

CURRENT TOPICS IN SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY
PSYCHOLOGY D15 F (SEPTEMBER, 1997)

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Instructor: Dr. Bikram DasGupta
Room: S-559, Life Sciences Department (S-Wing, 5th Floor)

Required Text:

Fiske, S.T. & Taylor, S.E. (1991). Social Cognition (2nd Ed.).
New York: McGraw-Hill.

Course Description:

This course will examine selected issues and problems in social psychology. It aims to familiarize students with contemporary theories in social psychology and research developments in such areas as: causal attribution; impression management; attitude formation and change; unconscious processes; the self and social identity; prosocial behavior and aggression; attraction and intimate relationships; leadership and group decision-making. These social psychological topics will be applied to areas such as health and education. In addition, there is an interest in observing how multicultural factors and affective states impact upon social cognition. It is anticipated that senior students in this course will use the course materials to develop an in-depth understanding of current theory and research in social psychology and to develop specific research interests that will lead to the development of research proposals.

Course Evaluation:

There will be two written assignments and an exam. The exam which will be held on a day during the exam period (i.e., December 10-19, 1997), will count for 40% of the total grade. Approximately two-third of the exam will be based on lecture and class discussion and one-third of the exam will cover material from selected chapters of the required textbook.

The first written assignment which will be due on October 23, 1997, will consist of a review of experimental literature on any topic of your choice discussed in class and/or from the textbook. This first assignment will be worth 20% of the total grade. This first assignment is expected to help develop the second assignment which will consist of a research proposal on the social psychological topic of your choice. This final assignment which will be due on the last day of class (December 4, 1997), will be worth 40% of the total grade. Class time and assistance will be provided to help develop your research focus, design your methodology and structure the proposal.

Teaching Method:

The material will be studied through both lecture and class discussions. The textbook is expected to provide an in-depth discussion of a cognitive framework to the study of human social behavior and experience. Class discussions and lectures will cover not only the text but also current research. Selected research articles will be reserved in the library for short-term loan.

Course Content Outline:

1. Introduction: A cognitive social psychology (Sept. 11, 1997)

Required Readings: Chapter 1 (Fiske & Taylor)

Other:

Bandura, A. (1989). Human agency in social cognitive theory. American Psychologist, 44, 1175-1184.

2. Attributional Processes: Attempts at a logic of cause
(Sept. 18-25, 1997)

Required Readings: Chapters 2 and 3 (Fiske & Taylor)

Other:

Guimond, S., Begin, G. & Palmer, D.L. (1989). Education and causal attributions: The development of "person blame" and "system blame" ideology. Social Psychology Quarterly, 52, 126-140.

Peterson, C., Colvin, D. & Liu, E.H. (1992). Explanatory style and learned helplessness. Social Behavior and Personality, 20, 1-14.

DasGupta, B. (1992). Perceived control and examination stress. Psychology: A Journal of Human Behavior, 29, 31-34.

3. Affective States: A limited rationality (Oct. 2 & 9, 1997)

Required Readings: Chapters 9 and 10 (Fiske & Taylor)

Other:

Dion, K.L. & Dion, K.K. (1987). Belief in a just world and physical attractiveness. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 52, 775-780.

Forgas, J.P. (1993). On making sense of odd couples: Mood effects on the perception of mismatched relationships. Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 19, 59-70.

Glover, R.J. (1994). Using moral and epistemic reasoning as predictors of prejudice. Journal of Social Psychology, 134, 633-640.

Mogg, K. et al. (1993). Subliminal processing of emotional information in anxiety and depression. Journal of Abnormal Psychology, 102, 304-311.

4. Knowledge Systems: Building realities (Oct. 16 & 23, 1997)

Required Readings: Chapters 4 and 5 (Fiske & Taylor)

Other:

Baldwin, M. et al. (1996). Social cognitive conceptualization of attachment working models: Availability and accessibility effects. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 71, 94-109.

5. The Personal: Disembedding the self in society (Oct. 30 & Nov. 6, 1997)

Required Readings: Chapters 6 and 11 (Fiske & Taylor)

Other:

Klein, S.B. & Loftus, J. (1988). The nature of self-referent encoding: The contributions of elaborative and organizational processes. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 55, 5-11.

DasGupta, B. & Liang, A. (1988). The effect of behavioral commitment and ability discrepancy on attitudinal persistence. Social Behavior and Personality, 16, 79-84.

Roskos-Ewoldsen, D.R. & Fazio, R.H. (1992). The accessibility of source likability as a determinant of persuasion. Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 18, 19-25.

6. Unconscious Processes (Nov. 13 & 20, 1997)

Required Readings: Chapter 7 (Fiske & Taylor)

Other:

Krosnick, J.A. et al. (1992). Subliminal conditioning of attitudes. Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 18, 152-162.

Bargh, J.A. et al. (1992). The generality of the automatic attitude activation effect. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 62, 893-912.

7. Catch-Up & Review (Nov. 27 & Dec. 4, 1997)