

Fall 2009  
Prof. Oettingen ([gabriele.oettingen@nyu.edu](mailto:gabriele.oettingen@nyu.edu))  
2-3:50 Wednesday  
Room 307

Motivation & Volition  
(V89.0300.01)

*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**

Gollwitzer, P. M. & Bargh, J. A. (1996). *The psychology of action: Linking cognition and motivation to behavior*. New York: Guilford Press.

Oettingen, G., & Gollwitzer, P.M. (2001). Goal setting and goal striving. In A. Tesser & N. Schwarz (Eds.), *Intraindividual processes. Volume 1 of the Blackwell Handbook in Social Psychology* (pp. 329-347). Oxford: Blackwell.

**September 16: Historical Background I**

James, W. (1904). *Psychology*. Chapter XXVI: Will. (pp. 415-460). New York: H. Holt & Company.

**September 23: Historical Background II**

Lewin, K. (1946). Behavior and development as a function of the total situation. In L. Carmichael (Ed.), *Manual of child psychology* (pp. 791-844). Wiley: New York.

**September 30: Traditional Theories of Motivation**

Atkinson, J. W. (1957). Motivational determinants of risk-taking behavior. *Psychological Review*, *64*, 359-372.

McClelland, D. C. (1985). How motives, skills, and values determine what people do. *American Psychologist*, *41*, 812-825.

**October 7: Delay of Gratification**

Mischel, W. (1974). Processes in delay of gratification. In L. Berkowitz (Ed.), *Advances in experimental social psychology* (Vol. 7, pp. 249-292). New York: Academic Press.

Mischel, W., Shoda, Y., & Peake, P. K. (1988). The nature of adolescent competencies predicted by preschool delay of gratification. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *54*, 687-696.

**October 14: Resistance to Temptations**

Hartig, M., & Kanfer, F. H. (1973). The role of verbal self-instructions in children's resistance to temptations. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *25*, 259-267.

Mischel, W., & Patterson, C. J. (1978). Effective plans for self-control in children. In W. A. Collins (Ed.), *Minnesota Symposium on Child Psychology* (Vol. 11, pp. 199-230). Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.

**October 21: Cognitive Social Learning Theories**

Bandura, A. (1977). Self-efficacy: Toward a unifying theory of behavioral change. *Psychological Review*, *84*, 191-215.

Mischel, W. (1973). Toward a cognitive social learning reconceptualization of personality. *Psychological Review*, *80*, 252-283.

**October 28: Fantasies and Goal Setting I**

Oettingen, G., & Mayer, D. (2002). The motivating function of thinking about the future: Expectations versus fantasies. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *83*, 1198-1212.

Oettingen, G., Pak, H., & Schnetter, K. (2001). Self-regulation of goal setting: Turning free fantasies about the future into binding goals. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *80*, 736-753.

#### **November 4: Fantasies and Goal Setting II**

Oettingen, G., & Stephens, M. E. J. (2009). Fantasies and motivationally intelligent goal setting. In H. Grant and G. B. Moskowitz (Eds.), *The big book of goals*. (p. 135-178). New York: Guilford.

Oettingen, G., Mayer, D., Sevincer, A. T., Stephens, E. J., Pak, H., & Hagenah, M. (2009). Mental contrasting and goal commitment: the mediating role of energization. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, *35*, 608-622.

#### **November 11: Planning Goal Attainment**

Taylor, S. E., Pham, L. B., Rivkin, I. D., & Armor, D. A. (1998). Harnessing the imagination: Mental simulation, self-regulation, and coping. *American Psychologist*, *53*, 429-439.

Gollwitzer, P. M. (1999). Implementations intentions: Strong effects of simple plans. *American Psychologist*, *54*, 493-503.

#### **November 18: Disengagement from Goals**

Janoff-Bulman, R., & Brickman, P. (1982). Expectations and what people learn from failure. In N. T. Feather (Ed.), *Expectations and actions: Expectancy-value models in psychology* (pp. 207-237). Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.

Klinger, E. (1975). Consequences of commitment to and disengagement from incentives. *Psychological Review*, *82*, 1-25.

#### **November 25: Content and Structure of Goals**

Dweck, C. S., & Leggett, E. L. (1988). A social-cognitive approach to personality and motivation. *Psychological Review*, *95*, 256-273.

Higgins, E. T. (2006). Value from hedonic experience and engagement. *Psychological Review*, *113*, 439-460.

#### **November 26: Thanksgiving**

#### **December 2: Mastering Negative Life Events and Ego-Depletion**

Taylor, S. E. (1983). Adjustment to threatening events: A theory of cognitive adaptation. *American Psychologist*, *38*, 1163-1173.

Baumeister, R. F., & Vohs, K. D. (2007). Self-regulation, ego depletion and motivation. *Social and Personality Compass*, *1*, 115-128.

#### **December 9: Discussion of Research Paper**