ATTITUDES AND SOCIAL COGNITION
GRADUATE SEMINAR
SPRING 2018

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

Social cognition is an area of social psychology concerned with understanding how people make sense of the social world. Social cognition is not a topic of study as much as an approach to the study of social psychology. We will cover many different topics (e.g., 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.

We will pay particularly attention to the study of attitudes, one of the most central areas of social psychology. Attitudes research has undergone many changes over time; it is clear, however, that understanding attitudes remains fundamental for understanding impression formation, stereotypes and prejudice, consumer behavior, jury decision-making, political psychology, and many other key areas of interest to social scientists.

STRUCTURE, PREPARATION, AND PARTICIPATION

Most weeks, we will spend the first hour of class working individually and collaboratively on your research projects. After a short break, the remainder of class will be spent on discussion. 2-3 students together will organize and facilitate the discussion of that week’s topics and readings. The class schedule and reading list is available on the course Canvas site.

REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Requirement</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Grade Range</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Class participation</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>A = 90-100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facilitating class discussion</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>B = 80-89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussion questions</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>C = 70-79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thought Papers</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>D = 60-69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research project</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>F = 60 or Below</td>
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CLASS PARTICIPATION

Meaningful, in-depth discussion is critical for learning and students are expected to be engaged and to participate fully. The overarching goal for this course is for you to develop your thinking and research ideas, and it is through the process of discussion and debate that one’s research acumen becomes defined and sharpened.
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. See Appendix A for the criteria that will be used in grading participation.

FACILITATING CLASS DISCUSSION

Each week, 2-3 students will work together to organize and facilitate discussion (two times each during the semester). As facilitators, you decide how to best accomplish your goal for the week, but you should do something more than simply collecting the discussion questions and working through them. For an activity, you could have your classmates work in groups to answer discussion questions. You might get the group to highlight common themes that run throughout the readings. You might set up a debate. You could provide a demonstration. You might have your classmates work together to apply something from the readings (e.g., design a survey). You may use handouts, or present outside material, but do not have to. The goal of facilitation is to provide structure and direction for fellow students in order to have a productive and interesting discussion. The best discussion facilitators are those who start thinking about how to structure the discussion well in advance, and who have backup plans and several ideas for fostering active discussion. I am happy to talk with you about your plans. See Appendix B for the criteria that will be used in grading performance as discussion leader.

WEEKLY READINGS AND DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

For most class meetings students are required to read the assigned articles and to submit one discussion question inspired by the readings. Your discussion question should be submitted on Canvas by 4pm the day before the class meeting. Generating discussion questions should help you to think critically about the theory prior to coming to class and should help the discussion leaders in determining what the class is interested in, so it is important that you put thought into your discussion questions. If you are struggling to come up with a thought question, one strategy is to think about it in terms of a qualifying exam: what could be a potential quals question from these readings? See Appendix C for the specific criteria that will be used in grading discussion questions.

THOUGHT PAPERS

Four times during the course of the semester you will submit thought papers. Thought papers are open-ended; the general idea is that you consider some aspects of the strengths, limitations, implications, and interconnections in the week’s readings. Thought papers must be less than two pages (double-spaced, 12-point font, 1” margins) and should follow APA format for citations. You should submit your thought paper through the course Canvas site by the time class begins. Neither a title page nor a reference page is necessary. You may choose which weeks you submit papers, but you must complete at least two before Spring Break. Your papers will be graded primarily on how well you provide a thoughtful, well-argued analysis of the work, but writing style always matters. See Appendix D for the specific criteria that will be used in grading thought papers.
RESEARCH PROJECT

The primary product in this course will be a research project in which you choose a research question and analyze relevant data from Project Implicit dataset available at https://osf.io/y9hiq/. We will spend the first 45-60 minutes in class most week actively working on this project. These datasets are large, and somewhat complicated, and we will need the time. Further, setting aside class time aside for this project will allow us to learn from each other’s progress and to do background reading and research to ensure that you each end up with a project that has some chance of turning into a published paper.

The opportunity to develop your theoretical and empirical thinking in this way should be helpful to those who wish to develop new lines of research or explore ideas relevant to theses, secondary projects, and dissertations. While you are encouraged to pick a topic that connects to your own interests, the topic must clearly relate to attitudes and social cognition. Please do not choose a project on which you are already working.

Your grade for this project comes from:

1. **Research Proposal, Pre-registration, and Peer Review.** Your research proposal should be organized like a formal manuscript, and should include: title page, abstract, introduction, method, and references. Your proposal should include an appendix that contains thorough responses to the pre-registration template you’ll find in Appendix E below. The main body of your proposal should be approximately 6-8 pages in length, written in APA style. You will submit a full draft of the proposal and pre-registration on the course Canvas site by 11.59pm on Sunday, February 25th. You will be assigned a partner for peer review, and you will comment on their work (and receive comments on yours) by Sunday, March 4th. Then, the final version of your proposal and pre-registration are due to me via Canvas by 11.59pm on Sunday, March 18th.

2. **Class Presentation.** You will give a ~10-minute presentation of your project in class on April 18th. You should include background information (theory, hypotheses), method that is unique to your project (e.g., number of participants, variables), and results.

3. **Final Paper.** Your final paper should be organized like a formal manuscript, and should include: title page, abstract, introduction, method, results, discussion, and references. You should include an Appendix that contains thorough responses to the pre-registration template you’ll find on the course Canvas site. The main body of your proposal should be approximately 10-12 pages in length, written in APA style. If you do a good job with your proposal, you should only need to add results and discussion to your proposal in order to complete the final paper. Your final paper is due to me via Canvas by 11.59pm on April 29th.
Appendix A
Class Participation Evaluation

- **A--Excellent.** Listens attentively and is engaged in class discussion. Talks in such a way that the conversation is moved forward productively by adding new information about the topic, disputing or questioning points under discussion, changing the topic when appropriate, noting exceptions, and/or providing observations from personal experience. Varies the type of contribution to discussion (e.g., factual statements, personal observations, etc.). Acknowledges and confirms the contributions of others by restating or referring to their points, asking for clarification, respectfully disagreeing with them. Is sensitive to the dynamics of the group, actively works to keep the discussion productive so that learning can occur and encourages others to contribute.

- **B--Good.** Listens attentively. Talks in such a way that discussion goes forward by adding new information, questioning or disputing, changing topic when appropriate, noting exceptions, and/or providing personal experience. Varies type of contribution (e.g., factual statements, personal observations, etc.). Acknowledges the contributions of others, is respectful, and does not dominate the discussion.

- **C--Satisfactory.** Listens attentively, but contributes infrequently. Talks with the intention of moving conversation forward (see above). Contributions may tend to one type (e.g., factual statements, personal observations, etc.) but demonstrates some sensitivity to group dynamics. Is respectful of others.

- **D--Poor.** Any of the following: Does not listen attentively (e.g., whispers to neighbors, reads or writes during discussion). Interrupts others. Talks very infrequently. Is limited to one type of contribution (e.g., disputing or questioning, talking from personal experience) with little sensitivity to group dynamics. Dominates conversation in a way that is resented by others.

- **F--Fail.** Any of the following: Doesn’t talk or talks extremely infrequently. Is disruptive. Demonstrates lack of respect for others.
Appendix B
Questions for Discussion Leader Evaluation

1. Did you do something beyond simply presenting the submitted discussion questions and having your classmates answer them?
2. Did you draw the other students out into interesting and relevant discussion?
3. Did you ask questions that promoted critical thinking?
4. Did you shrink/expand coverage to fit the available time and stay within the allotted timeframe?
5. Did you find a balance between discussing the theory/ideas behind the readings and the specifics of the individual studies?
6. Did you keep the class on topic?
7. Were you able to keep discussion going, elicit comments from quieter students, and/or tactfully bring discussion to a close when necessary?
8. Were you able to control and maintain discussion such that everyone got to talk?

A = Yes to all
B = Yes to most
C = Yes to few
F = Failure to show up or meaningfully participate
Appendix C
Discussion Question Evaluation

- **A--Excellent.** Always posts thoughtful, insightful questions that prompt theory-relevant discussion. Always integrates the assigned articles and asks questions about the “bigger picture” rather than small details. Questions always clear. Questions always contain rich and fully developed new ideas, connections, or possible applications. Questions always submitted on time and with no grammatical or spelling errors.

- **B--Good.** Mostly posts thoughtful, insightful questions that prompt theory-relevant discussion. Mostly integrates the assigned articles and asks questions about the “bigger picture” rather than small details. Questions always clear. Questions mostly contain rich and fully developed new ideas, connections, or possible applications. Questions always submitted on time and with few grammatical or spelling errors.

- **B--Satisfactory.** Sometimes posts thoughtful, insightful questions that prompt theory-relevant discussion but sometimes the questions are weak and commonplace. Sometimes integrates the assigned articles and asks questions about the “bigger picture” but other times the questions concern minor or irrelevant details of a specific article. Questions sometimes clear. Questions make limited connections, and those are often cast in the form of vague generalities. Questions contain few new ideas or possible applications, but instead are often a rehashing or summary of other questions. Questions often seem commonplace, obvious, or off-topic. Questions mostly submitted on time and with some grammatical or spelling errors.

- **D--Poor.** Like the satisfactory questions, but the problems are more serious or more frequent. Questions often submitted late and with frequent grammatical or spelling errors.

- **F--Fail.** Shows obviously minimal lack of effort. Questions frequently submitted late or not submitted at all.
Appendix D
Thought Paper Evaluation

• **A--Excellent.** Demonstrates an excellent understanding of the ideas in the assigned reading and critically evaluates/responds to those ideas in an analytical, persuasive manner. Paper has clear structure. Excellent transitions from point to point. Paragraphs support solid topic sentences. Evidence/argument used to support every point. Appropriate integration of quoted material into sentences. Avoids too much direct quotation. Analysis is interesting and exciting. Work displays critical thinking and avoids simplistic description or summary of information. All ideas in the paper flow logically; the argument is identifiable, reasonable, and sound. Author anticipates and successfully defuses counter-arguments; makes novel connections to outside material, which illuminate thesis. Creates appropriate academic tone. Sentence structure and grammar excellent. Correct use of punctuation and citation style. No spelling errors. No run-on sentences or comma splices. Uses active voice.

• **B--Good.** Demonstrates a good understanding of the ideas in the assigned reading and critically evaluates/responds to those ideas in a mostly analytical, persuasive manner. Generally clear structure, though may wander occasionally. May have a few unclear transitions, or a few paragraphs without strong topic sentences. Evidence/argument used to support most points. Quotes well integrated into sentences. Avoids too much direct quotation. Argument of paper is clear, usually flows logically and makes sense. Some evidence that counter-arguments acknowledged, though perhaps not addressed. Some insightful connections to outside material made. Mostly creates appropriate academic tone. Sentence structure and grammar strong, but with minor errors in spelling, punctuation, citations, or voice.

• **C--Satisfactory.** Demonstrates a reasonable general understanding of the ideas in the assigned reading and only occasionally critically evaluates/responds to those ideas in a mostly analytical, persuasive manner. Generally unclear, often wanders or jumps around. Few or weak transitions, many paragraphs without topic sentences. Points sometimes lack supporting evidence or evidence used where inappropriate (often because there may be no clear point). Quotes may be poorly integrated into sentences or too much direct quotation. Even balance between critical thinking and description. Logic may often fail, or argument may often be unclear. May not address counter-arguments or make any outside connections. Occasionally creates appropriate tone but has some informal language or inappropriate slang. Problems in sentence structure and grammar (not major). Some errors in punctuation, citation style, and spelling. May have some run-on sentences or comma splices. Only sometimes uses active voice.

• **D--Poor.** Like the satisfactory paper, but the problems are more serious or more frequent.

• **F--Fail.** Shows obviously minimal lack of effort or comprehension of the assignment. Very difficult to understand due to major problems with mechanics, structure, and analysis. Has no identifiable arguments. Does not follow paper guidelines for length and format. Does not cite sources correctly.
Appendix E
Pre-Registration Template for Research Project

Study Information

1. Study Title.
2. Research Questions. Please list each research question included in this study.
3. Hypotheses. For each of the research questions listed in the previous section, provide one or multiple specific and testable hypotheses. Please state if the hypotheses are directional or non-directional. If directional, state the direction. A predicted effect size is also appropriate here.

Sampling Plan

4. Preregistration is designed to make clear the distinction between confirmatory tests, specified prior to seeing the data, and exploratory analyses conducted after observing the data. Therefore, creating a research plan in which existing data will be used presents unique challenges. Please describe how you will go about choosing which data to look at. Will you do on analysis prior to pre-registration? Exploratory analysis on some subset of data and confirmatory analysis on another?
5. Data collection procedures. Please describe the process by which your data were collected. This should include the population from which you obtain subjects, recruitment efforts, payment for participation, how subjects will be selected for eligibility from the initial pool (e.g. inclusion and exclusion rules), and your study timeline.
6. Sample size. Describe the sample size of your study. How many units will be analyzed in the study? This could be the number of people, birds, classrooms, plots, interactions, or countries included. If the units are not individuals, then describe the size requirements for each unit. If you are using a clustered or multilevel design, how many units are you collecting at each level of the analysis?
7. Sample size rationale. This could include a power analysis or an arbitrary constraint such as time, money, or personnel.

Variables

8. Measured variables. Describe each variable that you will measure. This will include outcome measures, as well as any predictors or covariates that you will measure. You do not need to include any variables that you plan on collecting if they are not going to be included in the confirmatory analyses of this study. Clearly distinguish between exploratory and confirmatory variables.
9. Indices. If any measurements are going to be combined into an index (or even a mean), what measures will you use and how will they be combined? Include either a formula or a precise description of your method. If you are using a more complicated statistical method to combine measures (e.g. a factor analysis), you can note that here but describe the exact method in the analysis plan section.
Design Plan

10. Describe your study design. Examples include two-group, factorial, randomized block, and repeated measures. Is it a between (unpaired), within-subject (paired), or mixed design? Describe any counterbalancing required. Typical study designs for observation studies include cohort, cross sectional, and case-control studies.

Analysis Plan

Please remember that all analyses specified below must be reported in the final article, and any additional analyses must be noted as exploratory or hypothesis generating. A confirmatory analysis plan must state up front which variables are predictors (independent) and which are the outcomes (dependent), otherwise it is an exploratory analysis. You are allowed to describe any exploratory work here, but a clear confirmatory analysis is required.

11. Statistical models. What statistical model will you use to test each hypothesis? Please include the type of model (e.g. ANOVA, multiple regression, SEM, etc.) and the specification of the model (this includes each variable that will be included as predictors, outcomes, or covariates). Please specify any interactions that will be tested and remember that any test not included here must be noted as an exploratory test in your final article.

12. Transformations. If you plan on transforming, centering, recoding the data, or will require a coding scheme for categorical variables, please describe that process.

13. Follow-up analyses. If not specified previously, will you be conducting any confirmatory analyses to follow up on effects in your statistical model, such as subgroup analyses, pairwise or complex contrasts, or follow-up tests from interactions. Remember that any analyses not specified in this research plan must be noted as exploratory.

14. Inference criteria. What criteria will you use to make inferences? Please describe the information you will use (e.g. p-values, Bayes factors, specific model fit indices), as well as cut-off criterion, where appropriate. Will you be using one or two tailed tests for each of your analyses? If you are comparing multiple conditions or testing multiple hypotheses, will you account for this?

15. Data exclusion. How will you determine what data or samples, if any, to exclude from your analyses? How will outliers be handled?

16. Missing data. How will you deal with incomplete or missing data?

17. Exploratory analysis (optional). If you plan to explore your data set to look for unexpected differences or relationships, you may describe those tests here. An exploratory test is any test where a prediction is not made up front, or there are multiple possible tests that you are going to use. A statistically significant finding in an exploratory test is a great way to form a new confirmatory hypothesis, which could be registered at a later time.

Other

18. Other. If there is any additional information that you feel needs to be included in your preregistration, please enter it here.