

Psychology 8201: Social Cognition
Fall 2007, 3 credits
Wednesday, 9:00AM – 11:00PM, N227 Elliott Hall

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Office Hours: Wednesdays, 3-5PM or by appointment.

Rationale for the Seminar:

Social cognition is a thriving, scientifically active subfield of social psychology. It encompasses the study of the cognitive and motivational processes underlying social judgment, thought, and behavior. Social cognition has reached a stage in its development as a scientific field that the principles and processes associated with the field have become influential not only within social psychology (where social cognitive analyses influence theory and research on a wide range of social psychological phenomena, ranging from the self to intergroup relations), but in other subfields within psychological science (e.g., social development, I/O psychology, health psychology, cognitive neuroscience) as well as in other disciplines (e.g., political science, law, mass communications, public health). Therefore, the primary objective of this graduate seminar is to orient you to the social cognition *way of thinking* about research questions and to enhance your ability to evaluate the contribution of the social cognition perspective as it has been applied to research issues inside and outside the subfield's specific domain, including your own field of expertise. There are always different ways to accomplish these objectives, and each year this seminar adopts a somewhat different approach as a means to accomplish these pedagogical goals. This year's focus will be on the "brains to culture" approach adopted in the new third edition of the Fiske & Taylor text.

Course Requirements:

There are two requirements for this seminar. **First**, since this seminar will be conducted primarily in a discussion format (a modified, ostensibly benign Socratic method), you are expected to have completed the assigned readings prior to each session, and to come to the seminar prepared to discuss the material with your colleagues. To facilitate our discussions, **you are expected to email me a typed discussion comment by 4:00pm Tuesday prior to each Wednesday class meeting.** Your comment should take the form of a criticism, disagreement, synthesis, or query about *each* of the assigned

weekly readings. For each week, the total comment (i.e., for all the readings together) should be a single-spaced page or two in length (no longer than two pages, please). Be concise. The comments will help me organize the seminar discussions. Your comments, in conjunction with your class participation, will account for 50% of your seminar grade.

Second, the remaining 50% of your final grade will be based on a 15-20 page research paper (APA style required) which is due no later than 5:00PM on Friday, December 14th. This paper should be in the form of a research proposal on a topic of your choice and the conceptual framework for this paper must reflect what we have discussed and learned about the contributions of the social cognitive perspective during the term. *You are required to set up an appointment with me to discuss your paper ideas at any time during the semester.* Feel free to come and discuss your proposal more than once and/or via email. Please do not keep these appointments until the final two weeks of the semester as my schedule (and yours) becomes much more difficult to manage. **A one-page final paper proposal is due November 14.**

Required Course Text [available at the University Bookstore in Coffman Union]:

Fiske, S.T., & Taylor, S.E. (2008). *Social cognition: From brains to culture*. Third Edition. New York: McGraw-Hill.

Schedule of Core Text Readings

[Assigned on a weekly basis, hard copies of non-text readings will be available in N305 Elliott Hall on a sign-out basis; some will be distributed as pdf files via email]

- (1) **Sept. 5:** Overview and introduction to the seminar.
- (2) **Sept. 12:** F&T, Ch. 1 (Introduction)
- (3) **Sept. 19:** F&T, Ch. 2 (Dual Modes in Social Cognition)
- (4) **Sept. 26:** F&T, Ch. 3 (Attention and Encoding)
- (5) **Oct. 3:** F&T, Ch. 4 (Representation in Memory)
- (6) **Oct. 10:** F&T, Ch. 5 (Self in Social Cognition)
- (7) **Oct.17:** F&T, Ch. 6 (Attribution Processes)
- (8) **Oct. 24:** No class.

(9) Oct. 31: F&T, Ch. 7 (Heuristics) and Ch. 8 (Accuracy and Efficiency in Social Judgment)

(10): Nov. 7: F&T, Ch. 9 (Cognitive Structures of Attitudes) and Ch. 10 (Cognitive Processes of Attitudes)

(11) Nov. 14: F&T, Ch. 11 (Stereotyping: A Central Topic in Social Cognition)

One-page final paper proposals due.

(12) Nov. 21: F&T, Ch. 12 (Prejudice: Interplay of Cognitive and Affective Biases)

(13) Nov. 28: F&T, Ch. 13 (From Social Cognition to Affect)

(14) Dec. 5: F&T, Ch. 14 (From Affect to Social Cognition)

(15) Dec. 12: F&T, Ch. 15 (Behavior and Cognition)

Reminder: Final Paper Due: Friday, December 14, by 5:00PM. Email paper as Word file or hard copy. Be sure to retain a back-up for your files.