The way in which we think about our social worlds plays a major role in social behavior. We are constantly making judgments about ourselves and other people. We want to know the reasons why people do things, we want to know what other people are like, we want to know what we are like. Thus, Social Cognition is the study of how people make sense of others and themselves. It is the study of how people think about people and the effect this has on social behavior.

Essentially, Social Cognition is the study of the role that cognitive processes play in social behavior. Much social cognition research is based on the application of current work in cognitive psychology on perception, memory and inference, to the understanding of how people think about their social world.

The study of social cognition includes such topics as the following:

--- How do we explain our own and others' behavior? That is, how do we arrive at the causes and reasons of our own and other's behavior? What are the social theories that seem to underlie these explanations? What role do our explanations of our own and other's behavior play in such things as academic achievement, the development of depression, and the maintenance and breakup of interpersonal relations.

--- How do we develop and maintain our self-concepts of the kind of people we are? What role do our self-concepts play in guiding our interpretations of the world and other people?

--- How do we make judgments about the characteristics of ourselves and other people? For instance, how do we decide that Joe is friendly while Jane is hostile?

--- What are stereotypes? How do they affect our impressions and judgments of other people? How are they learned and how might they be changed?

--- What role do unconscious cognitive processes play in such things as impression formation, stereotyping, and attitudes?

--- Why do we do such a poor job of predicting how future events will make us feel? And what impact does this have on the decisions we make?

--- How do we figure out what other people are thinking and feeling? How do we know that our partner is feeling angry, sad, or joyful? What information do we use and how do we use it?

--- Why do we remember what we do about others and ourselves? How does social memory work?

--- What is the relationship between thinking and feeling? How are cognitive processes related to emotion?

--- What role do cognitive processes play in social interaction? How do our impressions of others guide our behavior in close relationships and other kinds of social interaction?

--- What role do our self-concepts and our various goals and motives play in guiding our behavior?
Required Readings:

**Text**

**Journal articles**
Every week I will assign several journal articles, in addition to the chapters from Fiske and Taylor. These can be downloaded from the class Blackboard site.

Course Requirements

**Class participation.** The class is small enough that there will be considerable discussion of the readings, in addition to lectures from me. Active participation in the class will count towards your grade (and lack of participation will subtract from it). Among the things I hope we can discuss are: (1) implications of the theories and finding for a variety of real world phenomena, (2) adequacy of the theories we will cover for understanding human social behavior, and (3) strengths and problems with the studies we will read about.

**Tests.** There will be a midterm and a final. These will be essay and short answer.

**Paper.** A 10 page, double spaced paper will be due by **Wednesday December 8 at 5PM**. The paper should be on some aspect of social cognition. You should consult with me before deciding on a topic.

**Examples portfolio.** Each student should collect examples of real-life illustrations of phenomena learned about in the course. You may choose examples from TV, newspapers, the Internet, or from your everyday interactions with others. In each case be sure to briefly define the phenomenon and explain exactly how your example maps onto it (*do not exceed one typed double spaced page for each example*).

Collection of examples should be an ongoing activity – **do not wait until the due date.**

Your portfolio should include 8 examples, each illustrating a different phenomena. Up to 4 of these may be based on everyday incidents from your own social life. **At least 4 must be based on examples you have come across in the media, and must be accompanied by copies of newspaper, magazine, or Internet articles. Examples found on the World Wide Web must include a copy of the article and the address of the web site. Examples coming from a movie or TV show must include a full citation of the source. The portfolio is to be handed in, in two parts. The first part will be the first three examples, due **September 22**, in class. The remainder of the portfolio is to be handed in on **November 22**, in class.**

**Extra Credit.** There will be opportunities for earning extra credit by participating in psychology experiments. Details will be provided in class. If you do not wish to participate in experiments then we can discuss alternative ways to earn extra credit.

**Readings.** The reading assignments are listed below.

**Grading**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Percentage of Grade</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Class participation</td>
<td>10% of the grade</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Midterm</td>
<td>20% of the grade</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final</td>
<td>25% of the grade</td>
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<tr>
<td>Paper</td>
<td>25% of the grade</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Examples portfolio</td>
<td>20% of the grade</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Late Penalty**

For both the final paper and the examples portfolio, I will subtract 5% of the points
for that assignment for each day late.

Blackboard

I will use the University’s Blackboard system to post grades, to post weekly readings, and to post copies of any assignments or announcements that I hand out in class. I will also use your email address in the University system to send out last minute messages, if necessary. Note that Blackboard relies on your University email account. You need that account to log in and email will be sent to that address.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY STANDARDS

The rules governing dishonesty in the current University of Southern California Faculty Handbook and also listed in the 2009-2010 SCAMPUS (online), under University Governance, will be maintained and enforced. Information about academic integrity violations and recommended penalties can be found in SCAMPUS.

The minimum penalty for cheating on an exam will be a score of zero on that exam. Particularly gross academic dishonesty on an exam, such as obtaining a copy of the exam beforehand, will result in an F for the course and may result in suspension or expulsion from the University. Cheating on a homework assignment will result in a zero on that assignment and repeated cheating on homework assignments will result in an F for the course.

Plagiarism on any of the class papers will result in a zero for the paper. Particularly gross academic dishonesty, such as turning in a paper done by another (such as a purchased paper) will result in an F for the course. According to the University guidelines plagiarism is defined as: (a) The submission of material authored by another person but represented as the student’s work, (b) the submission of material subjected to editorial revision by another person that results in substantive changes in content or major alteration of writing style, (c) the improper acknowledgement of sources in essays or papers. If you use the words or ideas of another you must properly acknowledge the source. If you use a direct quote then you must indicate the source and page number, using APA style. Even if you paraphrase someone’s ideas you must still acknowledge the source, using APA style.

You should also be aware that it is considered academic dishonesty to use a paper or project in more than one course without both instructor’s permission. The recommended penalty for this is an F in the course.

This description is not intended to be exhaustive. You are expected to be familiar with the relevant parts of the student conduct code.

Students with Disabilities

Students requesting academic accommodations based on a disability are required to register with Disability Services and Programs (DSP) each semester. A letter of verification for approved accommodations can be obtained from DSP when adequate documentation is filed. Please be sure the letter is delivered to me as early in the semester as possible. DSP is open Monday-Friday, 8:30-5:00. The office is in Student Union 301 and their phone number is (213) 740-0776.
**Topics and Readings**

**Week 1:**
**Introduction: What is Social Cognition?**  
8/23, 8/25  
*Readings:* Chapter 1: Introduction in Fiske and Taylor

**Week 2:**
**Basic Concepts in Social Cognition: Dual Modes in Social Cognition**  
8/30, 9/1  
*Readings:* Fiske and Taylor: Chap. 2. Dual modes in social cognition


**Week 3:**
**Basic Concepts in Social Cognition: Attention and Encoding**  
9/6, 9/8  
*Readings:* Fiske & Taylor: Chap. 3. Attention and Encoding


**Week 4:**
**Basic Concepts in Social Cognition: Representation in Memory**  
9/13, 9/15  
*Readings:* Fiske & Taylor: Chap. 4: Representation in Memory


**Week 5:**
**Self in Social Cognition**  
9/20, 9/22  
*Readings:* Fiske & Taylor, Chap. 5: Self in Social Cognition


**Week 6: Attribution Processes**  
9/27, 9/29  

**Readings:** Fiske & Taylor. Chap. 6: Attribution Processes


**Week 7: Heuristics and Shortcuts**  
10/4, 10/6  

**Readings:** Fiske & Taylor, Chap. 7: Heuristics and Shortcuts: Efficiency in Inference and decision making.


**Week 8: Accuracy and Efficiency in Social Inference**  
10/11, 10/13  

**Readings:** Fiske & Taylor: Chap. 8. Accuracy and Efficiency in Social Inference


**Week 9:**  
Tuesday: Review  
10/18, 10/20  
Thursday: MIDTERM

**Week 10: Cognitive Structures of Attitudes**  
10/25, 10/27  

**Readings:** Fiske & Taylor, Chap. 9. Cognitive Structures of Attitudes


**Week 11:**
11/1, 11/3

**Cognitive Processing of Attitudes**

**Readings:** Fiske & Taylor, Chap. 10. Cognitive Processing of Attitudes


**Week 12:**
11/8, 11/10

**Stereotyping: Cognition and Bias**

**Readings:** Fiske & Taylor, Chap. 11. Stereotyping: Cognition and Bias


**Week 13:**
11/15, 11/17

**Prejudice: Interplay of Cognitive with Affective Biases**


**Week 14:**
11/22, 11/24

**Interplay of Social Cognition and Affect**

**Readings:** Fiske & Taylor, Chap. 13. From Social Cognition to Affect


want. *Current Directions in Psychological Science, 14*(3) 131-134.

**Week 15: Behavior and Cognition**
11/29,12/1

*Readings:* Fiske & Taylor, Chap. 15. Behavior and Cognition


**PAPER DUE:** Wednesday December 8, 5:00PM.
**FINAL EXAM:** Monday, December 13, 8-10AM