



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**

All sessions , when the session will take place at the Freud Museum, starting at  
, when the session will take place at the British Refugee Council offices in  
Brixton, .

## **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 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.

A secondary aim is to 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.

## **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 – such as: quality of life, social inequalities, crime, education, substance misuse, immigration and asylum, gender issues and attitudes to sexuality. 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. 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 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 breaks as appropriate to the material being covered.

## **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.

The library also has a good collection of social psychology texts as well as valuable sources on current social issues in Britain today.

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

## Course Summary –

### Group 1:

Wednesday	Thursday
<p>Claudia Hammond</p> <p>Psychology of Emotions and Quality of Life in the UK</p> <p>Visit to the 'Who Am I? Exhibition at the Science Museum</p>	<p>Social issues in Britain – an introduction</p> <p>Psychology in Britain – some history and the current picture</p> <p>Visit to the Science Museum to take the Psychology Trail</p>
<p>Stephen Clift</p> <p>The British contribution to Psychology – Discussion of selected chapters from 'Psychology in Britain'</p> <p>The contribution of Darwin to Psychology</p> <p>Visit to the Natural History Museum</p>	<p>Stephen Clift</p> <p>Gender and sexuality in the UK – social attitudes and social change</p> <p>Film and discussion: 'How Gay Sex Changed the World'</p> <p>UK evolutionary psychologist in focus: Robin Dunbar</p>
<p>Stephen Clift</p> <p>Visit to the Freud Museum Meet at Museum 11am – directions will be given</p> <p>Talk by Ivan Ward, Education Officer</p>	<p>Stephen Clift</p> <p>Crime in the UK</p> <p>Film and discussion: Guns, Knives and Children</p> <p>UK criminal psychologist in focus: David Canter &amp; the case of Harold Shipman</p>
<p>Claudia Hammond</p> <p>Refugees and asylum seekers in the UK</p> <p>Visit to British Refugee Council 1.15 pm – directions will be given</p> <p>UK social psychologist in focus: Miles Hewstone</p>	<p>Stephen Clift</p> <p>The Social psychology of consumption</p> <p>UK environmental psychologist in focus: Tim Jackson</p> <p>Film and discussion: 'An Inconvenient Truth'</p>
	<p>Examination</p>

## **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 visit the 'Who Am I?' exhibition at the Science Museum and participate in a variety of exercises on emotions and quality of life which help to illustrate different perspectives

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.

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.

During the second half of the afternoon we will visit the 'Who Am I?' exhibition at the Science Museum. See: [http://www.sciencemuseum.org.uk/visitmuseum/galleries/who\\_am\\_i.aspx](http://www.sciencemuseum.org.uk/visitmuseum/galleries/who_am_i.aspx)

## **Stephen Clift**

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

#### **Learning objectives**

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

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 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.

We will then visit the Science Museum to follow the 'Psychology Trail' and learn something about the history of psychology in Britain since 1901.

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

**Stephen Clift**

## **The British Contribution to Psychology / Darwin's Contribution to Psychology**

### **Learning objectives**

1. To discuss selected contributions on social psychology in 'Psychology in Britain'
2. To explore the significance of Darwin for Psychology and the relevance of an evolutionary perspective to an understanding of social behaviour
3. To learn more about Darwin and his impact from a visit to the Darwin Centre at the Natural History Museum

The first part of this session will consider the historical development of social psychology in Britain, focusing on key contributions to the development of social psychology made by Michael Argyle, Rom Harré and John and Elizabeth Newsom.

Reference will be made to the current structures of academic and professional psychology in Britain, with a particular focus on the work of the British Psychological Society (for details see: <http://www.bps.org.uk/> )

The second half of the session will consider the contribution of Darwin within psychology, and the recent growth of evolutionary psychology.

A visit to the Natural History Museum will take place at 3.30pm to look at the exhibit on human evolution . For information on Darwin and the theory of evolution see: <http://www.nhm.ac.uk/nature-online/evolution/index.html>

**Stephen Clift**

## **Gender and Sexuality in the UK**

### **Learning objectives**

1. To consider issues of gender and sexuality in British society today and the continuing need to address inequalities
2. To watch and discuss a recent Channel 4 documentary marking the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the legalisation of homosexuality in Britain.
3. To consider the relevance of evolutionary psychology in understanding gender relations and sexual behaviour, focusing on the work of the UK evolutionary psychologist, Robin Dunbar

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.

National statistics on gender see: <http://www.statistics.gov.uk/focuson/gender/>

Equal Opportunities Commission see: <http://www.eoc.org.uk/>

For Stonewall see: <http://www.stonewall.org.uk/>

## **Robin Dunbar**

The second half the session will consider the relevance of evolutionary psychology in understanding contemporary experiences of gender and sexuality, with a focus on the work of Robin Dunbar, a leading UK exponent of the evolutionary perspective

To hear a recent lecture by Robin Dunbar given at the British Academy, visit:

<http://britac.studyserve.com/home/Lecture.asp?ContentContainerID=129>

## **Stephen Clift**

### **Visit to the Freud Museum**

We should arrive at the Freud Museum just before 11am. The visit will finish at around 1pm.

### **Learning objectives**

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

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>

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/>

You may also find the Anna Freud Centre website of interest:

<http://www.annafreudcentre.org/>

## **Stephen Clift**

### **Crime in the UK**

### **Learning objectives**

1. To explore recent development in research on the nature of altruism, and perspectives on aggression developed by evolutionary psychologists
2. To consider current issues related to crime and the criminal justice system in Britain today
3. To examine the concept of psychological profiling and the work of David Canter, one of the foremost criminal psychologists in the UK

The first part of the session will focus on examples of recent research on altruism and evolutionary psychological perspectives on aggression.

The second part of the morning 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. Attention will be given to theoretical interpretations of the case of Dr Harold Shipman, the GP who is believed to have murdered over 150 of his elderly patients, and to the work of David Canter, one of the foremost authorities on psychological profiling

The principal government department responsible for addressing crime is the Home Office. For details visit: <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/>

For information on the Shipman case visit:  
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/crime/caseclosed/shipman.shtml>

For David Canter see: <http://www.liv.ac.uk/psychology/staff/dcanter.html>

### **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.

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

### **Stephen Clift**

#### **The Social Psychology of Consumption and the Challenge of Climate Change**

1. 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.
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

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/>

An Inconvenient Truth – the website: <http://www.climatecrisis.net/takeaction/>

The Alliance for Climate Protection: <http://www.climateprotect.org/splash/>

## 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, consumption and the environment, 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 three parts. The first part will consist of 10 questions related to the required reading on the history of Psychology in Britain. The second part will ask you to reflect on what you have learned from the visits to the Freud Museum and Refugee Council organised as part of this course. The third 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.

## Grading Criteria

*The following Boston University table explains the grading system that is used by most faculty members on Boston University's British Programmes.*

<b>Grade</b>	<b>Honour Points</b>	<b>Usual% Definition</b>
A	4.0	93-100 Excellent
A-	3.7	89-92
B+	3.3	85-88
B	3.0	81-84 Good
B-	2.7	77-80
C+	2.3	73-76
C	2.0	69-72 Satisfactory
C-	1.7	65-68
D	1.0	60-64 Low pass
F	0.0	Unmarked Fail

***“Incomplete” or I grades are not permitted to be issued by faculty, because of the obvious difficulty in making up missed work once the student has left the country. All work must be completed on time. The grades reflect the quality of the work.***

*It is also important to realise that grades below C may not be transferable to non BU students' home institutions. Lecturers and students should use the following criteria for an understanding of what each grade means.*

**“Withdrawn”** The Boston University Provost has announced that faculty members may no longer assign grades of "W" (Withdrawn). In supporting this policy, the Registrar's Office will no longer assign W grades on individual students' official Boston University records, even if the grade sheet has a "W" recorded for a student. Alternative grades to "W" are "F" (Failing) or "MG" (Missing Grade).

**A** This exceptional grade is assigned only to work that has persistently outstanding quality in both substance and presentation. The student must demonstrate a sustained capacity for independent thought and extensive study, producing rigorous and convincing analyses in well-ordered prose.

**A-** Awarded to work that is clearly focused and analytical, and based on wide reading. The student must cover all the principal points of a question and systematically develop a persuasive overall thesis, allowing for one or two venial omissions or inapt expressions.

**B+, B, B-** This range of grades indicates that the student has shown some evidence of original thought and intellectual initiative. The student has cited sources beyond the class materials, and shown a degree of originality in perception and/or approach to the subject. The work will show thoughtful management of material, and a good grasp of the issues. The differences between a B+, a straight B and a B- may reflect poor presentation of the material, or mistakes in punctuation, spelling and grammar.

**C+, C, C-** Work in this grade range is satisfactory, but uninspiring. If the work is simply a recitation of the class materials or discussions, and shows no sign of genuine intellectual engagement with the issues, it cannot deserve a higher grade. Should an essay fail to provide a clear answer to the question as set, or argue a position coherently, the grade will fall within this range. Quality of presentation can lift such work into the upper levels of this grade range. Work of this quality which is poorly presented, and riddled with errors in grammar, spelling and punctuation, will fall into the lower end of the range. To earn a C grade, the work must demonstrate that the student is familiar with the primary course material, be written well enough to be readily understood, be relevant to the assignment, and, of course, be the student's own work except where properly cited.

**D** A marginal pass can be given where some but not all the elements of the course have been completed satisfactorily.

**F** The failing grade indicates the work is seriously flawed in one or more ways:

- \*Obvious lack of familiarity with the material*
- \*So poorly written as to defy understanding*
- \*So brief and insubstantial that it fails to properly address the subject*
- \*Material presented is not relevant to the assignment*
- \*Demonstrates evidence of plagiarism*

## Terms and Conditions

***\*\*Attendance at all classes and visits is mandatory. Students missing lectures without a doctor's letter or authorisation from the Director or from the EUSA Placements' Team will automatically be docked a – or a + from their final grade. Persistent lateness will also be penalised in the final grade. A register of attendance will be taken at the beginning of each session and marks will be awarded for attendance. Absence can be conveyed either by advising a senior member of staff in the Academic Affairs Office with a request that the information be passed on to me; or by emailing me prior to class. Leaving it to another class member to convey messages will not be acceptable. Appointments for interviews for internships should not conflict with class times.***

Any student who is unable to attend a class, or take part in an assignment because of religious reasons, must give notice in advance of class. He/she will be required to make up for time lost. In this situation arrangements must be made with another student for class notes to be shared. Written papers must be delivered before agreed deadline, failure to hand in the paper will result in deducted marks.

We will make some time available in each session for students to raise questions etc. Should students wish to discuss matters with either Claudia or myself in person we will also be available during the break mid-lecture and at the end of class. Alternatively, please feel free to e-mail me with questions. If you have problems with the availability of reading materials (all of which should be in the library) please contact me either through the Academic Affairs Office or via e-mail.

## **Plagiarism**

Boston University's *Code of Student Responsibilities* states:

The value of any grade, credit, honour or degree received by a student presupposes that all work submitted by a student is his or her own. A student who uses or relies upon the work of others or who, except under conditions expressly permitted by the instructor, furnishes assistance to another student, violates the standards of the University. Students must insist upon academic honesty and integrity from their fellow students and must report promptly any case of alleged violation of academic conduct. Failure to do so is a violation of this code.

Plagiarism can take many forms, including the reproduction of published material without acknowledgement, or representing work done by others as your own. This includes the increasingly common practice of purchasing and downloading work from Internet "paper mills." You should be extremely careful when submitting work for this course that all work is correctly sourced. Prints outs of websites that have been used in research may be required by the lecturer in cases of a grade dispute and all website based reference material should be kept by the student until after the end of the semester