Neuroscience 442-010: Social Neuroscience
Fall 2018
T/TH 2:00pm – 3:15pm
Meeting in ISE 207

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Office Hours: Tuesday 10:00-12:00am (or by appointment, if necessary)
Website: www1.udel.edu/canvas/

Course description and aims

How are the processes underlying social behavior instantiated in the brain? Are these processes localized in specific regions, or are they distributed across the brain? Is there even a social brain? And how does any of this inform psychological theory? The course will examine research that attempts to answer these questions, using the tools of cognitive neuroscience to understand social functioning.

This course will aim to offer you a comprehensive understanding of the methods of social neuroscience, as well as direct exposure to contemporary topics and controversies in this literature. At the end of this course, it's my hope that you will be a conscious, savvy consumer of social neuroscience research, that you will hone your scientific writing skills, and that you will have a deeper appreciation of the connections between mind, brain, and behavior.

Attendance, participation, and professionalism

Attendance is required. While I will not explicitly monitor your daily attendance, missing class will definitely put you at a disadvantage for several reasons. First, on most class days, I will ask a general participation question via iClicker, to make sure we're all on the same page. These responses will go towards your participation grade. Second, the majority of classes will feature active discussion and problem solving. These activities will offer you excellent preparation for the sorts of questions and problems you'll encounter on the exams. Third and finally, as far as the exams go, I'll expect you to be responsible for any material covered in class. If you miss class, you'll miss this material.

A few other notes on professionalism... I will genuinely appreciate your kind attention and participation during class. I know you all know the drill, but these are just a few friendly reminders:

1. Please arrive on time and prepared – i.e., having done the reading and ready to work! Please don’t leave early, unless it’s absolutely necessary. (If you must be late or depart early, please try to minimize the disruption to the class.)
2. Please turn off your cell phones, and only use your laptops or tablets for taking notes or working on in-class assignments – i.e., no email, chat, Facebook, Twitter, etc.
Course format

This course will primarily consist of (hopefully) lively discussions about weekly selections of readings. Below, you will see a tentative week-by-week schedule. This is somewhat subject to change, but should serve as a relatively faithful guide going forward. As a general rule, you'll be assigned a review article or two about a broad topic area for classes on Tuesdays, and I'll lecture in class on that topic. For Thursdays, you'll read between two and four few empirical articles, and we'll have a student-led discussion. PDFs of all readings will be available on Canvas.

Grading breakdown

Grades in this course will be based on your performance on reading responses, class presentation and participation, two exams, and a final paper. Your final course grade will be non-negotiable – grade changes will be made only to correct clerical errors – and will be based on the following components:

Exam #1  15%
Exam #2  20%
Participation and presentation  20%
Reading Responses  20%
Final Project  25%

From time to time, there will be small opportunities for extra credit, but these will be afforded to all students and assigned at the discretion of the instructor. No special deals!

Grading cut-offs

A  93%  C  73%
A-  90%  C-  70%
B+  88%  D+  68%
B  83%  D  63%
B-  80%  D-  60%
C+  78%

Reading responses and discussants

Each empirical article assigned for the Thursday classes will have an assigned discussant, to be determined during the first week of class. Each student will serve as a discussant once during the semester. Each discussant will be responsible for providing some structure to that particular week’s conversation. You’ll be asked to briefly (<5 minutes) describe the motivation, methods, and results of your assigned article at the beginning of class. Then you and your fellow discussants will form a “panel” and lead the class in discussion.

To assist you in your task, every student will contribute one discussion question for each of the readings each week. (The week you’re serving as a discussant, you don’t need to submit reading questions.) These questions don’t have to be elaborate – just a coherent distillation of your response to the week’s readings. For example, a good
question could address an empirical paper’s motivations, or it might note potential confounds in a particular study or issues with the interpretation of results, or it might draw connections to other work we’ve read, or it could explore the implications of a particular finding. Please focus on specific aspects of the empirical papers we read, rather than on more mundane details (e.g., “isn’t this study underpowered?”, etc.) Reading questions should be posted on Canvas by 8pm each Wednesday night (e.g., the night before empirical papers will be discussed in class). That way, discussants will have plenty of time to read over the questions related to the paper they’ll be presenting on, and to select a handful that they feel are really crucial to touch on during class.

For your performance as a discussant, you’ll receive a grade out of 25 points – which will comprise your presentation of your assigned paper, as well as your handling of questions from both me and the rest of the class. Each set of reading questions will receive a grade out of 4 points: a 4 is a truly excellent, incisive response; a 3 represents a solid, satisfactory effort; a 2 is for relatively cursory, superficial work; a 1 represents the bare minimum – falling very short of expectations.

Exams

You will take two closed-book, closed-note exams, comprising 35% of your grade. Each exam will consist primarily of multiple-choice questions, followed by a few short answer questions. Neither exam will be cumulative. You’ll take the first exam in class. The second exam will be taken during finals week but will only cover the second half (well, two-thirds) of the course. Neither exam is optional. Bring pencils and erasers to exams. Both multiple choice and short answer questions will be based on material covered in lectures and readings. I’ll expect you to be responsible for all material: some readings won’t be touched on in lecture, some lecture material won’t appear in the readings.

Final project

In the final week of the course, you will a) submit a written, APA-formatted paper (somewhere in the vicinity of ~10-12 pages) outlining a plan for conducting an experiment (or set of experiments) using social neuroscientific methods. The idea here is for you to synthesize the methodological and theoretical approaches you learn in this class with your own research interests and goals. More info to come on this, of course! Several extra credit opportunities associated with this project (specifically, submitting a proposal, outline, and bibliography ahead of time) will arise later in the course.

Email policy

I will gladly respond to your emails! I want to do whatever I can to make sure you are well informed regarding both the content and the structure of the course. With that in mind, here are a few guidelines to make sure things work smoothly:

a.) I will respond to emails with “NSCI442” in the subject line that are respectful, coherent, and concise.
b.) I generally try respond to emails from students once per day, so you may not hear back from me for up to 24 hours. If I don’t reply in 24 hours, my apologies! Please re-send!

c.) For emails regarding exams: All emails regarding exam-related questions must be sent by 8pm the night prior to each exam. Any emails sent after 8pm will be disregarded.

d.) For procedural or administrative questions: I’m happy to answer these, but please, please check to see if your question is addressed by the syllabus. Is the final cumulative? Does the final project have to be in APA style? It’s in the syllabus. (Spoiler alert: No to the first question, yes to the second.)

Reviewing and contesting grades

Contesting your grade on an exam: You will have a separate sheet of paper at each exam to write down and explain anything you feel is ambiguous on the exam (for example, you think two answers are accurate but you can only choose one), or if you want to justify your answer for any reason. You must turn this sheet in at the end of the exam. After you receive your grade, you will only be able to contest the answers for the specific questions that you discussed on this sheet.

Contesting your grade on a reading response or final project: If you wish to contest a grade, the entire assignment will be re-graded. This could result in either an improvement or a reduction in your grade. The new grade will stand, even if it’s lower than the original.

You will have a maximum of 2 weeks to contest any grade received in this course. Please initiate the contest via email, and be as clear and specific as possible regarding the nature of the dispute.

Late work and make-up exams

With regards to reading responses and the final project, no extensions will be granted, because they are unfair to other students in the class. Late work will not be accepted under any circumstances. However, per the policy of the Dean's Office, under the following circumstances (and only under these circumstances), I will allow excused absences from exams:

1. Absence from an exam due to athletic participation or other extracurricular activities in which the student is an official representative of the University is excused, as long as the student informs the instructor in writing during the first 2 weeks of the semester of these absences.

2. Absence from an exam due to serious illness or death within a student's family. To validate such absences, students need to present evidence to the Dean's Office of his or her college. The Dean's Office will then provide a letter of verification to all of the student's instructors.

3. Absence from an exam due to serious illness (e.g., hospitalization, surgery, or protracted medical illness or convalescence). To validate such absences, the student
should present evidence of the illness to the Dean’s Office of his or her college. The student will need to request that the Student Health Service provide supportive evidence directly to the respective Dean.

Again, I will only grant make-up exams in light of the above-mentioned circumstances. Otherwise, a score of 0 will need to be entered for the missed exam. Under certain circumstances, makeup exams may take an alternative form to that taken by the rest of the class (e.g., essay exam).

**Academic integrity**

Academic dishonesty is categorically unacceptable and will not be tolerated. Take pride in your work in this class – all exam work, reading responses, and the final project are to be your own. Please familiarize yourselves with the policies governing academic integrity at the University of Delaware at https://www1.udel.edu/studentconduct/ai.html. The Office of Student Conduct has an excellent description of what constitutes academic dishonesty (e.g., cheating, plagiarism, etc.) and how to avoid these missteps. Plagiarism can be an especially tricky area, so I urge you to educate yourself regarding how to appropriately cite your sources. When in doubt, please don’t hesitate to ask!

**Tentative schedule**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8/28 &amp; 8/30</td>
<td>Introduction &amp; Methods</td>
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<tr>
<td>9/4 &amp; 9/6</td>
<td>Social perception</td>
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<tr>
<td>9/11 &amp; 9/13</td>
<td>Social evaluation</td>
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<tr>
<td>9/18 &amp; 9/20</td>
<td>Thinking and learning about other people</td>
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<td>9/25 &amp; 9/27</td>
<td>Theory of mind and empathy</td>
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<td>10/2</td>
<td>Empathy, continued</td>
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<td>10/4</td>
<td>Exam 1</td>
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<td>10/9 &amp; 10/11</td>
<td>Emotion and emotion regulation</td>
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<tr>
<td>10/16 &amp; 10/18</td>
<td>Social decision-making</td>
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<td>10/23 &amp; 10/25</td>
<td>Social rejection, connection, and influence</td>
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<tr>
<td>10/30 &amp; 11/1</td>
<td>Morality and moral judgment</td>
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<td>11/6</td>
<td>No class – Election Day</td>
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<td>11/8</td>
<td>The self</td>
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<td>11/13 &amp; 11/15</td>
<td>Self-regulation and self-control</td>
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<tr>
<td>11/20 &amp; 11/22</td>
<td>No class – Thanksgiving</td>
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<td>11/27 &amp; 11/29</td>
<td>Social groups</td>
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<tr>
<td>12/4 &amp; 12/6</td>
<td>Stereotyping &amp; prejudice</td>
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<tr>
<td>Finals week</td>
<td>Exam 2</td>
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We may get to a particular week and I’ll think, “Oh man, how did I forget to assign XYZ?” or “Yikes, I went overboard this week.” Again, this is a good guide, but it could change.

**Introduction & Methods**


**Social perception**


**Social evaluation**


**Thinking and learning about other people**


**Theory of mind and empathy**


**Emotion and emotion regulation**


**Social decision-making**


Social connection, rejection, and influence


Morality and moral judgment


The self and self-control


Social groups


Stereotyping & prejudice


Social Justice Statement & Students with Disabilities:

The University of Delaware is committed to social justice. I firmly agree with that commitment and expect to maintain a positive learning environment based upon open communication, mutual respect, and non-discrimination. Our University does not discriminate on the basis of race, sex, age, disability, veteran’s status, religion, sexual orientation, or national origin. Any suggestions as to how to further such a positive and open environment in this class will be appreciated and given serious consideration.

If you need special academic accommodations due to a documented physical or sensory disability, please contact the Office of Disability Support Services at www.udel.edu/DSS/ during the first two weeks of class. The office provides academic support services to eligible students with temporary and permanent disabilities.