

# Social Cognition: Understanding Ourselves and Others

## PSYC13H3

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### **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.

### **Readings**

There is no required textbook for this class. Readings will consist of book chapters, academic and popular-press articles, and excerpts, and will be made available online through Blackboard (under Course Documents).

### **Grading**

Midterm Exam (Oct. 20)	25%
Final Exam (Date TBD)	40%
Written assignments	30%
Class participation	5%

Description of grade components:

1. Midterm exam: The midterm will be a combination of multiple choice, short answer, and essay-style questions. It covers the lecture material and readings from Weeks 1-5, and will take place in class on Oct. 20.
2. Final exam: Like the midterm, the final will be a combination of multiple choice, short answer, and essay-style questions. The multiple-choice portion of the final exam will focus on lecture material and readings after Week 5. However, short answer and essay-style questions will require a cumulative knowledge of all of the material from the course, including material from before the midterm. These questions may 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 (Dec. 5-20), and will be announced as soon as it is set.
3. Writing assignment: A major goal of this course is to help students develop crucial critical thinking and writing skills. As part of this goal, you will be asked to write a 7-8 page paper on a specific topic in social cognition. This paper will involve a number of intermediate steps, due over the course of the semester, that will ask you to synthesize and integrate existing knowledge, think critically about theory and data, generate hypotheses, express your ideas and arguments coherently, and respond to comments and critiques from others. More details about the specific requirements and timeline for the paper can be found on Blackboard.
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), attending and asking questions in office hours, or participating substantively on the Discussion Board (accessed via Blackboard). Participation will be graded on a point system, with 8 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 - .5 pt/class

Attending office hour sessions - 1 pt/session

Discussion board participation - 1 pt/substantive comment

### **Departmental Policy - Missed Term Work due to Medical Illness or Emergency:**

All students citing a documented reason for missed term work (this includes assignments and midterm exams) must bring their documentation to the Undergraduate Course Coordinator, Ainsley Lawson, **within three (3) business days** of the term test /

assignment due date. All documentation must be accompanied by the departmental [Request for Missed Term Work form](http://uoft.me/PSY-MTW) (<http://uoft.me/PSY-MTW>).

In the case of missed term work due to illness, only an **original copy** of the [official UTSC Verification of Illness Form](http://uoft.me/PSY-MED) (<http://uoft.me/PSY-MED>) will be accepted. Forms are to be completed in full, clearly indicating the start date, anticipated end date, and severity of illness. The physician's registration number and business stamp are required.

In the case of other emergency, a record of visitation to a hospital emergency room or copy of a death certificate may be considered.

**Forms should be dropped off in SW427C between 9 AM - 4 PM, Monday through Friday.** Upon receipt of the documentation, you will receive an email response from the Course Instructor / Course Coordinator within three business days. The Course Instructor reserves the right to decide what accommodations (if any) will be made for the missed work.

Note that this policy applies only to missed term work (assignments and midterms). Missed final exams are dealt with by the Registrar's Office (<http://www.utsc.utoronto.ca/registrar/missing-examination>).

**Failure to adhere to any aspect of this policy may result in a denial of your request for accommodation.**

## **Missed Exams**

*Midterm.* If you are approved to miss the midterm, your final exam score will be reweighted to count for 65% of your course grade. 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, 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 guides and preliminary lecture slides will be available on the Blackboard site prior to the start of class. Finalized lecture slides will be posted within 48 hours after class each week.

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 3-5pm in SY110, 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 but will 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 points for your course participation grade.

Please note: there will be no lectures on Oct. 13 (reading week) or Oct. 20 (replaced by an in-class midterm). In addition, because I will be away for a conference on Nov. 10, there will be no in-class lecture for that day. Instead, a pre-recorded lectures will be available solely through the WebOption on Blackboard.

## **Office Hours (SW565, Mondays 1-3pm, Thursdays 11-12pm)**

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. They are 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 to 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. Please note: not every class will include an iClicker component.

## **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.

## **English Language Development Center**

This class assumes a degree of fluency in English, for both writing and comprehension. All students are encouraged to take the Academic English Health Check at the start of the term, and to visit the English Language Development Center for support if needed. The ELDC supports all students in developing better Academic English and the critical thinking skills needed in academic communication. Make use of the personalized support in academic writing skills development and Café sessions to enhance your ability to do better in the various components of this course. Details and sign-up information: <http://www.utsc.utoronto.ca/eld/>

## **Sample Exam Questions and Extra Credit**

I am committed to giving you opportunities to think about the material and demonstrate your engagement with it outside of exams and assignments. I am also committed to incorporating your feedback in order to make this class a challenging but fun and worthwhile experience for students. In service of both these goals, starting in Week 2 I will provide a set of sample exam questions based on the lectures and readings for that week, as well as a short series of questions to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the lecture and the readings. Students who complete these weekly quizzes and evaluations can earn up to a maximum of 5% extra credit, which will be added to their total grade at the end of the semester. The amount of extra credit will depend on a) percentage of quiz questions answered correctly and b) percentage of evaluations provided, marked simply as completed or not. Feedback will be anonymized by the TAs before it is given to me, and I am keenly interested in improving the class, so you should feel free to give honest evaluations. Weekly quizzes and feedback questions can be found under the “Extra Credit” section on Blackboard.

## Course Schedule

DATE	TOPIC	READINGS	ASSIGNMENTS
Week 1: Sept 8	Logistics & Introduction: What is Social Cognition?	Hamilton (2005) Nisbett (1977)	
Week 2: Sept 15	Automaticity and control in social cognition	Gawronski (2013) Baumeister (2007) Job (2010) Inzlicht (2014)	
Week 3 Sept 22	Judging a person: What do we know and how do we know it?	Reeder (2013) Olivola (2014)	Topic selection DUE SEPT. 23
Week 4 Sept. 29	Judging ourselves: What does it mean to "know thyself?"	McConnell (2013) Bushman (1998)	
Week 5 Oct. 6	Judging groups: Generalization and individualization	Macrae (2000) Lai (2014)	Outline + Research Question DUE OCT. 7
Week 6 Oct 13	<b>Reading Week</b>	<b>NO CLASS</b>	
Week 7 Oct 20	<b>Midterm Exam (In class)</b>		
Week 8 Oct 27	Values, attitudes, and behavior	Fazio (1990) Petty (1997) Cunningham (2007)	
Week 9 Nov 3	Cognition-emotion interactions	Forgas (1995) Frijda (1989) Tamir (2009)	First full draft DUE Nov. 2
Week 10 Nov 10	Accuracy and bias in social cognition <b>NOTE: Class time canceled, lecture on web-cast only</b>	Jussim (2015) Sandberg (2015) Back (2010)	
Week 11 Nov 17	Brain and body in social cognition	Saxe (2006) Lieberman (2007) Niedenthal (2005)	Peer review DUE NOV. 18
Week 12 Nov 24	Evolutionary and developmental influences on social cognition	Dunham (2008) Martin (2016)	
Week 13 Dec 1	Looking back, looking ahead: Applications, and the future of social cognition	<b>TBA</b>	Final paper DUE DEC. 2