SELECTED TOPICS IN SOCIAL COGNITION

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Office Hours: By appointment

Meetings: Tuesday/Thursday, 11:00am-12:15pm, Psychology building 313

Overview of the Course
The overarching goal of this course is to provide an overview of current research and theory in social cognition. If there is a running theme to this course, it is in the use of “top down” processes in how we construct an understanding of the world around us. That is, we use our past experiences and memories to interpret new experiences, people and behavior. This fact does not dictate whether that understanding is accurate or not. However, social psychologists have historically been interested in the ways that this process leads to errors or biases in a vast array of human endeavors. This perspective has had a strong impact on the trajectory of social cognition.

Special Note on Attendance:
The success of the seminar depends critically on your participation and students should only take this seminar if they are prepared to attend every session. For this reason, attendance at every session is expected and required, with your grade determined by additional criteria, noted below. I understand that illness and true emergencies can sometimes occur, and that these cannot be avoided. Aside from these circumstances, however, unexcused absences will result in an automatic drop of one half letter grade. Students who miss more than one week of classes will be asked to drop the course.

Policy on academic dishonesty:
Academic integrity is fundamental to the activities and principles of a university. All members of the academic community must be confident that each person's work has been responsibly and honorably acquired, developed, and presented. Any effort to gain an advantage not given to all students is dishonest whether or not the effort is successful. The academic community regards breaches of the academic integrity rules as extremely serious matters. Sanctions for such a breach may include academic sanctions from the instructor, including failing the course for any violation, to disciplinary sanctions ranging from probation to expulsion. When in doubt about plagiarism, paraphrasing, quoting, collaboration, or any other form of cheating, consult the course instructor.

Information for students with disabilities:
If you anticipate barriers related to the format or requirements of this course, if you have
emergency medical information to share with me, or if you need to make arrangements in case the building must be evacuated, please let me know as soon as possible.

If disability related accommodations are necessary (for example, a note taker, extended time on exams, captioning), please register with the Office of Disability Services (http://disabilityservices.missouri.edu), S5 Memorial Union, 882-4696, and then notify me of your eligibility for reasonable accommodations. For other MU resources for students with disabilities, click on "Disability Resources" on the MU homepage.

**A note about diversity:**
The University community welcomes intellectual diversity and respects student rights. Students who have questions or concerns regarding the atmosphere in this class (including respect for diverse opinions) may contact the Departmental Chair or Divisional Director; the Director of the Office of Students Rights and Responsibilities (http://osrr.missouri.edu/); or the MU Equity Office (http://equity.missouri.edu/), or by email at equity@missouri.edu. All students will have the opportunity to submit an anonymous evaluation of the instructor(s) at the end of the course.

**A note about making audio or visual recordings of this class:**
In this class, students may make audio or video recordings of course activity unless specifically prohibited by the faculty member. However, the redistribution of audio or video recordings of statements or comments from the course to individuals who are not students in the course is prohibited without the express permission of the faculty member and of any students who are recorded. Students found to have violated this policy are subject to discipline in accordance with provisions of Section 200.020 of the Collected Rules and Regulations of the University of Missouri pertaining to student conduct matters.

**Course Requirements/Evaluation**

1. **Reaction papers (35% of grade).**
   For each class you will write a short (1/2-1 page) reaction based on the reading for that day. These do not need to be polished papers but they are expected to be conceptually clear and free of grammatical and spelling errors. Submit your reaction papers to me, via email, by 11:59pm Monday (for class on Tuesday) and Wednesday evening (for class on Thursday). Papers received on the day of class (12:00am or later) will not receive any credit.

   The purpose of these papers is to steer the discussion toward areas that you found interesting, debate-worthy, or unclear. As such, you should NOT summarize the readings. Instead, your paper should be in 1 of 3 formats:
   1. **Write a critical review** of one or more of the week’s readings. Critical does not mean negative. You should never simply say “I don’t believe that what they are saying is true.” Being negative and skeptical is easy. It is harder to be constructive. If you are skeptical, you must say why, and suggested solutions or alternative ideas.
   2. **Integrate the ideas** from several papers and talk about how they related synergistically. You can write about how the papers from that day related to each other, or to papers we have read in previous weeks, or to papers that you have read on your own.
   3. **Ask a question.** Please state the question clearly. The question can come in the form of a critique (e.g. “Why did they designed the experiment this way when another method
seems more appropriate”). Or, you can ask clarifying questions (e.g. “I didn’t understand the study design, can we discuss this in class?”).

2. Class moderation (15% of grade)
Students are required to moderate (lead) the class discussion for one week (beginning Week 3). This will include 1 class session (Tuesday or Thursday). Your job is to read the thought papers for that week and use those papers to guide the class in a discussion about the readings. As such, you need to do an especially close reading of the papers for that week. Moderators are expected to provide a structure for the discussion. Grading will be made on three main criteria, all weighted equally: (a) mastery of the relevant material, (b) clarity of presentation, and (c) ability to energize group discussion.

3. A term paper (8-10 pages, double-spaced, not including references) that is in one of these forms:
   (35% of grade)

   a. A theoretical paper that identifies a current social problem, issue or event, and presents a new way of looking at that problem based on a topic covered in class. Examples: racial bias, political gridlock, etc. The paper should introduce the problem/issue/event and make a case for its importance, and then review social psychological research that is pertinent to this issue. Critically, the term paper MUST demonstrate how specific social psychological phenomena can lend insight into the problem. The best papers will also suggest practical solutions to the problem, based on that insight.

   OR

   b. A research proposal that addresses research topic related to the issues covered in this course. You should develop a specific hypothesis and propose one study to test this hypothesis. The study that you propose should be different than ones you are may be conducting if you are part of a psychology lab (although you can certainly use those studies as inspiration!). The format of the paper should be similar to a journal article. More specifically, your paper should have the following sections: Introduction (Review of relevant literature, statement of hypotheses), Methods, and Predicted Results (i.e. what you expect to find and why).

Regardless of what format you choose for your final paper, this paper MUST have the following attributes:
   1. Maximum of 10 pages (not including references) double-spaced, Times New Roman 12 point font, 1 inch margins.
   2. Citations in the text, using American Psychological Association format, to support all assertions and factual statements made in the paper.
   3. A reference section that includes at least 6 articles from peer-reviewed psychology journals. Two of these 6 articles can be articles that we read in class. You may cite additional articles that we read in class but this will not count toward your 6 reference criterion. You may cite more than 6 references; in fact this is desirable so long as the citations are relevant. Reference section should be formatted according to American Psychological Association standards.
      a. Examples of peer reviewed social psychology:
         i. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology
         ii. Journal of Experimental Social Psychology
iii. Personality and Social Psychology Review
iv. Social Cognition
v. Psychological Review
vi. Psychological Science
vii. Perspectives on Psychological Science
viii. Etc.
b. News articles (e.g. New York Times, Wall Street Journal, etc.) MAY be used as sources, and should be properly cited. However they will not count toward your total required 6 psychology article citations.
c. Wikipedia and other webpages are NOT allowed as sources.

You have two deadlines. One is to submit a one page idea/proposal of what you are going to write about. This is due November 12 and is required. The deadline for submitting your final paper is December 12. Papers received December 13 will be subject to a deduction of a full letter grade. Papers received after that date will not receive any credit.

4. An in-class presentation of your term paper idea (15% of grade)
You will be required to present your topic to the class, worth 10% of your final grade. We all want to know what you’re doing, and this doesn’t happen if only I read your papers. You can learn from each other. Your presentation will be based on your final research proposal. You will make your presentations in front of the class on presentation day at the end of the semester. You can use PowerPoint, handouts, or any other materials that you like. The length of your presentations will depend upon the number of students ultimately enrolled in the class, but in general I’d like to have each student present for about 10 min. The main point of these presentations is to tell the class what you did, which can lead to others being interested and potentially collaborating in future research efforts.

Summary of grading scheme:
- Reaction papers: 35%
- Class moderation: 15%
- Term paper: 35%
- Presentation: 15%
DATES, TOPICS, AND READINGS

Week 1: August 22 & 24

Overview of the Course and Historical Background

Tuesday: What is Social Cognition

Thursday: Methods in Social Cognition

Week 2: August 29 & 31

Everything You Learn In This Course Might Be Wrong (but you're going to learn a lot about how science works)

Tuesday: The Crisis of Confidence in Psychology
1. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=42QuXLucH3Q
   http://www.slate.com/articles/health_and_science/cover_story/2016/03/ego_depletion_an_influential_theory_in_psychology_may_have_justBeen_debunked.html

Thursday: Continued Debates and Controversies

Suggested further reading:
• Inbar Y (2016) Association between contextual dependence and replicability in psychology may be spurious. Proc Natl Acad Sci USA, 10.1073/pnas.1608676113

**Week 3: September 5 & 7**  
*Introspection and knowing oneself*  
**Tuesday:**  

**Thursday:**  

**Suggested further reading:**  

**Week 4: September 12 & 14**  
*Motivated reasoning and perceptions of bias*  
**Tuesday:**  

**Thursday:**  

**Suggested further reading:**  
• Nyhan, Reifler, Ubel (2013). The hazards of correcting myths about health care reform. *Medical Care, 51*, 127-132

**Week 5: September 19 & 21**

**Impression Formation and Person Memory**

**Tuesday:**

**Thursday:**

Suggested further reading:

**Week 6: September 26 & 28**

**Social Categorization and Stereotypes**

**Tuesday: Categorization**

**Thursday: Stereotyping**
Suggested further reading:


**Week 7: October 3 & 5**

*Prejudice and the Nature of Implicit Attitudes*

**Tuesday:**


**Thursday:**


Suggested further reading:

Week 8: October 10 & 12
Priming: Theories and Controversies

Tuesday:

Thursday:

Suggested further reading:

Week 9: October 17 & 19
Dual Processes Theories I

Tuesday:

Thursday (dual processes and attitudes):

Suggested further reading:


**Week 10: October 24 & 26 (Dr. Scherer will be at a conference on Tuesday)**

**Judgment and Decision making**

**Tuesday:**

**Thursday:**

Suggested further reading:

**Week 11: October 31 and November 2**

**Dual Process Theories II: Judgment and Decision Making**

**Tuesday:**

**Thursday:**

Suggested further reading:


Week 12: November 7 & 9
Mood and Affect

Tuesday:

Thursday:

Suggested further reading:

Week 13: November 14 & 16
TBA

Week 14: November 21 & 23 NO CLASS THANKSGIVING BREAK

Week 15: November 28 & 30
Student presentations
Week 16: December 5 & 7
Student presentations