

Psy 630: Seminar in Social Cognition

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| Professor: | Allen McConnell |
| E-mail: | mcconnar@miamioh.edu |
| Office: | 316 Psychology Building |
| In-person office hours: | Thursdays 1:15-2:15 p.m. in 316 PSYC (just stop by, no appointments) |
| Virtual office hours: | Wednesdays 1-3 p.m. (in 20-minute blocks) using Google Meet (sign up here) |

Course location and meeting time

Class meets in 244 Psychology Building, Thursdays, 8:30-11:15 a.m.

Canvas site

The course's Canvas site has all of the assigned readings in PDF format (see [Resources](#)). All assignment documents should be uploaded to Canvas in either PDF, RTF, or DOC formats (see [Assignments](#)).

Overview

This course is a survey of social cognition, which is a scholarly orientation to understanding social behavior. At the end of this course, students should be able to:

- 1) Describe and analyze relationships between the actual, implied, or imagined presence of others and individuals' thoughts, feelings, and behaviors
- 2) Describe and analyze common research methods used in social psychology and in social cognition in particular
- 3) Apply the knowledge gained in this course across topics in social psychology and to other disciplines (e.g., clinical psychology, developmental psychology, cognitive psychology)
- 4) Develop innovative research hypotheses that can advance our knowledge of human social behavior

Course readings, discussions, and assignments are designed to support mastery of student learning outcomes. Namely, students will read, analyze, and discuss primary research that emphasizes both classic and cutting-edge approaches to social aspects of behavior. Students will also engage in hypothesis generation, research design, and scholarly writing. The weekly reading load is approximately the same each week (e.g., weeks with more readings assigned have articles that are relatively shorter or less dense in content).

This seminar provides a foundation in understanding social cognition. Since the 1980s, the social cognition movement has emerged as a dominant paradigm in social psychology. Social cognition explores the cognitive underpinnings of diverse social psychological phenomena, including impression formation, group stereotyping, attributional thinking, self understanding, affect and emotions, relationships, and judgment and decision making. This research seeks to better understand the processes that underlie the forces that shape, and are shaped by, social interactions. In addition to exploring classic topics in social psychology (e.g., stereotyping and prejudice), social cognition has examined new topics in social psychology as well (e.g., how societal structures reinforce social inequities). Social cognition represents less of "an area in" and more of "an orientation to" social psychology. Each week, students will lead discussions about, develop reaction papers to, and critique readings from scientific research journals and edited volumes. The primary project in the class will be a research proposal due at the end of the semester. The area of social cognition is expansive, and it will be impossible to cover every important topic in one semester. Instead, the first half of the course will focus on foundational and enduring themes in social cognition, and the second half of the course will examine more contemporary issues and topics.

Course activities

1) Student facilitation (3x course, 7 points each, 21 points max)

Thrice during the semester, students will facilitate class discussion and determine how best to accomplish this goal each week. It is not the responsibility of facilitators to explain the readings to others or to review the important points of each paper. Instead, facilitators provide a framework that is productive for discussing the topic. For example, facilitators may circulate e-mails before class to pose questions to students to ponder beforehand. Or they might present an initial framework at the beginning of class to highlight common (or divergent) themes that run through the readings. There are no right or wrong ways to facilitate (an exception would be starting class by saying, "Well, what did you think of this week's readings?"). The goal of facilitation is to provide structure and organization for fellow students during discussion, not be the discussion. Facilitators should emphasize analysis of readings and integration of readings within a given week and across weeks.

2) Weekly reaction papers (up to 7 papers per semester, 2 points each, 14 points max)

Each week, students may submit a brief reaction paper (2-3 double-spaced pages) describing their reactions to the week's readings during weeks when they do not facilitate class discussion, up to a maximum of 7 papers total. This assignment is very open-ended. Because some students specialize in different disciplines (e.g., clinical psychology, education), they may want to "spin" the week's themes in a reasonable fashion toward their interests, which is fine. The goal of reaction papers is to ensure that students come to class having put some thought into the implications of, and interconnections among, the readings before class begins.

Each acceptable reaction paper contributes 2 points to the overall grade. Students must upload reaction papers in Canvas (Assignments) before noon on the day before class (i.e., by Wednesdays, 12 noon). Before the beginning of class (i.e., Thursday morning), the professor will provide feedback on papers via Canvas before class discussion begins. Late reaction papers, regardless of the circumstances, will not be considered.

3) Research workshops (twice during course, 10 points per workshop, 20 points max)

To encourage the development of new research and to gain practice in presenting and critiquing research, there are two days (i.e., October 24th, December 5th) devoted to in-class research workshops. On these days, there are no readings. Instead, each student will (before coming to class) identify an interesting research question, describe it and its import, briefly outline an appropriate methodology to study it, and present the anticipated results (in either table or graph form). Thus, students will develop at least two research ideas in the course (one for October 24, a different one for December 5) before the research proposal is submitted.

Before arriving in class, each student will prepare a document that is no longer than 1 page (single spaced) and provide a graph or figure (on page 2). A copy of each student's pre-class work should be uploaded to Canvas by the normal reaction paper deadline (i.e., Wednesday by 12 noon). These documents will be circulated to all class participants later that day (Wednesday) evening, providing students with the opportunity to read each proposal and develop feedback for it (to be shared in class). In class, students will present their ideas orally without the benefit of computers, powerpoint slides, etc. for approximately 5 minutes. Other students will provide feedback during this presentation. Student evaluations will consist of the quality of the pre-class document (5 points per workshop) and their feedback for fellow students (another 5 points per workshop).

Additional details will be provided once the class composition and number of students are known. Students do not have to base their research proposal (see below) on their research workshop projects, however doing so may be beneficial in that the student's ideas will receive feedback long before the research proposal deadline.

4) Research proposal (paper is due at end of semester, 40 points max)

Students will submit a paper by choosing an area of attitudes based on their own interests and developing a research proposal. The topic need not be one that a student facilitated, though doing so may be beneficial. The research proposal must address an important research question from the perspective of social cognition. Students outside of social psychology are encouraged to relate social cognition to their area (e.g., clinical psychologists may want to explore how chronically accessible self knowledge can help in therapy, developmental psychologists may want to study the formation of group prejudice in children). Although students will not be required to carry out the research they propose, the opportunity to develop a well-thought-out proposal should help those who wish to develop new lines of research or explore ideas relevant to theses, minor projects, and dissertations. These papers must take the form of a research proposal (e.g., they *cannot* be simply a literature review). The instructor will be available to help students refine their ideas and suggest appropriate resources and references. There is no correct page length. Papers *must* be written in APA Style. The **research proposal is due no later than 12 Noon, on Thursday, December 12** (late papers receive a 10% deduction for each 24-hour period that they are late). More assignment details are provided in Canvas.

5) Class participation (every class, 1 point per class, 10 points max)

Because the success of this course rests with students and their preparation, students are evaluated for class participation. Because this is a small class that focuses on discussion of research material and ideas, active participation in discussions is essential. Moreover, it is through the process of discussion and analysis that one's research acumen is developed and honed. Thus, students are evaluated for their participation each class meeting (1 point per class day with a reading assignment).

Course evaluation

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| 1) Facilitation during the semester (3x; 7 points per class) | 21 | |
| 2) Weekly reaction papers (2 points per paper, 7 papers maximum) | 14 | |
| 3) Workshops (2x; 5 points for one's idea, 5 points feedback to others).... | 20 | October 24, December 5 |
| 4) Research proposal (40 points total) | 40 | Due December 12 |
| 5) Class participation (1 point per class)..... | 10 | |

Letter grades are assigned based on standard 10 percent gradients, including plus and minus designations (e.g., $105 \leq A \leq 93$, $92 \leq A- \leq 90$, $89 \leq B+ \leq 87$, $86 \leq B \leq 83$, $82 \leq B- \leq 80$, $79 \leq C+ \leq 77$, $76 \leq C \leq 73$).

Statement on academic misconduct

Miami University and the Department of Psychology are dedicated to providing a learning environment based not only on academic excellence but on academic integrity. In this course, students are expected to adhere to all Miami University guidelines regarding academic misconduct (see Miami's *Academic Integrity Policy* for details). Academic misconduct includes, but is not limited to:

- Submitting work (homework, papers, etc.) conducted for another course without professor approval
- Submitting another party's work (in part or in whole) as one's own, including work from another student, artificial intelligence system, a website, a book, or failing to provide appropriate citations for others' ideas
- Allowing other students to submit one's work as their own

Engaging in academic misconduct can result in penalties ranging from a *minimum* of a zero on the assignment to an F in the course, an "AD" signifying academic dishonesty on Miami transcripts, academic suspension, and expulsion from Miami University. Misunderstanding appropriate academic conduct will not be accepted as an excuse for academic misconduct (please review Miami's *Academic Integrity Policy*).

Class policies

Accommodations: Students with a disability who feel that they may need a reasonable accommodation to fulfill the essential functions of the course listed in this syllabus, or students with physical, medical or psychiatric disabilities, or students with AD(H)D or specific learning disabilities are encouraged to contact the Miller Center for Student Disability Services (<https://miamioh.edu/student-life/sds/>). The professor is committed to supporting students who require accommodations, and each student considering accommodations should contact Miami's Student Disability Services at the beginning of the semester (sds@miamioh.edu).

Writing competency: Writing competency is expected in all assignments. Students needing assistance with their writing skills should contact the Howe Center for Writing Excellence (<http://miamioh.edu/hcwe>).

Illnesses and significant health disruptions: Students who become seriously ill and are unable to complete assignments for a sizable portion of the course because of illness should contact the professor immediately to determine how alternative arrangements might be made. Students who fail to stay in contact with the professor assume the consequences for reduced options and remedies in these circumstances. Students are ultimately responsible for the material covered in class, regardless of whether they are absent or present. If student absences are of significant duration or severity, the professor can advise them about available options, which may include an incomplete grade or a medical withdrawal.

Course conduct, respecting others, and valuing diversity: Students are encouraged and expected to express their ideas, to be active and respectful listeners, and to express opinions speaking from their own experiences. To support an inclusive learning environment, bigotry or disrespectful behavior will not be accepted. Students must abide by all university health policies throughout the semester. Class norms of respect and empathy extend beyond formal class meetings to on-line contexts (e.g., comments posted on-line should be viewed as "just as formal" as saying something aloud in class). Please be courteous and respectful in all forms of communication and interaction in our course.

The Miami University Department of Psychology is strongly committed to diversity, inclusion, and belongingness for all, and these values are reflected in its departmental governance:

We, members of the Department of Psychology, value diversity and inclusion because the goal of psychology is to improve understanding and outcomes for all individuals. We value persons of all identities, including dimensions such as age, culture, national origin, ability, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, language, race, religion, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, and others. As psychologists, we understand that diverse groups bring diverse perspectives; this diversity produces better outcomes in a variety of contexts, including learning and decision making, and our ability to work with one another. Consistent with these values, our department actively seeks opportunities to increase and improve understanding of diversity. These enduring efforts include conducting research with diverse populations on topics related to intergroup understanding and asking questions that are relevant to different groups. We promote the academic and professional development of students, faculty, and staff from different backgrounds and provide education to improve intercultural knowledge, skills, and attitudes for all members of our academic community. We endeavor to actively engage in positive behaviors in order to achieve these goals. In sum, we value diversity because multiple perspectives improve our ability to understand psychological processes and to understand and contribute to the communities we serve.

Semester Schedule

Part I: Foundational and enduring themes

August 29 • Organizational meeting

September 5 • Foundational themes in social cognition (Allen)

Bruner, J. S. (1957). On perceptual readiness. *Psychological Review*, 64, 123-152.

Fiske, S. T. (2012). The Continuum Model and the Stereotype Content Model. In P. A. M. Van Lange, A. W. Kruglanski, & E. T. Higgins (Eds.), *Handbook of theories of social psychology* (Vol. 1, pp. 267-288). Sage.

Bargh, J. A., & Ferguson, M. J. (2000). Beyond behaviorism: On the automaticity of higher mental processes. *Psychological Bulletin*, 126, 925-945.

September 12 • Accessibility, chronicity, assimilation (Cole, Tiange)

Higgins, E. T. (2012). Accessibility theory. In P. A. M. Van Lange, A. W. Kruglanski, & E. T. Higgins (Eds.), *Handbook of theories of social psychology* (Vol. 1, pp. 75-96). Sage.

Bargh, J. A., Bond, R. N., Lombardi, W. J., & Tota, M. E. (1986). The additive nature of chronic and temporary sources of construct accessibility. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 50, 869-878.

Bless, H., & Schwarz, N. (2010). Mental construal and the emergence of assimilation and contrast effects: The inclusion/exclusion model. *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology*, 42, 319-373.

September 19 • Valence, sensitivity, and dimensions (Kathryn, Mariah)

Skowronski, J. J., & Carlston, D. E. (1987). Social judgment and social memory: The role of cue diagnosticity in negativity, positivity, and extremity biases. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 52, 689-699.

Cuddy, A. J. C., Fiske, S. T., & Glick, P. (2008). Warmth and competence as universal dimensions of social perception: The Stereotype Content Model and the BIAS Map. *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology*, 40, 61-149.

Fazio, R. H., Pietri, E. S., Rocklage, M. D., & Shook, N. J. (2015). Positive versus negative valence: Asymmetries in attitude formation and generalization as fundamental individual differences. *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology*, 51, 97-146.

September 26 • Limits of introspection and prediction (Mariah, Kathryn)

Nisbett, R. E., & Wilson, T. D. (1977). Telling more than we can know: Verbal reports on mental processes. *Psychological Review*, 84, 231-259.

Wilson, T. D., Lisle, D. J., Schooler, J. W., Hodges, S. D., Klaaren, K. J., & LaFleur, S. J. (1993). Introspecting about reasons can reduce post-choice satisfaction. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 19, 331-339.

Dunn, E. W., Wilson, T. D., & Gilbert, D. T. (2003). Location, location, location: The misprediction of satisfaction in housing lotteries. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 29, 1421-1432.

McConnell, A. R., Dunn, E. W., Austin, S. N., & Rawn, C. D. (2011). Blind spots in the search for happiness: Implicit attitudes and nonverbal leakage predict affective forecasting errors. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 47, 628-634.

October 3 • Attitudes and persuasion (Mariah, Kathryn)

Fazio, R. H. (1986). How do attitudes guide behavior? In R. M. Sorrentino & E. T. Higgins (Eds.), *Handbook of motivation and cognition* (Vol. 1, pp. 204-243). Guilford.

Schwarz, N. (2007). Attitude construction: Evaluation in context. *Social Cognition*, 25, 638-656.

Petty, R. E., & Briñol (2012). The Elaboration Likelihood Model. In P.A.M. Van Lange, A. Kruglanski, & E. T. Higgins (Eds.), *Handbook of theories of social psychology* (Vol. 1, pp. 224-245). Sage.

October 10 • Goal pursuit (Gaige, Cole)

Ferguson, M. J., & Bargh, J. A. (2004). Liking is for doing: The effects of goal pursuit on automatic evaluation. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 87, 557-572.

Monteith, M. J., Lybarger, J. E., & Woodcock, A. (2009). Schooling the cognitive monster: The role of motivation in the regulation and control of prejudice. *Social and Personality Psychology Compass*, 3, 211-226.

Ryan, R. M., & Deci, E. L. (2000). Self-determination theory and the facilitation of intrinsic motivation, social development, and well-being. *American Psychologist*, 55, 68-78.

Vallacher, R. R., & Wegner, D. M. (2012). Action identification theory. In P. A. M. Van Lange, A. W. Kruglanski, & E. T. Higgins (Eds.), *Handbook of theories of social psychology* (Vol. 1, pp. 327-348). Sage.

October 17 • No Class**October 24 • Research Workshop #1****Part 2: Contemporary issues****October 31 • Bias and misinformation (Tiange, Ben)**

Lord, C. G., Ross, L., & Lepper, M. R. (1979). Biased assimilation and attitude polarization: The effects of prior theories on subsequently considered evidence. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 37, 2098-2109.

Cole, S., & Balceris, E. (2021). Motivated perception for self-regulation: How visual experience serves and is served by goals. *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology*, 64, 129-186.

Lewandowsky, S., Ecker, U. K. H., Seifert, C. M., Schwarz, N., & Cook, J. (2012). Misinformation and its correction: Continued influence and successful debiasing. *Psychological Science in the Public Interest*, 13, 106-131.

Schwarz, N., Newman, E., & Leach, W. (2016). Making truth stick and the myths fade: Lessons from cognitive psychology. *Behavioral Science and Policy*, 2, 85-95.

November 7 • Moral judgment (Ben, Gaige)

Skitka, L. J., Hanson, B. E., Morgan, G. S., & Wisneski, D. C. (2021). The psychology of moral conviction. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 72, 347-366.

Graham, J., Haidt, J., Koleva, S., Motyl, M., Iyer, R., Wojcik, S. P., & Ditton, P. H. (2013). Moral foundations theory: The pragmatic validity of moral pluralism. *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology*, 47, 55-130.

Kubin, E., Puryear, C., Schein, C., & Gray, K. (2021). Personal experiences bridge moral and political divides better than facts. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 118, e2008389118.

Ellemers, N., van der Toorn, J., Paunov, Y., & van Leeuwen, T. (2019). The psychology of morality: A review and analysis of empirical studies published from 1940 through 2017. *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, 23, 332-366.

November 14 • Social inequity (Cole, Ben)

Payne, B. K., Brown-lannuzzi, J. L., & Hannay, J. W. (2017). Economic inequality increases risk taking. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 114, 4643-4648.

Piff, P. K., Kraus, M. W., & Keltner, D. (2018). Unpacking the inequality paradox: The psychological roots of inequality and social class. *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology*, 57, 53-124.

Kraus, M. W., Onyeador, I. N., Daumeyer, N. M., Rucker, J. M., & Richeson, J. A. (2019). The misperception of racial economic inequality. *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, 14, 899-921.

Diekman, A. B., Joshi, M. P., & Benson-Greenwald, T. M. (2020). Goal congruity theory: Navigating the social structure to fulfill goals. *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology*, 62, 189-244.

November 21 • Emotions and social connections (Tiange, Gaige)

Schwarz, N., & Clore, G. L. (2007). Feelings and phenomenal experiences. In A. Kruglanski & E. T. Higgins (Eds.), *Social psychology: Handbook of basic principles* (2nd ed., pp. 385-407). Guilford.

Bernstein, M. J., Sacco, D. F., Brown, C. M., Young, S. G., & Claypool, H. M. (2010). A preference for genuine smiles following social exclusion. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 46, 196-199.

Fredrickson, B. L. (2001). The role of positive emotions in positive psychology: The Broaden-and-Build Theory of positive emotions. *American Psychologist*, 56, 218-226.

Stellar, J. E., Gordon, A. M., Piff, P. K., Cordaro, D., Anderson, C. L., Bai, Y., Maruskin, L. A., & Keltner, D. (2017). Self-transcendent emotions and their social functions: Compassion, gratitude, and awe bind us to others through prosociality. *Emotion Review*, 9, 200-207.

Jacobs, T. P., & McConnell, A. R. (2024). Gratitude letters to nature: Effects on self-nature representations and pro-environmental behavioral intentions. *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, 96, 102319.

November 28 • No class (Thanksgiving Day)**December 5 • Research Workshop #2****December 12 • Research proposal due by 12 noon (Thursday, finals week)**