Overview

The course provides an overview of the major theories and findings in research on motivation and volition. After addressing the history of research on motivation and volition (e.g., we will read the chapter on the will by William James), we will discuss phenomena such as delay of gratification, resistance to temptation, goal setting and forming goal commitments, persistence in light of difficulties, disengagement of goals, and the mastery of major negative life events and daily hassles. We will discuss classic and recent approaches and findings regarding these phenomena, will design studies geared at fostering theoretical and applied knowledge, and will consider the meaning of the phenomena in different cultural contexts. Finally, we will discuss how one can create intervention studies applying the learned principles to help solve everyday concerns as well as societal problems.

Requirements

Grading will be based on in-class participation, and two research papers. The themes of the papers will be developed by students in group work and in collaboration with the instructor. The goal is to link each student’s research interests to the issues discussed in class. Research papers are due at mid-term and at the last day of class.

Course Outline

September 9: Introduction and Overview


September 16: Historical Background I


September 23: Historical Background II

September 30: Traditional Theories of Motivation


October 7: Delay of Gratification


October 14: Resistance to Temptations


October 21: Cognitive Social Learning Theories


October 28: Fantasies and Goal Setting I


November 4: Fantasies and Goal Setting II


November 11: Planning Goal Attainment


November 18: Disengagement from Goals


November 25: Content and Structure of Goals


November 26: Thanksgiving

December 2: Mastering Negative Life Events and Ego-Depletion


December 9: Discussion of Research Paper