

Summer Term Syllabus

Instructor Name: Joshua Davis

Course Title: Seminar in Social Cognition

1. Contact:

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2. **Course description:**

Prerequisite: Two psychology courses and the instructor's permission.

This course examines how one person infers the thoughts and feelings of others, predicts what they will do in certain situations, forms impressions of others' personalities, and manages to engage in culturally appropriate social behavior. Specifically, it tries to get inside the mind of the observer, and find the cognitive and neural reasons why we think and behave as we do around others. In doing so, we examine a range of topics, including research on empathy, emotion and self control, stereotypes and prejudice, justice and fairness, influence and persuasion, implications for cognitive therapy, and individual differences in social intelligence.

3. **Topics of lecture and/or discussion** for each session or each week.

7/3 What is Social Cognition?

7/5 The Principles of Social Cognition: Schemas, Meaning Systems, Mental Models

7/10 Automatic vs. Conscious Mechanisms. Do we really know ourselves?

7/12 What is the Self

7/17 Attribution – How we understand other's intentions

7/19 Empathy and Person Perception

7/24 Emotion and State Control

7/26 Racism and Stereotyping

7/31 Influence and Persuasion

8/2 Fairness and Justice

8/7 Sex, Attraction, and Attachment

8/9 Social Disorders and Cognitive Therapy

4. **Required readings:**

Fiske, S. T., & Taylor, S. E. (1991). (2nd Ed.). *Social Cognition*. New York: McGraw-Hill.

Selected articles will be assigned for each class period. These will be provided in electronic format or in a photocopied course reader at the start of the course.

5. **Course requirements**

1) Written and spoken responses to the readings will be required for each class period. Specific instructions for the content and format of these will be provided at the start of the course.

2) Students will co-lead a discussion

3) Students will write one 10 page term paper, reviewing an area of social cognition research, the topic of which they will choose.

3a) In addition, students will prepare written and spoken feedback on drafts of term papers for other students in the class.

3b) One powerpoint presentation will be required as part of the development of the students' term paper.

6. **Policies** on matters such as grading, attendance, preparation for class, and class participation.

Grading: 50% of the grade will be based on the term paper. 50% will be based on the student's engagement with the preparation for and participation in the class discussions and activities.

Attendance: Attendance is necessary to make the course work. Missing any class day will be penalized with a drop of 5% in the overall final class grade over and above any deficit due to failure to participate in that days activities.

Excused Absences and Extensions: They will not be granted except in cases of emergency or such unchangeable events as weddings, that are documented and verified by the Dean. Extensions will not be granted because extending deadlines for the papers and related assignments involved in developing them will make it impossible for the class feedback and discussion process to occur, which are essential parts of this course.