

## Psychology 2135: Social Perception and Cognition

Spring 2003

T 1:00-3:55PM

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### Course Description

In this course we will explore how people think about and perceive social objects - both other people and themselves. We will discuss how a variety of cognitive processes and shortcuts impinge on our social judgments, and the extent to which our implicit beliefs, motives, and emotions play a role. Attention will be paid to how we formulate impressions, the types of information we use to make social judgments, and the accuracy of such judgments. Along the way we will consider how research in this area informs our understanding of other psychological phenomena, and will also attempt to determine the implications of the findings for clinical diagnosis, health behavior, personnel selection, education, relationships, and other applications. We will also consider cultural influences on the processes we discuss. Throughout the course we will address parallels between the ways in which we perceive ourselves and other people, and discuss potential future avenues of research in interpersonal perception.

### Readings

*Required text:*

Kunda, Z. (1999). *Social cognition: Making sense of people*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

All other readings are available from the main office in the psychology department (Sennott Square, 3<sup>rd</sup> floor). Please make copies of all articles and bring the copies to class so that you can refer to them.

### Organization

We will meet once a week, and our class meetings will include lecture material along with facilitated discussion. Reading assignments include chapters from the Kunda text (which will serve as introductory material), additional background chapters and articles, and then a few selected "target articles" upon which we will focus discussion during the latter half of each class meeting. Starting in the third week, I will lead the first half of each class session, covering the topic for that day in a lecture/discussion format. After a break, pre-assigned members of the class will facilitate the second half of the session. Student discussion leaders will review the target articles for that day, report on other current research that has been published on this topic, introduce discussion questions, and moderate the ensuing class discussion. You will have the opportunity to choose **two** sessions for which you will work with other students as a discussion leader. You will also complete two papers - each of which provides a choice of writing a theoretical integration piece or a research proposal - and will write short critiques of other students' papers.

## Goals

I have two goals in this course. The first and most obvious one is to provide a reasonably comprehensive overview of research on social perception and cognition, one that adds to your knowledge base in psychology and perhaps sheds light on issues you are investigating in your own research. The second is to provide an opportunity for you to develop several professional skills that are important in most academic (and many non-academic) positions: (1) reading and integrating empirical and theoretical contributions to a field, (2) developing and expressing ideas and knowledge in both oral and written form, (3) teaching others and engaging them in creative and intellectual discussion, (4) critiquing others' work in a productive way, (5) receiving and adequately responding to critiques of your own work, and (5) collaborating with others. To this end, in addition to reading and digesting the assigned readings, you will collaborate with other students to lead the class on two occasions, write two papers and critique other students' papers, polish your written work after getting feedback, and participate actively in class discussions.

## Course Components

- (1) The first component of the course is class preparation and participation, which constitutes a full 50% of your grade. This includes being a discussion leader for portions of two class sessions as well as participating in discussions you are not leading.

Leading discussions (25%): As explained above, discussion leaders will make oral presentations of the target articles for that day, introduce new material to supplement what the rest of the class has read, and moderate the ensuing discussion. Leaders should meet with me **no later than** the Wednesday before their session, and preferably before that. In our preparatory meeting, I will ask you to tell me your tentative plan for your portion of the class session, including what issues you hope to focus upon, what discussion questions you hope to raise, and what other material you might introduce. I will suggest some appropriate references, and give you additional ideas about how to present the material. Punctuality and preparedness in these meetings will contribute to this portion of your grade. After your first presentation, you are encouraged to schedule another meeting with me so we can discuss how your session went and how you might improve the next time around. I am always happy to give you suggestions and talk over any questions and ideas that you have about your topic. Presentations are not formally graded -- they are considered a portion of the class participation grade.

Other participation (25%):

(a) **Reading**: In a class such as this it is important that all class members prepare the assigned readings adequately so that they are able to discuss them when we meet. An important point to be made here is that failing to come prepared to class negatively affects other students in the class because they then fail to benefit from your perspectives, and cannot get as much out of class discussion. It also suggests a lack of respect for other students -- remember that you would like them to be prepared on days that you are giving presentations. When you are unprepared, it will be more obvious than you may realize. It is useful to take notes on the main points of the readings so you can refer to them when necessary during class and when writing papers. If you do not have notes in front of you during a given class session, you simply are not prepared. It is also a good idea to read one or two articles about every other day so that you are not in a position where you have to do

all of the reading for a given session at one time. There is a full week of reading to do for each session, and there is no way you can absorb it all productively in one sitting.

(b) **Class discussion:** Our discussions will be key in trying to understand the topics we review, including how researchers have approached them and what we have learned, and what kinds of things we could do to further our knowledge. In class, it is important to realize that I am not counting up how many things you say (not to mention how many “clever” things you say). We’re all in this educational experience together, and can learn a great deal from each other. What this means is that you should participate by contributing when you have something to add, by responding to others’ remarks with those of your own, and by generally sharing your perspectives with the rest of the class. Clearly, contributions that reflect extensive thought about the material - and how it may be integrated with other topics in the course or with other areas of empirical interest - are going to be more valuable than matters of clarification, though the latter are encouraged as well to clear up any confusion. Careful consideration of others’ perspectives is an important part of a stimulating intellectual discussion, as is the willingness to “put oneself on the line” by introducing a potentially counterintuitive or unpopular perspective. Let’s all stick our necks out. *Pregnant pauses in discussion are OK, and normal, but let’s make sure they are due to thought, not laziness.* Moreover, be careful not to monopolize the discussion - the more perspectives we hear, the better off we are.

- (2) The second principal component of the course (comprising 50% of the grade) is to write two papers, present one of them to the class, write critiques of other students’ papers, and polish your own papers on the basis of feedback you receive from others’ critiques.

The two papers (each of which will be 8-10 pages, not including references) will give you an opportunity to critique, integrate, and apply what we have learned in the course. Each assignment will consist of a few different topics, with some serving as integrative reviews and others as research proposals. Although not required to do so, you are encouraged to make one paper an integrative review and the other a research proposal. Topics and instructions will be distributed in separate handouts. You should take careful notes of all the readings in order to assist in the writing of these papers. The papers will require a great deal of preparation and library research so you are encouraged to start them well in advance. The papers will be expected to be in APA format, double-spaced, and free of spelling, typographical, and grammar errors. Both papers are due by 5:00PM in my office on the due dates (Thursday, February 13, and Thursday, March 27).

Once I receive all of the papers, I will distribute each one to three randomly selected students who will serve as reviewers. Each will write a 1-2 page critique, and you will be given copies of these critiques. By the second week of April, you will have completed both papers and received both sets of critiques (and will have written critiques for other students’ papers), as well as feedback from me. At that point you will choose one of these papers to present to the class at the end of the term (April 15 or 22). Following that presentation, the next step will be to prepare a final revision of the paper you choose, taking all of the feedback you have received (including any feedback received during the class presentation), which you will then submit by April 26 (again, by 5:00PM in my office). When turning in

the final paper, please include your first version of the paper, and a short cover note indicating what you have done to improve the paper.

The critiques will be due on Monday, February 24 (for the first paper) and Monday, April 7 (for the second paper). The critiques will then be distributed in class to the authors of the papers the next day. Critiques should be no more than 2 pages single-spaced, and should include the title of the paper being critiqued on the top of the first page. Further instructions on how to write them will be provided in class. Please submit **two** copies of each critique.

This portion of the course grade will reflect the quality of both initial papers, the final revision (including responsiveness to feedback), and the critiques of other students' papers, equally weighted.

*Important point:* You will be graded individually, which means that you are not competitors but colleagues in class.

## COURSE TOPICS AND READING

**NOTE:** It is best to read assigned articles in the order they are listed. This is a *full week's* worth of reading for each topic, so it will be helpful to budget your reading time accordingly (not even a social psychologist could read and adequately process all the material for a given session in one or two sittings). In general, a good plan is to read the first 3 articles by the Friday prior to a class meeting - that will give you enough time to read all the articles carefully and intelligently. Remember to take notes when reading the articles – they will help during class discussions as well as when you work on your presentations and papers.

### January 7: Introduction

#### January 14: History of social perception and cognition research; mental representations

##### *Background reading*

Kunda, Ch. 1, 2 (also read syllabus carefully)

Jones, E. E. (1990). *Interpersonal perception*. NY: W. H. Freeman and Company. (Chapter 2, Early approaches to person perception)

Ickes, W., & Gonzalez, R. (1996). "Social" cognition and *social* cognition: From the subjective to the intersubjective. In J. L. Nye & A. M. Brower (Eds.), *What's social about social cognition?* (pp. 285-308). London: Sage Publications.

##### *Target articles*

Park, B., & Hastie, R. (1987). Perception of variability in category development: Instance- vs. abstraction-based stereotypes. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *53*, 621-635.

Dunning, D., Perie, M., & Story, A. L. (1991). Self-serving prototypes of social categories. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *61*, 957-968.

#### January 21: Heuristics and biases

##### *Background reading*

Kunda, Ch. 3, 4 (pp. 124-137, 143-159), 5 (pp. 182-186)

Chapman, L. J., & Chapman, J. P. (1969). Illusory correlation as an obstacle to the use of valid psychodiagnostic signs. *Journal of Abnormal Psychology*, *74*, 272-280.

Locksley, A., Hepburn, C., & Ortiz, V. (1982). Social stereotypes and judgments of individuals: An instance of the base-rate fallacy. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, *18*, 23-42.

##### *Target articles*

Dawes, R. M., Faust, D., & Meehl, P. E. (2001). Clinical vs. actuarial judgment. In T. Gilovich, D. Griffin, & D. Kahneman (Eds.), *Heuristics and Biases: The psychology of intuitive judgment* (pp. 716-729). Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press.

Harkness, A. R., DeBono, K. G., & Borgida, E. (1985). Personal involvement and strategies for making contingency judgments: A stake in the dating game makes a difference. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *49*, 22-32.

## **January 28: Attribution**

### ***Background reading***

Kunda, Ch. 9 (pp. 428-432), 11 (pp. 525-533)

Jones, E. E., & Harris, V. A. (1967). The attribution of attitudes. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 3, 1-24.

Fiske, S. T., & Taylor, S. E. (1991). *Social cognition*. New York: McGraw-Hill. (Chapter 2, Attribution theory)

### ***Target articles***

Arkin, R. M., & Oleson, K. C. (1998). Self-handicapping. In J. M. Darley and J. Cooper (Eds.), *Attribution and social interaction: The legacy of Edward E. Jones* (pp. 313-347). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

Blanchard-Fields, F. (1999). Social schematicity and causal attributions. In T. M. Hess & F. Blanchard-Fields (Eds.), *Social cognition and aging* (pp. 222-236). New York: Academic Press.

## **February 4: Self**

### ***Background reading***

Kunda, Ch. 5 (pp. 176-182, 186-187, 194-202), 10, 11 (pp. 518-525, 536-549)

Brown, J. D. (1993). Self-esteem and self-evaluation: Feeling is believing. In J. M. Suls et al. (Eds.), *Psychological perspectives on the self, Vol. 4* (pp. 27-58). Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Wood, J. V. (1989). Theory and research concerning social comparisons of personal attributes. *Psychological Bulletin*, 106, 231-248.

### ***Target articles***

Greenwald, A. G. (1980). The totalitarian ego: Fabrication and revision of personal history. *American Psychologist*, 35, 603-618.

Heine, S. J., & Lehman, D. R. (1995). Cultural variation in unrealistic optimism: Does the West feel more invulnerable than the East? *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 68, 595-607.

## **February 11: Hypothesis testing and behavioral confirmation**

### ***Background reading***

Kunda, Ch. 4 (pp. 111-124, 137-143), 5 (pp. 161-168, 174-176)

Snyder, M., Tanke, E. D., & Berscheid, E. (1977). Social perception and interpersonal behavior: On the self-fulfilling nature of social stereotypes. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 35, 656-666.

Pyszczynski, T., La Prelle, J., & Greenberg, J. (1988). Encoding and retrieval effects of general person characterizations on memory for incongruent and congruent information. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 13, 556-567.

### ***Target articles***

Rosenhan, D. L. (1973). On being sane in insane places. *Science*, 179, 250-258.

McFarland, C., & Ross, M. (1987). The relation between current impressions and memories of self and dating partners. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 13, 228-238.

**February 13: PAPER 1 DUE**

**February 18: Impression formation**

***Background reading***

Zebrowitz, L. A. (1990). *Social perception*. Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks/Cole (Chapter 3, Impression formation).

Kelley, H. H. (1950). The warm-cold variable in first impressions of persons. *Journal of Personality*, 18, 431-439.

Jones, E. E. (1990). *Interpersonal perception*. NY: W. H. Freeman and Company. (Chapter 7, Interaction goals and strategic self-presentation)

***Target articles***

Parsons, C. K., Liden, R. C., & Bauer, T. N. (2001). Person perception in employment interviews. In M. London (Ed.), *How people evaluate others in organizations* (pp. 67-90). NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Zebrowitz, L. A. (1997). *Reading faces: Window to the soul?*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press. (Chapter 3, The bases of reading faces)

**February 24: CRITIQUES OF PAPER 1 DUE**

**February 25: Affective and motivational influences**

***Background reading***

Kunda, Ch. 5 (pp. 168-170, 186-193), 6

Hilton, J. L. (1998). Interaction goals and person perception. In J. M. Darley & J. Cooper (Eds.), *Attribution and social interaction: The legacy of Edward E. Jones* (pp. 127-152). Washington, D.C.: American Psychological Association.

Dunning, D. A. (1999). A newer look: Motivated social cognition and the schematic representation of social concepts. *Psychological Inquiry*, 10, 1-11.

***Target articles***

Bodenhausen, G. V., Sheppard, L. A., & Kramer, G. P. (1994). Negative affect and social judgment: The differential impact of anger and sadness. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 24, 45-62.

Klein, W. M., & Kunda, Z. (1992). Motivated person perception: Constructing justifications for desired beliefs. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 25, 145-168.

**March 11: Social knowledge and socially-shared cognition**

***Background reading***

Kunda, Ch. 9

Goethals, G. R., Messick, D. M., & Allison, S. T. (1991). The uniqueness bias: Studies of constructive social comparison. In J. Suls and T. A. Wills (Eds.), *Social comparison research: Contemporary theory and research*. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Prentice, D. A., & Miller, D. T. (1996). Pluralistic ignorance and the perpetuation of social norms by unwitting actors. In M. Zanna (Ed.), *Advances in experimental social psychology* (pp. 160-209). San Diego, CA: Academic Press.

(March 11 readings continued on next page)

**Target articles**

- Sherman, S. J., Presson, C. C., Chassin, L., Carty, E., & Olshavsky, R. (1983). The false consensus effect in estimates of smoking prevalence. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 9, 197-207.
- Krauss, R. M., & Fussell, S. R. (1991). Constructing shared communicative environments. In L. B. Resnick, J. M. Levine, & S. D. Teasley (Eds.), *Perspectives on socially shared cognition* (pp. 172-200). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

**March 18: Automatic processes**

**Background reading**

Kunda, Ch. 7

- Devine, P. G. (1989). Stereotypes and prejudice: Their automatic and controlled components. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 56, 5-18.
- Greenwald, A. G., & Banaji, M. R. (1995). Implicit social cognition: Attitudes, self-esteem, and stereotypes. *Psychological Review*, 102, 4-27.

**Target articles**

- Chen, M., & Bargh, J. A. (1997). Nonconscious behavioral confirmation processes: The self-fulfilling consequences of automatic stereotype activation. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 33, 541-560.
- MacCrae, C. N., Bodenhausen, G. V., Milne, A. B., & Jetten, J. (1994). Out of mind but back in sight: Stereotypes on the rebound. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 67, 808-817.

**March 25: Stereotypes and prejudice**

**Background reading**

Kunda, Ch. 8

- Fiske, S. T. (1998). Stereotyping, prejudice, and discrimination. In D. T. Gilbert, S. T. Fiske, & G. Lindzey (Eds.), *Handbook of social psychology* (4<sup>th</sup> edition, Volume II, pp. 357-414). Boston, MA: McGraw-Hill.
- Steele, C. M. (1997). A threat in the air: How stereotypes shape intellectual identity and performance. *American Psychologist*, 52, 613-629.

**Target articles**

- Brewer, M. B., Dull, V., & Lui, L. (1981). Perceptions of the elderly: Stereotypes as prototypes. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 41, 656-670.
- Fein, S., & Spencer, S. J. (1997). Prejudice as self-image maintenance: Affirming the self through derogating others. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 73, 31-44.

**March 27: PAPER 2 DUE**

**April 1: Perception of nonverbal and emotional content**

***Background reading***

- Zebrowitz, L. A. (1990). *Social perception*. Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks/Cole. (Chapter 4, Perceiving emotions).
- DePaulo, B. M., & Friedman, H. S. (1998). Nonverbal communication. In D. T. Gilbert, S. T. Fiske, & G. Lindzey (Eds.), *Handbook of social psychology* (4<sup>th</sup> edition, Volume II, pp. 3-40). Boston, MA: McGraw-Hill.
- DePaulo, B. M., Stone, J. I., & Lassiter, G. D. (1985). Deceiving and detecting deceit. In B. R. Schlenker (Ed.), *The self and social life* (pp. 323-370). New York: McGraw-Hill.

***Target articles***

- Fleming, J. H., Darley, J. D., Hilton, J. L., & Kojetin, B. A. (1990). Multiple audience problem: A strategic communication perspective on social perception. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 58, 593-609.
- Ambady, N., & Rosenthal, R. (1992). Thin slices of expressive behavior as predictors of interpersonal consequences: A meta-analysis. *Psychological Bulletin*, 111, 256-274.

**April 7: CRITIQUES OF PAPER 2 DUE**

**April 8: Applications, reflections, and new directions**

***Background reading***

- Abelson, R. P. (1994). A personal perspective on social cognition. In P. G. Devine, D. L. Hamilton, & T. M. Ostrom (Eds.), *Social cognition: Impact on social psychology* (pp. 15-37).
- Operario, D., & Fiske, S. T. (1999). Integrating social identity and social cognition: A framework for bridging diverse perspectives. In D. Abrams & M. A. Hogg (Eds.), *Social identity and social cognition* (pp. 26-54). Malden, MA: Blackwell.
- Conner, M., & Norman, P. (1995). The role of social cognition in health behaviors. In M. Conner & P. Norman (Eds.), *Predicting health behavior: Research and practice with social cognition models* (pp. 1-22). Philadelphia, PA: Open University Press.

***Target articles***

- Fiske, S. T., & Goodwin, S. A. (1996). Social cognition research and small group research, a *West Side Story* or. . .? In J. L. Nye & A. M. Brower (Eds.), *What's social about social cognition?* (pp. xiii-xxxiii). London: Sage Publications.
- Ochsner, K. N., & Lieberman, M. D. (2001). The emergence of social cognitive neuroscience. *American Psychologist*, 56, 717-734.

**April 15: Paper presentations I**

**April 22: Paper presentations II**

**April 26: FINAL PAPER REVISION DUE**