reading: No readings
- Activity: Students will present their ideas

TBD: FINAL EXAM

Class Website
The course Classes site will be used to post lecture slides, course announcements, and student grades. Log in and you should see this course. If you do not, please let me know immediately. The slides are available to assist with your note taking, but much information will be covered in class that is not available on the outlines. I will aim to post the lecture slides at the start of each class (but they may not be posted earlier since I am often editing and improving the materials before class). Reading the available lecture slides is NOT a substitute for attending class.

There is also a discussion board for questions. If you have a question you can email me or post it online. If several people email me a similar question I will post it on the website. Please treat the website as a collective resource to ask questions of common interest and share ideas with one another. (NOTE: If you have a problem with another student, please email me directly and do not try to deal with them on the course website.)
Readings
To save you money, I have made the readings publicly available material and provided hyperlinks in the syllabus. These were all written by scientists or science writers and were designed to provide an accessible introduction to relevant topics in the course. If you would like to do further reading, I recommend purchasing the following textbooks (though it is not required): Cooper, J., Blackman, S. F., & Keller, K. T. (2016). The Science of Attitudes or Pratkanis, A., & Aronson, E., (2001). Age of Propaganda: The everyday use and abuse of persuasion.

As with any course, I encourage you to read the course material before the corresponding lecture. That way, the material covered in lecture will serve as a review, and you will be in a much better position to ask informed questions and to seek clarification on any confusing aspects of the material. This is especially true in this course because the articles are often dense and contain complex source material. However, there is not a complete overlap between the book and the lectures and you are expected to know both for the exams.

Email Policy
Who should you email for questions about the course? First you should read the syllabus before you send an email. As such, we will not respond to any questions that are clearly addressed in the syllabus. If many students ask the same questions, we will assume that other people have the same question and send out an announcement with the answer or updated information.

I will aim to respond to all emails within 2 business days. In a class this large, we receive several hundred emails. Simply include “ATTITUDES CLASS” in the subject line of your email. You DO NOT need to email the Instructor if you will miss a lecture. Simply get the lecture materials from NYU Classes and make a friend with someone in class who is willing to share notes with you.

Academic Conduct
All work must be your own. NYU uses Turnitin, which can automatically detect plagiarism. If you cheat, you will be caught. Cheating or plagiarism will be reported through official university channels, and the consequences will be severe. If you are unwise enough to plagiarize, the minimum punishment is usually failure in the course. If the case of plagiarism or cheating is especially blatant, you may be expelled from the university. The papers and assignments are designed for what you can do based on what we are covering in this class and the skills you have already learned.

No form of academic dishonesty will be tolerated. All suspicions of academic dishonesty during exams or assignments will be reported to and adjudicated by the Associate Dean for Students. If a case of academic dishonesty is confirmed, it will result in a penalty that is at least as severe as receiving a 0 on the assignment or
exam. Academic dishonesty includes all forms of plagiarism. Plagiarism includes (but is not limited to): copying or paraphrasing from someone else’s work (another student, an online source, or a journal article), turning in someone else’s work as your own, or presenting someone else’s ideas (a student, online source, or scholar) as your own.

**Laptop policy**

Some research has found that using laptops in class is associated with a much lower final grade. There is also evidence that using a screen can harm the grades of the students beside and behind you because it serves as a distraction. To read more, see this [short article](#) in the NYTimes. Thus, it is not in your own best interest to bring your laptop or other computer devices to class since it could harm your grade. In fact, many professors who have read this research are banning laptops in class.

I have decided to allow laptops and other electronic devices in class. But if you plan to have anything on your computer screen other than course material, I am going to ask that you sit in the back row. This will ensure that you do not impair others around you. This will not impact how your grades or assignments are graded by the Head TA and teaching assistants, it is simply as a courtesy to your classmates. If you have a problem with someone using their laptop in class, please politely ask them to move to the back row. If they do not move, please report it to me and I will ask them to move. Likewise, if you need to take a phone call please discreetly leave class and you can return after you call no questions asked.

**Commitment to Diversity and Constructive Disagreement**

This classroom environment supports a diversity of backgrounds and perspectives and respectful, critical inquiry through the free exchange of ideas. You do not need to express your own true beliefs—in fact, you will be assigned to present a side in a classroom debate that you may not even believe in. Learning how to take a perspective other than your own is critical to fully understanding an idea, and is part of the rich educational experience offered in this course and at NYU. To ensure our classroom discussions and formal debate are a useful education experience, the following principles will guide discussions:

- All backgrounds and viewpoints are welcome as long as they are respectful.
- Treat every member of the class with respect, even if you disagree with their opinion. No one should need to justify their participation, but they can be asked to justify their argument.
- Focus your discussion on the ideas up for debate, not on the people who delivered them (a failure to do so is a logical error known as an *ad hominem* attack).
- Understand that a person may be expressing an idea, even if they don’t agree with it, to fully flesh out a discussion or a perspective. This is a necessary part of science and education.
Science is an evolving process and no ideas are immune from scrutiny in the classroom, including any ideas presented by the professor! As such, you are free to present new evidence or logic if it bears on any relevant issues.

But please try to bring light, not heat, to any discussion.

Try to employ the Principle of Charity: Don’t assume ill intent of others and aim to inform them if they make errors. We all have blind spots, which is precisely why we are at an institution of higher learning together.

Reasonable people can differ on a number of perspectives, opinions, and conclusions.

Please allow time and space for other people to contribute to discussion—it is important to hear from multiple people.

Because diverse perspectives and constructive disagreement sharpens thinking, deepens understanding, and reveals novel insights, it is encouraged.

No harassment of staff or students will be tolerated.

Please do not post criticisms or photos of any of your classmates on social media without their written permission. This is critical for making the classroom a safe place for discussion.

**Getting the Most Out of University**

I thought it would be useful to share some resources for helping you get the most out of your time at NYU. First, life is going to be different at university compared to high school and it’s not always clear what is expected of you. I would recommend reading this short article about the rules of etiquette that are more common in university. Second, some people get far out of their university experience than others. The wisest students move into a peer relationship with the institution rather than a consumer relationship with it. They seize leadership roles. They serve as research assistants. I strongly encourage you to read this article and consider these words of advice. These are not required readings, but I strongly encourage you to check the out.

**Wellness Services**

NYU offers a rigorous academic environment, devoted to scholarship, teaching, and learning. NYU’s approach to the health of our students is one of “wellness”: supporting students in all aspects of their lives in order to enable them to achieve academic success. However, the demands of academic life, coupled with work, family, community, and personal responsibilities can create a stressful environment for students. As such, NYU offers an extensive network of physical and mental health resources here as well as a 24/7 hotline (212-443-9999). Please use these resources if you need additional support outside the classroom (unfortunately our academic staff and faculty are often not equipped or properly trained to help with these issues, but we are happy to direct you to these resources when necessary).