

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. 19)	25%
Final Exam (Date TBD)	30%
Written assignments	40%
Class participation	5%

Description of grade components:

1. Midterm exam: The midterm will be a combination of multiple choice and essay questions. It covers the lecture material and readings from Weeks 1-5, and will take place in class on Oct. 19.
2. Final exam: Like the midterm, the final will be a combination of multiple choice and essay questions. The multiple-choice portion of the final exam will focus on lecture material and readings after Week 5. However, 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. 7-20), 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

Lectures

Lectures take place on Thursdays from 3-5pm in HW216, 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. 19 (replaced by an in-class midterm).

Office Hours (SW565, Mondays 10:30am-12:30pm, Thursdays 5-6pm)

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 for 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. You can register your iClicker through Blackboard (<http://portalinfo.utoronto.ca/content/iclicker-student-registration>). 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.

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

All students citing a documented reason for missed term work must bring their documentation to the Psychology Course Coordinator in SW427C **within three (3) business days** of the assignment due date. You must bring the following:

- (1.) A completed [Request for Missed Term Work form](http://uoft.me/PSY-MTW) (<http://uoft.me/PSY-MTW>), and
- (2.) Appropriate documentation to verify your illness or emergency, as described below.

Appropriate Documentation:

- 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/UTSC-Verification-Of-Illness-Form) will be accepted (<http://uoft.me/UTSC-Verification-Of-Illness-Form>). 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 **medical emergency**, an original copy of the record of visitation to a hospital emergency room should be provided.
- In the case of a **death of a family member**, a copy of a death certificate should be provided.
- In the case of a **disability-related** concern, an email communication should be sent directly to the Course Coordinator (psychology-undergraduate@utsc.utoronto.ca) from your Disability Consultant at AccessAbility Services, detailing the accommodations required. The Course Instructor should also be copied on this email.
- For U of T **Varsity athletic commitments**, an email communication should be sent directly to the Course Coordinator (psychology-undergraduate@utsc.utoronto.ca) from a coach or varsity administrator, detailing the dates and nature of the commitment. The email should be sent **well in advance** of the missed work.

Documents covering the following situations are **NOT acceptable**: medical prescriptions, anything related to personal travel, weddings/personal/work commitments.

Procedure:

Submit your (1.) [request form](#) and (2.) [medical](#)/other documents in person **within 3 business days** of the missed test or assignment. Forms should be submitted to **SW427C between 9 AM - 4 PM**, Monday through Friday. If you are unable to meet this deadline for some reason, you must contact the Course Coordinator via email (psychology-undergraduate@utsc.utoronto.ca) within the three business day window. Exceptions to the documentation deadline will only be made under exceptional circumstances.

Within approximately one week, you will receive an email response from the Course Instructor / Course Coordinator detailing the accommodations to be made (if any). You are responsible for checking your official U of T email and Blackboard course announcements daily, as accommodations may be time-critical. The Course Instructor reserves the right to decide what accommodations (if any) will be made for the missed work.

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

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

Missed Exams

Midterm. If you are approved to miss the midterm, your final exam score will be reweighted to count for 55% 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.

Academic Integrity

Academic integrity is essential to the pursuit of learning and scholarship in a university, and to ensuring that a degree from the University of Toronto is a strong signal of each student's individual academic achievement. As a result, the University treats cases of cheating and plagiarism very seriously. The University of Toronto's Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters

(<http://www.governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/Assets/Governing+Council+Digital+Assets/Policies/PDF/ppjun011995.pdf>) outlines the behaviours that constitute academic dishonesty and the processes for addressing academic offences. Potential offences include, but are not limited to:

In papers and assignments:

- Using someone else's ideas or words without appropriate acknowledgement;
- Submitting your own work in more than one course without the permission of the instructor;
- Making up sources or facts;
- Obtaining or providing unauthorized assistance on any assignment.

On tests and exams:

- Using or possessing unauthorized aids;
- Looking at someone else's answers during an exam or test;
- Misrepresenting your identity; and

- When you knew or ought to have known you were doing it.

In academic work:

- Falsifying institutional documents or grades;
- Falsifying or altering any documentation required by the University, including (but not limited to) doctor's notes; and
- When you knew or ought to have known you were doing so.

All suspected cases of academic dishonesty will be investigated following procedures outlined in the Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters. If students have questions or concerns about what constitutes appropriate academic behaviour or appropriate research and citation methods, they are expected to seek out additional information on academic integrity from their instructors or from other institutional resources.

Note:

You may see advertisements for services offering grammar help, essay editing and proof-reading. Be very careful. If these services take a draft of your work and significantly change the content and/or language, you may be committing an academic offence (unauthorized assistance) under the *Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters*.

It is much better and safer to take your draft to the Writing Centre as early as you can. They will give you guidance you can trust. Students for whom English is not their first language should go to the English Language Development Centre.

If you decide to use these services in spite of this caution, you must keep a draft of your work and any notes you made before you got help and be prepared to give it to your instructor on request.

Turnitin

Normally, students will be required to submit their course essays to Turnitin.com for a review of textual similarity and detection of possible plagiarism. In doing so, students will allow their essays to be included as source documents in the Turnitin.com reference database, where they will be used solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism. The terms that apply to the University's use of the Turnitin.com service are described on the Turnitin.com web site.

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 3% 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 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.

AccessAbility

Students with diverse learning styles and needs are welcome in this course. In particular, if you have a disability/health consideration that may require accommodations, please feel free to approach me and/or the AccessAbility Services as soon as possible.

AccessAbility Services staff (located in Rm SW302, Science Wing) are available by appointment to assess specific needs, provide referrals and arrange appropriate accommodations [416-287-7560](tel:416-287-7560) or email ability@utsc.utoronto.ca. The sooner you let us know your needs the quicker we can assist you in achieving your learning goals in this course.

Course Schedule

DATE	TOPIC	READINGS	ASSIGNMENTS
Week 1: Sept 7	Logistics & Introduction: What is Social Cognition?	Nisbett (1977) Optional: Hamilton (2005)	
Week 2: Sept 14	Automaticity and control in social cognition	Gawronski (2013) Job (2010) Optional: Inzlicht (2014)	Topic selection + assignment quiz DUE SEPT. 15
Week 3 Sept 21	Judging a person: What do we know and how do we know it?	Reeder (2013) Olivola (2014)	Reading exercise DUE SEPT 22
Week 4 Sept. 28	Judging ourselves: What does it mean to "know thyself?"	McConnell (2013) Bushman (1998)	Outline + Research Question DUE SEPT. 29
Week 5 Oct. 5	Judging groups: Generalization and individualization	Macrae (2000)	
Week 6 Oct 12	Reading Week	NO CLASS	
Week 7 Oct 19	Midterm Exam (In class)		
Week 8 Oct 26	Values, attitudes, and behavior	Fazio (1997) Rydell (2006) Rudman (2013)	First full draft DUE OCT 27
Week 9 Nov 2	Cognition-emotion interactions	Keltner (1993) Tamir (2008)	
Week 10 Nov 9	Accuracy and bias in social cognition	Jussim (2015) Sandberg (2015) Back (2010)	Peer reviews DUE NOV. 10
Week 11 Nov 16	Brain and body in social cognition	Saxe (2006) Niedenthal (2005)	
Week 12 Nov 23	Evolutionary and developmental influences on social cognition	Dunham (2008) Martin (2016)	
Week 13 Nov. 30	Looking back, looking ahead: Applications, and the future of social cognition	TBA	Final paper DUE DEC. 1