

## **Attitudes and Social Cognition (SOP 4444)**

**Instructor:** Dr. Kate A. Ratliff

**Office:** Psychology Building 222

**Contact:** ratliff@ufl.edu

**Office Hours:** Tuesdays, 11.30-12.30

**Tuesday Meeting Time:** 10.40-11.30

**Thursday Meeting Time:** 10.40-12.35

### **Course Description**

Social cognition is an area of social psychology concerned with understanding how people make sense of the social world. In this course we will cover many different topics (attitudes, emotions, persuasion, prejudice, stereotyping, the self) with one guiding principle – that social behavior is best understood as a function of people's perceptions rather than as a function of some objective truth. This is an interactive, advanced course designed to provide insights into classic and recent theories in social cognition. In addition to learning the content of each theory, you will learn how to think critically about the value and application of a theory.

Please note that there is a considerable amount of reading and writing involved in this course; if these are not activities that you enjoy, or if you feel it will be difficult for you to keep up, you are strongly advised not to take this class.

### **Course Structure**

Tuesday class meetings will typically consist of lecture. Thursday class meetings will consist of a combination of lecture and activities such as debates, demonstrations, group discussions, student presentations, and/or guest lectures.

### **Course Materials**

The primary text for this course is *Social Cognition: Understanding Self and Others* by Gordon Moskowitz (2005). For each class meeting you will be given a reading assignment from the book. Occasionally you will also be assigned journal articles to read to supplement the information in the book; these will be posted on the course website. The slides that I use in class lectures will be available to you by 8pm the night before each class meeting. Please bring your textbook to class; you will be given in-class assignments for which it will help you.

### **Course Attendance, Preparation, and Participation**

Although attendance is not mandatory, it is in your best interest to attend regularly and to have read the assigned materials before coming to class. Lectures will always include information that is not in the textbook and we will do in-class activities that will help your learning. If you do miss class, it is your responsibility to get notes from a classmate – I will not provide them to you.

Students are expected to participate in class. Student participation takes the form of asking questions, voicing your thoughts and ideas, commenting on what your classmates or I have said, and actively taking part in activities and discussion. Participation is essential because it makes the classroom experience more enjoyable for everyone and because it will help you to get more from the class. Although you will not be formally graded on your participation, I do notice who participates, and will use my assessment in deciding borderline grades at the end of the semester.

Please keep in mind that sensitivity is important. Science tolerates and critically evaluates all points of view when they are advanced with sensitivity for those who may not share them. Please keep in mind that your fellow students may not share your religious affiliations, political beliefs, cultural backgrounds, economic, ethnic, or sexual orientations.

### **Course Assignments**

*Exams 1 and 2 (15% each).* There will be two multiple-choice exams that take place in class (see schedule). These two exams are “self-correcting” which means that: you will complete the exam in class and submit your answers (as is typical for a multiple-choice exam); however, you will have the option to take the exam home with you and to answer the questions again with the aid of your class notes and textbook. If you bring the “self-corrected” exam to the next class meeting, you will receive  $\frac{1}{2}$  of the item-value for each correct item that was previously incorrect. The exam questions will come from lecture and your textbook; all material is fair game unless I specifically tell you otherwise. Absolutely no make-up exams will be given except in the case of a documented emergency.

*Final Exam (30%).* There will be a cumulative, multiple-choice final exam that takes place during the scheduled final exam time for this course (December 11<sup>th</sup>). The final exam will be multiple-choice but will not be self-correcting.

*Reaction Papers (40%).* Students are required to complete four short reaction papers before the last day of class (December 4<sup>th</sup>). In each reaction paper you should respond to one of the questions posted on the course website. You may turn in the reaction papers at any point in the semester with the following caveats: (1) you must have completed at least two reaction papers before November 1<sup>st</sup>, and (2) you must have completed at least three reaction papers by December 5<sup>th</sup>, and (3) the deadline for the last reaction paper is December 12<sup>th</sup>. More information will be given in class.

The purpose of the reaction paper is for you to apply the concepts that we learn about in a way that will help you to better understand yourself and your life. Although the reaction papers are self-reflective and will necessarily contain descriptions of subjective experiences, keep in mind that they are intended to be formal, scientific papers. You will be graded on how well you use the information from the lectures and your textbook to support a clear, logical thesis and how well you demonstrate your understanding of the course materials by integrating concepts from the course with thoughts about your own life experiences.

The reaction papers should follow APA format. Use 12-point Times New Roman font with 1-inch margins. Reaction papers should be no longer than two pages; those that go onto a third page will not be graded. In addition to content, reaction papers will be graded on writing style (e.g. clarity, grammar). A hard copy of the reaction paper should be submitted to me during class or in the box on my office door. Emailed papers will not be accepted.

## **Course Grading**

Each assignment will be given a percentage grade ranging from 0-100%. Grades will be averaged according to the weighting described above and the following grading scale will be used to determine final grades:

94 to 100 = A, 90 to 93.99 = A-, 87 to 90 = B+, 84 to 86.99 = B, 80 to 83.99 = B-, 77 to 100 = C+, 74 to 76.99 = C, 70 to 73.99 = C-, 67 to 100 = D+, 64 to 66.99 = D, 60 to 63.99 = D-, 59.99 or below = F.

A grade of "I" (incomplete) is assigned only for work which has been of a passing quality through the academic term but which, for good reason and with approval of the instructor, cannot be completed within the time frame of the semester. Students for whom special circumstances may warrant an "I" must discuss this matter with the instructor before the last day of class.

If you wish to appeal any grade you received in this course, please contact me by email with "Grade Dispute" in the subject line. Write a brief note explaining your letter grade, the assignment, and how or why you believe you were graded unfairly. Be specific and persuasive. You must send this letter to me within 1 week after you receive the disputed grade—no exceptions. I will respond to your email within 2-4 days. If we still have not reached agreement, you may contact the University Ombudsperson, who will work to resolve the problem.

## **Students with Disabilities**

Students requesting classroom accommodation must first register with the Dean of Students Office. The Dean of Students Office will provide documentation to the student, who must then provide documentation to the Instructor when requesting accommodation.

## **Academic Integrity**

On all work submitted for credit by students at the University of Florida, the following pledge is implied: "On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment."

	<b>Meeting Date</b>	<b>Reading/Assignment</b>
1	Thursday, 08/23	Introduction: What Does It Mean to Know Something?
2	Tuesday, 08/28	Chapter 1: Naïve Realism <sup>a</sup>
3	Thursday, 08/30	Chapter 1: Naïve Realism <sup>a</sup>
4	Tuesday, 09/04	Chapter 2: Automaticity and Control
5	Thursday, 09/06	Chapter 2: Automaticity and Control
6	Tuesday, 09/11	Implicit Cognition (Nosek et al., 2012; Vendantam, 2005)
7	Thursday, 09/13	Implicit Cognition (Nosek et al., 2012; Vendantam, 2005)
8	Tuesday, 09/18	Implicit Cognition (Nosek et al., 2012; Vendantam, 2005)
9	Thursday, 09/20	Implicit Cognition, Chapter 3: Category Structure <sup>b</sup>
10	Tuesday, 09/25	Chapter 3: Category Structure <sup>b</sup>
11	Thursday, 09/27	<b>No class or office hours</b>
12	Tuesday, 10/02	<b>Exam #1 (self-correcting)</b>
13	Thursday, 10/04	Chapter 6: Attribution
14	Tuesday, 10/09	Chapters 7: Correspondence Bias
15	Thursday, 10/11	Chapters 7: Spontaneous Trait Inference
16	Tuesday, 10/16	Chapter 8: Biases in Person Perception
17	Thursday, 10/18	Chapter 8: Biases in Person Perception
18	Tuesday, 10/23	<b>No class or office hours</b>
19	Thursday, 10/25	<b>No class or office hours</b>
20	Tuesday, 10/30	<b>Exam #2 (self-correcting)</b>
21	Thursday, 11/01	Chapters 9 and 10: Chronic and Temporary Accessibility
22	Tuesday, 11/06	Chapters 9 and 10: Chronic and Temporary Accessibility
23	Thursday, 11/08	Chapters 9 and 10: Chronic and Temporary Accessibility
24	Tuesday, 11/13	Chapters 11 and 12: (Controlling) Stereotypes
25	Thursday, 11/15	Chapters 11 and 12: (Controlling) Stereotypes
26	Tuesday, 11/20	Chapters 11 and 12: (Controlling) Stereotypes
27	Thursday, 11/22	<b>No class or office hours (Thanksgiving)</b>
28	Tuesday, 11/27	Chapter 13: From the Intra- to the Interpersonal
29	Thursday, 11/29	Chapter 13: From the Intra- to the Interpersonal; Exam review; Last Day of Class Wrap-up

### Reaction Paper Questions

1. Chapter 1 of your textbook explains that the *person within the context* alters the way in which a context is experienced (page 37). For this assignment, go somewhere you haven't been before (e.g., a store, a neighborhood, an event) and take note of your initial impressions. Then, consider your own experiences (culture, expectancy/stereotype, mood) and write about the ways in which your own *life space* might have influenced those initial impressions.
2. Chapter 1 of your textbook presents five consequences of *naïve realism* (the belief that your perceptions are accurate transcriptions of reality; pages 45-50). For this assignment, pay careful attention to the judgments that you make about others for the next few days. Do you find that you've made any of these errors?
3. Chapter 2 of your textbook describes how we form impressions of people we have never met (page 70). For this assignment, go into a public space and choose a person to (unobtrusively) observe. First, describe your impression of them based on their body language, facial expression, and/or other nonverbal behaviors. Then, consider what contextual factors (including those coming from your own *life space*) might influence your judgment (e.g., do you think they are kind because their behavior suggests so or because they have a baby face?).
4. Chapter 2 of your textbook describes features that differentiate between automatic and controlled behavior. For this assignment, spend a day trying to engage in as much controlled behavior, and as little automatic behavior, as you possibly can. You can define these terms using any of the possible features (but keep in mind that automaticity is different from *mindlessness*). The point is to be as deliberate and thoughtful as possible about your own thoughts and actions. Describe your experience and what you learned about your automatic behavior.
5. Chapter 2 of your textbook describes *goals* as end states that people seek to attain (page 96). For this assignment, consider a goal that is important to you, being careful to distinguish it from a need, motive, or incentive. Then describe the process of selecting, implementing, and regulating that goal. Finally, consider and describe what type of goal yours is (e.g., causal-genetic, social sanction, value maintenance, etc.).
6. For this assignment, go to the Project Implicit website (<http://implicit.harvard.edu>) and try of the demonstration Implicit Association Tests. Describe your experience and what, if anything, you learned from the test. Please attach a copy of your results to your paper as a third page.
7. Some researchers argue that implicit attitudes reflect cultural knowledge, and that cultural knowledge is extraneous to one's personal beliefs (Arkes & Tetlock, 2004; Olson & Fazio, 2004). Other researchers argue that cultural beliefs should be considered part of one's attitude, and are therefore not extraneous (Gawronski & Bodenhausen, 2006; Nosek & Hansen, 2008). What do you think?

8. We learned about a wide variety of implicit attitude measures. For this assignment, describe an original idea for a new measure of implicit attitudes, being careful to distinguish your measure from those that already exist.
9. Chapter 3 of your textbook describes *categorization* as the placement of an object, person, or event into some class of familiar things (page 112). For this assignment, pay attention careful attention to all of the categorization decisions you make during the next few days and describe that experience. Then, take one of the decisions and describe it with regard to Bruner's stages of categorization (pages 113-114) and the function of categorization (pages 122-122).
10. Chapter 3 of your textbook describes the idea of *spreading activation* within an *associative network* (pages 130-132). For this assignment, set a timer for one minute. Then, open the nearest book and choose a word at random. Close your eyes and let your mind wander, starting from that word. Pay attention to how your thoughts jump from one concept to the next. Using concepts from the book and lecture, describe the experience and what you learned about your associative network.
11. Chapter 6 of your textbook is concerned with how it is that we make judgments about other people's behavior. For this assignment, pay attention careful attention to all of the judgments you make about others during the next few days. Using concepts from the book, describe the experience. Which of the factors described in this chapter do you tend to use when explaining other people's behavior?
12. Chapter 7 of your textbook describes *perspective taking* as seeing the world through another person's eyes, empathizing with what they are feeling, and thinking and reacting to the world in the same way that they do (page 277). For this assignment, consider a current conflict that you are having (or have recently had) with another person. Do your very best to take their perspective and to imagine the situation from their point of view. Visualize your own behavior through their eyes. Try to imagine their *life space*. How does this influence your view of the situation?
13. Chapter 8 of your textbook describes a number of shortcomings and biases in our perceptions of ourselves and of others. For this assignment, choose one or two of the biases to focus on. Pay careful attention to your judgments and behavior for the next few days. Did you engage in these biases? Describe the experience and what, if anything, you learned from it.
14. Chapter 8 of your textbook describes *cognitive dissonance* as the idea that people are motivated to reduce the unpleasantness associated with holding two inconsistent cognitions (page 317). In class, we discuss many different kinds of cognitive dissonance and strategies for dissonance reduction. For this assignment, pay attention to your own experience of cognitive dissonance. What inconsistent cognitions do you hold? What type of cognitive dissonance is this? How do you reduce it?

15. Chapter 9 of your textbook discusses *values* as chronic preferences for certain kinds of behavior and end states (page 361). For this assignment, consider the values that are most important to you. Where do they fit into a value hierarchy? How do they influence your interpretation of events in your social world?
16. Chapter 10 of your book describes *outgroup homogeneity* as the tendency to see the members of groups that we are not a part of as being more homogenous than groups that we are a part of (page 458). This is part of a general tendency to exaggerate group differences. For this assignment, pay attention to all of the judgments that you make about outgroups in the next few days. These do not have to be racial groups, but could be judgments about other sororities or fraternities, sports teams, universities, political parties, etc. Do you tend to see outgroups as being more homogenous than ingroups? Do you see them as being very different from your own group? Thinking as objectively as possible, are these fair judgments to make?
17. For this assignment, watch at least two television shows (comedy shows work well) and one news program. As you watch, record the number of times you hear a prejudicial remark or see a stereotype displayed. Then, describe your experience and what, if anything, you learned from it. Please attach the recorded log to your assignment.
18. Chapter 12 of your textbook describes *minority influence* as attitude change that occurs in a majority when a minority consistently adheres to a minority view, refusing to yield (page 488). For this assignment, think of and describe an example of minority influence that you have witnessed in your own life.
19. Chapter 13 of your textbook describes an *interaction sequence* where a perceiver construes a target in line with his/her own goals and expectancies, thus giving meaning to the perceiver's behavior without the perceiver's awareness (page 516). For this assignment, consider a simple misunderstanding that you've had with another person in your own life, or describe an example of such a misunderstanding that you've witnessed between others. How can understanding the idea of an interaction sequence help to explain the misunderstanding?
20. Chapter 13 of your textbook describes a *self-fulfilling prophecy* as what occurs when a perceiver's expectations actually cause someone else to act in line with those expectations (page 519). For this assignment, identify and explain an example of self-fulfilling prophecy that you've witnessed in your own life.
21. For this assignment, use concepts that you've learned during the course of the semester to design an intervention to reduce or prevent a conflict. The nature of the conflict is up to you (it can be between groups or between individuals), but you should think carefully about how social cognition could help.
22. For this assignment, describe what you think is the most important concept in social cognition for you to remember when trying to understand your own life and behavior.