UNIVERSITÀ
DEGLI STUDI DI MILANO-BICOCCA

COURSE SYLLABUS

Social Cognition

2526-1-F5109P005

Learning area

APPLIED EXPERIMENTAL PSYCHOLOGICAL SCIENCES

Learning objectives

Knowledge and understanding
• Understand the role that cognitive processes play in how people perceive, interpret, and remember information about themselves, other people, and social groups.
• Explain how cognitive biases affect social interactions.
• Acquire basic competence in conducting social cognition research using Inquisit.
• Develop skills in evaluating and synthesizing scientific sources to strengthen disciplinary knowledge.

Applying knowledge and understanding
• Analyze, evaluate, and integrate theory and research related to social cognition.
• Apply theoretical models to real-world phenomena (e.g., stereotypes, decision making, group processes).
• Identify and analyze with appropriate methodological skills the characteristics of different situations.
• Use problem-solving strategies to transfer theory into practice.

Making judgements
• Exercise critical thinking by identifying strengths, limits, and implications of theories and empirical studies.
• Reflect on own and others' experiences through practical activities (e.g., brief reaction papers).
• Evaluate ethical and methodological challenges in programming experiments in social cognition.

Communication skills
• Improve oral communication and reasoning through class and small-group discussions.
• Increase written communication skills through practical assignments and exams.

• Collaborate effectively with peers by presenting, discussing, and synthesizing course topics.
• Communicate research findings clearly in both oral and written formats.

Learning skills
• Develop autonomy in study through independent literature search and critical source evaluation.
• Strengthen self-regulation and metacognition by reflecting on personal learning strategies.
• Manage small-scale research projects, from planning to reporting.
• Build transferable skills (critical analysis, problem-solving, collaboration) to support lifelong learning.

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 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

The course will be held in person. Teaching will consist of 42 hours of lectures, during which student participation is expected and encouraged. There will also be 16 hours of practical sessions dedicated to acquiring basic programming skills for social cognition experiments using the Inquisit software.

The material (video-recorded 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.

As optional activities, attending students are given the opportunity to deepen their knowledge of the course contents through practical activities that take place outside the class lectures in the form of 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.

Assessment methods

To verify the achievements of the learning objectives, the exam will be written, consisting 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 be 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).

Textbooks and Reading Materials

• Fiske, S.T. & Taylor, S. (2020). Social Cognition. From brain to Culture. 4?? 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).
• Payne et al. (2005). An Inkblot for Attitudes: Affect Misattribution as Implicit Measurement. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 89 (3), 277–293.

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

Sustainable Development Goals

GENDER EQUALITY | REDUCED INEQUALITIES | PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS