

WESTERN UNIVERSITY
LONDON CANADA

Department of Psychology
Winter 2027

Psychology 4660 Section G

THE PSYCHOLOGY OF STATUS AND POWER

1 Calendar Description

Examines the psychological foundations of status and power in groups and organizations. Topics include the bases of social hierarchy, competition for rank, and the personal, interpersonal, and group consequences of social standing. Emphasizes contemporary theory on the emergence and maintenance of hierarchy across multiple levels of analysis.

Antirequisites: Psychology 4690F/G if taken in 2019-20, 2021-22, 2022-23, 2023-24.

Prerequisites: Both Psychology 2801F/G and Psychology 2811A/B, or the former Psychology 2820E, or both the former Psychology 2800E and the former Psychology 2810, PLUS registration in fourth year Main Campus Honours Specialization in Psychology or fourth year Honours Specialization in Developmental Cognitive Neuroscience. Fourth year Main Campus Psychology students and Main Campus Psychology Special Students who receive 75% in the prerequisite courses may enrol in this course.

3 lecture hours; Course Weight: 0.5

Unless otherwise stated, students are responsible for ensuring that they have successfully completed all prerequisites prior to enrolling. Where prerequisites have not been met, the instructor may require the student to withdraw from the course. In accordance with Western policy, this decision is not subject to appeal.

In the event of a discrepancy between this outline and Senate or University policies, the latter shall prevail. The instructor reserves the right to modify elements of this course outline for pedagogical or operational reasons. Any such changes will be communicated to students in a timely manner.

2 Course Information

Instructor:	Dr. Alex Benson
Office & Phone:	8408, 519-661-2111 ext. 85895
Office Hours:	Tuesday 2:00pm-3:00pm

Email: abenson3@uwo.ca

Teaching Assistant: TBD

Office: TBD

Office Hours: TBD

Email: TBD

Time and Location of Classes: Thursday 1:30pm – 4:30pm, UC-1105

3 Course Materials

There is no textbook for this class. Instead, a list of required readings will be available through OWL Brightspace. Each reading will be available through the library either as a physical copy or digitally accessible through OWL Brightspace. Weekly assigned readings, specified below, are to be completed before each class meeting.

4 Course Objectives and Learning Outcomes

The following table outlines the course learning outcomes and how they are assessed.

Learning Outcome	Learning Activity	Assessment
Depth and Breadth of Knowledge Evaluate and describe contemporary theory and methods relevant to the emergence, maintenance, and implications of social hierarchy in organizations.	Weekly reading Class discussion Research proposal	In-class examination Class reflections and discussion questions Class participation grades Research proposal
Knowledge of Methodologies Critically evaluate the appropriateness of different approaches to studying social hierarchy within organizations.	Weekly reading Class discussion	In-class examination Class reflections and discussion questions Class participation grades Seminar presentation Research proposal
Application of Knowledge	Class discussion	In-class examination

Apply concepts and theories to novel examples of behaviours and situations.	Research proposal	Class reflections and discussion questions Class participation grades Seminar presentation
Communication Skills Conceptualize and summarize findings from the scholarly literature and communicate these orally and in writing.	Research proposal Class discussion Seminar presentation	Class reflections and discussion questions Class participation grades Seminar presentation Research proposal
Awareness of Limits of Knowledge Understand constraints on the generality of findings based on the research context and target population. Understand the gap between theory and practice as it pertains to status and power in organizations.	Weekly reading Class discussion Research proposal	Class reflections and discussion questions Class participation grades Seminar presentation Research proposal
Autonomy and Professional Capacity Identify a research question that builds upon course material and propose a study to effectively address it. Effectively engage in collegial discussions, consider alternative viewpoints, and work effectively with others.	Class discussion Research proposal	Class participation grades Seminar presentation Research proposal

5 Evaluation

The evaluation and testing formats for this course were created to assess the learning objectives as listed in section 4 and are necessary for meeting these learning objectives. All evaluations listed in this course outline are required components of the course and together account for 100% of the final grade. Weightings and assessment formats may be adjusted where required to support course learning objectives, with appropriate notice to students.

Class participation (20%) - This is a seminar style course that relies on students to actively participate in class discussions. To facilitate these discussions, students are expected to come to class prepared with comments and questions about the readings that caught their interest and be prepared to respond to other students' comments and questions. Student participation should reflect deep and critical engagement with the weekly readings. Class participation will be evaluated based on the quality of contributions to the discussions.

Class reflections (10%) - Students will be asked to submit 3 reflections throughout the term about the previous week's in-class discussion. The reflections must be submitted to the discussion board located in the "Forum" section of **OWL Brightspace by Tuesday before 10pm, before next week's lecture**. Students may only submit ONE reflection in a given week.

Reflections can comment, expand, challenge, or provide an alternative perspective on a point made during the previous class. This gives you an opportunity to reflect on topics that you felt were not fully covered during the in-class discussion OR that you did not think of until after the class. Please keep these reflections to a maximum of 300 words each.

Discussion questions (5%) - Students will be asked to submit 4 discussion questions throughout the term to the discussion board located in the "Forum" section of **OWL Brightspace by Tuesday before 10pm, for that week's corresponding lecture**. Students may only submit ONE question in a given week and must have submitted 2 by February 4th.

All students in the class will have access to the weekly submitted discussion questions. In addition, all students are responsible for reviewing the questions posted to OWL prior to Thursday's class to ensure that there is a collective understanding of the viewpoints and questions elicited by the reading. Students are expected to be able to elaborate upon their own posted question during class. Excellent questions will demonstrate critical thought in relation to the assigned reading and should serve to stimulate a thoughtful and productive exchange of ideas.

In-class examination (35%) - A cumulative in-class examination will take place on March 11th. The examination will be 2 hours in length and will primarily consist of short answer questions.

Research proposal (20% written component + 10% verbal component) - Students will have the opportunity to apply course material by formulating a research question and proposing a study to answer it. The final paper should [1] provide a brief literature review, [2] outline a hypothesis (or hypotheses) you are interested in testing, [3] specify a method for examining the proposed question, [4] describe your expected results, and [5] discuss implications and plausible alternative accounts of what the research may yield. **The final paper must be at least 2500 words**, not including references (double-spaced, formatted with 12-point Times New Roman; 1-inch margins on all sides; written in accordance with APA 7th guidelines) and **is due on April 9 before 11:55pm**. Please submit via OWL Brightspace. There will be a 10% per day penalty for late submissions of research proposal papers. As a general recommendation, the introduction should be 4-6 pages in length, the method should be 1-3 pages in length, the expected results should be 1-3 pages in length, and the implications/alternative accounts should be 2-4 pages. As this is an essay course,

you must receive a passing grade on the written component of the research proposal to pass the course.

During the final weeks of the course, you will present your proposal to the class. Your presentation is expected to be 8 minutes long and should provide the class with a detailed understanding of your proposed study (i.e., what is the relevance of your research question, what do we currently know, what don't we know, and why is the gap important to address, the study design). There will be 3-5 minutes allotted for discussion following each presentation.

Policy on Missing Coursework

Class reflections – If you have approved documentation or have received permission from Dr. Benson, you may submit your class reflections later in the week. You must submit your last class reflection by Tuesday, March 9. For any reflections that were not submitted, you will receive a grade of 0.

Discussion questions – If you have approved documentation or have received permission from Dr. Benson, you may submit your discussion questions later in the week. Otherwise, you will receive a grade of 0 on weeks that you do not submit your reflection question by Tuesday before 10pm.

In-class examination – Please note that this assessment requires formal supporting documentation for an absence. If you have an excused absence and are unable to write the in-class examination (i.e., academic counselling-approved documentation), then you will write an alternative version with the time and date to be determined. The makeup exam may be in a different format from the regular exam. If you have a non-excused absence and you do not write the final exam, you will receive a grade of 0.

Research proposal (written component) - The final paper is due on April 9 before 11:55pm. There will be a 10% per day penalty for late submission of research proposal papers. For your in-class research presentation, if you have an excused absence and are unable to present on the originally scheduled date (i.e., academic counselling-approved documentation), then you will present your proposal at an alternative time, which may fall outside of class hours due to scheduling. If you have a non-excused absence and you do not present your research proposal on the scheduled date, you will receive a grade of 0.

Research proposal (oral component) – For your in-class research presentation, if you have an excused absence and are unable to present on the originally scheduled date (i.e., academic counselling-approved documentation), then you will present your proposal at an alternative time, which may fall outside of class hours due to scheduling. If you have a non-excused absence and you do not present your research proposal on the scheduled date, you will receive a grade of 0.

Students who encounter extenuating circumstances affecting their academic responsibilities may submit a request for academic consideration in accordance with Western University's Academic

Consideration policies. Requests must be submitted through the [Student Absence Portal](#) and may require supporting documentation.

Because this is an essay course, as per Senate Regulations, you must pass the essay component to pass the course. That is, the average mark for your written assignments must be at least 50%.

This course is exempt from the Senate requirement that students receive assessment of their work accounting for at least 15% of their final grade at least three full days before the date of the deadline for withdrawal from a course without academic penalty.

Course grades within the Psychology Department are expected to be distributed around the following averages:

70% 1000-level to 2099-level courses
72% 2100-2999-level courses
75% 3000-level courses
80% 4000-level courses

In the event that course grades are significantly higher or lower than these averages, instructors may be required to make adjustments to course grades. Such adjustment might include the normalization of one or more course components and/or the re-weighting of various course components.

Policy on Grade Rounding

Course grades are rounded to the nearest whole number. No additional assignments will be offered to enhance a final grade. Requests to change a grade because it is needed for a future program will not be considered.

6 Assessment/Evaluation Schedule

Exam/Assessment	Date and Time	Location
In-Class Examination	March 11, 1:30pm-3:30pm	In regular class location
Class Reflections	Three questions total. Due Tuesday before 10:00pm	Submitted online via OWL Brightspace
Discussion Questions	Four questions total. Due Tuesday before 10:00pm	Submitted online via OWL Brightspace
Research Proposal Paper	Due before 11:55pm on April 9.	Submitted online via OWL Brightspace

Research Proposal Presentation	Presentations will occur in-class on March 18, March 25, April 1, and April 8. The presenter schedule will be determined during the first class.	In regular class location
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7 Class Schedule

WEEK DATES TOPIC & REQUIRED READING

***Please note that all additional readings listed as 'optional' are for those who might be interested in reading further about a topic for their research paper. I will cover many of these additional papers during the lecture portion of classes.

1 Jan. 7 Introduction, overview, and scheduling of presentations (no assigned readings). Attendance is mandatory, meaning participation marks will be deducted if you do not attend.

2. Jan. 14 The nature of hierarchy

Weekly reading(s):

Magee, J. C., & Galinsky, A. D. (2008). Social Hierarchy: The self-reinforcing nature of power and status. *Academy of Management Annals*, 2, 351-398.

Optional reading(s):

Van Kleef, G. A., & Cheng, J. T. (2020). Power, status, and hierarchy: Current trends and future challenges. *Current Opinion in Psychology*, 33, 4-8. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.copsyc.2020.03.011>

Xu, T., Evans, M. B., & Benson, A. J. (2024). The nature of status: Navigating the varied approaches to conceptualizing and measuring status. *Organizational Psychology Review*, 14(2), 204-237. <https://doi.org/10.1177/20413866231220505>

3. Jan. 21 How status and power affect us

Anderson, C., Hildreth, J. A. D., & Howland, L. (2015). Is the desire for status a fundamental human motive? A review of the empirical literature. *Psychological Bulletin*, 141(3), 574-601.

Gobel, M. S., & Miyamoto, Y. (2024). Self-and other-orientation in high rank: A cultural psychological approach to social hierarchy. *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, 28(1), 54-80.

Optional reading(s):

Anderson, C., Willer, R., Kilduff, G. J., & Brown, C. E. (2012). The origins of deference: When do people prefer lower status? *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 102(5), 1077–1088.

Guinote, A. (2017). How power affects people: activating, wanting, and goal seeking. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 68, 353-381. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-psych-010416-044153>

Hays, N. A., Lee, A. J., Blader, S. L., & Galinsky, A. D. (2026). The social relations–approach theory of social hierarchy: Understanding the distinct psychological experiences of status and power. *Psychological Review*, 133(4), 957–993. <https://doi.org/10.1037/rev0000618>

4. Jan. 28 How do individuals acquire power and status?

Weekly reading(s):

Cheng, J. T., Tracy, J. L., Foulsham, T., Kingstone, A., & Henrich, J. (2013). Two ways to the top: Evidence that dominance and prestige are distinct yet viable avenues to social rank and influence. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 104, 103-125. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/a0030398>

Haslam, S. A., & Reicher, S. D. (2016). Rethinking the psychology of leadership: From personal identity to social identity. *Daedalus*, 145(3), 21-34.

Optional readings:

Kilduff, G. J., & Galinsky, A. D. (2013). From the ephemeral to the enduring: How approach-oriented mindsets lead to greater status. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 105(5), 816-831. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0033667>

McClanahan, K. J., Maner, J. K., & Cheng, J. T. (2022). Two ways to stay at the top: Prestige and dominance are both viable strategies for gaining and maintaining social rank over time. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 48(10), 1516–1528. <https://doi.org/10.1177/01461672211042319>

5. Feb. 4 Individual differences in power and status attainment

Weekly reading(s):

Grosz, M. P., van Aert, R. C. M., & Back, M. D. (2024). A meta-analytic review of the associations of personality, intelligence, and physical size with social status. *Psychological Bulletin*, 150(3), 253–283. <https://doi.org/10.1037/bul0000416>

Optional readings:

Li, Z., Lynch, J., Sun, T., Rizkyana, A., Cheng, J. T., & Benson, A. J. (2023). Power motives, personality correlates, and leadership outcomes: A person-centered approach. *Journal of Personality*, 92(4), 1211-1228. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jopy.12882>

Anderson, C., Hildreth, J. A. D., & Sharps, D. L. (2020). The possession of high status strengthens the status motive. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 46(12), 1712-1723. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0146167220937544>

6. Feb. 11 How our perception and behaviour toward others is shaped by social rank

Weekly reading(s):

Fast, N. J., Halevy, N., & Galinsky, A. D. (2012). The destructive nature of power without status. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 48(1), 391-394. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jesp.2011.07.013>

Ronay, R., Oostrom, J. K., She, M., & Maner, J. (2024). Banding together to avoid exploitation: Dominant (but not prestige-based) leaders motivate collective moral opposition from followers. *Group Processes & Intergroup Relations*, 27(1), 76–98. <https://doi.org/10.1177/13684302231151942>

Optional reading(s):

Anicich, E. M., Fast, N. J., Halevy, N., & Galinsky, A. D. (2016). When the bases of social hierarchy collide: Power without status drives interpersonal conflict. *Organization Science*, 27, 123-140. <https://doi.org/10.1287/orsc.2015.1019>

Kakkar, H., Sivanathan, N., & Gobel, M. S. (2020). Fall from grace: The role of dominance and prestige in the punishment of high-status actors. *Academy of Management Journal*, 63(2), 530-553. <https://doi.org/10.5465/amj.2017.0729>

Kuwabara, K., Yu, S., Lee, A. J., & Galinsky, A. D. (2016). Status decreases dominance in the West but increases dominance in the East. *Psychological Science*, 27(2), 127-137. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0956797615612694>

7. Feb. 18 Reading week (no class)

8. Feb. 25 How and why people are affected by status and power in different ways

Weekly reading(s):

Brescoll, V. L. (2011). Who takes the floor and why: Gender, power, and volubility in organizations. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 56(4), 622-641.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/0001839212439994>

Rosette, A. S., Koval, C. Z., Ma, A., & Livingston, R. (2016). Race matters for women leaders: Intersectional effects on agentic deficiencies and penalties. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 27(3), 429-445. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.leaqua.2016.01.008>

Optional reading(s):

Ma, A., Rosette, A. S., & Koval, C. Z. (2022). Reconciling female agentic advantage and disadvantage with the CADDIS measure of agency. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 107(12), 2115-2148. <https://doi.org/10.1037/apl0000550>

9. Mar. 4 Hierarchy and group functioning/Class Review

Weekly reading(s):

Greer, L. L., de Jong, B. A., Schouten, M. E., & Dannals, J. E. (2018). Why and when hierarchy impacts team effectiveness: A meta-analytic integration. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 103(6), 591-613. <https://doi.org/10.1037/apl0000291>

Optional reading(s):

Aime, F., Humphrey, S., DeRue, D. S., & Paul, J. B. (2014). The riddle of heterarchy: Power transitions in cross-functional teams. *Academy of Management Journal*, 57, 327-352. <https://doi.org/10.5465/amj.2011.0756>

Benson, A. J., McGregor, A., Martin, L. J., Allen, N. J., & Bruner, M. B. (2023). The rank dynamics of integrating new members: The process of hierarchical crafting. *Sport, Exercise, and Performance Psychology*, 12(1), 72-88. <https://doi.org/10.1037/spy0000315>

10. Mar. 11 In-class examination

11. Mar. 18 Student presentations (no assigned readings)
12. Mar. 25 Student presentations (no assigned readings)
13. April. 1 Student presentations (no assigned readings)
14. April. 8 Student presentations (no assigned readings)

8 Academic Integrity

Scholastic offences are treated seriously at Western University. Students are expected to understand and comply with the University's standards of academic integrity. Scholastic offences may result in penalties up to and including expulsion from the University. Please read [Western's Scholastic Offences](#) policy for definitions and examples of Scholastic offences.

Statement on Use of Electronic Devices

Electronic devices can be used during lectures but please be respectful in the use of your phones. Phones should be on silent and no recording during lectures is allowed without previous permission.

All electronic devices are strictly prohibited during midterms and exams.

Plagiarism Detection Software

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between Western and Turnitin.com.

Use of AI

Responsible use of artificial intelligence (AI) tools is **permitted** in this course as a support for learning, not as a substitute for critical thinking or scholarly work. All use of artificial intelligence tools must comply with Western University's academic integrity standards.

Students may use AI tools (e.g., ChatGPT, Claude, Copilot) for:

- Brainstorming ideas or refining research questions
- Improving clarity, grammar, or organization
- Preliminary or background exploration of topics

AI must not be used to:

- Generate full drafts or final versions of assignments
- Replace analysis, interpretation, or synthesis
- Fabricate, misrepresent, or cite sources that the student has not independently consulted
- Bypass engagement with course materials

You are ultimately responsible for all work submitted under your name. AI output should be critically evaluated, substantially revised, and integrated thoughtfully, not copied verbatim.

All written assignments must include a brief AI Usage Statement, indicating:

- Which tools were used (if any)
- The purpose for which they were used
- How the output was modified and incorporated

Assignments submitted without an AI Usage Statement will not be accepted. Misuse of AI or failure to disclose its use may constitute a scholastic offence and will be addressed in accordance with Western University's academic integrity policies. Students are responsible for ensuring that all work complies with Western's scholastic integrity standards.

Multiple Choice Exams

Computer-marked multiple-choice tests and/or exams will be subject to submission for similarity review by software that will check for unusual coincidences in answer patterns that may indicate cheating.

9 Academic Accommodations and Accessible Education

Western University is committed to providing an accessible learning environment. Students with disabilities or medical conditions requiring accommodation are encouraged to contact Accessible Education as early as possible. Accommodations will be implemented in accordance with University policy. Please review [Western's policy on academic accommodations](#) for student with disabilities. Accessible Education provides supports and services to students with disabilities at Western. If you think you may qualify for ongoing accommodation that will be recognized in all your courses, visit [Accessible Education](#) for more information. Email: aew@uwo.ca Phone: 519 661-2147

10 Absence & Academic Consideration

Please review Western's policy on [Academic Considerations](#):

11 Other Information

Helpful Websites

- Western's academic policies are available at the [Office of the Registrar](#).
- Departmental policies are available at the [Psychology Department website](#).
- Learning supports available at [Learning Development & Success](#).

Well-being

Western University provides a range of supports to promote student well-being. Students are encouraged to seek assistance when needed. Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to [Health and Wellness at Western](#) for a complete list of options about how to obtain help. Please contact the course instructor if you require material in an alternate format or if you require any other arrangements to make this course more accessible to you.

Grade Appeals

If you wish to appeal a grade, please read the [policy documentation](#) on requests for relief. Please first contact the course instructor. If your issue is not resolved, you may make your appeal in writing to the Undergraduate Chair in Psychology (psyugrd@uwo.ca).

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