



PSYC13H3: Social Cognition: Understanding Ourselves and Others



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Meet the Professor: M 12-1PM
Virtual Office hours: W 1-2PM

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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. Encourage you to apply empirical findings to your own life or the lives of others.
7. Help you to develop critical writing and presentation skills.

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	10%
"Test-yourself" quizzes (best 10 of 11)	10%
Final Exam (Cumulative)	40%
Group Project	40%

Description of grading components:

1. **Class participation:** This class is presented via a mix of asynchronous pre-recorded content and in-class content. 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 four forms: participating during in-person class discussion time, attending virtual office hours, participating substantively on the Discussion Board (accessed via Quercus), and attending Meet-the-Prof sessions (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 in-person class discussion - 1 pt/session

Participating in course discussion boards - 1 pt/substantive comment

Participating in virtual office hours – 1 pt/meeting

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 multiple choice questions similar in format to those found in the weekly “test-yourself” quizzes. The exam will be administered in person. 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.
4. **Group Project:** 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 and a group of four other students of your choosing will be asked to write a 5-6 page ‘white paper’ in which you will be asked to perform a literature review and apply social cognitive research, in the service of developing proposed policies and approaches to solve different topical issues or challenge. You will also create a short (3-5 minute) video introducing your issue and solution to a general audience. At the end of class, we will view some of the best group projects, and vote on an overall ‘winner’. The winning group will receive extra credit on the final exam. This group assignment 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 ideas, express your ideas and arguments coherently, and respond to comments and critiques from others. More details about each of these specific requirements for the paper can be found on Quercus. An outline of assignment due dates can be found in the course calendar on the last page of this syllabus.

Lectures

Lecture content will consist of a mix of short, pre-recorded videos (typically not more than 20-30 minutes for relevant topics) designed to introduce major concepts and ideas, as well as in-person lectures on Thursdays from 3-5PM, designed to present content while giving students the opportunity to ask questions about the material and to engage more actively in class lectures. In weeks with short, pre-recorded introductory videos, you are responsible for making sure you watch videos prior to class time. Videos and in-person lectures will present major research areas, theories and experiments from the field of social cognition. Introductory videos will be posted at the beginning of each week to give you plenty of time to watch them prior to class.

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

Meet-and-greets (In-person and Online – Mondays 12-1PM)

Because I am committed to getting to know you, starting in Week 2, I will be hosting weekly “Meet the Professor” sessions. These will be small, one-hour 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 12-1PM on Mondays, and students will sign up in advance. I will hold 8 in-person meetings, and 2 online meetings to accommodate student schedules. An incentive to come to one of the in-person sessions is that I will provide free snacks/beverages for all in-person attendees! 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-Proffessor session, and will not receive participation points beyond the maximum of 2 for this activity.

Virtual Drop-In Office Hours (Wednesdays 1-2PM)

In addition to the Meet and Greets and in-person Q&A sessions, I am committed to giving you the chance to ask more specific or personal questions about course content, or to discuss specific issues with me related to the course or life more generally. I will be holding virtual office hours on Wednesdays from 1-2PM in the course Zoom room (see Quercus for link).

Missed Term Work due to Medical Illness or Other Emergency

Department of Psychology Missed Term Work Policy

For missed term work (assignments and term tests) due to illness, emergency, or other mitigating circumstances, please follow the procedure outlined below.

Procedure:

1. Complete the [Request for Missed Term Work Accommodations Form](#) ("MTW Form").
2. Email **BOTH** your MTW Form and Supporting Documentation to c.hutcherson@utoronto.ca according to the instructions specified below.

Supporting Documentation Requirements and Deadlines:

Reason for Missed Work	Documentation required for a <i>first absence</i> in the term	Documentation required for <i>subsequent absences</i> in the term	Deadline for submitting MTW form and supporting documentation
Illness or Injury	ACORN Absence Declaration	UofT Verification of Illness Form	<u>within 2 business days</u> of the missed work
Bereavement	ACORN Absence Declaration	A death certificate or funeral	<u>within 2 business days</u> of the missed

		announcement	work
University-sponsored athletic or artistic obligation at the varsity/provincial/national level	ACORN Absence Declaration	A note from a university staff member (advisor, coach, residence staff, etc.) who can substantiate the obligation, sent directly to the course email	<u>10 business days IN ADVANCE</u> of the missed deadline
Disability-related reasons for students registered with AccessAbility Services	<p>For missed TERM TESTS,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Contact your AccessAbility consultant and have them write to the course email detailing the accommodations needed. <p>For missed ASSIGNMENTS,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - If your desired accommodation is within the scope of your Accommodation Letter (e.g. your letter includes “extensions of up to 7 days” and you need 3 days), send your Accommodation Letter to the course email and specify how many days extension you are requesting. - If your desired accommodation is outside the scope of your Accommodation Letter (e.g. your letter includes “extensions of up to 7 days” but you need more time than that), contact your AccessAbility consultant and have them write to the course email detailing the accommodations needed. 		<u>PREFERABLY IN ADVANCE of the missed work, or as soon as possible</u>
Academic Conflict (e.g. two midterms at the same time)	Screenshot from Quercus demonstrating the conflict.		<u>10 business days IN ADVANCE</u> of the missed work
Religious Conflict	None required		

Notes:

- The following reasons are not considered sufficient for missed term work: social activities, recreational travel, technological issues, avoidance of assessments or deadlines, work commitments
- [Missed Final Exams](#) are handled by the Registrar's Office and should be declared on eService.
- For ACORN absence declarations, the date you declare the absence is required to fall within the seven-day declaration period (i.e.) the absence cannot be submitted proactively or retroactively.
- Instructors cannot accept term work any later than five business days after the last day of class. Beyond this date, accommodations are only possible via the Registrar's Office [petition process](#).
- If you are unable to submit your request within the specified number of business days, you must still email Prof. Hutcherson within that window to explain the nature of the delay. Exceptions to the deadlines are made only under exceptional circumstances.
- Multiple assignments due on the same day are not considered academic conflicts. Students are expected to manage their time effectively to meet assignment deadlines.
- Back-to-back tests/quizzes are not considered academic conflicts. Only overlapping activities are conflicts.
- Students are responsible for keeping their course timetables conflict-free. Students who register in two courses with overlapping lecture/tutorial/lab schedules will not be accommodated.

Next Steps:

After submitting your documentation, you will receive a response from Prof. Hutcherson. The course instructor reserves the right to decide what accommodations will be made. Failure to adhere to any aspect of this policy may result in a denial of your request. **You are responsible for checking your official U of T email and Quercus course announcements daily**, as accommodations may be time-critical.

For missed assignments, **do not wait for Prof. Hutcherson's response to resume work on your assignment**. Extensions may be as short as one business day, depending on the nature of the illness/emergency. Complete your assignment as soon as you're able, and email it to your instructor.

If an accommodation is granted but a continued illness/emergency prevents you from meeting its requirements, you must repeat the missed term work procedure to request additional accommodations. **Please make it clear in your subject line that you are requesting a second accommodation**. Examples: If you were granted an extension for a paper but are still unable to meet the new deadline, or if you miss a make-up term test, you must submit *another* MTW form and supply documentation according to the "subsequent absences" column in the chart above. *Note: In the case of a missed make-up test, an opportunity to write a second make-up test may not necessarily be provided.

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.

Disability-Related Accommodations

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 Office (<http://www.utsc.utoronto.ca/ability/>) as soon as possible.

AccessAbility Services staff (located in Rm AA142, Arts and Administration Building) are available by appointment to assess specific needs, provide referrals and arrange appropriate accommodations. Please contact 416-287-7560 (tel/TTY) or email ability.utsc@utoronto.ca for more information.

The sooner you let us know your needs the quicker we can assist you in achieving your learning goals in this course.

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

Normally, students will be required to submit their course essays to the University's plagiarism detection tool 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 tool's reference database, where they will be used solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism. The terms that apply to the University's use of this tool are described on the Centre for Teaching Support & Innovation web site (<https://uoft.me/pdt-faq>).

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/policies/behaveac.htm>) outlines the behaviours that constitute academic dishonesty and the processes for addressing academic offences. Potential offences in papers and assignments include 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, cheating includes using or possessing unauthorized aids, looking at someone else's answers during an exam or test, misrepresenting your identity, or falsifying or altering any documentation required by the University.

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.

The University's Plagiarism Detection Tool

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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.uts.utoronto.ca/eld/>

Extra Credit

I am committed to incorporating your feedback in order to make this class a 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 online lecture content, readings, and in-person skill-building exercises, as well as other feedback on 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.

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	PROJECT DATES
Week 1: Sep 11	Logistics & Introduction: What is Social Cognition?	Hamilton (2005) – pgs. 1-8	
Week 2: Sep 18	Dual Systems: Automaticity in social cognition and behavior	Hamilton pgs. 8-12 Hofmann (2009)	
Week 3 Sep 25	Dual Systems: Controlled processes in social cognition and behavior	Job (2010) Xie (2020)	Group Formation & Reading exercise DUE Sep. 25
Week 4 Oct. 2	Values, attitudes, and behavior	Rudman (2013)	Topic paragraph DUE Oct. 2
Week 5 Oct. 9	Reading Week	NO CLASS	
Week 6 Oct 16	Cognition-emotion interactions	Lerner (2004)	Bibliography and Proposal Summary DUE Oct. 16
Week 7 Oct 23	Judging a person: What do we know and how do we know it?	Hamilton 12-13, 15-18 Olivola (2014)	<i>First TA Meeting (suggested)</i>
Week 8 Oct 30	Judging ourselves: What does it mean to “know thyself?”	McConnell (2013)	First TA Meeting Complete by Oct. 30
Week 9 Nov. 6	Judging groups: Generalization and individualization	Hamilton 13-15 Kurzban (2001) Ranganath (2008)	First Draft of Writeup DUE Nov. 6
Week 10 Nov. 13	Accuracy and bias in social judgment	Hamilton 18-21 Jussim (2015) Sandberg (2015)	Video Proposal DUE Nov. 17
Week 11 Nov. 21	Brain and body in social cognition	Hamilton 24-26 Varnum (2016)	<i>Second TA Meeting (suggested)</i>
Week 12 Nov. 28	Evolutionary and developmental influences on social cognition	Dunham (2008)	Second TA Meeting Complete by Nov. 27
Week 13 Dec. 4	Looking back, looking ahead: Applications, and the future of social cognition	TBA	Final Project DUE Dec. 4