

**SOFIA UNIVERSITY ST. KLIMENT OHRIDSKI
DEPARTMENT OF GENERAL, EXPERIMENTAL, AND
DEVELOPMENTAL PSYCHOLOGY
CONTINUING EDUCATION COURSES**

ASSOC. PROF. LUDMILLA ANDREEVA, PH.D.

**PSYCHOLOGY OF
SOCIAL
COGNITION**

**A distance-learning
course**

Duration: 13 weeks

One of the defining features that sets human beings apart from other animals is not only our ability to think, but also our ability to be aware of what we are thinking. A second feature, although shared with some other animal species, is our sociability and the central importance we place on relationships with other people. These features are at the heart of social cognition: the manner in which we interpret, analyze and remember information about the social world. The course will present the three cognitive processes that we apply to our social world: (1) information we receive about other people (and ourselves, for that matter) is interpreted, i.e. the information is given meaning often by both the social context and our previous experience, cultural values, etc. (2) social information is analyzed, i.e. the initial interpretation may be adjusted, changed or even rejected; (3) social information is stored in memory from which it may be recalled or retrieved. Recalling information from memory may require considerable effort; effort that we may not always be willing to make. As “social world” refers both to other people and ourselves, theories and research presented in this course are equally about other people, ourselves, and about ourselves in interaction with other people





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1. INTRODUCTION TO SOCIAL COGNITION

What is social cognition? Social cognition and social psychology. Social cognition and cognitive psychology. Historical perspective. Three principles of social cognition. People as cognitive misers. Spontaneous and deliberative thought. Self-esteem.

2. SELF-PERCEPTION AND SELF-CONCEPT

Personal factors which influence the self-concept. Focusing on self-awareness. Gender differences in self-definition. Social factors which influence the self-concept. Ways to maintain a positive self-concept. The downside of overly positive self-views. Ways people present themselves to others. The positive and the negative sides of self-presentation. Culture influences on self-perception and self-presentation. Ineffective self-presentation and spoiled identities (Embarrassment and saving face; Cooling-out and identity degradation; Stigma).

3. CHOICES AND ACTIONS: THE SELF IN CONTROL

What people do and what it means. Freedom of action. Goals, plans, intentions. Self-regulation. Irrationality and self-destruction. Money and decision-making. Gender, sex, and decisions. Delay of gratification. Putting the cultural animal in perspective.

4. SOCIAL PERCEPTION

Thinking about why other people do what they do. Types of errors in thinking about other people. Errors when thinking about other people. Forming impressions of people based on nonverbal behavior. Culture influences on social perception.

5. ERRORS AND BIASES

Confirmation Bias. Conjunction Fallacy. Illusory Correlation. Base Rate Fallacy. Gambler's Fallacy and the Hot Hand. False Consensus Effect. False Uniqueness Effect. Statistical Regression. Illusion of Control. Magical Thinking. Counterfactual Thinking. Are people really idiots? How Serious Are the Errors? Reducing Cognitive Errors.

6. SOCIAL SCHEMES AND IMPRESSION FORMATION

Schemas (Types of schemas; Schematic processing). Person schemas and group stereotypes (Person schemas; Group stereotypes). Impression formation (Trait centrality; First impressions; Impressions as self-fulfilling prophecies; Heuristics).

7. SOCIAL IDENTITIES AND IMPRESSION MANAGEMENT

The self we know (Role identities; Social identities; Research on self-concept formation; the situated self). The self we enact (Identities and behavior; Choosing an identity to enact; Identities as sources of consistency; self-awareness and self-discrepancies). Self-esteem (Assessment of self-esteem; Sources of self-esteem; Self-esteem and behavior; protecting self-esteem). Tactical impression management (Managing appearances; Ingratiation; aligning actions; altercasting; Impression management online). Detecting deceptive impression management (Ulterior motives; Nonverbal cues of deception).

8. CONTRIBUTION THEORY

Theories of attribution. Individual differences. Cultural differences. Dispositional versus situational attributions. Inferring dispositions from acts. Covariation model of attribution. Attributions for



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success and failure. Bias and error in attribution. Overattribution to Dispositions. Focus-of-attention bias. Actor–observer difference. Motivational biases.

9. PREJUDICE AND DISCRIMINATION

A social problem. Racism and sexism: old and new. The role of stereotype (The stereotype rebound effect; Stereotypes and expectations). Realistic group conflict (Sherif's "robber's cave" experiment). Group membership (The minimal group paradigm; Social identity theory; Self-categorization theory; Out-group homogeneity). Relative deprivation theory. Individual approaches (The authoritarian personality. Frustration and aggression). Is stereotyping inevitable? Reducing prejudice and discrimination (Setting superordinate goals; the contact hypothesis; re-categorization).

10. DEVIANT BEHAVIOR AND SOCIAL REACTION

The violation of norms (Norms; Anomie theory; Control theory; Differential association theory; Routine activities perspective). Reactions to norm violations (Reactions to rule breaking; Determinants of the reaction; Consequences of labeling). Labeling and secondary deviance (Societal reaction; Secondary deviance). Formal social controls (Formal labeling and the creation of deviance; Long-term effects of formal labeling).

11. SOCIAL INFLUENCE AND PERSUASION

Two types of social influence. Techniques of social influence. Persuasion. Resisting persuasion.

12. EMOTION AND AFFECT

What is emotion? Emotional arousal. Some important emotions. Why do we have emotions? Group differences in emotion. Arousal, attention, and performance. Emotional intelligence (EQ). Affect regulation.

13. CLOSE RELATIONSHIPS: PASSION, INTIMACY, AND SEXUALITY

What is love? Different types of relationships. Maintaining relationships. Sexuality

References

- Pennington, D. C. (2000). *Social Cognition* (Routledge modular psychology). London: Routledge.
- Moskowitz, G. B. (2005). *Social cognition: understanding self and others*. New York: The Guilford Press.
- Brewer, M. & Hewstone, M. (Eds.). (2004). *Social cognition*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Ltd.
- DeLamater, J. D. & Myers, D. J. (2011). *Social Psychology* (7th ed.). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Cengage Learning.
- Baumeister, R.F. & Bushman, B. J. (2011). *Social Psychology and Human Nature* (2nd ed.). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Cengage Learning.



Standards of Academic Integrity

Generally, academic fraud and dishonesty include, but are not limited to the following categories: cheating, fabrication, plagiarism, multiple submissions, etc.

• **Cheating:** Using unauthorized notes, aids or information on an examination; altering a graded work prior to its return to a faculty member, allowing another person to do one's own work and submitting it for grading.

• **Fabrication:** Inventing or falsifying information, data or citation; presenting data gathered outside of acceptable professorial guidelines; failing to provide an accurate account of how information, data or citations were gathered; altering documents affecting academic records; forging signatures or authorizing false information on an official academic document, grade, letter, form or any other university document.

• **Plagiarism:** Submitting material that in part or whole is not one's own work; submitting one's own work without properly attributing the correct sources of its content.

• **Multiple Submissions:** Submitting identical papers or course work for credit in more than one course without prior permission of the instructor.

A breach of ethics or act of dishonesty can result in:

• failure of an entire course (blatant plagiarism, cheating on a test or quiz)

• academic suspension or expulsion from the university.

APPLICATIONS:

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