Boston University British Programmes
Psychology Applied To Social Issues
CAS PS 365 (Core course)
Spring 2011

Instructor Information
A. Name          Prof. Stephen Clift and Claudia Hammond
B. Day and Time  Section A: Wednesdays and Thursdays, 9am-1pm
                Section B: Wednesdays and Thursdays, 2-6pm
                Note arrangements for visit days – see details at the end of the
                handbook.
C. Location      Section A: Harrington room, 43 Harrington Gardens, SW7 4JU
                Section B: Brompton room, 43 Harrington Gardens, SW7 4JU
D. BU Telephone  020 7244 6255
E. Email         and claudia.hammond@bu-london.co.uk
F. Webpage       http://www.bu-london.co.uk/academic/ps365
G. Office hours  By appointment

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 is
Great Britain.

The main aims of the course are to:

* Provide awareness of selected current social issues in Great Britain and the policies and
  strategies currently pursued by government to address them.
* Develop critical appreciation of the contributions and limitations of psychological theory and
  research in understanding social issues and in informing potential intervention strategies.
* Increase knowledge of the British contribution to the development of psychology as a
discipline, and awareness of the work of some leading contemporary British psychologists.
* Raise awareness of the importance of the evolutionary perspective in contemporary
  psychology, and consider its relevance to understanding and tackling current social issues.

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.
Course Overview

The course will offer students a broad overview of selected current social issues facing Britain today – such as: crime, substance misuse, immigration and asylum, gender issues and attitudes to sexuality, environmental issues and consumption. Students will be introduced to current work of government departments directly concerned with major social issues (e.g. Home Office, Department of Health) and current government policies and strategies for tackling such issues will be highlighted.

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 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/radio 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 breaks as appropriate to the material being covered.

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.

Students must check their email and the weekly Student Newsletter for field trip updates and reminders.

Course Reading

Required reading related to each session will be provided for students on-line or in hard copy through the library. A copy of the course resource CD is available for loan from the Centre library. This should be very helpful in preparing the course assignment.

Students will also be required to read selected chapters from Steven Pinker ‘The Blank Slate’

Core readings will be posted on the course webpage: http://www.bu-london.co.uk/academic/ps365 (you must be logged in to view materials).
### Course Summary

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<td>13 January 2011</td>
<td>Stephen Clift</td>
<td>Social issues in Britain – an introduction</td>
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<td>Psychology in Britain – some history and the current picture. Visit</td>
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<td>to Science Museum ‘Psychology Trail’ and Psychoanalysis exhibition</td>
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<td>19 January 2011</td>
<td>Claudia Hammond</td>
<td>Quality of Life in the UK and the Psychology of Emotions</td>
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<td>Guided tour of the High Society exhibition at the Wellcome Collection</td>
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<td>Required reading:</td>
<td>Hemenlotter (2008) the effects of Botox on emotional experience</td>
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<td>20 January 2011</td>
<td>Stephen Clift</td>
<td>Iceberg: Visits to the Science Museum and the ‘High Society’</td>
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<td>Reflection:</td>
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<td>Required reading:</td>
<td>Hurwitz et al. (2008) Narrative perspectives on drug use</td>
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<td>Introduction to the evolutionary perspective in psychology</td>
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<td>Required reading:</td>
<td>Pinker (1999) Summary of the Blank Slate</td>
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<td>Visit to the Human Evolution exhibition, Natural History Museum</td>
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<td>26 January 2011</td>
<td>Claudia Hammond</td>
<td>GROUPS COMBINE FOR AFTERNOON SESSION</td>
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<td>Visit to British</td>
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<td>D’Onofrio and Munk (2004) Understanding the stranger</td>
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<td>27 January 2011</td>
<td>Stephen Clift</td>
<td>Iceberg: Should recreational drugs should be decriminalised?</td>
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<td>Pinker chapter on violence</td>
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<td>Video:</td>
<td>‘Children, Knives and Guns’</td>
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<td>2 February 2011</td>
<td>Stephen Clift</td>
<td>Visit to the Freud Museum</td>
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<td>Ivan Ward: Do Freud’s ideas have any relevance for understanding</td>
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<td>contemporary gender/sexual cultures and their discontents?</td>
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<td>3 February 2011</td>
<td>Stephen Clift</td>
<td>Dimensions of gender and sexuality in contemporary Britain</td>
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<td>Debate:</td>
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<td>Barker et al (2009) Violence in teenage sexual relationships in</td>
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<td>Pinker chapter on sex and gender</td>
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<td>9 February 2011</td>
<td>Stephen Clift</td>
<td>Environmental degradation, species loss and climate change</td>
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<td>Required reading: Tim Jackson (2002) Evolutionary psychology in</td>
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<td>10 February 2011</td>
<td>Stephen Clift</td>
<td>Student presentations: Nudging, MINDSPACE and happiness – a look at</td>
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* Contingency Class Date: Friday 4 February. Students are obligated to keep this date free to attend class should any class dates need to be rescheduled.

Exam Date: Monday 14 February. Exam times and locations will be posted on the BU London website and in the Student Newsletter two weeks before exam dates.
Thursday 13 January
Social issues in Britain and the British contribution to Psychology

Stephen Clift

Learning objectives

1. To identify the key social and political issues facing Britain today using a range of sources – research, opinion polls, media coverage, government policy
2. To learn about the history of Psychology in Britain from following the Psychology Trail in the Science Museum.
3. To appreciate the continued interested in Psychoanalysis in Britain

An outline will 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 gained through references to opinion polls, newspaper reports and current government policies.

We will then visit the Science Museum to follow the ‘Psychology Trail’ and learn something about the history of psychology in Britain since 1901. We will also look at the current exhibition on psychoanalysis. If you wish, you can also visit the ‘Who Am I?’ exhibition in the museum.

For information on the Science Museum visit: http://www.sciencemuseum.org.uk/
For information on the Psychoanalysis exhibition visit: http://www.sciencemuseum.org.uk/visitmuseum/galleries/psychoanalysis.aspx
For information on ‘Who Am I?’ visit: http://www.sciencemuseum.org.uk/visitmuseum/galleries/who_am_i.aspx

Recommended Reading:

Wednesday 19 January

Claudia Hammond

The Psychology of the Emotions and altered states

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 visit the ‘High Society’ exhibition at the Wellcome Collection to consider the human desire to experience altered states through examining the history and culture of mind-altering drugs.

This session will provide an overview of recent developments in the psychology of emotions, including the contribution of evolutionary psychology. 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. Then we will move on to examine the human desire to have a different emotional experience through mind-altering drugs.
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.

For information on the ‘High Society’ exhibition see: http://www.wellcomecollection.org/whats-on/exhibitions/high-society

Required reading:
Hennenlotter, Dresel, Castrop et al. (2008) The link between facial feedback and neural activity within central circuitries of emotion

**N.B. The afternoon group will meet Claudia at the exhibition, not at Boston. See end of handbook for details***

Thursday 20 January

Stephen Clift

Reflections on visits / Pinker’s Blank Slate / Darwin’s Contribution to Psychology

Learning objectives

1. To reflect on the Science Museum and ‘High Society’ exhibition visits
2. To discuss the Hurwitz paper on narrative perspectives on substance use and prepare for the debate on the 27th January
3. To introduce the theoretical framework for understanding human behaviour set out in Steven Pinker’s book ‘The Blank Slate’
4. To learn more about human evolution from a visit to the Natural History Museum

The session will start with a brief reflection on the visits undertaken so far, and with a discussion of the paper by Hurwitz.

The second half of the session will introduce the work of Steven Pinker and the perspective on human behaviour elaborated in ‘The Blank Slate’

Stephen Pinker – Blank Slate lecture: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CuQHSKLIx2c
For a longer lecture see:

A visit to the Natural History Museum will take place to look the permanent exhibit on human evolution. For information on Darwin and the theory of evolution see: http://www.nhm.ac.uk/nature-online/evolution/index.html

Required Reading:
Pinker, S. (1999) The Blank Slate, the Noble Savage and the Ghost in the Machine (available online)


Further Reading:

Wednesday 26 January  
Claudia Hammond

Asylum Seekers and Refugees in Britain ** Meet at Brixton Station at 1.15pm **

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 learn about the work of the Refugee Council from a visit to this organisation
3. To discuss the ‘Understanding the Stranger’ report (Lisa D’Onofrio and Karen Munk)

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.

For information on the British Refugee Council visit: http://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/

Required reading:
D’Onofrio, L. and Munk, K. (2004) Understanding the Stranger, Report commissioned and published by The Information Centre about Asylum and Refugees in the UK (ICAR)

Thursday 27 January  
Stephen Clift

Drugs and Crime in the UK

Learning objectives

1. To debate the issue of decriminalisation of recreational drugs
2. To discuss the perspective on aggression outlined by Steven Pinker in The Blank Slate
3. To learn about the social and developmental factors links to criminal behaviour through watching a recent film ‘Guns, Knives and Children’

This session will be divided into two parts. In the first half, we will explore the arguments for and against the decriminalisation of recreational drugs. This will build upon your visit to the Wellcome Collection ‘High Society’ exhibition. Two groups will be formed to propose and oppose the motion. Resources will be provided before the session to help groups to construct their case.

As a stimulus, watch the following BBC news item in which a former Labour Government minister, Bob Ainsworth, makes the case for decriminalisation: http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-12005824
In the second half of the session, we will consider the state of crime in Britain today, the response of government in tackling it, and the value of psychological perspectives on criminal activity. We will explore in particular, concerns over anti-social behaviour and youth crime, and the response of government, police and the criminal justice system. Pinker’s discussion of aggression in his book *The Blank Slate* will provide a theoretical framework for analysing the content of the film.

**Required reading:**

Source material provided for the decriminalisation of drugs debate

**Listen to Claudia’s programme on drugs decriminalisation in Portugal:**
http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p0036wf7


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**Wednesday 2 February**

**Visit to the Freud Museum ** Meet outside the Freud Museum at 10.50am **

**Learning objectives**

1. To learn about the life and work of Freud from a visit to his home in London
2. To consider the place of Psychoanalysis in British Psychology both historically and today
3. To discuss whether Psychoanalysis has any relevance to contemporary debates on gender and sexuality

This visit will build upon our earlier visit to the Psychoanalysis exhibition at the Freud Museum.

You will have the opportunity to build upon what you may already have learned about Freud’s life and work from previous courses. The Museum website has very useful information and you will also be able to use an audio guide during the visit which is very interesting.

Visit the website of the Freud Museum to learn something about the house and the work of the museum: [http://www.freud.org.uk/](http://www.freud.org.uk/)

To listen to a recent radio series on five major works published by Freud in 1905 visit: [http://www.bbc.co.uk/radio4/science/freudianslips.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/radio4/science/freudianslips.shtml)

During the visit we will meet Ivan Ward, a practicing Psychoanalyst and the Museum’s Education Officer. I would like us to be prepared to engage in discussion with him about the extent to which Psychoanalysis has relevance to current debates about gender and sexuality in contemporary society – in particular: concerns about the ‘sexualisation’ of children; young people’s consumption of internet pornography and the claims made by Natasha Walter that we are witnessing a resurgence of sexism.


See also a recent BBC interview with David Cameron on the sexualisation of children: [http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/8521403.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/8521403.stm)
**Required reading:** Material provided in class to prepare for the visit and discussion

Suggested further reading:


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**Thursday 3 February**

**Gender and Sexuality in the UK**

**Learning objectives**

1. To discuss the perspective on sex and gender outline by Steven Pinker in the Blank Slate
2. To consider issues of gender and sexuality in British society today and the continuing need to address inequalities
3. To discuss a recent report on violence in teenage sexual relationships and the government’s response to this issue.

This session will continue our examination and discussion of gender and sexuality in the UK. This session will explore the extent to which an evolutionary perspective provides insights into contemporary problems, particularly the reported high levels of violence in teenage sexual relationships and continued discrimination and violence towards young lesbian and gay people.

**Required reading:**


For information on the government’s response see: [http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/8376943.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/8376943.stm)

For the media campaign see: [http://thisisabuse.direct.gov.uk/](http://thisisabuse.direct.gov.uk/)

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**Wednesday 9 February**

**The Challenge of Environmental Degradation, Species Loss and Climate Change**

**Learning objectives**

1. To consider the growing problems of environmental degradation, species loss and climate change
2. To watch and discuss ‘An Inconvenient Truth’ by Al Gore, focusing on the relevance of psychology in addressing the challenges of global climate change
3. To consider the work of Tim Jackson, a UK psychologist concerned with the challenges of the green agenda and the need for greater sustainability in use of natural resources.

4. To explore the relevance of evolutionary psychology and models of human needs in the context of increased environmental challenges

**Required reading:**


Further reading:


Visit the Resolve website at the University of Surrey, one of the leading academic centres in the UK concerned with the environment and lifestyles: [http://www.surrey.ac.uk/resolve/](http://www.surrey.ac.uk/resolve/)


Climate Crisis – Al Gore’s website: [http://www.climatecrisis.net/](http://www.climatecrisis.net/)


**Please note: students will have their first Internship Tutorial meeting on the day of their ninth (last) Core lecture, on Thursday 10 Feb., from 12-1.30pm (Boston room).**

In addition, all students must attend a Mandatory Internship Briefing that will not conflict with your exam on Monday 14 February at the Cine Lumiere, 17 Queensberry Place, London, SW7 2DT. You will be emailed with the time closer to the date.

**Thursday 10 February**

**Stephen Clift**

**Student Presentations: Nudging, MINDSPACE and happiness**

The current UK government has established a Behavioural Insight Team within the Cabinet Office. The unit draws inspiration from a recent book by Thaler and Sunstein: ‘Nudge: Improving Decisions About Health, Wealth and Happiness. In this session we will examine the work of this unit and look critically at its policy recommendations, particularly in relation to health and quality of life.

Students will work in five groups of three to devise a 15 minute presentation on one of the following topics: Smoking, teenage pregnancy, alcohol, diet and weight and physical exercise.
**Required reading:**

For a critical perspective on ‘nudging’ see:  
http://www.spiked-online.com/index.php/site/article/9840/

Royal Society of Arts ‘Social Brain’ project:  
http://www.thersa.org/projects/social-brain

Listen to Claudia’s programme on ‘Sugaring the pill’:  
http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b00vhgpq

**Assessment**

There are two aspects to the assessment of this course:

1. A paper of 2,000 words (50%) Due: Thursday 10 February
2. A two-hour exam (50%) Due: Monday 14 February

**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:**

Gender issues, sexual diversity, immigration and asylum, community safety and crime, consumption and the environment, substance use (drugs, smoking, alcohol), health and wellbeing (teenage pregnancy, diet and weight, physical exercise)

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 reflect on what you have learned from the visits organised as part of this course. The second 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.

Please refer to the Academic Handbook for detailed grading criteria, attendance requirements and policies on plagiarism:  
Details of visits arranged as part of this course

High Society Exhibition, Wellcome Collection, London, NW1 2BE – Wed 19th January

*MORNING GROUP MEET IN BOSTON CLASSROOM AS USUAL* Later in the morning we will travel to the Wellcome Collection together. We will finish there by 12.45pm.

*AFTERNOON GROUP MEET AT THE WELLCOME COLLECTION NEAR EUSTON STATION at 1.20pm. After we’ve seen the exhibition we will travel back to Boston together to spend the rest of the session in the classroom.

DIRECTIONS

Eastbound District or Circle line from Gloucester Road to Victoria. Then Victoria Line northbound to Euston. Please allow 40 min to get from Harrington Gardens to the Wellcome Collection. When you come out of the front main Entrance of Euston station walk to the right of cafes and head along the bath diagonally to your right (not sharp right) through a grassy area. This takes you to junction with traffic lights on the Euston Road. The Wellcome Collection is diagonally opposite you across the Euston Road. We will meet in the area with seating to the left at the top of the short staircase, outside the doors to the High Society exhibition at 1.20pm. We are booked in for a tour, so if you are unavoidably delayed come and find us inside the exhibition where the tour will have started.

For details of the High Society exhibition visit: http://www.wellcomecollection.org/whats-on/exhibitions/high-society.aspx
Visit to the British Refugee Council Wed 26th January

Required reading: Before the session please read - D’Onofrio and Munk (2004) Understanding the stranger. Note down two aspects of this study you like and two criticisms for use in discussion during this session

We are spending the entire session at the British Refugee Council in Brixton as one large group, with both morning and afternoon groups meeting at 1.15pm.

*Meet Claudia Hammond in the pedestrianised area next to the Body Shop on the opposite side of the road from Brixton Station at 1.15pm, not at Boston*

DIRECTIONS

Eastbound District or Circle line from Gloucester Road to Victoria. Then Victoria Line southbound to Brixton. Please allow 40 min for this journey.

Arrange to meet a few others from your group to travel with them. Exchange mobile nos. within your groups so that you can find each other. If you can’t come for any reason it’s essential that you call or text Claudia on 07956 646010 or give a message to another member of your group. Otherwise the entire group will have to wait for you outside Brixton station.

If you’re early do have a wander around Brixton market (just out of the station to the right). While you’re waiting at Brixton station see if you can spot something that makes this station unique.

Please try not to be late because at 1.15pm we will all set off together for the British Refugee Council which is just around the corner in Ferndale Road. If you are unavoidably delayed and find that we have gone, then proceed to this address and ask security to let you through to the Training Room, but it’s a busy place so it’s better if we all arrive together.

240-250 Ferndale Road, London SW9 8BB
Visit to Freud Museum Wed 2nd February

Meet outside the Freud Museum not later than 10.50am. The visit is timed to start at 11am. Allow 40 minutes for the journey from Harrington Gardens to the museum.

Location of Freud Museum

The **Freud Museum** is located at 20 Maresfield Gardens, NW3, near Finchley Road Underground Station.

Blue signposts mark the way from the station to the museum.

Exit the station, cross Finchley Road and turn to the right. After about 100 metres turn to the left into Trinity Walk (TR WK on above map). At the top of Trinity Walk, turn to the left into Maresfield Gardens, and you will reach the **Freud Museum** after about 150 metres, on the right-hand side.

**Underground:** Take the Jubilee Line or Metropolitan Line to Finchley Road underground station (note that this is in Underground **Zone 2**).