

**Social Cognition**  
**Psychology 353**  
**Spring 2009**

**Class Time and Location:** Monday & Wednesday, 2:30 to 3:50 p.m., Room PAS 2083

**Instructor:** Jennifer Peach  
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**Office Hours:** Mondays and Wednesdays 4pm-4:30pm

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**Course Description and Objectives**

Social cognition is a prominent area of research in social psychology today. Some of the major questions addressed by this field can be stated as follows: How do we perceive, represent, interpret, and remember information about ourselves and other individuals and groups? How do we utilize our social knowledge? How does our social knowledge determine our social judgments, including stereotypes? To what extent can we control the thought processes that influence our judgments about ourselves and others? In what ways are our social judgments influenced by our motivations, feelings and desires?

You will learn about all of the above themes in this course. Although social cognition uses both cognitive and social psychological theories and methodologies, we will predominantly focus on social psychological aspects of social cognition.

In addition to learning about the basic concepts and theory in social cognition, the course is designed to refine your ability to apply principles from the class to experiences in your life and that you see in the media. You will also learn the basics of research methodology as you will learn about numerous well-designed studies, and participate in a few experiments.

You are expected to attend the lectures as they will cover materials not covered in the textbook. There will be three tests of your knowledge of the content of readings and lectures. However, a portion of your grade will be determined by your writing assignments (see section of requirements and grading for further details). Your writing will show the extent to which you have actively thought about the course material. Therefore, throughout the course, it is important for you to evaluate research and theories critically and draw connections between topics and issues that you learn about in the lectures and in the readings.

**Required Readings**

1. Text: Kunda, Z. (1999) *Social Cognition: Making Sense of People*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press.

**Additional Readings**

- Kruger, J., Wirtz, D., & Miller, D. T. (2005). Counterfactual thinking and the first instinct fallacy. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 88, 725-735.

Nosek, B. A., Greenwald, A. G., & Banaji, M. R. (2007). The Implicit Association Test at age 7: A methodological and conceptual review. In J. A. Bargh (Ed.), *Social psychology and the unconscious: The automaticity of higher mental processes. Frontiers of social psychology*, pp. 265-292. New York, NY: Psychology Press.

Pronin, E., Wegner, D., McCarthy, K., & Rodriguez, S. (2006). Everyday magical powers: The role of apparent mental causation in the overestimation of personal influence. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 91, 218-231.

### **UW-ACE: Course Website**

<https://uwangel.uwaterloo.ca/uwangel/home.asp>

Check the course website regularly. Important announcements, as well as slides from lectures, will be posted there. Information about the papers will also be posted on the course website throughout the term.

### **Course Requirements and Grading**

#### **Tests (3 tests worth 25% each for a total of 75% of your grade)**

There will be three tests in the course: Test 1 on June 1<sup>st</sup> will cover material up to and including May 27<sup>th</sup>, Test 2 on June 29<sup>th</sup> will cover material between June 3<sup>rd</sup> and June 22<sup>nd</sup>, Test 3 on July 27<sup>th</sup> (last class) will cover material between June 24<sup>th</sup> and July 22<sup>nd</sup>. The first and the last tests will be multiple choice with some short answer, and the second test will be entirely multiple choice. You should note that doing the readings will be crucial for success on the tests. The tests will not be cumulative. In cases of severe illness or other extenuating circumstances a make-up test will be offered. If you feel you will require a make-up test, please contact one of the course instructors for permission and be prepared to provide documentation.

#### **Assignments (2 assignments worth 12.5% for a total of 25% of your grade)**

You will be required to do two assignments. The first assignment is due in the first half of the term (May 27<sup>th</sup>) and the second assignment is due in the second half (July 8<sup>th</sup>). Please hand in assignments in class on the day they are due.

The purpose of the assignments is to deepen your knowledge of the concepts from the course and practice applying them. Each assignment can be a maximum of five pages long (but may be shorter), double-spaced with at least 12-point font and one-inch margins.

The marking scheme will take into account:

- The clarity of writing
- The choice of appropriate concepts from the course
- Clear and correct explanation of the concepts
- Application of the concepts to the topic of the assignment
- Depth of thought and understanding in addressing the implications

#### **Assignment #1: Social Cognition in the Workplace**

For this assignment, you will be asked to write a five-page policy proposal for a workplace in which you describe how principles learned in class can diminish or improve the performance of a business. For example, if you are in Human Resources, you could write about how some principle described in class could bias people's hiring decisions if not accounted for, or could improve people's hiring

decisions if they were accounted for. Or, you could write about the function of heuristics for a marketing company.

Write the assignment as if the person grading it is a manager of a firm, and you are trying to convince them how the operation of this principle is hurting their organization (or how applying it could help their organization). Try to think about the objections that person might have, and try to show how these objections are not relevant.

## **Assignment #2: Psychology Today Article**

For this assignment, you must pick a topic covered in class (either one already covered in lectures or one covered in the textbook) and explain the topic as if you were writing a psychology today article. You must write about it in such a way that someone who is unfamiliar with psychology would find it interesting and relevant.

You should also explain how this topic could help to solve a real-world problem. For example, you could discuss how a topic covered could help us to understand reactions to the AIDs epidemic, or responses to the economic crisis, or how framing of a problem can increase environmental awareness. The assignment should be 4-5 pages double spaced.

Have fun with this assignment. It is designed to get you to think about and understand how social cognitive principles apply outside of the lab.

## **Bonus Marks (up to an extra 3% of your grade)**

You can earn bonus points of up to 3% of your grade by participating in studies or by providing the instructor with examples of phenomena described in class from the media. You may only earn a maximum of 3 bonus points. You are more than welcome to participate in 15 studies and / or provide 15 examples, but you will only receive 3 bonus points if you do.

### **Research Participation (1% per 1 participation credit).**

Most of psychology is about research. In classes you spend a great deal of time learning about how researchers conduct research; however, it is also important to understand the perspective of those participating in that research. There is no better way to do this than to participate in experiments. You will have the option to participate in social or cognition experiments through the Research Experiences Group (REG). Every participation credit will add 1% to your final grade (i.e., 0.5% for 0.5 credits, 1.5% for 1.5 credits, etc). As of Spring 2009, the REG guidelines for participation have changed. Please read the REG document on UW-ACE before participating.

### **Media examples (1% per example)**

You can also earn bonus points by providing the instructors with examples from popular culture (TV, movies, newspapers, joke emails, sports) of phenomena described in class. To earn this point, you will need to provide the instructor with the example in hard copy (on paper) or on a DVD or working internet link, and write a paragraph describing how this illustrates a point you learned in lecture, or from class readings or an upcoming lecture topic. Every example you provide that one of your instructors deems a good example of a phenomenon will add 1% to your final grade.

## **Grading Distribution**

The distribution of marks for the various aspects of the course is as follows:

- Tests (3 x 25%) 75%
- Assignments (2 x 12.5%) 25%
- Up to 3% bonus points.

## **Late Assignment Policy**

Keeping up with assignments is essential for getting the most out of this course as a student, and keeping track of late assignments is very time consuming for the instructors. Therefore, to encourage timely submission of assignments, there will be a 5% late penalty/day. Assignments more than a week late will only be accepted in cases of severe illness or other extenuating circumstances, so that all students can receive their marks on the assignments within a reasonable amount of time.

## **The Official Version of the Course Outline**

Outlines on UW-ACE may change as instructors develop a course, but they become final as of the first class meeting for the term.

## **Concerns About the Course or Instructor**

We in the Psychology Department take great pride in the high quality of our program and our instructors. Though infrequent, we know that students occasionally find themselves in situations of conflict with their instructors over course policies or grade assessments. If such a conflict arises, the Associate Chair for Undergraduate Affairs (Dr. Colin Ellard) is available for consultation and to mediate a resolution between the student and instructor. Dr. Ellard's contact information is as follows:

Email: [cellard@uwaterloo.ca](mailto:cellard@uwaterloo.ca)

Ph 519-888- 4567 ext 36852

A student who believes that a decision affecting some aspect of his/her university life has been unfair or unreasonable may have grounds for initiating a grievance. See Policy 70 and 71 below for further details.

## **Academic Integrity, Academic Offenses, Grievance, and Appeals**

To protect course integrity, as well as to provide appropriate guidance to students, course outlines in the Faculty of Arts incorporate the following note on avoidance of academic offenses:

Academic Integrity: in order to maintain a culture of academic integrity, members of the University of Waterloo community are expected to promote honesty, trust, fairness, respect and responsibility.

Grievance: A student who believes that a decision affecting some aspect of his/her university life has been unfair or unreasonable may have grounds for initiating a grievance. Read [Policy 70](#) - Student Petitions and Grievances, Section 4, <http://www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infosec/Policies/policy70.htm>

Discipline: A student is expected to know what constitutes academic integrity, to avoid committing academic offenses, and to take responsibility for his/her actions. A student who is unsure whether an action constitutes an offense, or who needs help in learning how to avoid offenses (e.g., plagiarism, cheating) or about 'rules' for group work/collaboration should seek guidance from the course professor,

academic advisor, or the Undergraduate Associate Dean. When misconduct has been found to have occurred, disciplinary penalties will be imposed under [Policy 71](#) - Student Discipline. For information on categories of offenses and types of penalties, students should refer to [Policy 71](#) - Student Discipline, <http://www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infosec/Policies/policy71.htm>

Appeals: A student may appeal the finding and/or penalty in a decision made under [Policy 70](#) - Student Petitions and Grievances (other than regarding a petition) or [Policy 71](#) - Student Discipline if a ground for an appeal can be established. Read [Policy 72](#) - Student Appeals, <http://www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infosec/Policies/policy72.htm>

For further advice from the Faculty of Arts on the avoidance of academic offenses, see the following website:

[http://arts.uwaterloo.ca/arts/ugrad/academic\\_responsibility.html](http://arts.uwaterloo.ca/arts/ugrad/academic_responsibility.html)

### Special Needs

Note for students with disabilities: The Office for Persons with Disabilities (OPD), located in Needles Hall, Room 1132, collaborates with all academic departments to arrange appropriate accommodations for students with disabilities without compromising the academic integrity of the curriculum. If you require academic accommodations to lessen the impact of your disability, please register with the OPD at the beginning of each academic term. Please provide us with necessary documentation as soon as possible.

### Course Schedule

The following is the schedule of topics to be covered in this course. For most lectures there is assigned reading. Lectures will tend to build on basic topics in the reading. Therefore, it will be in your best interest to complete each reading before the lecture for which it is assigned.

Date	Topic	Reading	Lecturer
Monday May 4 <sup>th</sup>	Introduction	Chapter 1	Both of us
Wednesday May 6 <sup>th</sup>	Concepts 1	Chapter 2	DAY
Monday May 11 <sup>th</sup>	Concepts 2		PEACH
Wednesday May 13 <sup>th</sup>	Heuristics 1	Chapter 3	PEACH
Monday May 18 <sup>th</sup>	NO CLASS VICTORIA DAY		
Wednesday May 20 <sup>th</sup>	Heuristics 2	Kruger, Wirtz, & Miller (2005)	PEACH
Monday May 25 <sup>th</sup>	Hypothesis testing 1	Chapter 4	PEACH
Wednesday May 27 <sup>th</sup>	Hypothesis testing 2 <b>Assignment 1 Due</b>		PEACH
Monday June 1 <sup>st</sup>	<b>Test 1</b>		
Wednesday June 3 <sup>rd</sup>	Stereotypes 1	Chapter 8	PEACH
Monday June 8 <sup>th</sup>	Stereotypes 2		PEACH
Wednesday June 10 <sup>th</sup>	Automatic Processing 1	Chapter 7	PEACH
Monday June 15 <sup>th</sup>	Automatic Processing 2	Nosek, Greenwald, & Banaji (2007)	PEACH
Wednesday June 17 <sup>th</sup>	Memory 1	Chapter 5	DAY
Monday June 22 <sup>nd</sup>	Memory 2		DAY
Wednesday June 24 <sup>th</sup>	Hot Cognition 1	Chapter 6	DAY

Monday June 29th	<b>Test 2</b>		DAY
Wednesday July 1st	NO CLASS CANADA DAY		
Monday July 6th	Hot Cognition 2		DAY
Wednesday July 8th	Person Perception 1 <b>Assignment 2 Due</b>	Chapter 9	DAY
Monday July 13 <sup>th</sup>	Person Perception 2		DAY
Wednesday July 15 <sup>th</sup>	Self 1	Chapter 10	DAY
Monday July 20 <sup>th</sup>	Self 2		GUEST
Wednesday July 22 <sup>nd</sup>	Magical Thinking	Pronin et al. (2006)	DAY
Monday July 27 <sup>th</sup>	<b>Test 3</b>		