Course Overview

This course is intended to provide an introduction to research in social cognition. Social cognition is the study of the cognitive underpinnings of social behavior and the ways individuals think about our social world.

This class will meet for two 80-minute sessions a week. Approximately two-thirds of the sessions will be devoted to a lecture, although adequate time will be allotted for questions and commentary. These lectures will provide an overview of the historical developments with respect to a given issue within the social cognition literature. The other class sessions will be devoted to a discussion of a set of recent articles related to the general issues covered in the preceding meeting(s).

Course Textbook


This book of readings is a collection of classic journal articles from the social psychological literature on social cognition. It also includes valuable ancillary material introducing each major topic area.

Additional readings, including those pertaining to the discussion sessions, are available on the course’s Carmen website.

The following are excellent texts that can provide useful background information, if you desire additional information about any given topic.


Course Requirements

Readings are assigned for each class meeting, and are to be read prior to the class with which they are associated. Readings consist of journal articles reprinted in Hamilton’s reader or provided on Carmen.

Grades will be based on:

1. Midterm exam covering the first half of the syllabus and weighted 35% of the course grade. The midterm will be administered during class on **October 18**.
2. Final exam covering the second half of the syllabus and weighted 35%. The final will be administered during finals week. According to the Registrar’s final exam schedule, the exam is scheduled for **Tuesday, December 13, 2:00-3:45**.
3. Class participation weighted 20%. This includes contributions to the discussions in general, as well as the discussion that each student will be leading. Each of the discussion articles will be assigned to a student, who will assume the responsibility of: (a) preparing a single-page handout summarizing the reading for distribution to the class, (b) presenting a brief overview of the article, (c) offering observations about the research, and (d) generating issues or questions for class discussion.
4. Thought paper weighted 10%. Details regarding this brief (1000 words or less) paper will be provided approximately two weeks prior to the due date of **September 30**.

Academic Misconduct

It is the responsibility of the Committee on Academic Misconduct to investigate or establish procedures for the investigation of all reported cases of student academic misconduct. The term “academic misconduct” includes all forms of student academic misconduct wherever committed; illustrated by, but not limited to, cases of plagiarism and dishonest practices in connection with examinations. Instructors shall report all instances of alleged academic misconduct to the committee (Faculty Rule 3335---5---487). For additional information, see the Code of Student Conduct [http://studentlife.osu.edu/pdfs/csc_12---31---07.pdf](http://studentlife.osu.edu/pdfs/csc_12---31---07.pdf).

Students with disabilities

The University strives to make all learning experiences as accessible as possible. If you anticipate or experience academic barriers based on your disability (including mental health, chronic or temporary medical conditions), please let me know immediately so that we can privately discuss options. You are also welcome to register with Student Life Disability Services to establish reasonable accommodations. After registration, make arrangements with me as soon as possible to discuss your accommodations so that they may be implemented in a timely fashion. **SLDS contact information:** slds@osu.edu; 614-292-3307; slds.osu.edu; 098 Baker Hall, 113 W. 12th Avenue.
Tentative schedule (subject to change)

August 23: Course introduction

August 25: Social perception and impression formation – Historical overview
From Heider/Bruner/Asch to modern social cognition; Some basic concepts;
The constructive nature of perception

Hamilton: Introductory Overview; Readings 1, 6, 22

Bruner, J. S. (1957). On perceptual readiness. Psychological Review, 64, 123-152. [Note: Reading 6 from the Hamilton volume is an abridged version of this article. I recommend reading the original article in its entirety.]

August 30: The rise of social cognition
Priming and category accessibility

Hamilton: Readings 4, 9

September 1: Person memory
Recall of expectancy-congruent versus incongruent information; Information processing goals

Hamilton: Preview Part 6; Readings 2, 7, 23, 24, 25

September 6: Discussion session

Kendrick, R. V., & Olson, M. A. (2012). When feeling right leads to being right in the reporting of implicitly-formed attitudes, or how I learned to stop worrying and trust my gut. Journal of Experimental Social Psychology, 48, 1316-1321.


September 8: Memory as reconstructions of the past
Expectancy-guided retrieval; False memories

Hamilton: Readings 33, 34
September 13: Discussion session


September 15: Probability estimation

Judgments under uncertainty; Heuristics

Hamilton: Preview Part 3; Readings 10, 11

September 20 & 22: Automaticity

Nonconscious processing; Automatically-driven attention, categorization, and behavior

Hamilton: Preview Part 4; Readings 13, 14, 15, 16

September 27 & 29: No Class – SESP

September 30: Thought paper, Due electronically by 5:00 PM

October 4: Discussion session


October 6: Dispositional Inferences

Attribution processes; Biases and errors; Spontaneous trait inferences; Self-inferences

Hamilton: Preview Part 5; Readings 17, 18, 19, 20, 21
October 11: Discussion session


October 13: No Class – Fall Break

October 18: MIDTERM

October 20: Review of Midterm

October 25: Stereotypes

Stereotype activation; The consequences of stereotypes for information processing; Their functional value

Hamilton: Preview Part 2; Readings 3, 8, 28, 29

October 27: Stereotype development

Hamilton: Preview Part 7; Reading 26

November 1: Discussion session


November 3: Stereotyping from the perspective of the target
Attributional ambiguity; Stereotype threat

November 8: Discussion session


November 10: Hypothesis testing
Confirmatory testing; Diagnosticity; Self-serving reasoning

Hamilton: Preview Part 8; Readings 30, 31, 32

November 15: Expectancies and social interaction
The impact of expectancies on social interaction; Expectancy maintenance and confirmation

Hamilton: Readings 12, 27, 37

November 17: Discussion session


November 22: The affect ↔ cognition interface
Effects of cognition on affect; Misattribution and emotion

Hamilton: Preview Part 9; Reading 38

November 24: No Class – Thanksgiving

November 29: The affect ↔ cognition interface
Effects of affect on cognition; Affective consequences of counterfactual thinking; Emotion-congruent processing; Feelings as information; Affect and creativity

Hamilton: Readings 35, 36

December 1: Discussion session


December 6: Wrap Up

December 13: Final Exam, 2:00-3:45