Advanced Seminar - Current Personality Theory
Instructor: Walter Mischel
G4630, Fall 2006
Hours: Monday 4:10 - 6:00pm
Room: 405 Schermerhorn Hall

Prerequisite
Open to graduate students and advanced undergraduates with the instructor's permission. Introduction to Personality, W2610, or equivalent is a prerequisite unless specifically waived.

Brief Description
This is an advanced seminar on current research and theory in personality psychology, focusing on the interaction of dispositions and psychological situations, and on research and theory in the self-regulation of goal-directed behavior.

Course Description
This seminar will explore selected current developments in personality theory and research. Readings will provide the background for these developments in the last two decades and give an overview of major research areas and theoretical challenges in the field. The seminar will critically review the nature and utility of global traits and states (as conceptualized both by trait and psychodynamic theories) and examine the theoretical and methodological alternatives provided by competing approaches that seek new units for the analysis of personality. Special attention will be given to the newly developed "cognitive-affective system theory" of personality by Mischel and Shoda (1995, Psychological Review). It will be the framework for studying selected specific problem areas in detail and for exploring the possible reconciliation of competing alternative theories within a unifying framework (Mischel & Shoda, 1998, Annual Review of Psychology; and Mischel, prefatory chapter, 2004, Annual Review of Psychology)
We also will use this framework to analyze the nature of the cognitive and self-regulatory competencies that underlie the developing child's ability to defer immediate gratification for larger delayed consequences and to exert effective self-control and "willpower". In another direction we will consider studies of naturally occurring social behavior and will assess the links between the structure of behavior and the perception of consistency in personality.
Meetings will be devoted to identifying topics and critically reviewing and analyzing the most interesting problems that require attention from the framework indicated above. Promising hypotheses and methods for new research and for alternative conceptualizations of basic units for personality psychology will be explored. We will examine the perception and nature of coherence and change in personality and the interactions between personal dispositions and psychological situations both over time and across contexts. Special attention will be given to combining experimental and observational strategies in personality research, and to the clinical-practical implications of research findings particularly for prevention and therapeutic-educational intervention issues, and for clinical psychology).
**Requirements**

Students will be expected to present in oral and written form a major review-research paper and a short, focused written report on a topic to be determined at the vanguard of the field. Specifics, dates, topics, etc. will be discussed in class. The development of this written work at a professional level of quality is a major goal in the course and the main task for participants.

**Required Texts**


**Required Articles**


General Recommended Background Readings


