Social Neuroscience and Culture
PSYC 180a
Fall 2016
Tuesdays & Fridays 11am-12:20pm, Brown 218
Psychology Department, Brandeis University

Instructors: Prof. Angela Gutchess
Contact information: Office: Lemberg 106; Phone: 6-3247
E-mail: gutchess@brandeis.edu
Office Hours: Tues & Fri, 12:30-1pm

I. Course Aims and Objectives:
This course serves as an introduction to empirical research on social neuroscience and culture.

Specific Learning Objectives:
By the end of this course, students should be able to:
- Understand how cognitive neuroscience methods can contribute to the understanding of social processes. Compare and contrast different cognitive neuroscience methods and understand at a general level how these methods operate
- Consider the ways in which culture can shape cognitive and social processes.
- Understand some of the challenges facing the use of experimental methods to study culture and social processes; interpret relevant data.
- Critically evaluate and synthesize research and methods on social neuroscience and culture.
- Apply laboratory research to “real world” scenarios and everyday life.

II. Format and Procedures:
The assigned readings will focus on primary research papers. The course will be structured using a combination of instructor- and student-led activities, with both leading class discussions.

Students are expected to participate actively in class discussions. I encourage you to take this opportunity to explore your strengths and weaknesses as a learner in a classroom setting. Reflect on how you can further push yourself to express your thoughts in different ways that will improve your comprehension of the material, your interpersonal communication skills, and your classmates’ insights into the course topics.

III. Course Schedule:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aug 26</td>
<td>Overview of course</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aug 30; Sept 2; Sept 6</td>
<td>Intro to Soc Neuro; fMRI Methods; Culture overview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sept 9 &amp; 13</td>
<td>Controlled &amp; Automatic Processes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sept 16 &amp; 20</td>
<td>Self</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Assignment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sept 23 &amp; 27</td>
<td>Empathy; Hierarchy &amp; Social Exclusion</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sept 30</td>
<td>No Class</td>
<td>Watch <em>Lost in Translation</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct 4</td>
<td>No Class</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct 7 &amp; 11</td>
<td>Trait inferences &amp; associations</td>
<td><em>Film paper due 10/10, @ 12pm</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct 11</td>
<td>Methods; work in computer lab</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct 14</td>
<td>Project work in computer lab</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct 18 &amp; 21</td>
<td>Impressions &amp; trustworthiness</td>
<td><em>2-pg proposal due 10/21, before class @ 11am</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct 25</td>
<td>No Class</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct 28 &amp; Nov 1</td>
<td>Impressions &amp; trustworthiness (con’t)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nov 4 &amp; 8</td>
<td>Social status &amp; popularity; Emotions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nov 11</td>
<td>Culture &amp; genes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nov 15 &amp; 18</td>
<td>Project work in computer lab</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nov 22</td>
<td>Culture &amp; language</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nov 25</td>
<td>No class</td>
<td><em>Thanksgiving</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nov 29 &amp; Dec 2</td>
<td>Culture &amp; cognition; Mental Health</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dec 6</td>
<td>Wrap-up &amp; Presentation of class projects</td>
<td><em>Final paper due Fri May 9th by 11:59pm</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**IV. Course Requirements:**

1. **Class attendance and participation:**
   
   **20% of grade** (attendance *and* participation)
   
   You are expected to attend each class, do the readings in advance, and come prepared to ask questions and discuss the material. You get one excused absence, no documentation or information needed. Beyond that, I do not waive attendance with the logic being that the entire semester will show your pattern of attendance (e.g., if you have a one-time emergency, your grade will absorb it, vs. having several absences). However, in the case of an emergency or extenuating circumstances that will affect several classes, please talk to me.

   For the participation portion of the grade, engaging in class discussions as an active participant is the most obvious (and objective) way to earn credit. However, I define participation broadly (e.g., office hour visits, attitude, and attentiveness) to allow for my subjective evaluation of your effort. If participation is lacking in class, I may require you to prepare written responses to the papers in advance of class. Based on past experience I have found that grading participation too leniently prevents me from recognizing exceptional effort in the class, which has led me to adopt this policy. The assignments will emphasize written communication skills, and I would like you
to foster your ability to communicate and reflect orally upon course topics. Please come see me if you find it difficult to contribute regularly to discussions, and we can work on strategies.

2. **Leading class discussion:**

**20% of grade**

Students will lead discussion on the assigned readings for one class. It is imperative that you do not simply lecture! Classes should be largely discussion-based; seek creative ways to involve your classmates and make the material relevant. In brief, you will be graded on coverage of major issues from the readings, critical evaluation of the readings (e.g., asking thoughtful questions; relating readings to broader topics), integration of additional material into class (e.g., reading supplemental material and bringing this knowledge to class) and creativity in your methods to involve the class. I am available for meetings in advance to assist you in planning.

Dates: Sign-ups for dates will take place during the first full week of class.

3. **Paper applying class concepts to a film**

**20% of grade, due Oct 10th by noon**

You will apply readings and themes covered over approximately the first month of the semester to a film, to be viewed during classtime 9/30 or earlier that week. Further directions on the assignment (approx. 5 pages) will be distributed in advance.

4. **Final research project and paper**

**10% of grade (proposal); 25% of grade (final paper); 5% final presentation**

Beginning in the 2nd month of the course, you will design and collect preliminary data on a cross-cultural research question in groups of approx 3-4 students. I will likely develop the methods and skeleton of the project that will be adapted across groups, and you will implement it in order to collect data online and analyze it. Some class time will be devoted to the project, but I anticipate that you will need to coordinate group work outside of class, too.

Although you will work in groups, **each student will write his/her own individual final paper.** I suspect these will be approx 12-15 pages, formatted like a final research paper. I will provide more details about the expectations and requirements before each deadline.

**Deadlines:**

- **Proposal – written as a group, approx. 2 pages,** due Oct 21st by 11am
- **Class group presentations** will take place on the last day of class, Dec 6th
- **Final draft** (individual paper) due Friday, Dec 9th at 11:59pm

V. **Policies on written assignments**

1. **Please use APA format.** Please talk to me well in advance of the deadlines should you be unfamiliar with this.

2. **Submit through LATTE.** I will create a submission portal through LATTE in advance of each assignment, and share this information with the class. Written assignments will not be accepted any other way.
3. **Late papers**: Papers turned in after the deadline will be docked 10% for each day the paper is late, starting after the time of the deadline. Individual extensions are not fair to your classmates, so please plan for deadlines in advance.

4. **Need some assistance with your paper?** I encourage you to write drafts of papers in advance and to consult with me if needed. I won’t read entire drafts, but we can discuss in person problems that you encounter. The Writing Program also offers helpful services: [http://www.brandeis.edu/programs/writing/](http://www.brandeis.edu/programs/writing/).

VI. **Academic Integrity**
You are expected to be honest in all of your academic work. The University policy on academic honesty is distributed annually as section 4 of the Rights and Responsibilities handbook. Instances of alleged dishonesty will be forwarded to the Office of Campus Life for possible referral to the Student Judicial System. Potential sanctions include failure in the course and suspension from the University. If you have any questions about my expectations, please ask.

Any work submitted by a student in this course for academic credit must be the student's own work, and be a unique piece of work created for this course. Do not submit work that presents the ideas of others as one’s own, fails to properly cite sources, and/or lifts sentences or ideas from the works of others. If you wish to bring in an idea or a quote from an outside source and are uncertain how to cite them, please feel free to ask me how to reference it, as well as to discuss overlap with other papers or projects. You have been warned. I will not hesitate to bring any student caught cheating before the Academic Judiciary Board. If you are at all uncertain as to whether something you are doing would count as cheating, ask me before you turn it in.

VII. **Accommodations for students with disabilities**
If you are a student with a documented disability on record at Brandeis University and wish to have a reasonable accommodation made for you in this class, please see me immediately.

VIII. **Course Readings.** Readings are posted on LATTE

**Aug 26: Overview of Course and Topics**

**August 30: Overview of Social Neuroscience**

**Sept 2: fMRI Methods**
Sept 6: Culture Overview
*There are many responses published to this article, which could help you prepare to discuss.

Sept 9: Controlled and Automatic Processes: Race Perception and Prejudice

Sept 13: Controlled and Automatic Processes: Culture

Sept 16: Self and Culture

Sept 20: Self and Social Neuroscience

Sept 23: Empathy

Sept 27: Hierarchy and Social Exclusion
dorsolateral prefrontal cortex increases the negative impact of social exclusion among those high in personal distress. *Social Neuroscience.*

**Sept 30: Loneliness**  

**Oct 7: Trait Inferences and Impressions**  
Todorov, A., & Olson, I. (2008). Robust learning of affective trait associations with faces when the hippocampus is damaged, but not when the amygdala and temporal pole are damaged. *Social Cognitive and Affective Neuroscience, 3,* 195-203.

**Oct 11: Methods for online and cross-cultural research**  
* TBA reading on online data collection

**Oct 14: Hands-on lab work**

**Oct 18: Impressions and Trustworthiness: Ratings across Cultures**  

**Oct 21: Impressions and Trustworthiness: Neural Response**  

**Oct 28: Impressions and Trustworthiness: Brain Structure**  

**Nov 1: Impressions and Trustworthiness: Individual/Group Differences**  
Nov 4: Social Status and Popularity

Nov 8: Emotions, Expressivity, and Culture

Nov 11: Culture and genes

Nov 15 & 18: Hands-on lab work

Nov 22: Culture and Language

Nov 29: Culture and Cognition

Dec 2: Connections to Mental Health