

Boston University  
London Internship Programme

**Boston University**  
43 Harrington Gardens, London SW7 4JU

Psychology Applied  
To Social Issues  
(CAS PS 365)

**Course Handbook**

**Course Convenor:**

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**Professors:**

**Claudia Hammond**

# **Psychology Applied to Social Issues**

## **Session Times**

Taught sessions for this course will take place on the days and dates indicated in the published programme.

## **Attendance**

Attendance is mandatory for ALL classes and penalties will be imposed for unauthorised absences (i.e. the loss of one grade point). Students must complete all required educational visits, tasks, assignments and activities.

## **Course Aims**

Students enrolled on this course may have studied Psychology at a general undergraduate level and / or may have studied Social Psychology and possibly Applied Social Psychology at a more advanced undergraduate level. Such experience is not essential and it is intended that all students, regardless of the type of knowledge they have will be able to engage in critical debate about the nature, characteristics and application of psychological theory in understanding social issues in Great Britain.

The main aims of the course are to:

- Enhance students' awareness of selected current social issues in Great Britain and the policies and strategies currently pursued by government to address them.
- Develop students' critical appreciation of the contributions and limitations of psychological theory and research in understanding social issues and in informing potential intervention strategies to address them.

Students who have completed several courses in Psychology and are familiar with some of the perspectives and issues covered in this course, should think carefully about their own learning goals and take advantage of the course to apply and extend their existing knowledge in relation to social issues in Britain.

## **Learning Objectives**

Specific learning objectives will be set for each session of the course. In the final session, students will be asked to assess the extent to which the learning objectives were achieved.

## **Course Overview**

The course will offer students a broad overview of the range of current social issues facing Britain today, with particular attention given to: quality of life, crime, substance misuse, immigration and asylum, gender issues and sexuality. Students will be introduced to current work of government departments directly concerned with major social issues (e.g. Home Office, Department of Health,

Cabinet Office) and current government policies and strategies for tackling such issues will be highlighted. Attention will be given to the role of arts and cultural strategies in addressing social issues.

The course will introduce current theoretical and methodological approaches in applied psychology drawing on recent British sources. Students will be encouraged to think critically about the extent to which contemporary psychological theory and research can provide us with insights and solutions to pressing social issues.

Visits and visiting speakers will be organised to help to inform students' understanding of the theoretical and applied issues addressed during the course.

### **Learning and Teaching Strategies**

The sessions will vary in format according to the topic and presenter. Most sessions will involve some formal input and will then adopt a problem solving (activity/debate) or discussion approach. It is expected that all students will be prepared to participate on the basis of having undertaken prior reading or other designated activities. Some use will also be made of recent television documentary material to provide students with more concrete images of the issues addressed in British society today. Each taught session will last for four hours with a half-hour break midway through the session.

### **Course reading**

Reading related to each session will be provided for students on CD. A copy of the course CD is available for loan from the Centre library.

Further readings are also available in a downloadable pdf format from the bu-london website -- <http://www.bu-london.co.uk/PS365.html>

Three social psychology texts of general value are available in the Centre library:

Hewstone, M. and Stroebe, W. (eds) (2001) *Introduction to Social Psychology*. Third Edition. Oxford: Blackwell.

Hewstone, M., Stroebe, W. and Stephenson, G.M. (eds) (1996) *Introduction to Social Psychology*. Second Edition. Oxford: Blackwell.

Hogg, M.A. and Vaughan, G.M. (2002) *Social Psychology*. Third Edition. Harlow: Prentice Hall.

Tutors will give particular recommendations for reading before sessions, and will suggest additional reading if required.

## Assessment

There are two aspects to the assessment of this course:

1. A paper of 2,000 words (50%)
2. A two-hour exam (50%)

### **You should use the following general title for your paper**

*'Psychological theory can further our understanding of social problems and reveal practical solutions to them. Discuss this statement with reference to one social issue covered on the course.'*

**Suggested topics are:** mental health, sexual health, gender, sexual diversity, poverty and social inequality, immigration and asylum, stress, community safety and crime, substance dependency (drugs, smoking, alcohol) and quality of life. If you wish to address a topic not in this list, you must agree the topic of your paper with Stephen Clift.

### **The examination**

This will be in two parts. The first part will ask you to critically evaluate one of the research papers discussed in sessions during the course. These research papers will be clearly identified for you. The second part will ask you to reflect on what you have learned from the visits organised as part of this course.

## Course Summary –

<b>Themes</b>	<b>Wednesday</b>	<b>Thursday</b>
<b>Psychology and social issues</b>	No session	Stephen Clift Social issues in Britain and the British contribution to Psychology  Visit to the Science Museum to take the Psychology Trail
<b>Emotion, quality of life and well-being</b>	Claudia Hammond Psychology of Emotions and Quality of Life  Visit to the 'Who Am I?' Exhibition at the Science Museum	Stephen Clift Evolutionary Psychology – what relevance does it have to understanding contemporary social issues?  Visit to the Natural History museum
<b>Gender and Sexuality</b>	Stephen Clift Freud, Psycho-analysis and social issues  Visit to the Freud Museum This may be during the morning if it can be arranged	Stephen Clift Gender and Sexuality  Visit to the 'What Women Want' exhibition, The Women's Library
<b>Living on the margins</b>	Claudia Hammond Refugees and asylum seekers in Britain  Visit to the British Refugee Council	Stephen Clift Crime, policing and punishment  Film by Roger Graef
<b>Arts and Social Inclusion</b>	Stephen Clift Arts and Social Issues in Britain	Stephen Clift Arts and Social Issues in Britain  Reflection on the course

## Details of Sessions

Stephen Clift

### Social issues in Britain and the British contribution to Psychology

#### Learning objectives

1. To consider what 'A Future Fair for All' and other sources tell us about important social and political issues facing Britain today
2. To gain an overview of the nature of Psychology as a discipline and development and contributions of British Psychology
3. To learn about British Psychology from a visit to the Science Museum

An outline will then be given of the course: aims, course content, working methods, study visits and course assessment. Insights into current social problems in Britain today will be given through references to the Labour Party document - *A Future Fair for All* (2003), government policies, opinion polls and newspaper reports. The group will be asked to reflect on the contribution of psychological theory and research to the social issues identified.

Attention will be given to recent work of Henriques on the unity of Psychology as a discipline, followed by an overview of the development of academic and professional Psychology in Britain. This will provide a preparation for a visit to the Science Museum to follow the 'Psychology Trail' during the second half of the afternoon.

For information on the Science Museum visit: <http://www.sciencemuseum.org.uk/>

Claudia Hammond

### Psychology of Emotions and Quality of Life

#### Learning objectives

1. To explore the range of theoretical perspectives developed to understand emotion and to reflect critically on recent examples of research on the psychology of emotions
2. To participate in a variety of exercises on emotions and quality of life which help to illustrate different perspectives
3. To learn more about Psychology through experience from a visit to the 'Who am I?' exhibition at the Science Museum

This session will provide an overview of recent developments in the psychology of emotions. Emotions – generally of a negative kind, have been a common thread running through all the issues addressed so far in the course. It is appropriate, therefore, to reflect on the contribution made by psychologists in understanding our emotional lives, and in particular to redress the focus on negative feelings with an examination of the circumstances which lead us to feel good about ourselves and our social circumstances. What do we mean by a 'good quality of life'? Are people generally satisfied with their lives and happy? These are some of the questions this session will seek to answer.

Details of the Radio series Claudia has produced on the emotions can be found at:

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/radio4/science/rollercoaster1.shtml> Visit these pages before the session and listen to the programmes.

Before the session, members of the group will be asked to read examples of recent British research available on the course CD.

During the second half of the afternoon, there will be the opportunity to visit the 'Who Am I?' exhibition at the Science Museum.

### **Stephen Clift**

#### **Evolutionary Psychology – what relevance does it have to understanding contemporary social issues?**

##### **Learning objectives**

1. To explore the significance of Darwin for Psychology and the relevance of an evolutionary perspective to an understanding of social behaviour
2. To introduce the work of leading British advocates and critics of the evolutionary perspective in Psychology
3. To learn more about Darwin and his impact from a visit to the Darwin Centre at the Natural History Museum

One of the most fundamental British contributions to the development of psychology as a discipline is the work of Darwin on the theory of evolution. This session will explore the relevance of his ideas for psychology and an understanding of contemporary social issues. Particular attention will be given to evolutionary accounts of positive aspects of human behaviour such as our capacity to cooperate and care for others. Further reading will be recommended which will give students insights into current debates in Britain today on the relevance of an evolutionary perspective in Psychology.

To listen to a recent Radio 4 discussion on human evolution visit:

[http://www.bbc.co.uk/radio4/science/frontiers\\_20050504.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/radio4/science/frontiers_20050504.shtml)

To learn more about Robin Dunbar's 'lonely hearts' research visit:

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/science/humanbody/mind/surveys/lonelyhearts/index.shtml>

A visit to the Darwin Centre at the Natural History Museum will take place during the second half of the afternoon. For details of the Centre visit: <http://www.nhm.ac.uk/visit-us/galleries/darwin-centre/>

### **Stephen Clift**

#### **Freud, Psychoanalysis and Social Issues**

##### **Learning objectives**

1. To consider the place of Psychoanalysis in British Psychology both historically and today
2. To introduce some of the work of the Janet Sayers and Mark Solms - two of the leading exponents of Psychoanalysis in Britain today
3. To learn about the life and work of Freud from a visit to the Freud Museum

Today we will visit the Freud Museum in Hampstead – the house where Freud lived for the last eighteen months of his life after being forced to leave Vienna after the Nazi occupation. In association with this visit we will have the opportunity to reflect on the contribution of Freud to the development of psychology. We will also read and discuss extracts from the work of Janet Sayers, and Mark Solms and consider what relevance Psychoanalysis has, if any, in understanding social issues in contemporary societies.

To listen to a recent radio series on five major works published by Freud in 2005 visit: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/radio4/science/freudianslips.shtml>

Information on Janet Sayers: <http://www.kent.ac.uk/sspsr/staff/sayers.htm>

To hear Mark Solms in discussion on dreaming visit: [http://www.bbc.co.uk/radio4/history/inourtime/inourtime\\_20040304.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/radio4/history/inourtime/inourtime_20040304.shtml)

Visit the website of the Freud Museum to learn something about the house and the work of the museum: <http://www.freud.org.uk/> Reading will be allocated from the course CD.

## **Stephen Clift**

### **Gender and Sexuality**

#### **Learning objectives**

1. To consider issues of gender and sexuality in British society today and the continuing need to address inequalities
2. To introduce some of the work of Celia Kitzinger and Sue Wilkinson – two of the leading feminist/lesbian Social Psychologists in Britain today
3. To learn about the struggle for equality between the sexes in Britain from a visit to the Women's Library

Addressing social inequalities and discrimination is high on the political agenda in Britain today – and commitment to promoting equality of opportunity informs current UK policy in areas of gender, sexuality, race, disability and social disadvantage. This session will consider the circumstances and experiences of women and lesbian and gay men in Britain today, and will explore the recent contributions made by feminist and lesbian/gay psychologists.

For a recent radio discussion on evolutionary psychology, gender and sexuality: [http://www.bbc.co.uk/radio4/womanshour/2001\\_32\\_wed\\_03.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/radio4/womanshour/2001_32_wed_03.shtml)

Information on Celia Kitzinger and Sue Wilkinson:  
[http://www.york.ac.uk/depts/soci/s\\_kitz.html](http://www.york.ac.uk/depts/soci/s_kitz.html)  
<http://www.lboro.ac.uk/departments/ss/depstaff/staff/wilkinson.html>

A visit to the 'What Women Want' exhibition at the Women's Library will provide insights into the historical struggle of women in Britain for equal rights. For details of the exhibition visit: <http://www.londonmet.ac.uk/thewomenslibrary/>

## **Claudia Hammond**

### **Asylum Seekers and Refugees in Britain**

#### **Learning objectives**

1. To consider the experiences of asylum seekers and refugees in Britain today, as well as attitudes of the general population towards these groups.
2. To explore theories of inter-group relations, prejudice and discrimination, focusing in particular on the work of Miles Hewstone, one of Britain's most distinguished Social Psychologists
3. To learn about the work of the Refugee Council from a visit to this organisation

There has been growing public concern over a number of years about increased numbers of people seeking asylum and refugee status in the UK. This session will provide an introduction to the asylum system in this country, government policy and public perceptions of asylum seekers. It will go on to discuss theories of prejudice (e.g. Authoritarian personality, scape-goating theory, social categorisation etc.) and how prejudice can be challenged. A concrete understanding of the current situation in the UK will be aided through an analysis of newspaper articles about asylum looking for positive or negative images, assumptions made about refugees, use of misleading language, textual techniques used to harness readers' fears, identification of themes relating to theories of prejudice and examples of initiatives to tackle inter-group tensions.

Information on Miles Hewstone: [http://www.psy.ox.ac.uk/social\\_psych/miles-bio.htm](http://www.psy.ox.ac.uk/social_psych/miles-bio.htm)  
For information on the British Refugee Council visit: <http://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/>

### **Crime, policing and punishment**

#### **Learning objectives**

1. To explore the extent and nature of crime in British society today, drawing on the work of David Wilson, one of the most provocative criminologists working in Britain today
2. To consider the value of psychological theory and research in understanding the causes of crime and in developing approaches to rehabilitation
3. To view and discuss a recent film on prison and prisoners by Roger Graef

The first half of this session will examine recent patterns of crime in Britain and current controversies around understanding the causes of crime and how best it can be tackled. Crime is a complex phenomenon, which takes a wide variety of forms. It is also associated in important ways with many other social characteristics and issues – such as gender, age, economic inequalities, race, mental health and drug/alcohol use. The session will draw upon recent media reports on crime, as well as social psychological accounts of criminal activity in attempting to understand some of the issues facing British society today.

Particular attention will be given to the controversial views of David Wilson and his recent work on 'theorising Harold Shipman' the British GP who killed over 200 of his elderly patients. There will also be an opportunity to watch a recent film by a leading British director, Roger Graef, on an innovative approach to work in prisons through the arts.

Information on Colin Wilson: <http://www.professorwilson.com/>

Information on Roger Graef: [http://www.filmsofrecord.com/biogs/biogs\\_roger.htm](http://www.filmsofrecord.com/biogs/biogs_roger.htm)

## **Stephen Clift**

### **Arts and Social Issues in Britain I and II**

#### **Learning objectives**

1. To consider the role of the arts in addressing social issues in British society – including social inequalities, prejudice, and criminal justice issues
2. To examine the role of the arts in healthcare and health promotion
3. To explore through experience and reflection the personal significance of the arts for members of the group

These sessions will examine a number of initiatives developed in Britain over the last 10 to 15 years to use the arts to encourage personal and community growth, health and well-being. Particular attention will be given to the work of the National Network for Arts in Health, the Centre for Arts and Humanities in Healthcare and Medicine, the Unit for Arts and Offenders, and the work of Healing Arts, St. Mary's Hospital, Isle of Wight. Throughout the session, members of the group will be invited to participate in simple musical activities to illustrate the connections, which can be made between music, singing and well-being.

Links will be drawn with the various psychological perspectives discussed earlier in the course.

Reading will be allocated to individuals in the group from the course CD