I. Bulletin description

PSYC G4635y The Unconscious Mind
4 pts. B. Sparrow. T 4:10-6. Room: 405 Schermerhorn
Prerequisites: The instructor’s permission. Some basic knowledge of social psychology is desirable.

Discussion of the unconscious mind from the perspective of social cognition, with an emphasis on both theoretical and empirical background, as well as current issues in measuring automatic processing. Topics include: implicit memory systems; unconscious attitudes, goals and behavior, emotions, and decision making; the activation and deactivation of knowledge systems; and priming.

II. The rationale for giving the course

This advanced seminar course will complement our present curriculum in a number of important ways. The role that unconscious cognitive processes play in social behavior is currently a major topic in the study of social psychology, and has been for the last 30 odd years. It is relevant to other courses currently being offered in the curriculum. Specifically, the study of unconscious cognition will compliment G4685 Social Cognitive Neuroscience and G4450 Evolution of Intelligence and Consciousness by offering a more comprehensive and detailed treatment of the contribution of automatic and unconscious processes to the study of social cognition, and the unique ways conscious and unconscious systems function in a dual process model.

PSYC G4680 is an advanced seminar, designed particularly for graduate students, for advanced undergraduates who are majoring in Psychology or in Neuroscience and Behavior, and for students participating in the Postbac Psychology Program. It fulfills the following degree requirements:

• For Psychology Graduate Students, PSYC G4680 will apply toward the “two seriously graded seminars” requirement of the Master’s degree.

• For the Psychology major or concentration in the College and in G. S., for the
Psychology minor in Engineering, and for the Psychology Post-bac, G4680 meets the Group III (Social, Personality, and Abnormal) distribution requirement.

- G4680 will meet the social science requirement of GS, provided that students obtain the necessary permissions and have taken the prerequisite psychology courses.
- For the Psychology Post-bac certificate, PSYC G4680 will fulfill the advanced seminar requirement.
- For the Barnard Psychology major, PSYC G4680 will fulfill the senior seminar requirement.

III. A full description of the content of the course

The idea of thought that occurs outside of conscious awareness has been around since the fifth century BCE. Of course, the most famous theory of the unconscious comes from Freud, and his notions of the Id, Ego, Superego, Oedipal Complexes and the like, and the resulting defense mechanisms to keep unwanted thoughts out of conscious awareness. The psychoanalytic concept of the unconscious is of a disturbing, boiling cauldron that is, out of necessity, kept below the surface.

The cognitive notion of the unconscious does agree with Freud in regard to the proportion of unconscious to conscious thought, agreeing with the famous tip of the iceberg metaphor. However, the early cognitive model of the 1980s, was of a cold, efficient, and unmotivated processor, that was capable of complex activity.

Current notions of the unconscious mind build on these early cognitive theories, but include the possibility for affect, motivation, and goals. There is hardly a psychological process that cannot be seen as carried out to a greater or lesser extent unconsciously, so we may be left to wonder what is consciousness for?

The first segment of the course is devoted to an examination of the early cognitive theories of the unconscious to provide a theoretical framework for the rest of the course. Next, we will discuss unconscious processing, including implicit memory, knowledge activation, priming and, unpriming. We will then examine core themes in social psychology from a perspective of unconscious processing, affect, attitudes, goals and behavior, and the self.

IV. Course requirements (subject to minor revision)

Students will be required to submit a one page thought paper each week, based on the assigned readings, which will be used to launch discussion during the seminar. Students will be expected to participate in the discussion, and will complete a research project proposal of 2 pages at mid-semester. A research presentation and final paper of approximately 10 pages will be required at the last class meeting.
These components will contribute to the course grade as follows:

- 25% Thought papers
- 25% Class participation
- 10% Project proposal
- 40% Final paper and presentation

V. Reading list and weekly syllabus

The following is the preliminary reading list, which is subject to minor revision.

**Week 1: Jan 20**
**Introduction**


**Week 2: Jan 27**
**Unconscious Cognition: Frameworks**


**Week 3: Feb 3**
**Implicit Memory**


**Week 4: Feb 10**

*Knowledge Activation*


**Week 5: Feb 17**

*Priming*


**Week 6: Feb 24**

*Unpriming*


**Week 7: Mar 3**

*Affect*


**Week 8: Mar 10**

*Attitudes*


**Week 9: Mar 24**

*Project Discussion*

**Week 10: March 31**

*Goals and Behavior*


**Week 11: Apr 7**

*Decision Making*


**Week 12: Apr 14**  
*The Self*


**Week 13: Apr 21**  
*Automatisms*


**Week 14: (Last day of class) Apr 28**  
*Project Presentations*  
class time may be extended on this day to accommodate all presentations