



PSYC13H3: Social Cognition: Understanding Ourselves and Others



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Course Description and Goals

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.

This course has several objectives for your development:

1. Familiarize you with key concepts and hypotheses in social cognition regarding the role of automaticity and control in human social behavior
2. Familiarize you with key aspects of theory and research on the ways we come to know and make judgments about ourselves and others.
3. Introduce you to the many ways in which “thinking makes it so,” that is, how our perceptions, thoughts, memories, and emotions can influence and be influenced by cognitive interpretation.
4. Introduce you to arguments about the ways in which social cognitive processes arise to serve biological and cognitive purposes.
5. Help you to develop the capacity to consume and critique empirical research in psychology.
6. Help you to develop writing skills, including grammar, prose, and structure.

Readings

There is no required textbook for this class. In order to build your capacity to read critically and to understand empirical research, readings will consist of primary sources, including book chapters, academic and popular-press articles, and excerpts. All readings will be made available online through Quercus.

Grading

Participation	5%
"Test-yourself" quizzes (best 10 of 11)	10%
Final Exam (Cumulative)	40%
Grant Proposal Assignment	45%

Description of grading components:

1. **Class participation:** This class is presented via asynchronous online lectures. Despite this, a major goal of the class is to engage you in substantive interaction with me, the TAs, and other students in the class, because this is one of the primary ways to help you develop critical thinking capacity, and the ability to apply the knowledge you obtain beyond the specific circumstances in which it is presented. Participation can take one of three forms: attending my virtual office hours/class discussion time, participating substantively on the Discussion Board (accessed via Quercus), and attending virtual get-to-know-you meetings (see more details on this below). Participation will be graded on a point system, with 10 total points possible.

Documented instances of participation are worth the following:

Participating in virtual class discussion - 1 pt/session

Participating in course discussion boards - 1 pt/substantive comment

Participating in virtual get-to-know-you meetings – 2 pts (max of once)

2. **Weekly "test-yourself" quizzes:** Starting in Week 2, you will be asked to complete weekly quizzes allowing you to assess your understanding of lecture and reading materials for that week. Quizzes are designed to help you to learn, not to stress you out. Therefore, quizzes are open-book, open-note, and will allow up to three attempts, with feedback on correct answers given after every attempt. Each attempt will consist of a different set of questions, but ones designed to test similar concepts and knowledge. I will also keep only the best 10 of the 11 weeks of quizzes. Thus, I expect every student who consistently attempts these quizzes to achieve between 80-100% on average for this component of the grade.
3. **Final exam:** The final exam will test cumulative knowledge acquired over the course of the semester. It will consist of a mix of multiple choice, short answer, and essay-style

questions. The final will be designed to be challenging, requiring you not only to know facts, but also to think carefully and critically about the materials and how they apply to the real world. Short answers and essays will be graded on three aspects: the quality of writing, the extent to which they demonstrate knowledge of concepts and research covered in class, and the extent to which they show evidence of the critical thought required to apply this knowledge in service of properly answering each question. The date is set by the UTSC registrar, will take place sometime during exams period (Dec. 10-22), and will be announced as soon as it is set.

4. **Grant Proposal:** A major goal of this course is to help students develop crucial critical thinking and writing skills that can serve you well as you transition beyond the University. As part of this goal, you will be asked to write a 7-8 page miniature grant proposal on a specific topic in social cognition. This proposal 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. A brief outline of these steps is included below. More details about each of these specific requirements for the paper can be found on Quercus.
 - a. Assignment quiz and topic selection (4 pts., due Sep. 18)
 - b. Reading scientific articles exercise (6 pts., due Sep. 25)
 - c. Writing skills exercise (6 pts., due Oct. 2)
 - d. Outline and bibliography (9 pts., due Oct. 9)
 - e. First draft (30 pts., due Nov. 6)
 - f. Peer reviews x 2 (5 pts. each review, 10 pts. total, due Nov. 20)
 - g. Final paper (35 pts., due Dec. 4)

Lectures

Lectures will consist of a series of pre-recorded videos designed to present major research areas, theories and experiments from the field of social cognition. New videos will be posted at the beginning of each week, and will remain available throughout the course once posted. 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 the recorded lectures but will not appear in the reading and vice-versa.

Please note: there will be no lecture videos posted for reading week.

Virtual Discussion Section/Office hours (Online – Thursdays 3-5PM)

Because this class is being presented asynchronously, it makes conversation about the lecture topics a little bit more difficult. While the online discussion boards can serve as one forum for

asking these questions, I also hope to engage you in more real-time back-and-forth. Thus, I will be holding a weekly “virtual class,” during which you can ask any questions you may have about the lecture videos. I will also lead an informal discussion of additional materials that extend the material covered in the lecture videos, with an eye towards applications, current controversies, and open questions that will serve as a basis for conversations. While these virtual discussion sections are not mandatory, and the material covered in them will not be tested, I strongly encourage you to attend them. They are a great way to delve deeper into the material, and to obtain participation points!

Virtual meet-and-greets

Because I am committed to getting to know you, starting in Week 2, I will be hosting weekly virtual “Meet the Professor” sessions. These will be small, one-hour virtual gatherings of no more than 10 students, with no agenda other than for me to get a chance to know you, for you to get to know some of your classmates, and for us to discuss anything that interests us about the class or beyond. Sessions will be held from 5-6PM on Thursdays (i.e., just after virtual class has ended), and student will sign up in advance. While these sessions are not mandatory, you are strongly encouraged to sign up for one, and will receive 2 automatic participation points if you attend one. Please note that due to space constraints, students can sign up for a maximum of one Meet-the-Professor session, and will not receive participation points beyond the maximum of 2 for this activity.

Time Zone conflicts

If you are physically in a different time zone and a quiz or midterm is scheduled outside of 7:00am to midnight in your local time, you may use the following form to request special arrangements. Note that the form is only for term work. [Final exam conflicts](#) are handled by the Registrar’s Office.

The form must be submitted **at least ten (10) business days before the activity.**

Form: <https://uoft.me/PSY-TimeZone>

Submit via email to: Keely Hicks, Departmental Assistant, keely.hicks@utoronto.ca

Missed Term Work due to Medical Illness or Other Emergency

All students citing a documented reason for missed term work must submit their request for accommodations **within three (3) business days** of the deadline for the missed work.

Submit via email to: Keely Hicks, Departmental Assistant, keely.hicks@utoronto.ca

Students must submit **BOTH** of the following:

- (1.) A completed **Request for Missed Term Work Accommodations form** (<http://uoft.me/PSY-MTW>), and

(2.) **Appropriate documentation** to verify your illness or emergency, as described below.

Appropriate documentation:

For missed **ASSIGNMENTS or TERM TESTS** due to **FLU-LIKE SYMPTOMS or SELF-ISOLATION REQUIREMENTS:**

- Email the Request for Missed Term Work Accommodations form (uoft.me/PSY-MTW) to Keely (keely.hicks@utoronto.ca), and
- **Declare** your absence on **ACORN** (Profile & Settings > Absence Declaration)

For missed **ASSIGNMENTS** due to **OTHER ILLNESS:**

- Email the Request for Missed Term Work Accommodations form (uoft.me/PSY-MTW) to Keely (keely.hicks@utoronto.ca), along with the Self-Declaration of Student Illness Form (uoft.me/PSY-self-declare-form).

For missed **TERM TESTS** due to **OTHER ILLNESS:**

- Email the Request for Missed Term Work Accommodations form (uoft.me/PSY-MTW) to Keely (keely.hicks@utoronto.ca), along with a scan/photo of the **original** copy of the official UTSC Verification of Illness Form (uoft.me/UTSC-Verification-Of-Illness-Form) or an **original** copy of the record of visitation to a hospital ER.
- Forms are to be completed in full, clearly indicating the start date, anticipated end date, and severity of illness. The physician's registration # and business stamp are required.
- *Note: If an end date of "ongoing" is specified, the medical note will be assumed to cover a period of **two weeks**. If no end date / an "unknown" end date is specified, the note will be assumed to cover a period of **three business days** (starting from illness start date.)*

For missed **TERM TESTS** due to **ACCESSABILITY REASONS:**

- Meet with your **AccessAbility consultant** and have them email Keely (keely.hicks@utoronto.ca) detailing accommodations required.

For missed **ASSIGNMENTS** due to **ACCESSABILITY REASONS:**

- If your desired accommodation is **within the scope** of your Accommodation Letter (ex. your letter includes "extensions of up to 7 days" and you need 1-7 more days), email the Request for Missed Term Work Accommodations form (uoft.me/PSY-MTW) to Keely (keely.hicks@utoronto.ca), and attach a **copy of your letter**. Specify how many days extension you are requesting in your email.
- If your desired accommodation is **outside the scope** of your Accommodation Letter (ex. your letter includes "extensions of up to 7 days" but you need more time than that) you will need to meet with your **AccessAbility consultant** and have them email Keely (keely.hicks@utoronto.ca) detailing the accommodations required.

For missed **ASSIGNMENTS or TERM TESTS** in **OTHER CIRCUMSTANCES:**

Email the Request for Missed Term Work Accommodations form (<http://uoft.me/PSY-MTW>) form to Keely (keely.hicks@utoronto.ca), along with:

- For the **death of a family member/friend**, provide a copy of the death certificate.

- For U of T varsity-level or professional **athletic commitments**, an email from your coach or varsity administrator should be sent directly to Keely (keely.hicks@utoronto.ca) **well in advance** of the missed work, detailing the dates and nature of the commitment.
- For **religious accommodations**, please email Keely (keely.hicks@utoronto.ca) **well in advance** of the missed work.
- For circumstances **outside of these guidelines**, please email Keely (keely.hicks@utoronto.ca) **on or before the date of the test / assignment deadline** to describe your circumstances and determine appropriate documentation.

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

As stated above, your documents must be submitted **within three (3) business days** of the deadline for the missed work.

After submitting your documentation:

Within approximately one to five business days, you will receive a response from your instructor detailing the accommodations to be made (if any).

You are responsible for checking your official U of T email and Quercus course announcements daily, as accommodations may be time-critical.

You should continue to work on your assignments to the best of your ability, as extension accommodations may be as short as one business day, depending on the nature of the illness/emergency.

If an accommodation has been granted but you are unable to meet the conditions of the accommodation (ex. you need a longer extension, or you missed a make-up test), you will need to repeat the missed term work procedure and submit additional forms to request further accommodation. Note that in the case of a missed make-up test, an opportunity to write a second make-up test may not be provided.

Completion of this form does NOT guarantee that accommodations will be made. The course instructor reserves the right to decide what accommodations (if any) will be made. Failure to adhere to any aspect of this policy may result in a denial of your request for accommodation.

Missed Accommodations

If an accommodation is granted but a continued illness/emergency prevents you from meeting the requirements of your accommodation, you must repeat the missed term work procedure to request additional accommodations.

(E.g.) If you miss a make-up midterm, you would need to submit another Request for Missed Term Work Accommodations form. If your original medical note / documentation included the date of the make-up midterm, then only the Request form is required. If the date of the make-up midterm fell outside of the dates indicated on your original medical note/other documentation, then a new medical note/other appropriate documentation must also be submitted.

Importance of Three Business Day window:

If you are unable to submit your documents within the three business day window, **you must email Keely (keely.hicks@utoronto.ca) within the three business day window** to explain the nature of the delay, and when you will be able to provide your documents. Exceptions to the documentation deadline will only be made under exceptional circumstances.

NOTE: Assignments due at end of term

Instructors cannot accept term work any later than five business days after the last day of class. Beyond this date, you would need to file a petition with the Registrar's Office (<https://www.utoronto.ca/registrar/term-work>).

NOTE: Final Exams

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

Missed Final Exam

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.

Quercus

The course's Quercus 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. Quercus is also where the course Discussion Board can be found (important both for your participation grade and for answering questions). Lecture guides and lecture videos will also be posted here each week.

To access Quercus, log on via <http://q.utoronto.ca/> using your UTORid and password. I strongly recommend regularly checking the "Announcements" section of the course website, since you are solely responsible for making sure that you stay up to date with course announcements and assignments. 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 the written portions of the course assignment 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/>

Extra Credit

I am 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 short series of questions to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the lecture and the readings, and the course to date. 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 the percentage of evaluations provided (marked simply as completed or not). Feedback will be anonymized before I read it, and I am keenly interested in improving the class, so you should feel free to give honest evaluations. Weekly feedback surveys can be found under the "Quizzes" section on Quercus.

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 Materials, Including Lecture Notes

Course materials are provided for the exclusive use of enrolled students. Do not share them with others. I do not want to discover that a student has put any of my materials into the public domain, has sold my materials, or has given my materials to a person or company that is using them to earn money. The University will support me in asserting and pursuing my rights, and my copyrights, in such matters.

Overview of Course Schedule

DATE	TOPIC	READINGS	ASSIGNMENTS
Week 1: Sep 7-11	Logistics & Introduction: What is Social Cognition?	Hamilton (2005)	
Week 2: Sep 14-18	Dual Systems: Automaticity in social cognition and behavior	Hofmann (2009)	Topic selection + assignment quiz DUE Sep. 18
Week 3 Sep 21-25	Dual Systems: Controlled processes in social cognition and behavior	Job (2010) Xie (2020)	Reading exercise DUE Sep. 25
Week 4 Sep 28- Oct. 2	Values, attitudes, and behavior	Rudman (2013) Catapano (2019)	Writing exercise DUE Oct. 2
Week 5 Oct 5-9	Cognition-emotion interactions	Lerner (2004) Tamir (2008)	
Week 6 Oct 12-16	Reading Week	NO CLASS	
Week 7 Oct 19-23	Judging a person: What do we know and how do we know it?	Reeder (2013) Olivola (2014)	Question + Bibliography DUE Mon. OCT. 19
Week 8 Oct 26-30	Judging ourselves: What does it mean to "know thyself?"	McConnell (2013) Bushman (1998)	
Week 9 Nov 2-6	Judging groups: Generalization and individualization	Kurzban (2001) Ranganath (2008)	First full draft DUE Fri. NOV. 6
Week 10 Nov 9-13	Accuracy and bias in social judgment	Jussim (2015) Sandberg (2015) Back (2010)	
Week 11 Nov 16-20	Brain and body in social cognition	Niedenthal (2005) Varnum (2016)	Peer reviews DUE Fri. Nov. 20
Week 12 Nov 23-27	Evolutionary and developmental influences on social cognition	Dunham (2008) Martin (2016)	
Week 13 Nov 30- Dec 4	Looking back, looking ahead: Applications, and the future of social cognition	TBA	Final paper DUE Dec 4
FINAL EXAM PERIOD (DEC. 10-22)			