

## The Psychology of Human Cooperation

**Course code:** PSY325/525

<b>Credits US/ECTS</b>	3/6	<b>Level</b>	Advanced
<b>Length</b>	15 weeks	<b>Prerequisite</b>	Introduction to Psychology
<b>Contact hours</b>	42 hours	<b>Course type</b>	Bachelor Required/GEC

### 1. Course Description

Cooperation is necessary to solve many of our pressing challenges – including depletion of natural resources, managing the COVID-19 pandemic, and effective policy making. By studying the psychological processes underlying cooperation we gain knowledge that can help us create environments and institutions which will be more successful in tackling the societal challenges. The main goal of the course is to introduce students to the psychological processes of human cooperation. This course draws on theories and empirical findings from social, cognitive and developmental psychology, and behavioural economics.

The course will address questions such as:

- What are the evolutionary roots of human cooperation?
- How does prosocial behavior develop in children?
- What are the major strengths and weaknesses of human cooperation?
- Which factor supports inter- and intra-group cooperation?
- What is the role of communication in cooperative behaviors?
- How can our knowledge about game theory models improve decisions in public policy?

The course consists of three main sections.

**Section 1** will explore the origins of human cooperation. It will introduce the basic evolutionary mechanisms (such as direct reciprocity, reputation, punishment etc.) and psychological mechanisms from a developmental and comparative perspective.

**Section 2** will address psychological mechanisms of cooperation such as attention sharing, knowledge sharing and perspective taking. Both positive and negative motivational forces beyond cooperative behaviours will be discussed.

**Section 3** will address challenges to cooperation, including cheating and exploitation. It will provide a brief introduction to game theory and will introduce the basic ideas behind the key concepts in game theory, such as equilibrium, rationality, and cooperation. Students will learn about strategies in games by actually playing and making decisions in various games. Additionally, Section 3 will demonstrate how some of the present challenges – overuse of freshwater, depletion of natural resources and managing the COVID-19 pandemic – can be analysed through game theory approach. We will discuss practical applications.

### 2. Student Learning Outcomes

Upon Completion of this Course, students will gain knowledge and various skills and will be able to:

### **Knowledge**

- Demonstrate understanding of basic terminology, concepts and principles of human cooperation.
- Recognize that human cooperation has multiple layers.
- Understand how scientists accumulate scientific knowledge about human cooperation through discovery, confirmation, and correction.
- Understand how psychology is applied to improving various areas including prosocial behavior and inter- and intra-group cooperation.

### **Information digital skills**

- Use Google Scholar to identify the relevant scientific articles for their questions about human cooperation.
- To evaluate how valuable the source and its contents are for answering questions about human cooperation.

### **Collaboration and Communication skills**

- To communicate and collaborate with their classmates

### **Competence**

- Apply a basic understanding of human cooperation in practice.

### **3. General Education Learning Outcomes Supported**

This is a General Education course, which addresses and develops especially two of the GELO:

- GELO 3: Social Sciences
- GELO 5: Diversity and Values

### **4. Reading Material**

#### **Required Materials**

- Selected journal articles, book chapters and videos will be specified for each session

### **5. Teaching methodology**

Lectures, reflections, group discussions, simulations, presentations.

Each session is based on materials (readings and links to videos) available for students on the NEO LMS course page. Students will use these materials to prepare for a session. Students are expected to actively participate each week.

### **6. Course Schedule**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Class Agenda</b>
<b>Session 1</b>	<b>Topic:</b> Course Overview & a Multidisciplinary Approach Towards Understanding Human Cooperation <b>Description:</b> Discussion: class expectations, assignments, effective learning methods. Lecture: A multidisciplinary approach towards understanding human cooperation <b>Reading:</b> N/A <b>Assignments/deadlines:</b> N/A
<b>Session 2</b>	<b>Topic:</b> Origins of Human Cooperation I <b>Description:</b>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How and why do researchers use qualitative and quantitative methods to study human cooperation?</li> <li>• The basic evolutionary mechanisms such as direct reciprocity, reputation, punishment supporting cooperation</li> <li>• Using google scholar to answer questions about human cooperation</li> </ul> <p><b>Organization:</b> Presentation schedule  <b>Reading:</b> Introduction chapter from: Tomasello, M. (2009). Why we cooperate, Boston Review Books.  <b>Assignments/deadlines:</b> Reflection Session 2</p>
<b>Session 3</b>	<p><b>Topic:</b> Origins of Human Cooperation II  <b>Description:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The basic psychological mechanisms from a developmental and comparative perspective.</li> <li>• What can we learn from great apes and children about cooperation?</li> </ul> <p><b>Reading:</b> Henrich, J., &amp; Muthukrishna, M. (2021). The origins and psychology of human cooperation. Annual Review of Psychology, 72, 207-240.  <b>Assignments/deadlines:</b> Reflection Session 3</p>
<b>Session 4</b>	<p><b>Topic:</b> Psychological Mechanisms of Cooperation I  <b>Description:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The role of social cognition in cooperation.</li> <li>• The importance of attention sharing, knowledge sharing and shared experiences for cooperation .</li> <li>• Nonverbal signals that support cooperation (eye contact and pointing).</li> </ul> <p><b>Reading:</b>  Tomasello, M., Carpenter, M., Call, J., Behne, T.&amp; Moll, H. (2005). Understanding and sharing intentions: The origins of cultural cognition. Behavioural and Brain Sciences, 28, 675-735.  <b>Assignments/deadlines:</b> Reflection Session 4, Presentations 1</p>
<b>Session 5</b>	<p><b>Topic:</b> Psychological Mechanisms of Cooperation II  <b>Description:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Perspective taking</li> <li>• Theory of mind - the mental capacity to understand other people and their behavior by ascribing mental states to them</li> </ul> <p><b>Video:</b> Selected videos will be posted on NEO  <b>Assignments/deadlines:</b> Reflection Session 5, Presentations 2</p>
<b>Session 6</b>	<p><b>Topic:</b> Psychological Mechanisms of Cooperation III  <b>Description:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Empathy as a motivational force.</li> <li>• Altruism as a motivational force.</li> </ul> <p><b>Reading:</b> Fehr, E. &amp; Fischbacher, U. (2003). The nature of human altruism. Nature, 425,785-791.  <b>Assignments/deadlines:</b> Reflection Session 6, Presentations 3</p>
<b>Session 7</b>	<p><b>Topic:</b> Psychological Mechanisms of Cooperation VI  <b>Description:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sense of obligation to cooperate</li> <li>• The role of common knowledge in supporting cooperation</li> </ul> <p><b>Reading:</b> Tomasello, M. (2020). The moral psychology of obligation. Behavioral and Brain Sciences, 43, E56.  doi:10.1017/S0140525X19001742  <b>Assignments/deadlines:</b> Reflection Session 7, Presentations 4</p>
<b>Mid-term break</b>	Mid-term break

<b>Session 8</b>	<p><b>Topic:</b> Psychological Mechanisms of Cooperation V</p> <p><b>Description:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How can our cultural environment affect our behavior and cognition?</li> <li>• Enculturation &amp; Acculturation.</li> <li>• Factors supporting inter- and intra-group cooperation</li> </ul> <p><b>Video:</b> Selected videos will be posted on NEO.</p> <p><b>Assignments/deadlines:</b> Reflection Session 8, Presentations 5</p>
<b>Session 9</b>	<p><b>Topic:</b> Challenges to Cooperation I</p> <p><b>Description:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Simulations: Students will learn about various strategies in game theory by playing and making decisions in several games.</li> <li>• The basic ideas behind the key concepts in game theory, such as equilibrium, rationality, and cooperation.</li> </ul> <p><b>Video:</b> Selected videos will be posted on NEO</p> <p><b>Assignments/deadlines:</b> Reflection Session 9, Presentations 6</p>
<b>Session 10</b>	<p><b>Topic:</b> Challenges to Cooperation II</p> <p><b>Description:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Trust</li> <li>• Deception</li> <li>• Free-riding</li> </ul> <p><b>Video:</b> Selected videos will be posted on NEO</p> <p><b>Assignments/deadlines:</b> Reflection Session 10, Presentations 7</p>
<b>Session 11</b>	<p><b>Topic:</b> Challenges to Cooperation III</p> <p><b>Description:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduction to social dilemmas</li> <li>• Understanding politics of pandemic through game theory</li> <li>• Stag Hunt game</li> </ul> <p><b>Reading:</b> Preface chapter and Chapter 1 (pp. 1-14) from: Skyrms, B. (2004). The Stag Hunt and the Evolution of Social Structure, Cambridge University Press.</p> <p><b>Assignments/deadlines:</b> Reflection Session 11, Presentations 8</p>
<b>Session 12</b>	<p><b>Topic:</b> Challenges to Cooperation IV</p> <p><b>Description:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The tragedy of the commons</li> <li>• Conflict between short-term individual interests and long-term collective interests</li> <li>• Managing common-pool resources</li> <li>• Understanding depletion of natural resources through game theory</li> </ul> <p><b>Reading:</b> Hardin, G. (1968). The tragedy of the commons. Science 162, 1243-1248</p> <p><b>Assignments/deadlines:</b> Reflection Session 12, Presentations 9</p>
<b>Session 13</b>	<p><b>Topic:</b> Practical applications</p> <p><b>Description:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strategies for sustaining cooperation</li> <li>• Implications for public policy and business</li> <li>• Implications for private live</li> <li>• Digital tools to improve cooperation</li> </ul> <p><b>Video:</b> Selected videos will be posted on NEO</p> <p><b>Assignments/deadlines:</b> Reflection Session 13, Presentations 10</p>
<b>Session 14</b>	<p><b>Topic:</b> Summary, discussion, questions</p> <p><b>Description:</b></p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Feedback</li> <li>• Mind-mapping what we learned and how can we apply it</li> <li>• Where to find quality resources to improve our cooperation</li> </ul> <p><b>Video:</b> Selected videos will be posted on NEO</p> <p><b>Assignments/deadlines:</b> N/A</p>
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## 7. Course Requirements and Assessment (with estimated workloads)

Assignment	Workload (hours)	Weight in Final Grade	Evaluated Course Specific Learning Outcomes	Evaluated Institutional Learning Outcomes*
Class participation and supporting the learning community	42	20%	Ability to openly and honestly discuss with others, listening skills, ability to provide & receive feedback.	1,2,3, 4
Presentation	10	25%	Information digital skills, Using Google Scholar to find relevant sources, Presentation skills, ability to explain the studied topic to peers, ability to receive and implement feedback	3,5,6,7
Essay	15	25%	Ability to understand scientific literature and critically apply knowledge to practical issues. Ability to communicate clearly and effectively.	5,6,7
Reflections on readings and videos	24	30%	Knowledge and ability to apply learned information and critical thinking and propose their constructive application in a real situation.	1,6,7
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>91</b>	<b>100%</b>		

\*1 = Critical thinking; 2 = Effective communication; 3 = Information digital skills, 4 = Collaboration skills, 5= Effective communication skills; 6 = Knowledge , 7 = Competence to apply a basic understanding of the psychology of human behaviour in practice

## **8. Detailed description of the assignments**

*More details about requirements/instructions will be provided in the class.*

### ***Class participation and supporting the learning community***

#### **Options to support the learning community:**

- 1) Spokesperson for Teams students: When in-class, sign in to Teams and monitor the chat for questions and help. (13 slots – each session is 1 slot)
- 2) Prepare and maintain a schedule for Presentations (2 slots - two people can be responsible for that and work in a dyad)
- 3) Organizing Presentation at the day of presentation (technical support to students who will present, time-management of the presentations – 10 slots - there will be 10 sessions with Presentations)

Please think about which “slot” you would like to take.

#### **Class participation:**

Students are supposed to attend the course regularly, behave professionally, actively participate in class activities, ask relevant questions, and constructively contribute to group discussions (see also General Requirements and School Policies).

#### **Presentation:**

- Choose a question from psychology of cooperation for which you would like to perform a literature search. (E.g. ‘Which factor support cooperation in small teams up to 10 people?’)
- Carry out a search in Google Scholar or alternative.
- Choose 5 scientific articles that you think are relevant to your question and summarize them briefly.
- Use a citation manager (e.g., Zotero or Qiqqa) to insert in-text citations and a reference list.
- Present your question and a very brief summary of those 5 articles to the peers
- (Optional: you can make a short video of your screen during the searching and filtering to demonstrate this skill).
- Presentation length: Max 10 min

#### **Final essay**

The main outcome is producing a final essay. Students are expected to choose one topic that is part of this class and find one relevant academic source (scientific talk, paper, digital tool, organization) that discusses that topic. The essay should summarize the selected source, critically evaluate it and discuss potential application for business, policy and/or private life.

#### **Weekly reflections on home readings and videos**

Students are expected to write down a short reflection on each reading (an article or a chapter from the textbook) and each video that is posted to NEO for weekly assignment. In a short reflection (max. 1 page together) please answer these questions:

- What was the most important thing I learned from this section/article/video?
- How will I use what I have learned in the future?
- (optional) Did something surprise me? What would I like to discuss with my classmates?

Please submit the reflection to NEO within the format Last name\_Reflection\_Session X (e.g., Siposova\_Reflection\_Session 2) and take the reflection document to the class as we will discuss it at the beginning of each lesson.

There will be 10 reflections that will count for assessment (starting from Reflection Session 4, Reflections for Session 2 and 3 will not be marked and will be used for formative assessment). The lecturer will pick randomly one Reflection from each student for detailed assessment at the end of the semester.

**Assessment breakdown**

Assessed area	Points/Percentage
Detailed assessment of 1 randomly chosen Reflection: Proven understanding of the content of required materials, critical assessment of the text	50%
Submitting all 10 Reflections on time (for each missed reflection – 5%)	50%

**9. General Requirements and School Policies**

**General requirements**

All coursework is governed by AAU’s academic rules. Students are expected to be familiar with the academic rules in the Academic Codex and Student Handbook and to maintain the highest standards of honesty and academic integrity in their work.

**Electronic communication and submission**

The university and instructors shall only use students’ university email address for communication, with additional communication via NEO LMS or Microsoft Teams.

Students sending e-mail to an instructor shall clearly state the course code and the topic in the subject heading, for example, “COM101-1 Mid-term Exam. Question”.

All electronic submissions are through NEO LMS. No substantial pieces of writing (especially take-home exams and essays) can be submitted outside of NEO LMS.

**Attendance**

Attendance, i.e., presence in class in real-time, is required. Students who are absent 35 percent of classes or more cannot complete the course. Those with a majority of unexcused absences will be failed; those with a majority of excused absences will be administratively withdrawn from the course. Students may also be marked absent if they miss a significant part of a class (for example by arriving late or leaving early).

**Absence excuse and make-up options**

Should a student be absent from classes for relevant reasons (illness, serious family matters), s/he can submit to the Dean of Students an Absence Excuse Request Form supplemented with documents providing reasons for the absence. These must be submitted within one week of the absence. If possible, it is recommended the instructor be informed of the absence in advance. Should a student be absent during the add/drop period due to a change in registration this will be an excused absence if s/he submits an Absence Excuse Request Form along with the finalized add/drop form.

Students whose absence has been excused by the Dean of Students are entitled to make up assignments and exams provided their nature allows. Assignments missed due to unexcused absences which cannot be made up, may result in a decreased or failing grade as specified in the syllabus.

Students are responsible for contacting their instructor within one week of the date the absence was excused to arrange for make-up options.

**Late work:** No late submissions will be accepted – please follow the deadlines.

### **Electronic devices**

Electronic devices (e.g. phones, tablets, laptops) may be used only for class-related activities (taking notes, looking up related information, etc.). Any other use will result in the student being marked absent and/or being expelled from the class. No electronic devices may be used during tests or exams unless required by the exam format and the instructor.

**Eating** is not allowed during classes.

### **Cheating and disruptive behavior**

If a student engages in disruptive conduct unsuitable for a classroom environment, the instructor may require the student to withdraw from the room for the duration of the class and shall report the behavior to the Dean.

Students engaging in behavior which is suggestive of cheating will, at a minimum, be warned. In the case of continued misconduct, the exam or assignment will be failed and the student will be expelled from the exam or class.

### **Plagiarism and Academic Tutoring Center**

Plagiarism is “the unauthorized use or close imitation of the language and thoughts of another author and the representation of them as one’s own original work.” (Random House Unabridged Dictionary, 2nd Edition, Random House, New York, 1993)

Turnitin’s White Paper ‘The Plagiarism Spectrum’ (available at <http://go.turnitin.com/paper/plagiarism-spectrum>) identifies 10 types of plagiarism ordered from most to least severe:

1. CLONE: An act of submitting another’s work, word-for-word, as one’s own.
2. CTRL-C: A written piece that contains significant portions of text from a single source without alterations.
3. FIND-REPLACE: The act of changing key words and phrases but retaining the essential content of the source in a paper.
4. REMIX: An act of paraphrasing from other sources and making the content fit together seamlessly.
5. RECYCLE: The act of borrowing generously from one’s own previous work without citation; To self-plagiarize.
6. HYBRID: The act of combining perfectly cited sources with copied passages—without citation—in one paper.
7. MASHUP: A paper that represents a mix of copied material from several different sources without proper citation.
8. 404 ERROR: A written piece that includes citations to non-existent or inaccurate information about sources
9. AGGREGATOR: The “Aggregator” includes proper citation, but the paper contains almost no original work.
10. RE-TWEET: This paper includes proper citation, but relies too closely on the text’s original wording and/or structure.

At minimum, plagiarism from types 1 through 8 will result in a failing grade for the assignment and shall be reported to the Dean. The Dean may initiate a disciplinary procedure pursuant to the Academic Codex. Allegations of bought papers and intentional or consistent plagiarism always entail disciplinary hearing and may result in expulsion from AAU.

If unsure about technical aspects of writing, students are encouraged to consult with the tutors of the AAU Academic Tutoring Center. For more information and/or to book a tutor, please contact the ATC at: <http://atc.simplybook.me/sheduler/manage/event/1/>.

### **Course accessibility and inclusion**

Students with disabilities are asked to contact the Dean of Students as soon as possible to discuss reasonable accommodations. Academic accommodations are not retroactive.



Students who will be absent from course activities due to religious holidays may seek reasonable accommodations by contacting the Dean of Students in writing within the first two weeks of the term. All requests must include specific dates for which the student requests accommodations.

### 10. Grading Scale

Letter Grade	Percentage*	Description
A	95-100	<b>Excellent performance.</b> The student has shown originality and displayed an exceptional grasp of the material and a deep analytical understanding of the subject.
A-	90-94	
B+	87-89	<b>Good performance.</b> The student has mastered the material, understands the subject well and has shown some originality of thought and/or considerable effort.
B	83-86	
B-	80-82	
C+	77-79	<b>Fair performance.</b> The student has acquired an acceptable understanding of the material and essential subject matter of the course, but has not succeeded in translating this understanding into consistently creative or original work.
C	73-76	
C-	70-72	
D+	65-69	<b>Poor.</b> The student has shown some understanding of the material and subject matter covered during the course. The student's work, however, has not shown enough effort or understanding to allow for a passing grade in School Required Courses. It does qualify as a passing mark for the General College Courses and Electives.
D	60-64	
F	0-59	<b>Fail.</b> The student has not succeeded in mastering the subject matter covered in the course.

\* Decimals should be rounded to the nearest whole number.