

**Social Cognition
Psychology 353
Winter 2010**

Class Time and Location: Monday & Wednesday, 2:30 to 3:50 p.m., Room AL 211

Instructor: Danielle Gaucher
Office: PAS 3252
Email: dgaucher@uwaterloo.ca
Office Hours: Mondays and Wednesdays 4pm-4:30pm or by appointment

Instructor: David Cwir
Office: PAS 3040
Email: dcwir@uwaterloo.ca
Office Hours: Thursdays 1:30pm-2:30pm or by appointment

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.

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 and the additional readings 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 Feb 1st will cover material up to and including Jan 27th, Test 2 on March 3rd will cover material between Feb 3rd and March 1st, Test 3 on April 5th (last class) will cover material between March 8th and March 31st. All tests 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.

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 (Jan 27th) and the second assignment is due in the second half (March 17th). 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 should be three pages long, 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 Real World

Imagine you are called by a newspaper to write an editorial commenting on a current event for the benefit of their readers. Your job as a social psychology expert is to apply your knowledge of social cognition to shed light on some important aspect of the event.

Begin your write-up by describing the event. This should be a real news event that has taken place in the last year or so. Please attach a printout of a media article about this event. Describe a concept from the course (either material we have already covered or in any part of the textbook) ***If you would like to use a social cognitive construct from outside of class, you may want to clear it with one of the instructors before you begin.*** Describe how research on this concept (include study descriptions) can help viewers understand or reinterpret the event or people's reactions to it.

This assignment is designed to get you to think about how social cognition concepts apply outside of the lab. The assignment should be 3 pages double spaced, with at least 12-point font and one-inch margins.

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 3 pages double spaced, with at least 12-point font and one-inch margins.

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.

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 Winter 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 per day.

Illness Policy

Students who are requesting accommodation for course requirements (*assignments, midterm tests, final exams, etc.*) due to illness should do the following:

- seek medical treatment as soon as possible and obtain a completed UW Verification of Illness Form:
http://www.healthservices.uwaterloo.ca/Health_Services/verification.html
- submit that form to the instructor within 48 hours.
- (preferably) inform the instructor by the due date for the course requirement that you will be unable to meet the deadline and that documentation will be forthcoming.

In the case of a missed final exam, the instructor and student will negotiate an extension for the final exam which will typically be written as soon as possible, but no later than the next offering of the course.

In the case of a missed assignment deadline or midterm test, the instructor will either:

1. waive the course component and re-weight remaining term work as he/she deems fit according to circumstances and the goals of the course, or
2. provide an extension.

In the case of bereavement, the instructor will provide similar accommodations to those for illness. Appropriate documentation to support the request will be required.

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

Phone: 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>

PLAGIARISM DETECTION SOFTWARE (TURNITIN) WILL BE USED TO SCREEN ASSIGNMENTS IN THIS COURSE. THIS IS BEING DONE TO VERIFY THAT USE OF ALL MATERIAL AND SOURCES IN ASSIGNMENTS IS DOCUMENTED. IN THE FIRST LECTURE OF THE TERM, DETAILS WILL BE PROVIDED ABOUT THE ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE USE OF TURNITIN IN THIS COURSE.

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

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 Jan 4	Introduction	Chapter 1	BOTH
Wednesday Jan 6	Concepts 1	Chapter 2	GAUCHER
Monday Jan 11	Concepts 2		GAUCHER
Wednesday Jan 13	Heuristics 1	Chapter 3	GAUCHER
Monday Jan 18	Heuristics 2	Kruger, Wirtz, & Miller (2005)	GAUCHER
Wednesday Jan 20	Hypothesis testing 1	Chapter 4	GAUCHER
Monday Jan 25	NO Class		
Wednesday Jan 27	Hypothesis testing 2 Assignment 1 Due		GAUCHER
Monday Feb 1	Test 1		GAUCHER
Wednesday Feb 3	Memory 1	Chapter 5	GAUCHER
Monday Feb 8	Memory 2		GAUCHER
Wednesday Feb 10	Hot Cognition 1	Chapter 6	GAUCHER
Monday Feb 15	NO CLASS – READING WEEK		
Wednesday Feb 17	NO CLASS – READING WEEK		
Monday Feb 22	Hot Cognition 2		GAUCHER
Wednesday Feb 24	Automatic Processes 1	Chapter 7	CWIR
Monday March 1	Automatic Processes 2		CWIR
Wednesday March 3	Test 2		CWIR
Monday March 8	Stereotypes 1	Chapter 8	CWIR
Wednesday March 10	Stereotypes 2		CWIR
Monday March 15	Person Perception 1		CWIR
Wednesday March 17	Person Perception 2 Assignment 2 Due	Chapter 9	CWIR
Monday March 22	Self 1		CWIR
Wednesday March 24	Self 2	Chapter 10	CWIR
Monday March 29	Culture 1	Chapter 11	CWIR
Wednesday March 31	Magical Thinking	Pronin et al. (2006)	CWIR
Monday April 5	Test 3		BOTH