



O.P. Jindal Global University
A Private University Promoting Public Service



**Jindal School of
Psychology & Counselling**
India's First Transdisciplinary Psychology School

Love, Sex & Technology: A Social Psychological Perspective

PCCU-04-BAP-LSTP4055

School-specific Elective

Jindal School of Psychology and Counselling B.A. (Hons.)

Fall Semester 2026

Course Information

Course Duration: 15 weeks

Credit Hours: 4 credit points

Meetings: TBD

Location: TBD

Prerequisites: Basic understanding of introductory social psychology concepts

Course Timings:

Instructor Information

Instructor: Dr. Prathyasha George

Biography: Dr. George is currently an Assistant Professor in the School of Psychology and Counselling at O.P. Jindal Global University, Sonapat, Haryana. She completed her PhD in Health and Medical Psychology from the Department of Liberal Arts, IIT Hyderabad. Through her PhD thesis, she explored the attitudes towards and experiences of dating and practicing safe

sex among young adults living in urban cities in India. Her broad research interests include understanding safe sex practices, socio-cultural aspects of dating, and gender and sexual representation in new media.

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Phone:

Office: FOB, 7B- First floor (West Side)

Office Hours: By appointment, TBD based on class schedule and timings

Homepage: <https://jgu.edu.in/jspc/dr-prathyasha-george/>

1. Course Description: This course offers a rigorous social psychological examination of how digital technologies are reshaping the most fundamental aspects of human connection: our romantic relationships and sexual lives. We will explore how technology has transformed relationship dynamics through the formation of parasocial relationships with influencers and fictional characters, introduction of dating apps, AI companions, and online sex work. These topics will be analyzed through key social psychological and communication frameworks, including the online disinhibition effect, the hyperpersonal communication model, and parasocial interaction theory.

2. Course Intended Learning Objectives

Course-intended learning outcomes	Teaching and learning activities	Assessments/ Activities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To examine how technological affordances have reshaped contemporary relationships and sexual behavior 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lectures with real-world examples Guided discussions applying concepts to everyday scenarios 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Case study analysis
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To apply social psychological and communication theories to explore everyday behaviors associated with technology use 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lectures and discussions Reading research papers pertaining to the application of social psychological theories to digital intimacy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Case study analysis Critical evaluation of research papers examining the effects of digital intimacy
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To apply concepts and theories to one's own life while examining technology use 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lectures and reflective classroom discussions Guided self-analysis exercises 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assessment 1: Reflective essay
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To critically evaluate the risks and benefits of technological affordances and their impacts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lectures and discussions Debates on technology and intimacy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assessment 2: Group project on parasocial relationships

on relational and sexual intimacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analysis of media and real-life cases 	
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3. Scheme of Evaluation and Grading

Evaluation breakup (70:30 assessment criteria)	
<i>Components</i>	<i>Maximum Percentage</i>
Assessment 1: Reflective Essay	30%
Assessment 2: Group Presentation	30%
Class participation	10%
End-term exam	30%

Reflective Essay: The Critical Incident Analysis (30%)

This assessment aims to develop your ability to critically reflect on a personally meaningful moment where technology shaped your experience of love, desire, intimacy, or sexual behavior. Choose one specific incident from your own life where these elements intersected in a way that still matters to you. This could be a positive, negative, confusing, or transformative moment. You will describe the incident in vivid detail, analyze it through one social psychological theory, critically evaluate what the theory explains and misses, and articulate what you have learned.

Group Presentation: Parasocial Relationships with Celebrities (30%)

This assessment aims to enable students to understand and apply parasocial interaction theory to real-life celebrity cases, explore how social media intensifies these relationships, and generate practical insights for audiences like fans, educators, therapists, or industry professionals. You must choose a real celebrity case (living or deceased, actor, musician, influencer, streamer, or K-pop idol) and use specific examples from their career and fan interactions to illustrate your arguments.

Class participation (10%)

Class participation includes but is not limited to taking part in classroom discussions based on readings and lecture slides, asking questions or areas of doubt to the lecturer, responding to other student's questions to promote discussions on various topics, and taking part with enthusiasm as well as effort in all individual or group assignments. Class participation will be decided at the end of the semester depending on individual performance in class.

End-term exam (30%)

There will be one final exam at the end of the semester consisting of the entire syllabus. The format of the exam will consist of long answer questions.

Grade Definition

Grade	Percentage of Marks	Grade Value	Grade Description
O	80% and above	8	Outstanding: Exceptional knowledge of the subject matter, thorough understanding of issues; ability to synthesize ideas, rules, and principles; and extraordinary critical and analytical ability.
A+	75 - 79.75%	7.5	Excellent: Sound knowledge of the subject matter, thorough understanding of issues; ability to synthesize ideas, rules, and principles; and critical and analytical ability.
A	70 - 74.75%	7	Very Good: Sound knowledge of the subject matter, organizational capacity; ability to synthesize ideas, rules, and principles; critically analyze existing material and originality in thinking.
A-	65 - 69.75%	6	Good: Good understanding of the subject matter, ability to identify issues and provide balanced solutions to problems; good critical and analytical skills.
B+	60 - 64.75%	5	Fair: Average understanding of the subject matter, limited ability to identify issues and provide solutions to problems; reasonable critical and analytical skills.
B	55 - 59.75%	4	Acceptable: Adequate knowledge of the subject matter to go to the next level of the study; passable critical and analytical skills.
B-	50 - 54.75%	3	Marginal: Limited knowledge of the subject matter and irrelevant use of materials; poor critical and analytical skills.
P1	45 - 49.75%	2	Pass 1: Pass with a passable understanding of the subject matter; lacking in critical and analytical skills.
P2	40 - 44.75%	1	Pass 2: Pass with a rudimentary understanding of the subject

			matter; lacking in critical and analytical skills.
F	Below 40%	0	Fail: Poor comprehension of the subject matter; poor critical and analytical skills; and marginal use of the relevant materials. Requires the student to repeat the course.
P/F	Pass / Fail		Pass or Fail: Pass is awarded a final grade of 40% or above. Fail reserved for the final grade below 40%. This option is only available for semesters taught online (covid).
I	Incomplete		Incomplete: Issued due to extenuating circumstances that prevent the student from completing internal or external marks. If an 'I' grade is assigned, the JSPC Academic Committee will suggest a schedule for the completion of work or a supplementary examination.

4. Academic Integrity

Punctuality and Conduct

JSPC conducts all classes on a foundation of professionalism. Students are expected to be present in class and seated within five minutes of the class start time. Students arriving after a ten-minute window from the designated start time will be refused entry/attendance. A classroom is a place for free expression and critical-thinking students must respect the opinions expressed and actively participate in classroom discussions.

Participation and Attendance Policy

Attending classes will help students understand and master the concepts and their applications. Thus, we encourage you to attend all classes and avoid missing them until and unless very necessary. Students with less than 75% attendance will not pass this course.

Phone Usage

Phones are not allowed during classroom hours. The use of phones by students may result in their

removal by the course instructor. Repeated violations may result in an academic discipline.

Plagiarism

In line with JGU policy, JSPC operates a zero-tolerance approach to plagiarism. The unacknowledged use of material by others within your work is a violation of academic integrity, and all reported cases will be investigated for potential disciplinary action.

Disability Support

JGU endeavours to make all its courses accessible to students. The Disability Support Committee (DSC) has identified conditions that could hinder a student's overall well-being. These include physical and mobility-related difficulties, visual impairment, hearing impairment, mental health conditions, and intellectual/learning difficulties, e.g., dyslexia and dyscalculia. Students with any known disability needing academic and other support are required to register with the Disability Support Committee (DSC) by following the procedure specified at <https://jgu.edu.in/disability-support-committee/>

Students who need support may register any time during the semester up until a month before the end semester exam begins. Those students who wish to continue receiving support from the previous semester must re-register within the first month of a semester. Last-minute registrations and support might not be possible as sufficient time is required to make the arrangements for support.

The DSC maintains strict confidentiality about the identity of the student and the nature of their disability, and the same is requested from faculty members and staff as well. The DSC takes a strong stance against in-class and out-of-class references made about a student's disability without their consent and disrespectful comments referring to a student's disability.

All general queries are to be addressed to disabilitysupportcommittee@jgu.edu.in

Mental Health Services

The Centre for Wellness and Counselling Services (CWCS) provides comprehensive guidance and

counselling services to the JGU community. If you are experiencing distress, be it personal, academic, social, or career related, CWCS has a competent and well-qualified group of counsellors available for consultation (personal and group). You can be assured that your confidentiality will always be protected. To schedule an appointment, call 83969 07312 or write an email to cwcs@jgu.edu.in

Safe Space and Respect for Diversity

This course may discuss issues that could result in distress or provoke emotional responses in students. To make sure that all students collectively benefit from the course, it is incumbent on everyone to maintain respect towards one another. All JSPC program faculty, staff, and students shall maintain respect for differences including, but not limited to, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, age religion/spirituality, ability, socioeconomic status, and culture. Each person will be responsible and accountable for creating and maintaining a culture of respect at every level of the program. This does not mean that you must feel restrained about what you feel and say- rather it is about creating a safe space for everyone to speak and learn without inhibitions or fear.

5. Keyword Syllabus: Human sexuality, culture and sexuality, gender and sexual orientation, safe sex, paraphilia

6. Course Materials

Books

Owlett, J. S., & Rossetto, K. R. (Eds.). (2024). *Social media and close relationships* (1st ed.). Cognella Academic Publishing.

Chambers, D. (2013). *Social media and personal relationships: Online intimacies and networked friendship*. Palgrave Macmillan.

Joinson, A. N., McKenna, K. Y. A., Postmes, T., & Reips, U.-D. (Eds.). (2007). *The Oxford handbook of Internet psychology*. Oxford University Press.

7. Session Plan

Session		General Topic	Readings	Approach / Pedagogy
Week 1	Lecture 1 & 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The landscape of digital intimacy Do technologies merely extend or fundamentally transform human bonding? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Owlett & Rossetto (2024): Introduction 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lectures & discussion-based learning Class debates
Week 2	Lecture 1 & 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Foundational theory I: Hyperpersonal Communication Model Selective self-presentation, idealization, and asynchronous feedback loops 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Walther, J. B. (1996). Computer-mediated communication: Impersonal, interpersonal, and hyperpersonal interaction. <i>Communication Research</i>, 23(1), 3–43. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lectures & discussion-based learning Experiential learning (self-reflection exercise)
Week 3	Lecture 1 & 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dating apps: Swiping, matching, and algorithmic romance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Owlett & Rossetto (2024): Chapter 7 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lectures & discussion-based learning
Week 4	Lecture 1 & 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Applying the hyperpersonal model to dating app behavior Choice overload, gamification of romance, dating fatigue Why does digital rejection feel different from in-person rejection? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Owlett & Rossetto (2024): Chapter 7 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lectures & discussion-based learning Problem-based learning (case studies) Class debates
Week 5	Lecture 1 & 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Foundational theory II: Parasocial Interaction (PSI) & Parasocial Relationships (PSR) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Horton, D., & Wohl, R. R. (1956). Mass communication and parasocial interaction. <i>Psychiatry</i>, 19(3), 215–229. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lectures & discussion-based learning
Week 6	Lecture 1 & 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parasocial relationships with influencers & fictional characters Para-social breakup grief Parasocial jealousy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hoffner, C. A. (2021). Parasocial relationships, social media, & well-being. (review) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lectures & discussion-based learning Problem-based learning (case studies)
Assessment 1: Reflective Essay: The Critical Incident Analysis (Week 6)				
Week 7	Lecture 1 & 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Foundational Theory III: Online Disinhibition Effect Benign disinhibition (self-disclosure, emotional expression) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Suler, J. (2004). "The disinhibition effect." <i>Cyber Psychology & Behavior</i>, 7(3), 321–326. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lectures & discussion-based learning

Week 8	Lecture 1 & 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Toxic disinhibition & digital harms in intimacy • Ghosting, breadcrumbing, orbiting, revenge porn • How does the permanence of digital traces complicate disinhibited behavior? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Owlett & Rossetto (2024): Chapter 9 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lectures & discussion-based learning • Class debates
Assessment 2: Group Presentations (Weeks 8-12)				
Week 9	Lecture 1 & 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social psychology of human-AI relationships: Replika, Character.AI, and companion bots • Do AI relationships satisfy or substitute human attachment needs? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Turkle, S. (2011). <i>Alone Together</i>, Chapter 9: "Love's Labor Lost" (on AI companions) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lectures & discussion-based learning • Class debates
Week 10	Lecture 1 & 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Online sex work & digital economies of desire • Social psychological perspectives on OnlyFans, camming, and virtual sex work 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Andreassen et al. (2017). <i>Mediated Intimacies</i>, Chapter 8: Digital Sex Work and the Politics of Intimacy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lectures & discussion-based learning • Problem-based learning (case studies)
Week 11	Lecture 1 & 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stigma, self-presentation, and emotional labor in digital sexual services. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Andreassen et al. (2017). <i>Mediated Intimacies</i>, Chapter 8: Digital Sex Work and the Politics of Intimacy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lectures & discussion-based learning
Week 12	Lecture 1 & 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attachment styles in the digital Age • Secure attachment in digital spaces • Anxious-preoccupied: texting anxiety, reassurance-seeking • Avoidant-dismissive: emotional distance, ghosting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Owlett & Rossetto (2024): Chapter 4 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lectures & discussion-based learning • Experiential learning (self-reflection exercise)
Week 13	Lecture 1 & 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintaining friendships on social media 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Owlett & Rossetto (2024): Chapters 11 and 12 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lectures & discussion-based learning • Experiential learning (self-reflection exercise)
Week 14	Lecture 1 & 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social media and family relationships 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Owlett & Rossetto (2024): Chapters 14 and 15 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lectures & discussion-based learning
Week 15	Revision & clarification of doubts/ feedback			

Note: This schedule is preliminary and subject to change as needed