UNIVERSITÀ
DEGLI STUDI DI MILANO-BICOCCA

SYLLABUS DEL CORSO

Social Cognition

2122-1-F5105P005

Learning area

APPLIED EXPERIMENTAL PSYCHOLOGICAL SCIENCES

Learning objectives

Knowledge and understanding

- The role that cognitive processes play in how people perceive, interpret, and remember information about themselves, other people, and social groups
- How cognitive biases affect social interactions
- Doing social cognition research using Inquisit

Applying knowledge and understanding

- Understanding, analysis, evaluation, and integration of theory and research related to social cognition
- Implications of the theories and findings for a variety of real-world phenomena
- Identify and analyze with appropriate theoretical-methodological skills the characteristics of different situations

Contents

This course provides an overview of theory and research in social cognition. It examines the role that cognitive processes play in the way people make sense of themselves and others. Topics to be studied include automatic versus controlled processing, social categorization, attribution, heuristics, impression formation, the self, stereotypes. Additionally, the associated lab activities provide basic skills in programming social cognition experiments using the Inquisit software.

Detailed program

- What is social cognition?
- Automatic versus controlled processing
- Dual-process models
- Social categories and category structure
- Mental representations
- The Self in social cognition: Cultural differences
- Attribution Theory
- Impression formation of individuals and groups
- Prejudice and Stereotyping
- Programming of social cognition experiments with Inquisit.

Prerequisites

None. However, basic knowledge of Social Psychology and Research Methods in Social Sciences enables a more informed use of the course contents. Students lacking such basic knowledge are encouraged to ask for a list of basic references.

Teaching methods

In addition to lectures, part of the teaching will take place through the discussion of scientific articles and lab activities, the latter dedicated to the acquisition of basic skills in programming social cognition experiments using the Inquisit software.

The material (lectures, slides and scientific articles) is made available on the e-learning site of the course so that it can also be used by non-attending students.

Attending students are given the opportunity to deepen their knowledge of the course contents through practical activities: (a) Brief reaction papers: Students have to use the information from the lectures and course readings to support a clear, logical thesis to demonstrate their understanding of the course materials by integrating concepts from the course with thoughts about their own life experiences. (b) Class debate/presentation of a relevant topic: students, divided into groups, read a few scientific articles on a debated topic in the field, and discuss the pros and cons of the argumentations with the rest of the class.

*** Lessons will be held in presence, unless further COVID-19 related restrictions are imposed. ***

Assessment methods

To verify the achievements of the learning objectives, the exam will be written, with an optional oral exam. The written exam will consist of multiple-choice, short-answer, and essay questions.

The questions aim at ascertaining the effective acquisition of both theoretical knowledge and the ability to apply them to reality. The answers to all questions will be evaluated in terms of correctness of the answers, and for the short-answer and essay questions will also be evaluated the argumentative capacity, synthesis, ability to form links among the different topics, and the ability to critically present the phenomena.

Lab activities concerning the acquisition of basic skills in programming with Inquisit will worth 25% of the final grade. Participation in the optional activities proposed during the course (see teaching methods) also contributes to the final evaluation (up to 2 points).

For students who request it, an oral interview will be also made available, on all the topics of the course, which can lead to an increase or decrease of up to 3 points compared to the written exam score.

Textbooks and Reading Materials

- Fiske, S.T. & Taylor, S. (2020). *Social Cognition. From brain to Culture*. 4th edition. Sage Publication. Chapter 1-3, 4 (from p.117), 5-8, 11-12, 15 (from p. 461)
- Gawronski, B., & Creighton, L.A. (2013). Dual Process Theories. *The Oxford Handbook of Social Cognition* (Chap. 14).
- Payne, B.K. (2012). Control, awareness, and other things we might learn to live without. *Sage Handbook of Social Cognition* (Chap. 2).

Additional material will be indicated during the course and will be uploaded on the course website.