

Introduction to Social Cognition

Professor: Betsy Sparrow
Email: sparrow@psych.columbia.edu
Office Hours: Tuesday 4-5:30 355 Schermerhorn Hall

Teaching Assistants: Ljubica Chatman: lc2387@columbia.edu
Office Hours: Thursday 4-6, 329 Schermerhorn

Leor Hackel: lmh2160@columbia.edu
Office Hours: Tuesday 12:30-2:30, 329 Schermerhorn

Reginald Williams: rjw2116@columbia.edu
Office Hours: Monday 4-6, 329 Schermerhorn

Social cognition has been described as the science of human experience, “the understanding of what it is like to be a person-why our existence at this moment in time and space feels the way it does...and attempting to provide a scientific answer to the problem of the other minds” (Gilbert & Wegner, 2000). Human beings are a unique animal when taking into consideration the complex nature of our social interactions. How do we understand the minds of others? For that matter, how do we infer the beliefs and desires that underlie the bases for our own behaviour? How does the way we think about ourselves inform the way we think about others, and vice versa? How do we navigate our social world? In this course we will attempt to answer these questions through an examination of a range of topics utilizing both research and popular science articles, including the questions of attribution theory (how we explain our own and other’s behaviour), social categories and schema (social perception and stereotyping), the social self (the development and maintenance of a self-concept), attention and consciousness, person memory, affect and cognition, and social inference among others.

Course requirements: There will be three non-cumulative in-class exams, scheduled on February 18th, April 1st, and April 29th. Exams will be in multiple choice format. Your lowest score of the three will be thrown out. Your highest two scores on the midterm exams will each count for 30% (60% total) towards the final grade. A cumulative final exam will count for 40% toward the final grade. The final exam will be composed of essay questions, which will be provided before the exam, that integrate material from the entire semester. The final exam is scheduled on May 13th from 1:10-4:00.

Reading list and weekly syllabus: Each week the main reading consists of a collection of research articles mostly published within the last 20 years which are central to the understanding of social cognition as a field. There are also additional readings, either book chapters or popular science articles, which serve to bring the topics raised in the research articles home through the application of real world anecdotes and experiences. All of these readings will be available on courseworks. THERE IS NO TEXTBOOK FOR THIS COURSE.

Week 1: Jan 19 & 21

Introduction

Wegner, D.M. & Gilbert, D.T. (2000). Social psychology: The science of human experience. In H. Bless & J.P. Forgas (Eds.) *The Message Within: The Role of Subjective Experience in Social Cognition and Behavior* (pp.1-9). Philadelphia: Psychology Press.

Impression Formation

Asch, S.E. (1946). Forming impressions of personality.

Higgins, Rholes, & Jones (1977). Category accessibility and impression formation. *JESP*, 13. 141-154.

Gosling, S. (2008). *Snoop: What Your Stuff Says About You*. NY: Basic Books. [Selection Ch. 1: Less than zero acquaintance].

Week 2: Jan 26 & 28

Attribution Theories

Winter, L & Uleman, J.S. (1984). When are social judgments made?

Gilbert, D.T., et al. (1988). On cognitive busyness.

Gilbert, D. T. (1998). Speeding with Ned: A personal view of the correspondence bias. In J. M. Darley & J. Cooper (Eds.), *Attribution and social interaction: The legacy of E. E. Jones*. Washington, DC: APA Press.

Johnson, S.J. (2004). *Mind Wide Open: Your Brain and the Neuroscience of Everyday Life*. New York: Scribner. [Selection Ch 1: Mind sight].

Week 3: Feb 2 & 4

Person Memory & Mental Reconstruction

- Slull, T.K. (1981). Person memory.
- Loftus, E.F. (1997). Memories for a past that never was.
- McNally, R.J., Clancy, S.A. (2005). Sleep Paralysis, Sexual Abuse, and Space Alien Abduction. *Transcultural Psychiatry*, Vol 42(1): 113-122.
- Sacks, O. (2007). The abyss: Music and amnesia. *The New Yorker*, September 24th.

Week 4: Feb 9 & 11

Social Self

- Ross, M., & Sicoly, F. (1979). Egocentric biases in availability and attribution.
- Wilson, T. D. (2002). *Strangers to ourselves: Discovering the adaptive unconscious*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. [Selection: Chapter 9: Looking outward to know ourselves]
- Gilbert, D. T. (2006). *Stumbling on happiness*. New York: Knopf. [Selection: Chapter 9: Immune to reality.]
- Bargh, J.A., Gollwitzer, P.M., Lee-Chai, A., Barndollar, K., & Trötschel, R. (2001). The automated will: Nonconscious activation and pursuit of behavioural goals. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 81, 1014-1028.

Week 5: Feb 16 & 18

Review and Exam 1

Week 6: Feb 23 & 25

Social Categories and Schema

- Hamilton, D.L., Gifford, R.K. (1976). Illusory correlation.
- Correll et al. (2002). The police officer's dilemma...
- Macrae et al. (1994). Stereotypes as energy-saving devices.
- Gladwell, M. (2006). Troublemakers: What pitbulls can teach us about racial profiling. *New Yorker*, February 6.

Week 7: Mar 2 & 4

Judgment and Decision Making

- Tversky, A., & Kahneman, D. (1974). Judgment under uncertainty.
- Schwartz et al. (1991). Ease of retrieval as information.
- Dijksterhuis, A., Bos, M.W., Nordgren, L.F., van Baaren, R.B. (2006). On making the right choice: The deliberation-without-attention effect. *Science*, 311: 1005-1007.
- Gilovich, T. (1993). *How We Know What Isn't So: The Fallibility of Human Reason in Everyday Life*. New York: Free Press. [Selection: Chapter 2 Something Out of Nothing: The Misperception and Misinterpretation of Random Data]
- Epley, N., & Gilovich, T. (2006). The anchoring and adjustment heuristic: Why adjustments are insufficient. *Psychological Science*, 17: 311-318.
- Levitt, S.D., & Dubner, S.J. (2006). *Freakonomics: A Rogue Economist Explores the Hidden Side of Everything*. New York: William Morris. [Selection: Chapter 5 What Makes a Perfect Parent.]

Week 8: Mar 9 & 11

Automatic Processing & Consciousness

- Nisbett, R.E., & Wilson, T.D. (1977). Telling more than we can know: verbal reports on mental processes.
- Bargh, J.A., & Chartrand, T.L. (1999). The unbearable automaticity of being.
- Dijksterhuis, A., & van Knippenberg, A. (1998)...how to win a game of trivial pursuit.
- Wegner, D. M. (2003). The mind's best trick: How we experience conscious will. *Trends in Cognitive Science*, 7, 65-69.

[Spring Break: Week of March 15th]

Week 9: Mar 23 & 25

Social Interaction

- Darley, J.M., & Gross, P.H. (1983). A hypothesis-confirming bias in labelling effects.
- Snyder et al. (1977). Social perception and interpersonal behaviour.
- Baron-Cohen, S. (1995). First lessons in mind reading. *The Times Higher Education Supplement*, July 16.
- Wegner, D. M., & Sparrow, B. (2007). The puzzle of coaction. In D. Spurrett, D. Ross, H. Kincaid, & L. Stephens (Eds.), *Distributed cognition and the will*. Cambridge, MA : MIT Press.
- Dobbs, D. (2007). The gregarious brain. *New York Times Sunday Magazine*. July 8th.

Week 10: Mar 30 & Apr 1

Review and Exam

Week 11: Apr 6 & 8

Affect and Cognition

Hastorf, A.H., & Cantril, H. (1954). They saw a game: A case study.

Medvec et al (1995). When less is more: Counterfactual thinking and satisfaction among Olympic medalists.

Dutton, D.G., & Aron, A.P. (1974). Some evidence for heightened sexual attraction under conditions of high anxiety. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 30: 510-517.

Niedenthal, P.M. (2007). Embodying emotion. *Science*, 316, 1002-1005.

Week 12: Apr 13 & 15

Morality

Haidt, J. (2001). The emotional dog and its rational tail: A social intuitionist approach to moral judgment. *Psychological Review*, 108, 814-834.

Rozin, P., Markwith M., Stoess C. (1997). Moralization and becoming a vegetarian: the transformation of preferences in values and the recruitment of disgust. *Psychological Science*, 8: 67-73.

Gray, K. & Wegner, D.M. (2008). The string of intentional pain. *Psychological Science*. 19, 1260-62.

De Waal, F. (2009). *The Age of Empathy*. NY: Random House [Selection Ch. 5 : The Elephant in the Room].

Week 13: Apr 20 & 22

Cross-Cultural Cognition

Nisbett, R. E. (2003). *The geography of thought: How Asians and Westerners think differently ... and why*. New York: The Free Press. [Selection: Chapter 5 "The Bad Seed" or "The Other Boys Made Him Do It"? Causal Attribution and Causal Modeling East and West.]

Hernandez, M.R. & Iyengar, S.S. (2001). What drives whom? A cultural perspective on human agency. *Social Cognition*, 19: 269-294.

Levine, R.V., Norenzan, A. (1999). The pace of life in 31 countries. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, 30, 178-205.

Week 14: Apr 27 & Apr 29 (Last Day of Class)

Review and Exam