

**Perception & Cognition in Social Life**  
**Psychology XXXX - Spring 2024**

Time: TBD; Location: TBD

**Instructor:** Prof. Meghan Meyer  
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**Office Hours:** TBD

**Teaching Assistants:** TBD

**Course Overview:** This course focuses on perception and cognition in social life. We start by addressing the core social motivations we experience in everyday life (e.g., our desire to feel like we belong to a group). Next, we examine how these motivations shape our basic sensory experiences—for example why we can't help but anthropomorphize inanimate objects or enjoy holding hands with our partner. We then examine the mental strategies we use to meet our social needs, such as how we figure out other people's thoughts and feelings, as well as our own. Finally, we wrap up by examining how these motivations, perceptions, and cognitions play out not just within one mind – but also between minds in everyday social interaction. This course will not only teach you the fundamental science behind the social mind. It will also let you see your own social life through a whole new lens.

**Course Learning Goals and Outcomes:**

- Learn the fundamentals of how the mind works in social life
- Hone critical thinking skills by learning how scientists test their hypotheses about the social mind

**Prerequisites:** Science of Psychology (UN1001) or Mind, Brain, & Behavior (UN1010).

**Role in the Curriculum:**

This is an undergraduate, intermediate-level lecture course, open to undergraduates and students in the post-baccalaureate Psychology program. It can be used to fulfill the following requirements:

- For the psychology major or concentration in the College and in the School of General Studies, for the psychology minor in Engineering, and for the psychology postbac certificate, this course will fulfill the Group 1 Perception and Cognition distribution requirement.
- For the Neuroscience & Behavior major, this course can be used toward the P4 Additional 2000-level lecture course.
- For other undergraduate students, this course will fulfill one term of the social science requirement of the School of General Studies.

**Important Dates:**

- Exam 1
- Exam 2
- TA email approval for Research Critique paper due: Mon, April 1
- Research Critique Paper due: Mon, April 22 28
- Exam 3: Date TBD

## Assignments:

### Exams

There are three, non-cumulative exams total. Exam questions will be based on material presented and/or discussed in class, material from the reading assignments that are included in the lectures and will require you to go beyond memorization and apply, analyze, and synthesize information. The exams will consist of multiple-choice questions and a few short-answer questions.

If you know that you will be missing an exam for a university-approved reason (e.g., religious observation, athletic competition, etc.), it is your responsibility to bring this to our attention as early as possible, and at the very latest at least one week before the scheduled exam date. Make-up exams are not given except for university-approved reasons or emergency situations that can be verified.

### Research Critique Paper

The objective of the research critique paper is for you to gain practice (1) reading scientific research articles, (2) thinking critically and independently about psychology research and (3) communicating your ideas effectively. For this short paper assignment, you will select a target primary research article of your choice. You will be designated a TA for this assignment, and **it is required that you receive email approval from your TA to use the target article by the date listed in Important Dates above to ensure your article is appropriate.**

We will cover in class how to find your article. The paper will begin with a brief summary of the article and then provide a critique of the research (positive and negative points are both acceptable). Papers should connect the work to concepts and related studies covered in class. The papers can also describe creative ways to improve or expand on the primary research and/or future studies that could specifically remedy issues you've identified with the primary research. The paper should be no longer than 4-5 pages double-spaced. The usual formatting: 1" margins with Times New Roman, Arial, or Helvetica 11-12 pt. font. Late papers will be penalized by a full letter grade per each day overdue.

### Class Participation

Although this is a lecture class, I invite and encourage you to ask and answer questions as they arise. During class, at times we will break out into small groups to respond to discussion prompts. The responses to the discussion questions should be recorded on the Discussion Boards on Canvas (only 1 response per group will be necessary). Some days you may be asked to submit an individual reflection of a discussion held during class. In those cases, you will be expected to write your reflection on your own. Instructions for such assignments will be clearly specified.

### **Grading:**

3 Exams: each 25% of grade  
Research Critique Paper: 20%  
Class participation 5%

Grading is as follows: A = 94-100; A- = 90-93; B+ = 87-89.9; B: 83-86.9; B-: 80-82.9; C+: 77- 79.9; C: 73-76.9; C-: 70-72.9; D: 60-69.9, E: 0-59.9. Grades will not be rounded up; for example, a 93.9 is an A-.

**Lectures:** Lectures slides will be posted on Canvas the day before each class.

**Readings:** The readings for this class include 1) a mix of chapters from social cognition textbooks, 2) chapters from books written for the public by social cognition researchers, and 3) scientific publications in academic journals. This range of readings is designed to 1) give you breadth and depth into this area of psychology, 2) show you the multiple formats academics write in and 3) keep the readings fun and engaging. Information covered in the

readings will appear on exams only if they were also covered in lectures. All readings will be posted on canvas—you do not need to purchase anything.

**Attendance:** Please do your best to attend class and arrive on time. A key factor in student success is class attendance, which is not easily replaced by copying someone else's notes. Lecture slides will be posted, but these outlines are brief, and are not meant to substitute for participation. Students are responsible for all material, including changes to the syllabus presented in class or noted on Canvas.

**Diversity & Inclusion:** My aim is to foster a learning environment that supports a diversity of perspectives and experiences and honors your identities. Please reach out to me with any concerns or suggestions you may have to better address your learning needs and to improve the effectiveness of this course. I look forward to working together to create a classroom community built on mutual respect and inclusivity.

**Accommodations:** Students who may require accommodations should make an appointment to see me as soon as possible, at least by the end of the second week of class. If you have not already done so, stop by the Office of Disability Services (ODS) on the 7th floor of Lerner Hall to register for support services. ODS often requires two weeks to process an application, so please contact them as soon as you can, preferably before the course begins.

**Academic Integrity:** The University now requires that syllabi include discussion of the importance of academic integrity in your studies at Columbia:

The intellectual venture in which we are all engaged requires of faculty and students alike the highest level of personal and academic integrity. As members of an academic community, each one of us bears the responsibility to participate in scholarly discourse and research in a manner characterized by intellectual honesty and scholarly integrity. In practical terms, this means that, as students:

- You must be responsible for the full citations of others' ideas in all of your research papers and projects
- You must be scrupulously honest when taking your examinations
- You must always submit your own work and not that of another student, scholar, or internet agent.

From the Faculty Statement on Academic Integrity ([www.college.columbia.edu/academics/integrity-statement](http://www.college.columbia.edu/academics/integrity-statement)):

- Students are expected to do their own work on all tests and assignments for this class and act in accordance with the Faculty Statement on Academic Integrity and Honor Code established by the students of Columbia College and the School of General Studies.
- Because any academic integrity violation undermines our intellectual community, students found to have cheated, plagiarized, or committed any other act of academic dishonesty can expect to receive a zero for the work in question and may fail the class.
- Students will also be referred to the Dean's Disciplinary Process (see: [www.college.columbia.edu/academics/disciplinaryprocess](http://www.college.columbia.edu/academics/disciplinaryprocess)).

It is students' responsibility to ensure their work maintains expected standards. Should you have any questions or concerns regarding these expectations, please:

- Talk with the instructor
- Refer to the Columbia University Undergraduate Guide to Academic Integrity: [www.college.columbia.edu/academics/academicintegrity](http://www.college.columbia.edu/academics/academicintegrity)

## Class Schedule

Date	Topic
W 1/17	Why are humans so social and why does it matter?
M 1/22	Motivation: Core social motivations in everyday life
W 1/24	Motivation: Shared Reality
M 1/29	Motivation: Social pleasures
W 1/31	Motivation: Social pleasures
M 2/5	Motivation: Social pains
W 2/7	Motivation: Social pains
M 2/12	Exam 1
W 2/14	Perception: Subjective Construal & Naïve Realism
M 2/19	Perception: Mind Bias in Visual Perception
W 2/21	Perception: Mind Bias in Visual Perception
M 2/26	Perception: Affiliative Touch
W 2/28	Perception: Affiliative Touch
M 3/4	Perception: Smell, Taste, & Sound in Social Life
W 3/6	Perception: Smell, Taste, & Sound in Social Life
M 3/11	The Perception-Morality Link
W 3/13	Exam 2
	Spring Break!
M 3/25	Cognition: Reasoning about others' minds
W 3/27	Cognition: Reasoning about others' minds
M 4/1	Cognition: Reasoning about others' minds
W 4/3	Cognition: Reasoning about your own mind
M 4/8	Cognition: Reasoning about your own mind
W 4/10	Interacting Minds: Social Influence
M 4/15	Interacting Minds: Synchrony
W 4/17	Interacting Minds: Collective Memory
M 4/22	Interacting Minds: Collective Memory
W 4/24	Interacting Minds: Social Networks
M 4/29	Interacting Minds: Social Networks
4/3-5/2	University Study Days
5/3-5/10	Exam Week: Final Exam Time TBD

## Readings

### I. Motivation

1. Social Motivations in everyday life  
Fiske, S. (2018). Adaptive motives for social situations. Chapter 1 from *Social Beings: Core motives in social psychology*.
2. Shared Reality  
Higgins, T. (2019). Sharing is believing. Chapter 1 from *Shared Reality: What makes us strong and tears us apart*.
3. Social Pains & Pleasures  
Eisenberger, N.I. (2016). Social pain and social pleasure: Two overlooked but fundamental mammalian emotions? In: L.F. Barret, M Lewis, J. Haviland-Jones (Eds.), *The Handbook of Emotions*. New York, NY: Guilford Press, pp. 440-452.
4. Social Pains & Pleasures  
Lieberman, M. (2013). Fairness tastes like chocolate. Chapter 4 from *Social: Why our brains are wired to connect*

### II. Perception

5. Mind Bias in Visual Perception  
Epley, N. How we anthropomorphize. Chapter 4 from *Mindwise: Why We Misunderstand What Others Think, Believe, Feel, and Want*
6. Affiliative Touch  
Burlinson, M. H., & Davis, M. C. (2013). Social Touch and Resilience. Chapter 10 in *The resilience handbook: Approaches to stress and trauma*, 131.
7. Smell, Taste, & Sound in Social Life  
Ravreby, I., Snitz, K., & Sobel, N. (2022). There is chemistry in social chemistry. *Science Advances*, 8(25), eabn0154.
8. The Perception-Morality Link  
Wheatley, T., & Haidt, J. (2005). Hypnotic disgust makes moral judgments more severe. *Psychological science*, 16(10), 780-784.

### III. Social Cognition

9. Reasoning about others' minds  
Fiske, S. (2018). Making Sense of Others. Chapter 4 from *Social Beings: Core motives in social psychology*.  
  
Lieberman, M. (2013). Mental Magic Tricks. Chapter 5 from *Social: Why our brains are wired to connect*.
10. Reasoning about our own minds  
Fiske, S. (2018). The Self. Chapter 5 from *Social Beings: Core motives in social psychology*.

#### IV. Interacting Minds

##### 11. Social Influence

Fiske, S. (2018). Attitudes & Persuasion: Changing Hearts & Minds  
Chapter 6 from *Social Beings: Core motives in social psychology*.

##### 12. Synchrony

Gallotti, M., and Frith, C.D. (2013). Social cognition in the we-mode. *Trends in Cognitive Sciences*, 17, 160-165.

Launay J., Tarr B., Dunbar RIM. (2016). Synchrony as an adaptive mechanism for large-scale human social bonding. *Ethology*, 122, 779–789

##### 13. Collective Memory

Coman, A. (2022). Towards a dynamical - in the field - approach to collective memory. In *“National memory in a time of populism”* (Eds. Roediger & Wertsch). Oxford University Press.

##### 14. Social Networks

Basyouni, R. & Parkinson, C. (2022). Mapping the social landscape: Tracking patterns of interpersonal relationships. *Trends in Cognitive Sciences*, 26(2), 204–221

Dunbar, R.I.M. (2017). The anatomy of friendship. *Trends in Cognitive Sciences*, 22, 32-51.