SELF AND SOCIAL COGNITION

PSY 260, Class 13984
Spring, 2015
Tuesday, Thursday, 10:00AM – 11:15AM, Billings – MLK

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Prerequisites

This course requires students to have completed, with a passing grade, Psychology 109 (Psychology Research Methods I) and Psychology 130 (Social Psychology), and Junior standing.

Course Overview and Objectives

The purpose of this course is to introduce you to social cognition research. Social cognition is not a “topic” like aggression, persuasion, prejudice, or attraction. It is more of a general approach to studying human behavior in a social context. In other words, it represents a specific level of analysis. In this course you will have an opportunity to read and discuss assigned readings on social cognition research. For the most part, assigned readings will be from primary sources, and they will cover many of the major issues that have preoccupied social cognition researchers. Each week, the topic of the readings will be an issue that is either (1) an older, classic social-psychological phenomena, or (2) still being actively studied and discussed and is controversial.

By the end of the semester, you should be able to:

• Understand what is unique about this general approach to studying social psychological phenomena, along with its advantages and limitations.
• Recognize, articulate, and elaborate upon specific theories and research findings on social cognition.
• Communicate effectively, orally and in writing, about social cognition research.
• Discuss and critique social cognition research and theory.

Supplemental Materials

Many aspects of this course are presented and available through the course website on Blackboard. It is your responsibility to stay current with this material. In other words, check Blackboard frequently.

Course Requirements and Grading

Attendance and Participation (5% of your grade)
Needless to say, the most basic course requirement is attendance and participation. Students will be expected to come to class with questions about the readings that might stimulate discussion. To do this—and more generally, to contribute to the discussion in a meaningful way—you will need to do the assigned readings before the class for which they are assigned. These readings will be available online on Blackboard.

Thought Questions (15% of your grade)
The first week of class will include (a) a discussion of the course requirements and expectations, (b) an overview of “social cognition,” broadly defined, and (c) a discussion on how to read and analyze an empirical research article.

After the first week of class, we will have 27 meetings during which we will discuss a set of readings. Students will be expected to submit at least two “thought questions” on the readings per meeting (for a total of at least four submissions per week). Some weeks will deviate from the format described above.

The content of these questions can vary widely, but they should reflect some kind of intellectual engagement with the readings. These questions could consist of critical reactions, thoughts about how the research might apply to other issues, alternative explanations for findings, interesting and unanswered questions, and more. They should not, however, just be straightforward summaries of the readings or lists of things that you did not understand.

Thought questions should be submitted to Blackboard by Friday at 8pm for Tuesday meetings, and by Sunday at 8pm for Thursday discussions.

Article Presentations (20% of your grade)
Students will also be required to lead one weekly discussion meeting in which they will be expected to help facilitate the discussion of the assigned readings through two mechanisms. First, the student is required to present a summary and critique of each of the assigned readings. Each article presentation should take no longer than 15 minutes. Second, the student is required to provide an overview of the thought questions submitted for that day’s readings.

Students who are leading a weekly discussion are required to email the professor an electronic copy of their presentation, including a paragraph-long critique and summary of each reading, and a synthesis of the thought questions, the day before they lead the discussion. Following the presentation, the outline and critique will be posted on Blackboard.
for the benefit of all students in the class. The outlines and critiques, along with the presentation itself, will be graded for clarity, comprehensiveness, accuracy, effort, and thoughtfulness.

**Group Discussions and Reaction Papers (20% of your grade)**

In week two of class, students will be randomly assigned to discussion groups. These groups will serve two purposes. First, during the course of the semester, you will have at least two in depth in class discussions with your group. The topics of the discussion will be based on a list of 5-6 questions that will be distributed at the beginning of class. Those questions will deal with broad issues from the previous weeks’ readings. After the class discussion, students should write a “reaction paper” of approximately 2 pages (double-spaced) and submit it to the instructor (by the beginning of the next class). These papers should be written independent of your group members. Grades for these assignments will be based upon students’ contributions to the in-class discussion (determined by anonymous group member evaluations), as well as the reaction papers.

Second, group members will be expected to refer to one another for feedback regarding their final papers. Information about the final paper and group feedback expectations are below.

**Final Paper (40% of your grade)**

A paper will be due on Friday of the last week of classes (May 1). It should be approximately 12-15 pages long and prepared in APA style. The paper can take one of three forms:

1. A critical literature review of competing theories, models, or methodologies covered in the course. The paper should include a summary of the areas of the social cognition literature you are drawing from. The bulk of the paper, however, should be devoted to discussing the similarities and differences between the two areas, unanswered questions, and how these unanswered questions might be resolved in a novel or compelling way.

2. A proposal for novel research related to one of the issues discussed during the semester. If this option is selected, though, the emphasis should be on the theoretical background and the issues that would be addressed by the research and not on research design and data analytic issues.

3. An extended discussion of a novel perspective on one of the issues discussed during the semester. That is, it should elaborate on a perspective either not discussed in class or only very briefly touched upon.

You are all required to discuss your paper topic with the instructor before you begin working on them. Specifically, students will be expected to do the following:

- Submit a brief proposal (a short paragraph) on their paper topic and format to Blackboard by the end of week 10, (Friday 3/27).

- Submit an annotated bibliography of the primary sources used for their paper to Blackboard by the end of week 11, (Friday 4/3). This annotated bibliography will be evaluated by the instructor and one group member.
• Submit an outline/plan of their paper to Blackboard by the end of week 13 (Friday 4/17). This outline will be evaluated by the instructor and one group member.

• Provide critical feedback to one group member on his/her annotated bibliography and paper outline.

• Submit final draft by May 1.

In summary, your assignments for this class include:

1) Attendance and Participation (5% of your grade)
2) Thought Questions (15% of your grade)
3) Article Presentations (20% of your grade)
4) Group Discussions and Reaction Papers (20% of your grade)
5) Final Paper (40% of your grade)

Grading

At the end of the semester, your grades will be weighted as noted in the above table and your final grade will be assigned according to the following scale: A = 93-100; A- = 90-92.9; B+ = 86.9-89.9; B = 82.9-86.9; B- = 79.9-82.8; C+ = 75.5-79.8; C = 70-75.4; D = 60-69.9; F = 59.9 or below.

General Policies

Attendance Policy:
I strongly encourage you to attend class. Your performance and grade in this class largely hinge on your being there, particularly on the days when you are scheduled to present. It will also be an educational and intellectually stimulating experience to the extent that all students are present.

Make-up Policy:
You cannot make-up work, including oral presentations. If you are scheduled to present on a given day; make sure you show up. If you do not, you can turn in the outline for half credit. Otherwise, you will receive zero points.

Lateness Policy:
I do not accept late work. If you are having difficulty completing your final paper, please contact me at least 48 hours before the deadline.

Checks and Balances: All students will be asked to evaluate fellow group members. These evaluations will be factored into the final grade.
Policy on Cheating (Academic Honesty)

The Department of Psychological Science follows the University system policy on academic honesty that is published on the student affairs website. You may download a version from here: http://www.uvm.edu/policies/student/acadintegrity.pdf. You are expected to know the University’s standards of academic honesty and are responsible for abiding by these standards. Lack of knowledge of these standards is not an acceptable defense for academic misconduct. Acts of academic dishonesty include:

- Plagiarism: presenting another person's work as your own, whether or not doing so was intentional.
- Cheating on examinations: giving or receiving unauthorized help before, during, or after an examination
- Unauthorized collaboration: submitting academic work, whole or in part, as your individual effort when it has been developed in collaboration with another person or source
- Falsification: misrepresenting material or fabricating information in order to gain an unfair advantage over others
- Multiple submissions: submitting the same work, whole or in part, for credit more than once without the explicit consent of the faculty member(s) to whom the material is submitted

The penalty for academic misconduct in this course varies from a 0 on the assignment to a failing grade in the course, depending on the severity of the offense and the student’s history of academic conduct. Disciplinary action may be taken in addition to the academic penalty if the instructor, department, college, or university feels such action is warranted. All acts of academic dishonesty will be reported to the Chair of the Department of Psychological Science, the Director of Undergraduate Studies in Psychological Science, and the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences.

All members of the University community, including students, faculty, and staff, are expected to report violations of academic conduct to the appropriate authorities. Failure to report academic misconduct of which you are aware reflects complicity with the misconduct. Such complicity may also result in an academic and/or disciplinary penalty.

Classroom Environment
This course will uphold the University of Vermont’s Classroom Code of Conduct

University of Vermont Classroom Code of Conduct:
Faculty and students will at all times conduct themselves in a manner that serves to maintain, promote, and enhance the high quality academic environment befitting the University of Vermont. To this end, it is expected that all members of the learning community will adhere to the following guidelines:

1. Faculty and students will attend all regularly scheduled classes, except for those occasions warranting an excused absence under the University Attendance Policy (e.g., religious, athletic, and medical).
2. Students and faculty will arrive prepared for class and on time, and they will remain in class until the class is dismissed.

3. Faculty and students will treat all members of the learning community with respect. Toward this end, they will promote academic discourse and the free exchange of ideas by listening with civil attention to comments made by all individuals.

4. Students and faculty will maintain an appropriate academic climate by refraining from all actions that disrupt the learning environment (e.g., making noise, ostentatiously not paying attention, and leaving and reentering the classroom inappropriately). (Please turn your cell phones off during class).

Special Accommodations and ACCESS

Please contact Dr. Perry in person, by email, or by phone if there is anything that she needs to know that might improve your learning environment in this class.

UVM, through its ACCESSS office, provides accommodation, consultation, collaboration and education support services to students needing special accommodations. To contact the ACCESS office, you may go to: http://www.uvm.edu/access/; email them at access@uvm.edu; or call at 656-7753. If you need specific accommodations in this class, please bring a letter from ACCESS to the instructor within the first 3 weeks of class so that we can make appropriate arrangements.

Religious Holidays

According to UVM guidelines, students have the right to practice the religion of their choice. Each semester students should submit in writing to their instructors by the end of the second full week of classes their documented religious holiday schedule for the semester. Faculty must permit students who miss work for the purpose of religious observance to make up this work.

Helpful Hints

• Come to class every day.
• Check Blackboard at least 24 hours before class.
• Check at your syllabus often. I will not answer questions that can be answered by looking at the syllabus
• Complete the reading prior to class and come with topics for discussion.
• Ask questions! If you don’t understand something, you are likely not the only person.
Topics and Reading Assignments

**Week 1, 1/13: Introduction and overview**

NO READING ASSIGNMENT

**Week 1, 1/15: Introduction and overview**

Sample article discussion:


**Week 2, 1/20: Building blocks of social cognition, Part I—Accessibility**


**Week 2, 1/22: Building blocks of social cognition, Part II—Categorization**


**Week 3, 1/27: Building blocks of social cognition, Part III—Automaticity & the Unconscious**


**Week 3, 1/29: Building blocks of social cognition, Part III — Automaticity & the Unconscious**


**Week 4, 2/3: Building blocks of social cognition, Part IV — Motivated/biased cognition**


**Week 4, 2/5: Building blocks of social cognition, Part IV — Motivated/biased cognition**


**Week 5, 2/10: What’s so special about the “self”**


**Week 5, 2/12: What’s so special about the “self”**


**Week 6, 2/17: Terror management versus sociometer theory**


**Week 6, 2/19: Terror management versus sociometer theory**


**Week 7, 2/24: Putting it all together—Person Perception (with an emphasis on culture)**


**Week 7, 2/26: Putting it all together—Person Perception (with an emphasis on culture)**


**SPRING BREAK**
**Week 8, 3/10: Putting it all together—Stereotyping and Prejudice**


**Week 8, 3/12: Putting it all together—Stereotyping and Prejudice**


**Week 9, 3/17: The Implicit Association Test (IAT)—The perfect nonreactive attitude measure?**


**Week 9, 3/19: The Implicit Association Test (IAT)—The perfect nonreactive attitude measure?**


**Week 10, 3/24: Doing a number on ourselves: Stereotype threat**


**Week 10, 3/26: Doing a number on ourselves: Stereotype threat**


**Week 11, 3/30: Current trends, Part I—Evolutionary social cognition**


**Week 11, 4/2: Current trends, Part I—Evolutionary social cognition**


**Week 12, 4/7: Current trends, Part II—Social cognitive neuroscience**


**Week 12, 4/9: Current trends, Part II—Social cognitive neuroscience**


**Week 13, 4/14: Current trends, Part III—Accuracy and Embodiment**


**Week 13, 4/16: Current trends, Part III—Accuracy and Embodiment**


**Week 14, 4/21: Revisiting classic issues, Part I—Aggression and prosocial behavior**


Week 14, 4/23: Revisiting classic issues, Part I—Aggression and prosocial behavior


Week 15, 4/28: Revisiting classic issues, Part II—Relationships and culture
