

SPHR 4201: SOCIAL COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENT
CREDITS: 3 / SPRING 2016 / CLASS LOCATION: TBD

CONTACT INFORMATION

Instructor: F. Subiaul

Telephone: 202.994.7208 / **Office:** MON 204

e-mail: subiaul@gwu.edu / **Office hours:** tbd

COURSE DESCRIPTION

How do we come to understand others and navigate an ever-changing social landscape? This course will answer this question in three parts. The first part of the course will explore infants' understanding of social concepts such as agency, knowledge, relationships, ownership and morality. We will explore how these concepts develop in relationship with and independently of children's extraordinary social—imitation—learning skills. The second part of the course will focus on children's ability to imitate across many different domains and tasks. The final part of the course will explore how children's social concepts and social learning abilities underlies two distinctive features of our species: language and culture.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

By the end of this course students will be able to (1) describe the various concepts and areas of social cognition, (2) explain the classic and contemporary theories and methods of social cognitive development, (3) compare and contrast their strengths and weaknesses, (4) effectively analyze and critique the primary literature of social cognitive development, (5) formulate logical arguments based on that analysis and (6) deliver a presentation on a selected topic on social cognitive development.

COURSE MATERIALS

There are no assigned texts for this course. Empirical and theoretical (review) papers will be posted on Blackboard for each lecture (<http://blackboard.gwu.edu>).

GRADING

(i) Critical Thinking Assignments (500 points), (ii) Research Presentation (600 points), (iii) Class participation (100 points).

A 1000 – 940	B 860 – 840	C 760 – 740	D 660 – 640
A- 930-900	B- 830 – 800	C- 730 – 700	D- 630 – 600
B+ 890-870	C+ 790 – 770	D+ 690 - 670	F < 600

Critical Thinking Assignments or CTA. Students will complete a 10 CTAs *ONLY one page and no more than 200 words*. The key here is to learn how to translate complex information into clear, concise statements. Samples are provided below. (500 points, 50 points each).

Research Presentation. Students will discuss 2 empirical research papers in class. These should be based on a corresponding CTA. During the presentations students in addition to stating the hypothesis, null hypothesis, results and conclusion should also discuss the significance (broader impact) of the research and relate it at least one other theory discussed in class or the readings. Students will be judged not just in their abilities to summarize but the ability to critically analyze and evaluate the significance of the research and how they contribute to our understanding of social cognitive development. (600 points/ 300 points each).

Class Participation. Because this a seminar, students are expected to do the readings and regularly contribute to class discussion. (50 points).

COURSE SCHEDULE

Lectures Topics

1. Introductions
2. What is Social Cognition & What are Social "Concepts"
3. Methods & Theories of Infant Social Cognition

PART 1

4. It's Alive! Early Concepts of Animacy
5. It's Chasing Him! Early Concepts of Agency
6. Who's In and Who's Out? Early Concepts of Social Groups
7. Helpers and Hinderers: Early Concepts of Morality
8. Scary! Early Processing of Basic and Complex Emotions
9. Do you hear what I hear? Early Concepts of Knowledge & Belief
10. Like Me: Imitation in Infants
11. Critique of Early Competence & Alternatives

PART 2

12. Social Learning & Social Referencing
13. Varieties of Social Learning
14. Not like That! Learning and Enforcing Social Conventions
15. It's Mine! Ownership and Sharing in Childhood
16. Watch me! Imitation & Social Learning in the Object Domain
17. Do this! Imitation & Social Learning in the Gestural Domain
18. Repeat after me! Imitation & Social Learning in the Vocal Domain
19. Becoming a Super Imitator: From Emulation to Overimitation

- 20. What is imitation for? Learning Versus Affiliation
- 21. Critiques of Social Learning Research & Theory

PART 3

- 22. Are Humans *Really* Super Imitators? Social Learning in Non-Human Primates
- 23. Spreading Culture Around: Traditions in Non-Human Primates
- 24. Are Children “Cultural Magnets?”
- 25. Autism & Social Communication Disorders
- 26. Is Human Cognition Distinctly Social?

COURSE POLICIES

ATTENDANCE

Students are expected to attend all lectures and complete all assignments such as readings prior to the start of the class. Students will not be penalized for missing class. However, students that miss a lecture are strongly encouraged to download the missed lecture posted on Blackboard and notes from an attending student.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

This course will be conducted according to the principles and provisions of the GW Code of Academic Integrity. The Code states that “Academic dishonesty is defined as cheating of any kind, including misrepresenting one’s own work, taking credit for the work of others without crediting them and without appropriate authorization, and the fabrication of information.” The full code may be viewed at <http://www.gwu.edu/~ntegrity/code.html>.

POLICY ON RELIGIOUS HOLIDAYS

1. Students should notify faculty during the first week of the semester of their intention to be absent from class on their day(s) of religious observance;
2. Faculty should extend to these students the courtesy of absence without penalty on such occasions, including permission to make up examinations;
3. Faculty who intend to observe a religious holiday should arrange at the beginning of the semester to reschedule missed classes or to make other provisions for their course-related activities

SUPPORT FOR STUDENTS OUTSIDE THE CLASSROOM

DISABILITY SUPPORT SERVICES (DSS)

Any student who may need an accommodation based on the potential impact of a disability should contact the Disability Support Services office at 202-994-8250 in the

Phillips Hall, Suite 102, to establish eligibility and to coordinate reasonable accommodations. For additional information please refer to: <http://gwired.gwu.edu/dss/>

UNIVERSITY COUNSELING CENTER (UCC) 202-994-5300

The University Counseling Center (UCC) offers 24/7 assistance and referral to address students' personal, social, career, and study skills problems. Services for students include:

1. Crisis and emergency mental health consultations
2. Confidential assessment, counseling services (individual and small group), and referrals
3. INFO: <http://gwired.gwu.edu/counsel/CounselingServices/AcademicSupportServices>

SECURITY

In the case of an emergency, if at all possible, the class should shelter in place. If the building that the class is in is affected, follow the evacuation procedures for the building. After evacuation, seek shelter at a predetermined rendezvous location.

USE THE FOLLOWING (SPECIFIC) FORMAT FOR THE CTA ASSIGNMENTS:

ONLY one page and no more than 150 words. The key here is to learn how to translate complex information into clear, concise, and factually-specific statements.

CTAs have 3 parts: Hypotheses, Evidence, Conclusion. *Hypotheses* should make clear, concise and specific predictions. They should, generally, have the following structure: X causes/correlates/results in Y. X and Y should be something narrow in scope and clear to most educated people. Big, broad open-ended topics make for poor hypotheses. The relationship between X and Y (i.e., the hypothesis) should be easy to falsify or reject if untrue. *Evidence* should be facts discovered through empirical/scientific research. Evidence should not be confused with expert opinion. Opinions represent an analysis (i.e., potentially an alternative hypothesis) or belief about the evidence reported. *Conclusion* should summarize the evidence in one sentence and clearly state whether the evidence supports the hypothesis and the null. Below are some examples.

Sample / Template 1:

- (a) Hypothesis: Language comprehension (hearing) and language production (speech) are located in different parts of the brain.
- (b) Null: Language comprehension (hearing) and language production (speech) are located in the same parts of the brain.
- (c) Evidence: (1) fMRI shows that speech production activates Broca's Area in frontal lobes and (2) speech perception (hearing) activates Wernicke's Area in the

posterior temporal lobes. Research on brain damages patients show that (3) damage to Broca's area affects speech production but not general language comprehension. (4) Damage to Wernicke's Area in the temporal lobe affect language comprehension but not speech fluency.

- (d) Conclusion: Given the evidence from fMRI and brain damaged patients showing that Broca's area is associated with language production and Wernicke's Area with language comprehension, we can reject the null and accept the hypothesis that speech production and language comprehension are localized to different areas of the brain.

Sample / Template 2:

- (a) Hypothesis: Reading atypical stylized fonts (italicized, bolded) leads to better learning than reading typical non-stylized fonts (non italicized, bolded).
- (b) Null: Reading typical non-stylized fonts (non italicized, bolded) leads to better learning than reading atypical stylized fonts (italicized, bolded).
- (c) Evidence: Research shows that participants (1) have better recall after reading atypical than typical fonts, (2) studied passages longer when fonts were small than when they were larger and (3) answered more questions correctly (improved comprehension) when reading a passage in atypical stylized fonts than in typical non-stylized fonts.
- (d) Conclusion: Together, results show that reading stylized (small, italicized and/or bolded) fonts has a direct impact on learning, improving recall and language comprehension. These results are consistent with the hypothesis and reject the null hypothesis.