

Current Issues in Social Cognition

USC, Fall 2014 -- Mon, 2-6pm, SGM 807

20143-psyc-612-52742

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Draft syllabus; details pending

Topics and readings will be posted on Blackboard as we move along

What is this class about?

This is an advanced class on current issues in social cognition research. Each topic domain will begin with an overview of the current state of the art, usually based on handbook chapter readings, followed by a discussion of current open issues. The topics highlight the context sensitivity of human judgment by focusing on the situated, embodied, and experiential nature of human cognition. Bringing insight into basic psychological processes to bear on real world issues, we will discuss their implications for consumer behavior and political judgment (including issues that arise in the campaign of the 2014 midterm elections) and will develop relevant research ideas.

Topics

I am listing core themes and introductory overview readings.

A. Mental construal: Information accessibility and use

This section addresses how we construct mental representations of targets and of standards against which the targets are evaluated. This includes familiar keywords like priming, framing, and assimilation and contrast effects. We will also address the recent controversy about the replicability of priming effects.

For an introduction to these themes see:

Schwarz, N. (2009). Mental construal in social judgment. In F. Strack & J. Förster (eds.), *Social cognition: The basis of human interaction* (pp. 121-138). Philadelphia: Psychology Press.

B. Metaphors and embodiment

Sensory experience plays a major role in how we represent and think about abstract domains. This is reflected in metaphors and in pervasive effects of concurrent sensory inputs on unrelated judgments in substantively different domains. We review key findings and discuss open issues.

For an introduction to these themes see:

Lee, S. W. S., & Schwarz, N. (2014). Metaphors in judgment and decision making. In M. J. Landau, M. D. Robinson, & B. P. Meier (Eds.), *The power of metaphor: Examining its influence on social life* (pp. 85-108). Washington, DC: APA.

C. Feeling and thinking

Closely related to some uses of sensory experience is the role of moods, emotions, and metacognitive experiences (= feelings of ease or difficulty that accompany one's thought process). We explore the role of feelings across all topics addressed in class.

For an introduction to these themes see:

Schwarz, N. (2012). Feelings-as-information theory. In P. A. M. Van Lange, A. Kruglanski, & E. T. Higgins (eds.), *Handbook of theories of social psychology* (pp. 289-308). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Grading

Grading is based on class participation (1/3) and two research proposals (each counting 1/3) that develop an idea from the topics covered in class.