

Professor Jose Guntin
Lesson Plan for PSY2012 Introduction to Psychology

Topic: When is conformity with social norms unacceptable behavior?

Objectives: Assist students gain understanding and insight about social cognition. Issues of conformity, obedience, and responsibility are explored in the context of evidence provided by research. Students are encouraged to identify obstacles and potential solutions to increase prosocial behaviors.

Learning outcomes: Students will be provided with the opportunity to utilize critical thinking skill. They will also have the opportunity to gain insight and understanding about how natural systems function and recognize the interaction between humans and the environment.

Description: Students will be provided with the opportunity to explore obstacles to prosocial behavior, such as development and maintenance of sustainability projects.

1 - Conformity is explored and a video of the Asch experiment (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iRh5qy09nNw>) introduced as evidence that most people go along with the group at times when group answers are clearly wrong. A video about Milgram's study of obedience (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BcvSngOHZwk>) is also presented as an illustration that most people will follow commands of "experts" and willfully hurt fellow human beings without question or remorse.

2 – Concept of cognitive dissonance - the feeling of discomfort caused by information that is at odds with perception of oneself as a reasonable and sensible person – in relation to environmental issues. Cognitive dissonance is resolved by changing behavior. However, it may also be resolved by changing cognitions to justify behaviors or by adopting cognitions consistent with behavior.

3 – Students will be divided into groups of 5 to 6 students and encouraged to develop recycling initiatives that consider obstacles to pro-social behavior and anticipate cognitive dissonance irrational reactions that could also preclude development of pro-social behaviors.

4 – Students will share (1) their thoughts and feelings about the experience and (2) their recycling initiative with the rest of the class.