EVALUATIONS IN SOCIAL INTERACTION  
(Tuesday, 1-4 p.m., Tarbutton Hall 206)

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Office:  Tarbutton Hall, Room 227  
Hours:  Tu 10:30-12:30 a.m.; by appointment  
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**Course Objectives**

How do people evaluate the dynamics of social interaction? Components of those dynamics include the perceivers themselves as well as other people. To assess an interaction requires consideration of what people – consciously or not – think and how they feel. Moreover, the multifaceted evaluation process reflects the interdependence of actors and their behaviors. In this course, we will examine fundamental processes that provide a basis for the evaluations that individuals make in the context of social interaction.

We begin by focusing on social cognition and ask, “What are the ways in which individuals process, organize, structure, and retrieve information in order to make sense out of themselves, other people, and situations?” We examine how underlying objective, subjective, and comparison processes drive automatic and controlled categorization processes to give rise to social cognitions. In addition to perceptions about people and contexts, individuals also respond to them emotionally. The second part of the course asks “What contributes to stimulating emotional experiences and shaping emotional expressions?” We discuss debates regarding the roles of biology and cognitions in creating and controlling emotions. We draw largely from theoretical approaches in Sociology pertaining to the construction of emotions and their consequences for interaction.

Finally, we bring together our analysis of social cognitions and emotions by focusing on their role in fairness evaluations. In this third part of the class, we presume that “Justice is in the eye of beholder” and thus relies upon people making sense out of a situation. Generally, we focus on the question, “How do people perceive and respond to injustice?” In doing so, we consider the antecedents and consequences of distributive, procedural, and interactional injustice.

Germane to all sections of the course are the implications of these evaluations for interaction. Students should acquire an understanding of the central issues and debates in these sub-fields of social psychology. In addition, the course should prepare students to formulate their own critical assessments of areas and the potential for links between them.

**Course Readings**

Course Requirements

You are, of course, expected to attend class regularly, to complete all assigned readings before class, and to participate actively in class discussions. If you should foresee missing a class session due to illness, please notify me so that we do not delay the start of class waiting for you. Missing more than two class sessions may jeopardize your grade for the class. In addition to participation, your course grade will be based on the following: (parenthetical expressions indicate percent of your total grade).

1. Reading Memos

For each weekly topic, class members will offer reviews of the readings. Typically, two or three class members will write and circulate reviews, which will be used as a basis of discussion. The nature of the review will vary, depending upon the type of reading; a chapter from Social Cognition may be less amenable to the criteria noted below. A memo on an article consists of a summary of the piece, identification of its strengths and weaknesses (including critical comments), statement of how a reading fits with others, and identification of new questions stemming from the article. Class members will choose or I will assign readings to review within each section of the course. Students should write up their critiques in no more than two double-spaced, type-written pages (per article) and circulate them to other class members 24 hours before the class session. (Depending on the topic and the reading to be covered, students will meet with me to discuss how we will coordinate our roles in class.) We will make sure that students do about the same number of critiques in the course of the semester. These will be graded satisfactory/unsatisfactory. The memo is based on thoroughness and thoughtfulness. Students will have to re-write any review on which they receive an unsatisfactory. (15%)

At the beginning of class sessions, each student will offer a question raised by the set of readings (which may coincide with the reading critiques offered by others). These questions will be addressed during the class discussion at appropriate times.

2. Essays

In order to provide students with the opportunity for expressing their individual analyses of various issues discussed, the course includes three essay exams. Students will complete one exam on a topic other than the topic addressed in their papers. Each exam requires students to respond to one of two essay questions, which are much like questions that appear on preliminary examinations. I will hand out an exam at the conclusion of each section of the course. Responses may be no more than 10 pages in length and will be due about two weeks later. (25%)

3. Research Paper and ALTERNATIVE

Because individuals take courses for different reasons, the intent of the research paper is to allow you to study in detail a topic that is specific to your own purpose. (You may “piggy-back” this paper on an assignment for another class as long as the content of the paper reflects the content of this class in some way. You must discuss this with me prior to submitting your paper proposal.) Thus the research paper may take one of the following forms:
(A) a position paper presenting a cogent argument regarding a theoretical or empirical issue on a topic relevant to evaluations in social interaction;
(B) a research proposal that includes a review of relevant literature, hypotheses, and tentative research methods; or
(C) report of your own empirical research, completing the research proposed for another class (this option would include a literature review and theoretical statement in addition to empirical results);
(D) an analytical synthesis of topics stemming from two different parts of the course.

To facilitate development of the research paper, a one-page prospectus is due February 15. Preliminary drafts should be completed one week prior to the class discussions (i.e., April 12). We will discuss papers on April 19. Final papers are due no later than Tuesday, May 3, in my box by 5 p.m. (50%)

ALTERNATIVE: Because students take this course for various reasons and at various points in their graduate careers, sometimes it does not make sense to devote effort to the development of a research paper that will be solely an exercise and never used for other scholarly purposes. Thus, as an alternative to the research paper, students may opt to take all three essay exams (one for each topic).

4. Paper Critiques

Seminar members will read and critique papers of at least two of their classmates. Authors are responsible for copying papers and distributing them to class members approximately one week before discussion dates. Readers will take the role of "journal reviewer" in examining the papers. Each review (approximately one type-written page) should critique the author's argument and identify other inadequacies as well as offer constructive suggestions for revisions. Readers should provide copies of their reviews to all class members. The critiques will form the basis for the paper discussions; authors will have the opportunity to address the criticisms of classmates and use the reviews as a basis for revising their papers. (5%/5%)

Course Outline

I. Introduction                                               (18 January)
II. Social Cognition
     A. What drives categorization and other mental representations? (25 January)

     SC: Chapter 1, Introduction
         Chapter 2, Dual Modes in Social Cognition
         Chapter 3, Attention and Encoding (pp. 51-70)
         Chapter 4, Representation in Memory (pp. 90-102)

B. How do heuristics and comparisons shape perceptions? (1 February)

SC: Chapter 7, Heuristics and Shortcuts


C. How do people assess the causes of others’ behaviors? How do such assessments affect subsequent behavior? (8 February)

SC: Chapter 6, Attribution
Chapter 11, Stereotyping
Chapter 15, Behavior and Cognition (pp. 361-76, pp. 387-96)


III. Emotions

A. What are emotions? (15 February)


SC: Chapter 13, From Social Cognition to Affect (pp. 310-22, skim rest)


B. How do emotional experiences emerge? (22 February)

*SC*: pp. 148-49 (description of Schachter and Singer 1962)


C. How are emotions managed? (1 March)


Wingfield, Adia Harvey 2010. “Are Some Emotions Marked 'Whites Only'?: Racialized Feeling Rules in Professional Workplaces.” *Social Problems*


SPRING BREAK!! (8 March)

D. How does group structure and the context affect emotions? (15 March)


IV. Justice Processes

A. What is justice? (22 March)


B. How do people perceive injustice? (29 March)


C. How do people respond to injustice? (5 April)


D. How do justice processes play out in interaction?  (12 April)


Student Paper Discussions  (19 April)