

Social Cognition: Understanding Ourselves and Others
PSYC13H3

Instructor: Cendri Hutcherson
Office: SW572
Phone: 416-287-7447
Email: c.hutcherson@utoronto.ca
Office hours: M 1-3pm, Th 2-3pm

TAs: Nick Hobson (Head TA)
nick.hobson@mail.utoronto.ca
Shelly Zhou
shelly.zhou@mail.utoronto.ca
Nic Weststrate
nic.weststrate@utoronto.ca
Office hours: by appointment

Course Description

The study of social behavior has yielded a number of key insights into human nature. One of the most fundamental is that how we make sense of ourselves and the people around us is a complex function of our *perceptions, memories, beliefs, and attitudes*. These social cognitive mechanisms can be both surprisingly accurate and disturbingly biased. Moreover, they shape our actions and environment in ways that often produce self-fulfilling prophecies. This class explores the operation of these social cognitive mechanisms, what functions they serve, and how they lead to behaviors both beneficial and detrimental. In the process, the class will explore ways in which we can avoid the most common pitfalls of perception and judgment, and harness the incredible power of our social minds.

Required Text

Social Cognition: From Brains to Culture, Second Edition, by Fiske & Taylor, published by SAGE. Available at UTSC bookstore. Referred to as F&T for short.

Additional readings for class and readings related to writing assignments are available online through Blackboard (under Course Documents).

Grading

Midterm Exam (Feb. 11)	25%
Final Exam (Date TBD)	40%
6 short written assignments	30%
Class participation	5%

Description of grade components:

1. Midterm exam: The midterm will be a combination of multiple choice and short answer questions. It covers the lecture material and readings from Weeks 1-5, and will take place in class on Feb. 11.
2. Final exam: Like the midterm, the final will be a combination of multiple choice and short answer questions. 80% of the questions will focus on lecture material and readings after Week 5, and 20% will focus on material from Weeks 1-5 or will require you to synthesize material from across the two halves of the course. The date is set by the UTSC registrar, will take place sometime during exams period (April 8-22), and will be announced as soon as it is set.
3. Six (6) written assignments: Starting in Week 2, a target question will be posted each week to the course's Blackboard site (with the exception of Midterm and Reading weeks). This question is designed to get you thinking critically about the material from lecture and the book using social cognitive theories and approaches. Your assignment is to respond to the target question with a 1-2 page typed, double-spaced essay. You must write responses for 6 out of 9 total readings. If you choose, you may write a 7th response to replace the lowest of your six assignment grades.

Each assignment will be graded on three factors: 1) critical argumentation and the development of a coherent thesis with respect to the topic and the question, including evaluations of the ideas presented, as well as evidence supporting that evaluation; 2) appropriate use and discussion of social cognitive theories relevant to the reading/question; and 3) the quality of your written exposition (e.g., grammar, writing style, etc.). Assignments will be scored on a scale from 1-4, and you will receive comments to help you understand the grade and improve on future assignments.

Readings/target questions will be posted by 9am on Friday each week, with responses due by 5pm on Thursday the following week. Late assignments will receive a penalty of 1 point per day.

4. Class participation: Although this is a lecture-style class, a major goal of the class is to engage you in substantive interaction with me, the TAs, and other students in the class. This interaction will form the basis of your participation grade. Participation can take a number of forms: asking or responding to substantive questions in class, responding during class surveys using the i-Clicker (see i-Clicker section below), asking questions in office hours, or participating substantively on the Discussion Board (accessed via Blackboard). Participation will be graded on a point system, with 7 total points possible.

Documented instances of participation are worth the following:

Asking or responding to questions in class – 1 pt/class

Responding using the iClicker - 1 pt/class

Attending office hour sessions – 1 pt/session

Discussion board participation - 1 pt/substantive comment

Missed Exams

Midterm. According to University policy, you may miss the midterm if you are unable to take the exam for a number of legitimate reasons. You must obtain verifiable documentation of your reason for missing the midterm, and email me or one of the TAs as soon as you know that you will have to miss the midterm. If you are approved to miss the midterm, your final exam score will be reweighted to count for 65% of your course. For reasons of fairness, there will be no exceptions to this policy.

Final. If you must miss the final exam, then you should contact the Registrar's Office directly, as I am not authorized to make any changes to the final exam date and time.

Blackboard

The course's Blackboard website is the central location where you will find all important course information, including syllabus, reading materials and information for writing assignments, lecture notes and handouts, announcements, and supplementary information. Blackboard is also where the course Discussion Board can be found (important both for your participation grade and for answering questions). Lecture notes for each class (PDF copies of the slides) will be available on the Blackboard site by noon the day of class.

To access Blackboard, log on via <https://portal.utoronto.ca/> using your UTORid and password. I strongly recommend regularly checking the "Announcements" and "FAQ" sections of the course website, since you are solely responsible for making sure that you stay up to date with course announcements and assignments. To facilitate this, please make sure that your Blackboard account is up to date so that your correct email address is listed. If you are registered for the course, you should see this class displayed automatically when you log on via the intranet.

Lectures

Lectures take place on Thursdays from 5-7pm in AA112, and are designed to present major research areas, theories and experiments from the field of social cognition. While there will be some overlap between lectures and the readings, there will not be a 1-to-1 correspondence. Some things may be covered in lecture

that do not appear in the reading and vice-versa. I therefore recommend that you make every effort to attend class each week. Attendance and participation during lectures is also a good way to achieve full marks for.

Please note: there will be no lectures on Feb. 11 (in-class midterm) or Feb. 18 (reading week).

Office Hours (SW572, Mondays 1-3pm)

Office hours are a great way for you to get answers to specific questions you may have, as well as a way for you to receive points for participation. It is also a good forum for hearing answers to questions that other students have and learning about things you may not have thought about. When you arrive for office hours, please come inside my office, even if other students are already present. That way I will know you are present, and you can hear the discussion with other students.

iClicker

I will occasionally be polling the class during lectures to add an element of interaction, as well as provide a way for you to earn participation points. This participation will rely on the iClicker remote polling technology, for which you can use the iClicker device or the mobile phone app. You can register your iClicker at <http://www.iclicker.com/registration/Register.aspx>. Enter your first and last name, clicker id (the number above the bar code in the back of the device), and your UTORid (not your student number). iClickers can be purchased at the UTSC bookstore, bought used, or borrowed, as long as the device is registered under your own name and UTORid.

Academic Integrity

Academic integrity is a cornerstone of University of Toronto policy. It is critically important both to maintain a community that honours the values of honesty, trust, respect, fairness and responsibility and to protect you, the students. According to Section B of the University of Toronto's Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters which all students are expected to know and respect, it is an offence for students to 1) use someone else's ideas or words in their own work without acknowledging those ideas/words with a citation and quotation marks, i.e. to commit plagiarism; 2) include false, misleading or concocted citations in their work; 3) obtain or provide unauthorized assistance on any assignment; 4) submit their own work for credit in more than one course without the permission of the instructor; 5) falsify or alter any documentation required by the University, including doctor's notes; or 6) use or possess an unauthorized aid in any test or exam. There are other offences covered under the Code, but these are by far the most common. Please respect these rules and the values they protect.

Course Schedule

DATE	TOPIC	READINGS
Week 1: Jan 7	Logistics & Introduction: What is Social Cognition? Is it special?	F&T Chapter 1
Week 2: Jan 14	Automaticity and control in social cognition	F&T Chapters 2 & 3
Jan 21 Week 3	Judging people: What do we know and how do we know it?	F&T Chapters 4 & 6
Jan 28 Week 4	Judging ourselves: Do we know ourselves like we know others?	F&T Chapter 5
Feb 4 Week 5	Judging groups: Generalization and individualization	F&T Chapters 11 & 12
Feb 11 Week 6	Midterm Exam (In class)	
Feb 18 Week 7	Reading Week	NO CLASS
Feb 25 Week 8	Values, attitudes, and behavior	F&T Chapter 9 & 10
March 3 Week 9	Accuracy and bias in social cognition	F&T Chapters 7 & 8
March 10 Week 10	Cognition-emotion interactions	F&T Chapters 13 & 14
March 17 Week 11	Brain and body: Biological and neural insights into social cognition	Lieberman, 2007 (see Blackboard)
March 24 Week 12	Evolutionary and developmental insights into social cognition	Dunham, Baron, & Banaji, 2008; Blakemore, 2008 (see Blackboard)
March 31 Week 13	Looking back, looking ahead: review, applications, and the future of social cognition	F&T Chapter 15