DD307

Are you ready for DD307?

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1. Introduction

The purpose of this booklet is to give you a flavour of the new third level Open University course DD307 Social Psychology: Critical Perspectives on Self and Others. It presents some material from the course and exercises which will help you decide whether you are ready to begin work on the course right away, or whether you would benefit from doing some revision, or perhaps even taking another course before you begin.

It is always difficult to 'jump in' to material outside the context of a course. To get the most out of this booklet, we recommend that you set aside 1-2 hours to read through it and complete the self-assessment activities. It may take you a little time to get back into the habit of reading academic material so you should take that into account when you assess the level of difficulty of the activities in Section 6.

The key question

DD307 Social Psychology: Critical Perspectives on Self and Others addresses one of the most exciting questions we all face in our everyday lives: how do we understand ourselves and other people?

The course uses traditional and cutting-edge social psychological theories to explore a number of complex topics and issues which relate to our lives and our social worlds. These include:

- emotions (Do we all experience the same emotions or are emotions different for people in different societies?)
- embodiment (What is the relationship between the body and the person?)
- intimate relationships (What shapes them? Do men and women bring different expectations to relationships?)
• public relationships (What affects our impressions of other people? Have people in contemporary society become harder and less compassionate towards others?)
• families (What counts as ‘family’ today? Why are contemporary families changing?)
• prejudice and conflict (Are these problems between individuals or groups?)
• identity and subjectivity (What makes each of us different? What makes us the same? How does each of us experience our own identity ‘from the inside’?).

The course also considers social psychology as a discipline, including its history and the debates between different perspectives. The four main perspectives explored are:
• Cognitive social
• Phenomenological
• Discursive psychological
• Social psychoanalytic.

The course raises challenging questions about the status of knowledge and what social psychology can tell us about ourselves and others.

As you can see, DD307 Social Psychology: Critical Perspectives on Self and Others will promote your understanding of social behaviour and experience (your own and other people’s) and help you develop a critical understanding of social psychological theories and research. By encouraging you to reflect on your own life in the light of social psychological evidence, the course is likely to contribute to your personal development. You will also use and develop the academic skills of critical evaluation, argument and the appropriate use of evidence. You will have the opportunity to undertake a piece of independent research which will enable you to develop your research skills and consolidate and deepen your understanding of a particular social psychological topic.

Studying social psychology will give you the skills and knowledge relevant to careers in education, industry, health profession, management and social services. For students who wish to pursue careers in psychology, DD307 Social Psychology: Critical Perspectives on Self and Others is one of the core psychology courses for the BSc (Hons) Psychology and the Diploma in Psychology (the conversion for postgraduates) which is recognised by the British Psychological Society (BPS) for Graduate Basis for Registration (GBR).

2. The course programme and materials

Before embarking on DD307 Social Psychology: Critical Perspectives on Self and Others, it will be useful for you to get an idea of the course contents and how the course is structured.

2.1 The study programme

DD307 Social Psychology: Critical Perspectives on Self and Others is a 60 point third level course, presented from February to October. There is no summer school. You will work through an introduction to the course; blocks on Social Selves and Social Judgement; a block on research methods as preparation for designing your own project and writing a proposal and rationale; a block on Group processes; a separate block on the project itself; a block on The Production of Knowledge, and a concluding block which will prepare you to revise for the final exam.
2.2 The course materials

The course has two textbooks.

Book 1 Social Psychology Matters explores the significance of social psychology in the 21st century and the contribution it makes to understanding the experience of being a person in today's world. The book traces the roots of social psychology and relates the key perspectives to real-life experience. It explores major topics such as family relationships, conflict, the self, emotions and the body through different theoretical perspectives. It encourages you to reflect on your experience of being a person in a social world in the light of these perspectives and poses challenging questions about how we come to know about ourselves and other people.

Book 2 Critical Readings in Social Psychology covers seven key social psychological topics (close relationships, attitudes, attribution, intragroup processes, intergroup processes, bystander intervention and individual differences) using extracts from previously published materials, with supporting teaching commentaries. This will give you an appreciation of the historical context of social psychological knowledge and the ways in which the same topic is treated differently by different theorists. By stimulating your own ideas and thoughts about these topics and perspectives the book will encourage your development of critical evaluation skills.

The course has two DVDs. DVD 1 revisits classic social psychological studies and introduces the four course perspectives and research approaches associated with them. DVD 2 presents model interviews and gives detailed guidance on data collection and analysis as a basis for your own project work.

The other main course materials are the project guide and the course guide. You will also be provided with other printed materials and links to electronic materials through the course website.

3. Assessment and essential equipment

DD307 is assessed through six tutor-marked assignments and a final examination. As DD307 is a 60 point Level 3 course, you should expect to spend about 16 hours per week on your study.

3.1 The assignments

The tutor-marked assignments comprise:
- four essays
- a project proposal and rationale
- a double-weighted project

Like most other Social Sciences undergraduate courses, DD307 allows you a 'substitution score', calculated as a weighted average of all your scores for the course for one of three of the tutor marked assignments, if you unavoidably miss an assignment or do badly in it.

3.2 Essential equipment for DD307

To study DD307 you will need the following equipment:
- television
- DVD player
- portable tape recorder for use in your supervised research project
- computer with a Pentium 450MHz processor; 64MB RAM memory; Windows 98 SE operating system; 32x CD-ROM with internet access.
Office software is needed by some courses, but the University provides Sun StarOffice, free, if you don't already have a suitable office package. For more information about computing visit our website at www.open.ac.uk/personal-computing or contact your Regional Centre.

4. Previous study and academic skills

DD307 Social Psychology: Critical Perspectives on Self and Others is designed both for students who want to specialise in psychology and for those who may have a broader background in the social sciences and a particular interest in the social psychological issues covered in the course. Although it has applications to real life situations, it does not offer prescriptions for behaviour. Rather, it tries to give a wider appreciation of the complexities and limits as well as the uses of psychology.

The majority of students studying DD307 Social Psychology: Critical Perspectives on Self and Others are likely to have taken the Level 2 OU course DSE212 Exploring psychology; knowledge of its content will be an advantage, although it is not a compulsory requirement. The subject matter of DD307 Social Psychology: Critical Perspectives on Self and Others is also complemented by other OU Psychology Courses, including ED209 Child development, SD226 Biological psychology and DD303 Cognitive psychology, as well as other courses in the Social Science faculty. Students who have not studied these courses or other psychology courses may find it useful to look at the materials. The DD307 website will also provide supplementary reading on psychoanalytic theory which will be useful for students with limited knowledge of this fascinating area.

As a Level 3 course, DD307 Social Psychology: Critical Perspectives on Self and Others assumes that students have an appropriate background of study at Levels 1 and 2 and builds on the subject knowledge and academic skills already acquired.

To succeed in DD307 you need to be able to:

- read and understand academic texts appropriate to Level 3
- write clear and well-structured essays in a conventional academic style
- compare and assess different theoretical approaches
- understand abstract (social science) concepts, themes and models
- relate theory to practice; and
- present course work appropriately (this includes providing accurate reference lists and bibliographies).

It will be an advantage to have some practical research skills, including those related to the collection and analysis of qualitative data.

5. General learning outcomes

By the end of the course you should have:

- an understanding of the complex relationship between social behaviour and experience and societal processes, and the challenges this presents to researchers in social psychology
- the ability to compare and contrast the competing 'voices' and to identify points of juxtaposition, interaction and contradictions between them
- a good understanding of the theoretical underpinnings of a wide range of research methods in social psychology and an appreciation of the different forms of knowledge they produce
knowledge of how epistemological debates have important implications when applied to social problems

- a realisation that social psychological knowledge and understanding is constructed and therefore temporal, fragmented and open-ended.

There are many ways in which you will develop your knowledge and skills during the course itself. One way will be through your assignments which have been especially designed to get you to engage with and actively process the materials. You will be required to carry out some independent research using the study and research skills you have developed within the course. With support from the course materials and your tutor, you will develop your research skills so that you are able to:

- develop a project proposal for your research
- review relevant literature associated with the research topic
- collect data using one of the methods you have learned about in DD307
- analyse and interpret the data
- write a correctly structured research report for your study.

6. Self-assessment activities

The following activities have been designed to show you some of the materials from DD307 Social Psychology: Critical Perspectives on Self and Others (Activity 1) and help you assess your own skills so you can decide whether you are ready to study the course (Activities 1-4).

Self Assessment Activity 1

Distinguishing between methods in social psychology

If you have completed second level core psychology courses, third level psychology courses (for example DD303), or other social sciences courses where you have had to develop a research proposal, identify a relevant research question and carry out a small piece of independent research, you should be well prepared for DD307. If you are not sure what this involves, read the material below and have a go at the Self-assessment questions following Box 1. They will give you some insight into the research methods and skills you will be introduced to in DD307. Of course it is always difficult to ‘jump in’ to material outside the context of the course and we would not expect you to manage the task without effort. However these activities will give you a taste of the content and level of DD307.

Introduction to Box 1

You will learn about a number of approaches to core methods in DD307. Four of these approaches are examined in Book 1 in Chapter 2 ‘Methods and perspectives’ by Wendy Hollway. Hollway writes about an article that appeared in the Guardian.

‘On 24 May 2004 The Guardian published a story about an Iraqi family, a mother and her children. The woman’s husband, and children’s father, had died mysteriously in detention during the American/British invasion. The newspaper headline quoted the woman’s response – ‘I will always hate you people’.

The course text indicates that: ‘Mrs Izmerly’s response, extreme emotions, unequal power and national, global and group conflict are part of the territory social psychology covers.’
The four ways in which DD307 presents this story could be used as a way of exploring what social psychology offers. It also allows you to probe the differences between four core approaches – Cognitive social, Social psychoanalytic, Discursive psychological and Phenomenological.

Box 1 contains an extract from Derek Edward’s description of one of these approaches, the Discursive psychological approach, in relation to the story and headline.

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**BOX 1  Discursive social psychology**

*(Derek Edwards)*

My first reaction to the headline, and the story beneath it, is that of an ordinary reader. It is a powerfully evocative report. But rather than exploring my emotions, or developing my stance on Iraq, finding people to interview, or devising experiments on how emotions are caused, I start to get interested in the report itself. This is not a pursuit of deep, underlying significances, but rather, of how specific words, descriptions and accounts are assembled and put to work.

A common objection to discursive psychology (DP) is that it only analyses discourse, when there are other, more important things to do. We are turning away from the events themselves, whether in the world or in the psyche – in this case death, politics and hatred. Yet to take an immediate interest in those matters is also to turn away from the actual object presented for analysis, the newspaper report, which is also real. Discourse is both real and important. If it were not for discourse there would be no politics, no war in Iraq, no understanding of what is happening there, nobody to quote, nothing to say. So there is no immediate requirement to use the report as a point of departure and do some other study instead. Our immediate focus is on reports themselves, how they provide for causal explanations, invoke psychological states, and build implications for politics and policy.

**EXAMINING EVERYDAY EMOTION**

Discursive psychology (DP) examines, among other things, how people deploy commonsense psychological ideas. Rather than taking those ideas out of context and finding that they amount to a messy, contradictory and inaccurate theory of mind, we explore how people actually put them to use in their everyday lives, when accounting for actions and events.

In a relevant study of emotion discourse (Edwards, 1999), talk from relationship counselling was analysed along with newspaper reports in the aftermath of Princess Diana’s death. A *Sun* editorial said: ‘In the depths of his grief, Diana’s brother is entitled to be bitter about her death’. Analysis focuses on how this formulation selects emotion rather than, say, judgement as his reaction (her brother, Earl Spencer, had produced a heavy rebuke of the role of the press in her death), and names that emotion *grief* rather than, say, *anger*. Conceptually, grief’s object would be Diana’s death, whereas the object of anger would be (in this context) the activity of the press. Similarly, *bitter* evokes a disposition within Spencer, and perhaps a motive for producing emotive criticisms, whereas anger directs attention to its object and cause – the press and their paparazzi.
Very briefly, these kinds of observations reveal a range of functional uses of emotion terms including, in the case of the Sun’s editorial, how to deflect attention from a criticism of their own journalistic practices onto the psychological state of the critic. Everyday emotion talk turns out to be very precise when examined inside the real-life practices where it is used, and for which it is surely designed.


Out of such an analysis may come further questions, and the need for more materials. But those materials will probably be more discourse rather than an experiment or survey.

Apart from uses of emotion words, and other items from the commonsense psychological thesaurus, DP examines how psychological business is generally handled and managed when people talk together. One specific topic, again starting with our newspaper headline, might be how direct quotation works (‘I will always hate you people’). What are the general characteristics and uses of direct quotation? What does it do? In what discourse contexts, at what junctures, and in the performance of what kind of activities, do people actually produce quotes of what other people say? Does it have regular characteristics, types, functions and occasions?


Self-assessment questions for Activity 1

As a check to your understanding, we suggest you attempt to answer the following questions as though you had decided to undertake an independent research project using the discursive psychological approach as described by Edwards.

Question 1 What would you be examining?

Question 2 What material would you collect and use in your research?

Question 3 If you were focussing your research on the report in the Guardian:
   a. what particular aspects of the report might you be analysing?
   b. what might you be trying to elicit from the report?

Question 4 How, according to Edwards, might direct quotation work in relation to the Guardian headline?

Some possible answers to these questions are presented in the Appendix of this booklet on p.12. Your answers might be different. The main point here is that you should be able to draw out ideas from a complex piece of text and apply them to a new context, a possible piece of research.

The second self-assessment activity relates to essay writing skills.
Self Assessment Activity 2  Essay writing skills

In DD307 you will need the skills to produce professionally written essays and a research report aimed at an academic audience. Your tutor will work with you throughout the year to develop your writing skills but you should enter the course with a fair amount of competence in this area.

To assess whether your writing skills will satisfy the course requirements, think back to the last the last time you wrote essays for an academic course and to the feedback that you received from your tutor. With this in mind, decide ‘yes’ or ‘no’ for each point in the following table.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>My essay writing skills on entry to DD307: thinking back to my most recent experience of academic study (e.g. the last university-level course I took)</th>
<th>Yes/No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I could understand complex essay questions and what they wanted me to do.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My introduction succinctly signposted the content and structure of the essay.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I was able to grasp the major underlying debates.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I could define the key terms.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>I managed to raise sub-questions around the central question.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I identified and summarised key debates and theories relevant to the question.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I could relate abstract ideas and theories to concrete detail.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I was able to understand and evaluate competing theoretical perspectives.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I supported my arguments with appropriate evidence and examples.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I understood how the course fitted together and could draw on different aspects of the course.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I knew how to select and use appropriate quotations and make reference to key texts in the field.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In my conclusions I highlighted the core arguments, provided a summary of the key debates raised and pointed to absences in the argument or areas worthy of further research.</td>
<td></td>
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</table>

Assessing your own level: We do not expect you to come to the course with all of these abilities, but it will obviously be difficult for you to start from a very low point (i.e. mostly ‘no’ answers). You might wish to assess how confident you feel that you will be able to master them throughout the year. To do this have a go at Self-assessment Activity 3
Self Assessment Activity 3

Below are statements defining the ways in which you will be expected to approach essay writing in DD307. Again, decide ‘yes’ or ‘no’ for each box.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Do you think you can achieve the essay writing skills below?</th>
<th>Yes/No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In your essay introductions you will need to present a sophisticated version of the core argument to the question and summarise succinctly the key debates raised by it. You should interrogate the question, raise ideas and sub-questions and indicate clearly your own position within the debate. This section should demonstrate explicitly and clearly the content and structure of the essay.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your aim for most essays will be to develop your own argument (a ‘voice’) by drawing selectively on a wide range of supporting theoretical arguments, evidence and examples. To do this you will need to provide sophisticated definitions of key terms and concise outlines of complex theories and debates. A key skill here will be to ‘weight’ each aspect according to its significance within the overall argument.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At third level you will need to show familiarity with and display confidence in handling a wide scope of materials and original papers. Many of these are philosophical and inconclusive in nature and you will be dealing with a considerable amount of uncertainty. You will need to selectively use materials to make your own independent evaluations and not rely on course interpretations - this often means applying complex theoretical debates to concrete every day examples.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All essays need a strong conclusion. Your skills here will be to provide a reflexive synthesis of core arguments, key debates and the main position you attained. You'll need to make logical indications of the relevance of your argument to historical debates about the nature of social psychology</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Adapted from Peter Redman’s Good Essay Writing: A Social Sciences Guide, Sage Publications Ltd, 2001)

Assessing your own level: Again, the point of this activity is for you to decide your own level compared to the standards described in the boxes. Of course you will have the time and opportunity to improve while you study but only you can decide whether you will be able to achieve these standards early enough in the course to manage the coursework.

Self Assessment Activity 4  Accessing and referencing the literature

One of the skills which DD307 will help you to develop is the ability to review and utilise literature that is relevant to an independent research project. For this you need to search for, access, select, evaluate the worth of and cite appropriate literature to support your study and when discussing your analysis.

The Open University Library offers you access to a vast range of electronic or print resources including journals, books, reference sources such as dictionaries, encyclopaedias and maps, and specialist databases containing images, statistics and conference papers.
For Self Assessment Activity 1 you were introduced to, and answered questions about, aspects of an independent research study using discursive psychology. Activity 4 is designed to enable you to use Open Library on your StudentHome website to search for, and access a journal article about discursive psychology. You can also use other routes through the library at http://library.open.ac.uk/services/studentservices.html. If you are confident with using Open Library you may not want to complete this activity but you may find the article interesting to read.

Follow these steps to find the article then answer the questions below.

- Log into StudentHome using your user ID and password
- Go into The Open Library
- Go into Accessing your subject under electronic resources
- Go into Social Sciences
- Go into Psychology
- Go into Electronic Journals
- As the topic within the Guardian Article was ‘hate’ select ‘Emotion’
- Select the Publications button on the green bar at the top of the page
- In the ‘find’ box (top left) type in ‘discursive psychology’ and press the ‘search’ button
- Select ‘3’. This will access the journal article written by Rolf Kroger and Linda Wood ‘The Turn to Discourse in Social Psychology’. The source of the article was Canadian Psychology, Vol. 39(4), November 1998 pp266-279

Having accessed Kroger and Wood’s article. Have a go yourself and search for articles under using Cognitive social or Social psychoanalytic methods

**Referencing**

Citing and using references is an important part of psychological research. The following is a direct quote from p270 of Kroger and Wood’s article: ‘…the use of discourse analysis involves an explicit theory of methods that is grounded in an explicit theory of social psychology, namely discursive psychology’

**Question:** If you had read this as a primary source how would you reference the quote:

- a. within your research report?
- b. at the end of your research report?

**Assessing your information skills**

If you feel that your information skills need improving you might want to access Safari on the Open Library site. Safari is an interactive information skills training package, which can be used as a complete course or as a resource to refresh your information skills. There are sections on planning a search, searching for information and evaluating information. If you want to access this at http://ltssolweb1.open.ac.uk/safari/ou/homeframe.html

**7. How do your answers compare?**

Having completed the self assessment activities you will now have some idea about whether:

- you are interested in the activities and content offered on DD307 and would like to engage with them further by taking the course
you will find the workload manageable (taking into account both your previous study experience and your other life commitments)

you would find it useful to do some preparatory work before beginning DD307, such as reading materials from previous courses or even completing further study at Level 1 or 2. To access this information contact your Regional Centre

If, after working through these and activities, you are still unsure whether DD307 Social Psychology: Critical Perspectives on Self and Others is the right course for you, we advise you to seek further help and advice from a Regional Adviser or from a Psychology Staff Tutor at your Regional Office

Finally, if you do decide to take DD307 Social Psychology: Critical Perspectives on Self and Others, the Course Team wishes you all the best with your studies. We are sure that you will find the course enjoyable, stimulating and challenging.

8. Registering for DD307

We hope you have found this booklet useful and that it has given you confidence to begin your work on DD307 Social Psychology: Critical Perspectives on Self and Others. As mentioned throughout this booklet, we do not expect you to carry out all the activities here perfectly – the main aim is for you to judge for yourself how well prepared for the course you think you are, or how much extra work or revision you need to do.

If you are ready for DD307 Social Psychology: Critical Perspectives on Self and Others, it's a good idea to register as early as possible to make sure you get a place on the course. This can be done in two ways:

- register online at www.open.ac.uk/nextstep.
- call our hotline 0870 333 4340 (if you already have an Open University personal identifier, please quote it when you call)

References


Appendix: Answers to self-assessment activities

Self-assessment Activity 1

If you had decided to undertake your independent research project using discursive psychology as described by Edwards:

**Question 1:** *What would you be examining?*

You would be examining, amongst other things:
- ‘how people deploy commonsense psychological ideas’
- ‘how psychological business is generally handled and managed when people talk together’.

**Question 2:** *What material would you collect and use in your research?*

You would collect and use discourse. ‘Discourse’ is a complex term with a number of meanings (a point which is discussed on the course) but here Edwards is using it to refer to everyday talk between people or other everyday use of language (e.g. in newspapers).

**Question 3:** *If you were focussing your research on the report in the Guardian:*

*a.* what particular aspects of the report might you be analysing?

*b.* what might you be trying to elicit from the report?

*a.* According to Edwards you could be analysing how the specific words, descriptions and accounts are assembled and put to work

*b.* You could, as Edwards points out, be focussing on the report itself, how it provides for causal explanations, invokes psychological states and/or builds implications for politics and policy.

If you have carried out discursive social psychological research before you may have thought of other answers.

**Question 4:** *How, according to Edwards, might direct quotation work in relation to the Guardian headline?*

According to Edwards direct quotations may be examined to address the following questions: ‘What are the general characteristics and uses of direct quotation? What does it do? In what discourse contexts, at what junctures, and in the performance of what kind of activities, do people actually produce quotes of what other people say? Does it have regular characteristics, types, functions and occasions?’
Self-assessment Activity 6

Referencing

Citing and using references is an important part of psychological research. The following is a direct quote from p270 of Kroger and Wood’s article: ‘…the use of discourse analysis involves an explicit theory of methods that is grounded in an explicit theory of social psychology, namely discursive psychology’

Question: If you had read this as a primary source how would you reference the quote

a. within your research report?

b. at the end of your research report?

As a primary source (one that you have read the original of):

a. Within the report you need to cite the names of the authors, the date of publication and the page number, e.g. Kroger and Wood, 1998, p. 270. Dependent on how the quote was incorporated into your project report you may have expressed this as Kroger and Wood (1998, p. 270) or in brackets (Kroger and Wood, 1998, p. 270).

b. At the end of the report you will cite the reference as a journal article, i.e. with authors (surname and initials, date of publication, title of the article, title of the journal, volume number and the full page range of the article:

How well did we do?

Thank you for completing this Are You Ready document. We hope you found it useful and are now able to make a more informed decision about whether to study DD307. To help us improve the document we would appreciate it if you could spend a few minutes completing this short feedback sheet. Please could you either email the form to Socsci-Psychology-Programme@open.ac.uk or post to Helen Kaye The Open University in the East of England Cintra House 12 Hills Rd Cambridge CB2 1PF

Tick the appropriate to indicate your rating for the questions below

1. Was the document useful in helping you decide whether to study DSE212?
   - Not at all useful
   - Very useful

2. Was the document easy to use?
   - Very hard
   - Very easy

3. Were the questions easy to understand?
   - Very hard
   - Very easy

4. Did the document cover everything you needed to know to help you decide whether to study DSE212?
   - Did not cover everything
   - Did cover everything

5. What was good about the document? Please list.

6. What in the document needs to be changed/improved? Please list.