

PSYCHOLOGY D15-F, 1998
Dr. John Bassili (room S-550)
Office Hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays 2-3 pm

Required Texts: Social Cognition by Fiske and Taylor (2nd Ed.)

Marking Theme: There will be two exams and a term paper. Each of the exams, which will have a short-answer format, will count for 35% of the total grade. The exams will cover material from the readings and lectures and will not be cumulative. The term paper will consist of a review of experimental literature on any topic discussed in either lectures or the textbook (more on this in class) and will count for 30% of the total grade. The paper is due on December 11. You will lose 2 marks out of 30 for each day of tardiness.

September 18 Chpt 1: Introduction

The book and the lecture will each provide a distinctive orientation towards the subject matter of the course. There is little overlap between the introductory coverage in the two.

September 25 Chpt 2: Attribution Theory

Attribution Theory is regarded by many as the first clearly cognitive perspective on processes of person perception. For this reason, the attributional approach is scrutinized fairly closely in chapter 2 and in lecture. I like Heider, the creator of Attribution Theory, so I will spend a bit more time describing his early ideas than the book does.

October 2 Chpt 3: Attribution Theory: Theoretical

More attribution theory, both in chapter 3 and in lecture. The emphasis will shift from looking at the basic models to looking at ideas and discoveries that were stimulated by these theories.

October 9 Chpt 4: Social categories and schemas

The role of schemas and categories in social cognition is introduced in chapter 4. Because this is a relatively complex topic, the lecture will complement the book.

October 16 Chpt 6: Cognition and the self

There will be no overlap between chapter 6 and the lecture. The chapter covers "cognition and the self", a topic that is receiving quite a bit of attention in the field today, while I will be reviewing classical work in a topic that is known as "impression formation". Along with attribution theory, research on impression formation forms the foundation of modern social cognition.

BREATHER DATE WITH SESP

October 23 Breather: No class, no required readings

Every year at about this time the Society for Experimental Social Psychology holds its annual meeting. Everyone who is anyone in experimental social psychology attends this conference. So off I go, and you are given a breather. No readings are assigned for

this week to allow you to start researching your paper. No one will get upset if you read chapter 5 for your own edification and titillation.

October 30 MIDTERM EXAM

The midterm exam will be held in class. It will last an hour and a half and will cover representatively material from the book and lectures.

November 6 Chpt 7: Social encoding: Attention and Consc.

Chapter 7 as well as the lecture will focus on processes that have to do with the encoding of social information. There will be a special emphasis on the role of automatic processes in social information processing, in particular on the question of whether we make trait inferences about others automatically when we observe trait-relevant behavior.

November 13 Chpt 8: Person Memory

One of the most important contributions of research in social cognition has been to our understanding of how people organize information about others in memory. Chapter 8 reviews this work, and we will start an extensive discussion of this research in lecture.

November 20 Chpt 9: Social Inference

Modern social cognition comprises two approaches, one that examines information processing in social situations and the other that examines how people make social judgments and inferences. Chapter 9 focuses on the latter approach, and describes people's shortcomings when dealing with problems that have correct answers. In lecture we will continue our review of person memory.

November 27 Chpt 10: Affect and cognition

Social cognition has not been embraced by all social psychologists (to put it mildly). Detractors of the field usually argue that not enough attention is given to affect and emotions. Chapter 10 will help set the record straight. In lecture we will be finishing our coverage of person memory.

December 4 Chpt 11: Cognitive approaches to attitudes

Although most of our review of social cognition has been in the domain of person perception (where most of the research has focused) important contributions have also been made in the domain of attitudes. This will be the focus of chapter 11 as well as of the lecture.

December 11 Catch-up, finish-up

To allow you time to finish your paper the readings for this week are optional (chapter 12 and 13). Our meeting will consist of a discussion of stereotypes. One particularly important question that we will touch on is whether stereotypes are accurate.