Course information 2011–12
MN2079 Elements of social and applied psychology

This course provides an overview of key areas of social psychology and their application. It addresses issues of both theoretical interest and practical importance, thereby aiding our understanding of how people behave, think, interact and communicate in social settings.

Prerequisite
None apply.

Aims and objectives
This course has five major aims. To:
- provide an overview of the scope of social psychology and its major methodological approaches
- identify the key ideas and processes people use in understanding their social world
- assess the impact of group membership and social influence on people’s behaviour
- evaluate the role of social relations in our societies
- illustrate how social psychological knowledge and principles can be applied to real-world issues.

Essential reading
For full details please refer to the reading list.

Myers, D. Social Psychology. (Boston/London: McGraw-Hill)

Learning outcomes
At the end of this course and having completed the essential reading and activities students should be able to:
- describe key concepts, theories and methodological approaches used in social psychology
- outline the processes used in understanding our social world
- assess how people behave in groups and the role of social influence
- analyse the processes and phenomena involved in social relations
- critically evaluate how social psychology can be applied to social issues and can aid our understanding of human behaviour in real-world settings.

Assessment
This course is assessed by a three hour unseen written examination.

Students should consult the Programme Regulations for degrees and diplomas in Economics, Management, Finance and the Social Sciences that are reviewed annually. The Prerequisites, Exclusions, and Syllabus are subject to confirmation in the Regulations. Notice is also given in the Regulations of any courses which are being phased out and students are advised to check course availability.
What is social psychology?: The nature and scope of social psychology; factors which influence social behaviour; theoretical perspectives and the role of theory in research; research methods in social psychology; reliability, validity and realism; ethical issues in research; the challenges and benefits of applying the knowledge and principles of social psychology to practical problems, especially in organisations and workplace settings.

Understanding the social world: Concepts of the self; self-perception; self presentation; performance style and self-presentation strategies; the dramaturgical model. Perception of others and impression formation. Cognitive strategies: heuristics, biases and fallacies; the impact of schemata and stereotypes. Attributions and attributional style; attribution theory; sources of error and bias. Attitudes: their nature, formation and functions; cognitive consistency and dissonance; the relation between attitudes and behaviour; recent models of the attitude-behaviour link; the nature and impact of social representations.

Social influence: Groups: roles, norms and cohesiveness. Group influence: task performance; problem solving; decision making. Conformity; normative influence, majority and minority pressure and its impact; compliance and acceptance. Obedience to authority; experimental studies factors affecting obedience and their implications. Attitude change and persuasive communication; analyses of the factors involved in the persuasion process, with special reference to the media and advertising and the role of social psychology in promoting health-related behaviour.