Advanced Special Topics in Psychology: Early Social Cognition  
Psychology 489C, Fall 2012

Time: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 12:30 to 1:45 pm
Location: BPS 1112
Website: http://elms.umd.edu

Instructor: Dr. Jonathan Beier  
jsbeier@umd.edu
Office hours: By appointment in BPS 2147A (please email to set a time)

Course description

This advanced undergraduate seminar explores the foundations of social cognition, focusing primarily on developments from birth through the first few years of life. In this course, we will first review infants’ and toddlers’ conceptual development in the social domain. Topics will include the detection of social partners in one’s environment, representations of intentional agents and their actions, and understanding of others’ perceptual and belief states. We will then consider the ways that this early knowledge guides young children’s own social behaviors and evaluations of others. On what grounds do children form preferences for some individuals over others, and how do these preferences revealed in their actions? How do they learn to be members of the society in which they are raised?

Success in this class is simple. Do the readings. Come to class. Participate in discussions. Submit your assignments on time. And ask for help if you need it.

Grading

- Class participation (20%)
- Online discussion posts (25%)
- Discussion leading (5% + 5%)
- Written QALMRI analysis (5%)
- Final paper presentation (10%)
- Final paper (30%)

Policy on late assignments

If your online discussion post does not appear before 7 pm the night before class, you will not receive credit for it.

If they are late, QALMRI and Final papers will rapidly lose their value to you. QALMRI papers are due at the start of class one week following your in-class presentation. Final papers are due by midnight on the evening of December 12th (Reading day). If an assignment arrives within 24 hours after these times, the grade will be reduced by 10%; deductions of 20% and 30% will occur if it arrives on the second or third day, respectively. After that, assignments will not be accepted.
More on assignments

Class participation (20%):
  - Be prepared and be engaged!
  - I will take notes each day on each student's attendance and participation in the discussion. You should contribute something each day, but keep in mind that quality is more important than quantity.

Online discussion posts (25%):
  - Before each class session you will post a short response to that day's readings on the ELMS discussion board for the class.
  - Your posts are due by 7 pm the night before class. This is important because the discussion leader(s) for that day must have time to review your posts and think about how to include the issues you have raised.
  - Read through other students' posts! You'll learn a lot from each other's reactions. In your post, you are welcome to refer to posts made by your peers, but be advised that if the discussion has gone far afield you might not want to follow it there.
  - Posts should be about a paragraph long at minimum (~150 words). Although only one is required, you should feel free to make multiple posts; but if you do, make sure that at least one of them meets this length.
  - You don't need to summarize the readings beyond providing enough detail for us to know what you're referring to. We've all read the papers, so get to the point.
  - In order to receive full credit, you will have to go beyond statements such as “I thought X was interesting” or “I didn’t understand Y.” Of course, these are reasonable starting points for your comments, but you shouldn’t stop here! For instance, “I thought X’s finding was interesting because it contradicted Y’s theory that...”; or, “I didn’t understand Y’s conclusion because the data really seemed to suggest that...”; or, “I think X experiment is related to an article I read in a previous class because Y...”; or, “In future work, it would be important to know X because otherwise Y...”

Discussion leading (5% + 5%):
  - You will be responsible for leading the day’s discussion twice during the semester. There are several parts to this role:
    - You will present a SHORT (5 minute) summary of one of the empirical research articles assigned for that day, using the QALMRI method.
    - Prior to class, you will compile a list of the thoughtful comments made by your peers online, to be used as starting points for discussion during class. Look for both themes across multiple students’ posts and particularly insightful comments by individual students.
    - During class, I will give the discussion leaders an opportunity to comment on the day’s readings as a whole. In addition to offering their own thoughts, they will guide the discussion by asking other students to restate their points made online.
On many days there will be two students assigned as discussion leaders – these are days with more than one empirical reading. You will each present separate papers, and then jointly lead the general discussion.

**Written QALMRI analysis (5%)**:
- Each student will write one QALMRI analysis of an empirical paper they described while leading the discussion.
- Since you will lead discussion twice, that means you have your choice of which paper to write about.
- QALMRI papers are due at the start of class, in hardcopy, one week after the class in which you presented that empirical paper.

**Final paper presentation (10%)**:
- I’ve set aside three class days towards the end of the semester for Final paper presentations. By this point in the semester, you should have begun making concrete plans for the topic of your paper. The presentation is your chance to get feedback for these plans, from your peers and from me.
- Because there will be many of them, paper presentations should be brief: about 5 minutes, with another 5 minutes of Q & A from the class.

**Final paper (30%)**:
- At the end of the semester, you will turn in a proposal for a new study in the domain of social cognitive development. It must be 10 – 11 pages, double spaced, APA format, and without tortured margins.
- The study you propose should make contact with at least one of the topics that we discussed in class. I recommend that you keep a list of the open questions that you identify throughout the semester; when it comes time to begin work on the paper, this list will come in handy.
- The paper will be roughly in the format of a journal article, though of course without data: you’ll have an introduction, methods section, planned analyses, and a thorough discussion of possible results and their implications. More details will be provided as the deadline approaches.
- You should email me a short description (just a few sentences) about your study proposal by November 20 (the Tuesday before Thanksgiving). Based on these descriptions, I’ll be able to let you know if you’re headed down a reasonable path.
- Final papers are due at midnight on the night of December 12th (Reading day).

**Academic Integrity**

Academic integrity is a serious matter, and the Department of Psychology has a zero-tolerance policy towards academic dishonesty. Please review our statement on the ethics of scholarship, appended to this syllabus.
Excused Absences

University of Maryland policy dictates that a single absence during the semester due to illness or injury will be excused with a signed letter attesting to the date of the illness and acknowledging that the information is true and correct. You are required to contact me by email prior to the class meeting if you expect to be absent for any reason, especially due to illness or injury, and to provide this form by the next class meeting that you are present for: http://www.health.umd.edu/sites/default/files/ClassExcuse1011.pdf

Multiple absences, and those occurring on a major scheduled grading event (http://president.umd.edu/policies/docs/V-100G.pdf), require written documentation of the illness or injury from the Health Center or an outside health care provider. The letter must verify the dates of treatment and the time period during which you were unable to meet academic responsibilities. Accommodations will be arranged on a case-by-case basis.

A grade of zero will be assigned for any assessment missed with an unexcused or undocumented absence.

Electronic devices

I will take a wait-and-see approach to the use of laptops and tablets during class. If you are clearly using them for note-taking or to view digital copies of the assigned reading, all will be fine. If I suspect that some of you are using your electronic devices for other purposes, such as email, messaging, web browsing, or Facebook, I may decide to ban these devices for everyone (except when required for DSS accommodations).
## Schedule of topics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aug 30</td>
<td>Intro and organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sept 4</td>
<td>Social cognitive development in perspective; How to summarize an empirical article</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sept 6</td>
<td>Face perception</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sept 11</td>
<td>Agents</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sept 13</td>
<td>Eye gaze – Where agents look</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sept 18</td>
<td>Perception – What agents see</td>
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<td>Sept 20</td>
<td>Beliefs – What agents know</td>
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<td>Sept 25</td>
<td>Communication – Joint attention and Shared intentionality</td>
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<td>Sept 27</td>
<td>Communication – Pedagogy and Knowledge transfer</td>
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<td>Oct 2</td>
<td>Other animals – Understanding agency</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oct 4</td>
<td>Social evaluation – Judging good and bad behavior</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oct 9</td>
<td>Prosocial and antisocial behavior – Helping and hurting</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oct 11</td>
<td>Prosocial and antisocial behavior – Fairness and sharing</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oct 16</td>
<td>Building relationships</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oct 18</td>
<td>Doing things together</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oct 23</td>
<td>Social categories – Language, gender, and race</td>
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<td>Oct 25</td>
<td>Social categories – Novel groups</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oct 30</td>
<td>Other animals – Social connections</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nov 1</td>
<td>Negativity bias</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nov 6</td>
<td>Learning from others – Imitation</td>
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<td>Nov 8</td>
<td>Learning from others – Selective trust</td>
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<td>Nov 13</td>
<td>Being a part of society – What not to do</td>
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<td>Nov 15</td>
<td>Being a part of society – What we do</td>
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<td>Nov 20</td>
<td>The social status of objects</td>
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<td>Nov 22</td>
<td>NO CLASS – Thanksgiving!</td>
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<td>Nov 27</td>
<td>Paper presentations – Group 1</td>
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<td>Nov 29</td>
<td>Paper presentations – Group 2</td>
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<td>Dec 4</td>
<td>Paper presentations – Group 3</td>
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<td>Dec 6</td>
<td>TBD – Class vote on final topic</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dec 11</td>
<td>Wrap-up discussion</td>
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Class Outline

Note: Readings are subject to revision as the course proceeds!

August 30: Introduction and organization

September 4: Social cognitive development in perspective


September 6: Face perception


September 11: Agents


September 13: Eye gaze – Where agents look


September 18: Perception – What agents see


**September 20: Beliefs – What agents know**


**September 25: Communication – Joint attention and Shared intentionality**


**September 27: Communication – Pedagogy and Knowledge transfer**


**October 2: Other animals – Understanding agency**


**October 4: Social evaluation – Judging good and bad behavior**


October 9: Prosocial and antisocial behavior – Helping and hurting


October 11: Prosocial and antisocial behavior – Fairness and sharing


October 16: Building relationships


October 18: Doing things together


October 23: Social categories – Language, gender, and race

October 25: Social categories – Novel groups


October 30: Other animals – Social connections


November 1: Negativity bias


November 6: Learning from others – Imitation


November 8: Learning from others – Selective trust


November 13: Becoming a part of society – What not to do

Repacholi, B. M., Meltzoff, A. N., & Olsen, B. (2008). Infants' understanding of the link between visual perception and emotion: "If she can't see me doing it, she won't get angry.". *Developmental Psychology*, 44(2), 561-74.
November 15: Becoming a part of society – What we do


November 20: The social status of objects


November 22: NO CLASS - Thanksgiving!

November 27: Paper presentations – Group 1

November 29: Paper presentations – Group 2

December 4: Paper presentations – Group 3

December 6: TBD – Class vote on final topic

Topic and readings to be determined based on class vote.

December 11: Wrap-up discussion

No reading

[Final papers due by midnight on December 12th]