

Early Social Cognition
PSYC 789R / NACS 728G, 3 credits
Fall 2015

Time: Thursdays, 12:20 to 2:50 pm

Location: JMZ 1120

Website: <http://elms.umd.edu>

Instructor: Jonathan Beier

jsbeier@umd.edu

Office hours: by appointment

Course description

This graduate seminar explores the foundations of social cognition, from birth through the first few years of life. There will be two phases of the semester. The first phase of the class will focus on weekly collections of primary empirical and theoretical readings. We will first review infants' and toddlers' developing conceptions of people as mental agents. Next, we will observe that young children not only understand the experiences of others, but also care about them, as revealed through both their evaluations of characters' behaviors and children's own prosocial behaviors toward others. The class will continue with an exploration of how young children recognize, reason about, and relate to the social ties that bind people together, such as their interpersonal relationships and social group memberships. We will conclude with consideration of the mechanisms by which infants learn from those around them, via both direct instruction and observation. Throughout these discussions, our focus will be primarily upon developments early in human life, but we will frequently engage the ideas of scholars whose empirical and/or theoretical work also attends to the evolutionary history of our human social cognitive capacities and proclivities.

The second phase of the class will feature a close reading of a new book by Michael Tomasello, "A Natural History of Human Morality." Previous versions of this course have featured his work prominently, interspersed through the different weekly reading. We will take advantage of the book by shifting much of this material into the "book club" days, allowing for a deeper exploration during the first class phase of very early appearing social cognitive processes, which have not traditionally been Tomasello's focus. Because the book does not come out until mid-November, I have not yet read it, so the structure of our discussion and possible additional readings for these days is somewhat less worked out for now.

Attendance and participation

This course is based around active discussion among its participants. Before each course meeting, students are expected to have read all of the assigned readings. Students will also submit short online responses the night before class and should be prepared to elaborate on these responses in class. As this is a graduate seminar, I encourage you to find ways that your own areas of expertise might relate to the course material.

Course requirements and evaluation for enrolled students

Attendance and class participation (10%):

Be prepared and be engaged! Your grade will be based on whether you come prepared to discuss the readings, the relevance of your comments to the ongoing discussion, and your ability to integrate the readings and comments made by other seminar participants.

Response posts (20%):

Each week, students should compose a short response to that week's primary readings. Response posts should be posted to the Discussion Board on the ELMS website for the course; each week there will be a new Forum on the board. Responses should be posted by noon on the Wednesday before class. Discussion leaders for a given week should read all response papers and raise their themes as points of discussion. Discussion leaders are exempt from writing responses, but welcome to do so if they desire.

Response papers should be at least 200 words, but content is more important than length. Since everybody will have read the readings there is no need to summarize them. Your paper should be a thoughtful response to the course material; for instance, you may critique the readings, point out interesting contrasts among them, relate them to another body of work, or extend their arguments. Although non-discussion leaders are not required to read the responses, I encourage you to do so. Your response may be a reply to another student's response, extending her or his ideas.

Discussion leading (30%)

Each week, at least one student will lead discussion of the readings for that day. On the first day of class, we will take volunteers for the next class, and then work out the semester's assignments the following week, once final course enrollment is hopefully determined. I expect each student will lead about twice, but we shall see!

Discussion leaders should plan to meet with me briefly, early in the week before their class leading day. Ideally, we would check in for 5-10 minutes after Thursday's class, but we can arrange times as best fits our schedules. In this meeting, we will review the themes of the upcoming class meeting. I may suggest additional readings or findings that should be brought into the discussion.

The discussion leader should prepare a handout summarizing the day's material. I strongly encourage you to include figures of results, images of stimuli if they are clarifying, and any tables, charts, or other graphical summarizations that you may generate! This will allow us to avoid a constant flipping through different papers during the discussion. The discussion leader should bring printouts of the handout to class (double-sided, please!). The handout should also be posted as a pdf to ELMS by shortly after class, so that other students can have it for their records.

To encourage discussion, Powerpoint-guided presentations will be generally discouraged; however, if there is a video of an experimental task or behavior that would be helpful for the class to view, I'll be happy for us to watch it together.

Secondary topic presentations (10%):

Each week, one student will also give a 30-minute primer on a single paper or set of secondary readings, as a supplement to the main discussion. Other students are not required to have read these papers, but are of course welcome to do so. I anticipate about two secondary presentations per student (as determined by final enrollment).

The secondary readings will be worked out on a week-to-week basis. The choice of topics will be determined by the expertise of the presenters, my suggestions for useful complements to the primary readings, and nominations during class of further areas to explore. The presenter should post a list of relevant papers to ELMS as early in the week as possible, so that other students may look over these in advance if they wish. However, the presentation should aim to be a true summary, with no prior reading necessary on the part of the other class participants.

Final paper (30%):

Final papers are due by 5 pm on Friday, December 18 – but I welcome them before that time, as you are ready. They should be about 15 pages, double-spaced. I am open to a range of topics, but your paper should engage the material of the course. Before settling on a topic, you should discuss it with me, in person or by email. Your papers will likely take the form of either 1) a grant or project proposal or 2) a theoretical review that offers more than just summary (i.e., includes a new synthesis or positive account), but you are welcome to propose an alternative format if it would be useful to you in your own work.

Course requirements for auditors

Auditors are expected to be active participants in the class. They should do all the readings and come to all class meetings. Based on final enrollment, auditors may be required to lead discussion or offer secondary topic presentations.

Policies

Everyone is expected to come prepared to discuss the readings for the week. Class attendance is essential and if you cannot attend a particular session please let me know as soon as possible.

- Students with disabilities or special needs: If you have special needs with regards to this class, please contact me so that appropriate accommodations can be arranged.
- Academic honesty: All students are expected to adhere to campus policy on academic integrity. Cheating on academic work will not be tolerated in any form and will be subject to strong penalties in this class and the university system. If you cheat on a paper or assignment, you risk failing the class, as well as suspension or expulsion from the University as a whole. Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, misrepresenting someone else's work as your own, falsifying any information in a citation or academic exercise, using unauthorized materials in any academic exercise, or helping another to commit academic dishonesty. You are expected to work independently on your papers.

Tentative Class Schedule

Date	Topic
9/3/15	Intro and organization
9/10/15	Innateness and learning devices: the case of faces
9/17/15	Agents and goals
9/24/15	Agents and beliefs
10/1/15	Communication
10/8/15	No class (JSB Conference travel)
10/15/15	Good and bad: Social evaluation
10/22/15	Empathy and prosocial behavior
10/29/15	Right and wrong: Moral judgments
11/5/15	Social Groups
11/12/15	Social Relationships
11/19/15	Trust and Learning from others
11/26/15	No class (Thanksgiving)
12/3/15	Tomasello on Morality, part 1
12/10/15	Tomasello on Morality, part 2

Class Readings:

Note: I recommend that you engage the readings in the order that they are listed here. Also, readings are subject to revision as the course proceeds!

September 3: Introduction and organization

September 10: Innateness and learning devices: the case of faces

Primary readings:

Carey, S. (2009). *Origin of concepts*. New York: Oxford University Press. (read Chapter 1: Some preliminaries, pp. 1 - 25).

Meltzoff, A. N., & Moore, M. K. (1977). Imitation of facial and manual gestures by human neonates. *Science*, 198(4312), 75.

Farroni, T., Johnson, M. H., Menon, E., Zulian, L., Faraguna, D., & Csibra, G. (2005). Newborns' preference for face-relevant stimuli: Effects of contrast polarity. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America*, 102(47), 17245-50.

Sugita, Y. (2008). Face perception in monkeys reared with no exposure to faces. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America*, 105(1), 394-8. doi:10.1073/pnas.0706079105

Johnson, M. H., Grossmann, T., & Farroni, T. (2008). The social cognitive neuroscience of infancy: Illuminating the early development of social brain functions. *Advances in Child Development and Behavior*, 36, 331-372.

Secondary presentation: Further development of face processing? (JSB suggestion)

September 17: Goal-directed action and intentional agency

Primary readings:

Woodward, A. L. (2009). Infants learning about intentional action. In A. L. Woodward & A. Needham (Eds.), *Learning and the infant mind* (pp. 227-49). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Gergely, G. (2010). Kinds of agents: The origins of understanding instrumental and communicative agency. In U. Goswami (Ed.), *The Wiley-Blackwell handbook of childhood cognitive development, second edition* (pp. 76-105). John Wiley & Sons.

Biro, S., & Leslie, A. M. (2007). Infants' perception of goal-directed actions: Development through cue-based bootstrapping. *Developmental Science*, 10(3), 379-98.

Csibra, G., & Gergely, G. (2013). Teleological understanding of actions. In M. R. Banaji & S. A. Gelman (Eds.), *Navigating the social world: What infants, children, and other species can teach us* (pp. 38-43). Oxford University Press.

Skerry, A. E., Carey, S. E., & Spelke, E. S. (2013). First-person action experience reveals sensitivity to action efficiency in prereaching infants. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America*, 110(46), 18728-33.

Secondary presentation: Agents and causality? (JSB suggestions)

September 24: Beliefs and Theory of Mind

Primary readings:

Wellman, H. M. (2012). Theory of mind: Better methods, clearer findings, more development. *European Journal of Developmental Psychology*, 9(3), 313-330.

Baillargeon, R., Scott, R. M., & He, Z. (2010). False-Belief understanding in infants. *Trends in Cognitive Sciences*, 14(3), 110-118.

Senju, A., Southgate, V., Snape, C., Leonard, M., & Csibra, G. (2011). Do 18-month-olds really attribute mental states to others? A critical test. *Psychological Science*, 22(7), 878-80.

Southgate, V., & Verneti, A. (2014). Belief-based action prediction in preverbal infants. *Cognition*, 130(1), 1-10.

No ordinary secondary presentation. Instead, I will offer a selection of current attempts to resolve the tension between findings with infants and older children. All students will pick at least one to present to the rest of us for discussion. I expect to offer about 4 reviews for selection, so there will be a couple students presenting each one.

October 1: Non-verbal communication

Primary readings:

Carpenter, M., & Liebal, K. (2011). Joint attention, communication, and knowing together in infancy. In A. Seemann (Ed.), *Joint attention: New developments in psychology, philosophy of mind, and social neuroscience* (pp. 159-182). Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Liszkowski, U., Carpenter, M., Henning, A., Striano, T., & Tomasello, M. (2004). Twelve-month-olds point to share attention and interest. *Developmental Science*, 7(3), 297-307.

Csibra, G., & Gergely, G. (2009). Natural pedagogy. *Trends in Cognitive Sciences*, 13(4), 148-53.

Skerry, A. E., Lambert, E., Powell, L. J., & McAuliffe, K. (2012). The origins of pedagogy: Developmental and evolutionary perspectives. *Evolutionary Psychology: An International Journal of Evolutionary Approaches to Psychology and Behavior*, 11(3), 550-572.

Martin, A., Onishi, K. H., & Vouloumanos, A. (2011). Understanding the abstract role of speech in communication at 12months. *Cognition*, 123(1), 50-60.

Secondary presentation: Links between infant social cognition and later developments

October 8: No class

October 15: Good and bad - Social evaluation

Hamlin, J. K., Wynn, K., Bloom, P., & Mahajan, N. (2011). How infants and toddlers react to antisocial others. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America*, 108(50), 19931-6. doi:10.1073/pnas.1110306108

Hamlin, J. K. (2014). The origins of human morality: Complex socio-moral evaluations by preverbal infants. In J. Decety & Y. Christen (Eds.), *Research and Perspectives in Neurosciences: Vol. 21. New frontiers in social neuroscience* (pp. 165-188).

Dunfield, K. A., & Kuhlmeier, V. A. (2010). Intention-mediated selective helping in infancy. *Psychological Science*, 21(4), 523-7.

Sommerville, J. A., Schmidt, M. F. H., Yun, J. E., & Burns, M. (2013). The development of fairness expectations and prosocial behavior in the second year of life. *Infancy*, 18(1), 40-66.

Secondary presentation: TBD

October 22: Empathy and prosocial behavior

Primary readings:

Warneken, F., & Tomasello, M. (2006). Altruistic helping in human infants and young chimpanzees. *Science (New York, N.Y.)*, 311(5765), 1301-3.

Hobbs, K., & Spelke, E. (2015). Goal attributions and instrumental helping at 14 and 24 months of age. *Cognition*, 142, 44-59.

Davidov, M., Zahn-Waxler, C., Roth-Hanania, R., & Knafo, A. (2013). Concern for others in the first year of life: Theory, evidence, and avenues for research. *Child Development Perspectives*, 7(2), 126-131.

Vaish, A., Carpenter, M., & Tomasello, M. (2009). Sympathy through affective perspective taking and its relation to prosocial behavior in toddlers. *Developmental Psychology*, 45(2), 534-43.

Eisenberg, N., Spinrad, T. L., & Knafo-Noam, A. (2015). Prosocial development. In *Handbook of child psychology and developmental science* (pp. 1-47). Hoboken, NJ, USA: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

Secondary presentation: TBD.

October 29: Right and wrong - Moral judgments

Primary readings:

Blake, P. R., McAuliffe, K., & Warneken, F. (2014). The developmental origins of fairness: The knowledge-behavior gap. *Trends in Cognitive Sciences*, 18(11), 559-61.

Shaw, A., & Olson, K. R. (2012). Children discard a resource to avoid inequity. *Journal of Experimental Psychology. General*, 141(2), 382-95.

Heiphetz, L., & Young, L. (2014). A social cognitive developmental perspective on moral judgment. *Behaviour*, 151(2-3), 315-335.

Killen, M., & Rizzo, M. T. (2014). Morality, intentionality, and intergroup attitudes. *Behaviour*, 151(2-3), 337-359.

Secondary presentation: TBD.

November 5: Social groups

Primary readings:

Dunham, Y., Baron, A. S., & Banaji, M. R. (2008). The development of implicit intergroup cognition. *Trends in Cognitive Sciences*, 12(7), 248-53.

Dunham, Y., Baron, A. S., & Carey, S. (2011). Consequences of "minimal" group affiliations in children. *Child Development*, 82(3), 793-811.

Powell, L. J., & Spelke, E. S. (2013). Preverbal infants expect members of social groups to act alike. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America*, 110(41), E3965-72.

Spelke, E. S., Bernier, E. P., & Skerry, A. E. (2013). Core Social Cognition. In M. R. Banaji & S. A. Gelman (Eds.), *Navigating the Social World: What Infants, Children, and Other Species Can Teach Us* (pp. 11-16). Oxford University Press.

Secondary presentation: TBD.

November 12: Social relationships

Primary readings:

Rhodes, M. (2013). How two intuitive theories shape the development of social categorization. *Child Development Perspectives*, 7(1), 12-16.

Thomsen, L., & Carey, S. (2013). Core cognition of relational models. In M. R. Banaji & Gelman (Eds.), *Navigating the social world: What infants, children, and other species teach us* (pp. 17 – 22). Oxford University Press.

Mascaro, O., & Csibra, G. (2012). Representation of stable social dominance relations by human infants. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America*, 109(18), 6862-7.

Liberman, Kinzler, K. D., & Woodward, A. L. (n.d.). Friends or foes: Infants use shared evaluations to infer others' social relationships. *JEP: General*, 143(3), 966-971.

Hrdy, S. B. (2014). Development + social selection in the emergence of "emotionally modern" humans. In J. Decety & Y. Christen (Eds.), *Research and Perspectives in Neurosciences: New frontiers in social neuroscience* (Vol. 21, pp. 57-91).

Secondary presentation: TBD.

November 19: Trust and Learning from others

Primary readings:

Harris, P. L., & Corriveau, K. H. (2011). Young children's selective trust in informants. *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society of London. Series B, Biological Sciences*, 366(1567), 1179-87.

Zmyj, N., Daum, M. M., Prinz, W., Nielsen, M., & Aschersleben, G. (2012). Fourteen-Month-Olds' imitation of differently aged models. *Infant and Child Development*, 21(3), 250-266.

Shneidman, L., & Woodward, A. L. (2015). Are child-directed interactions the cradle of social learning? *Psychological Bulletin*.

Legare, C. H., & Watson-Jones, R. E. (2015). The evolution and ontogeny of ritual. *The Handbook of Evolutionary Psychology*, 829-847.

Secondary presentation: TBD.

November 26: No Class – Thanksgiving

Possible reading to prep for Tomasello book:

Tomasello, M. (2011). Human culture in evolutionary perspective. In M. Gelfand (Ed.), *Advances in Culture and Psychology*. Oxford U. Press.

December 3: Tomasello on Morality, part 1

December 10: Tomasello on Morality, part 2

Final papers due Friday, December 18 at 5 pm.