

New York University
CALL#: 31213
The Social Psychology of Visual Perception
Spring, 2010
Mondays, 2:00-4:00, Meyer 751

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

People tacitly assume perceptions are veridical representations of reality. Research, new and old, calls this supposition into question and instead suggests our vantage is clouded at best. With this class, we will debate an emerging field that combines the interests of social, personality, and cognitive psychology. This new and developing area of research offers evidence that visual perception is malleable. Perceptual experiences change with the perceiver's cognitions, emotions, goals, motivations, culture, surroundings, and other variables that have been traditionally considered exclusive to social, personality, and cognitive psychology. We will investigate the ways in which and reasons why the visual system does not represent the surrounding world in a complete and accurate manner. We will discuss work from leading experts in the field of social cognitive neuroscience explore the neurological mechanisms behind these effects.

REQUIREMENTS

Readings will be assigned each week and should be completed by Monday's class. In addition:

1. **CLASS DISCUSSION:** Given that this is a seminar, a large part of your grade is based on your participation in class discussions. The presentations and questions are meant to encourage discussion. This should be taken seriously and will serve as the major portion of your final grade. As a heads up, there should be no single paper that you do not comment on during class discussion.
2. **PRESENTATIONS:** Each student (individually, or in groups of 2 or 3) will lead the class discussion several times during the semester. This entails explaining the main points of each assigned reading, and generating questions and issues for discussion. You can use the questions that you will receive the day before class to structure the discussion.
3. **PREPARE COURSE MATERIALS:** Consider this like show-and-tell. The final project for this class will be a cumulative effort. All students will work together collectively throughout the quarter to gather and create course materials appropriate for undergraduate or introductory graduate student courses on this topic. Each week, discussion leaders and one student not leading that discussion will bring materials that elucidate the core concepts associated with or only loosely related to that week's topic. These materials will be collected throughout the quarter and combined at the end. All students in the class will receive copies of all materials to use as a basis for prepping a course related to motivation in the future. Show-and-tellers for that week should prepare the following materials:
 - a. **TERMS:** List, definitions, and citations for relevant concepts and terms. Format in Excel.
 - b. **CLASSIC STUDIES:** Prepare cheat sheet including citation, methods, and results for classic studies related to topics.
 - c. **MEDIA & AV:** Find relevant, exemplary videos or demos that could be used in courses and/or examples in the media of the topics being discussed.
4. **TALKING TO THE MEDIA:** One of the most challenging aspects of our science is communicating our research findings to the outside world. The easiest way to reach the largest audience is by communicating with the media and using them to disseminate our findings. Doing this, though, is an art. You will take one article either listed on the syllabus or that you came across that is directly relevant to this class, and prepare to disseminate it to the mainstream media. In addition, you will find public discourse about an article and discuss your reaction to the media attention it received. Detailed description of this assignment to follow.
5. **RESEARCH PROPOSAL:** You will develop a 20 page research proposal for an *original* project inspired specifically by the readings that you complete for *this* class. To receive a grade in the class within the normal timeframe, the paper needs to be turned in by the end of the semester. However, you may also make use of the "incomplete" option.
6. **NO REACTION PAPERS – NO DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:** The purpose of weekly reaction papers is to help organize your thoughts in advance of the class discussion and to provide external motivation to ensure you complete the readings by class time. I trust that you will take class discussion seriously and will complete the readings in advance of the discussion. Because I believe you understand the importance of this to the quality of all of our educational experiences, I will not use this type of external motivator. Please come prepared to discuss the articles and realize that the quality of your preparation will be reflected in your class discussion grade.

GRADING

Class discussion	25%
Presentation	20%
Course materials	20%
Talking to the Media	10%
Research Paper	25%

COURSE SCHEDULE

Papers listed in each section are ordered in a completely random manner—well, actually in the order I thought of them.

WEEK 1

NO CLASSES HELD ON MONDAY

WEEK 2 25-Jan

COURSE OVERVIEW

WEEK 3 1-Feb

WHAT IS PERCEPTION?

James, W. (1890). The perception of things. In *The principles of psychology*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press

Allport, F. H. (1955). Chapter 2: The problem of perception: Its place in the methodology of science. In *Theories of perception and the concept of structure*. (pp. 14-57). New York: Wiley.

Selections from: Rock, I. (1975). *An introduction to perception*. (pp. 2-7). New York: Macmillan.

Kohler, W. (1929). The viewpoint of introspection. In *Gestalt psychology*. (pp. 70-102). New York: Horace Liverlight.

WEEK 4 8-Feb

THE CONTROVERSY: MODULARITY VS CONTINUITY OF MIND 1

Pylyshyn, Z. (1999). Is vision continuous with cognition? The case for cognitive impenetrability of visual perception. *Behavioral and Brain Sciences*, 22, 341-365.

Bermudez, J. L. (1999). Cognitive impenetrability, phenomenology, and nonconceptual content. *Behavioral and Brain Sciences*, 22, 367-368

Cavanagh, P. (1999). The cognitive impenetrability of cognition. *Behavioral and Brain Sciences*, 22, 370-371

Crassini, B., Broerse, J., Day, R. H., Best, C. J., & Sparrow, W. A. (1999). The cognitive impenetrability of cognition. *Behavioral and Brain Sciences*, 22, 372-373

WEEK 5 15-Feb

THE CONTROVERSY: MODULARITY VS CONTINUITY OF MIND 2

Freeman, J. B. & Ambady, N. (2009). Motions of the hand expose the partial and parallel activation of stereotypes. *Psychological Science*, 20, 1183-1188.

Spivey, M. (2007). Chapter 5, Shoedinger's Cat Example. In *The continuity of mind*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Raftopoulos, A. (2001). Is perception informationally encapsulated?: The issue of the theory-ladenness of perception. *Cognitive Science*, 25, 423-451.

WEEK 6 22-Feb
 READINESS, DEFENSE, & VIGILANCE 1

Bruner, J. S. (1957). On perceptual readiness. *Psychological Review*, 64, 123-152

Zigler, E., & Yospe, L. (1960). Perceptual defense and the problem of response suppression. *Journal of Personality*, 28, 220-239.

Lazarus, R. S., & McCleary, R. A. (1951). Autonomic discrimination without awareness: A study of subception. *Psychological Review*, 58, 113-122.

Eriksen, C. W. (1960). Discrimination and learning without awareness: A methodological survey and evaluation. *Psychological Review*, 67, 279-300.

WEEK 7 1-Mar
 READINESS, DEFENSE, & VIGILANCE 2

Sechrest, L., & Wallace, J. (1964). Figure drawings and naturally occurring events: Elimination of the expansive euphoria hypothesis. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 55, 42-44.

Erdelyi, M. H. (1974). A new look at the new look: Perceptual defense and vigilance. *Psychological Review*, 81, 1-25.

Tamir, M., & Robinson, M. D. (2007). The happy spotlight: Positive mood and selective attention to rewarding information. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 33, 1124-1136.

Caseras, Xavier, Garner, Matthew, Bradley, Brendan P. and Mogg, Karin (2007) Biases in visual orienting to negative and positive scenes in dysphoria: an eye movement study. *Journal of Abnormal Psychology*, 116, (3), 491-497.

WEEK 8 8-Mar
 PERCEPTION FOR ACTION

Bargh, J. A., & Chartrand, T. L. (1999). The unbearable automaticity of being. *American Psychologist*, 54, 462-479.

Gibson, J. J. (1979). The theory of affordances. In *The ecological approach to visual perception* (pp. 127-143). New York: Hoghton Mifflin.

Selections from: Dollard, J., & Miller, N. (1950). *Personality and psychotherapy: an analysis in terms of learning, thinking and culture*. New York: McGraw-Hill.

Witt, J.K., & Proffitt, D.R. (2007). Perceived slant: A dissociation between perception and action. *Perception*, 36, 249-257.

Duffy, S., & Verges, M. (in press). Forces of nature affect implicit connections with nature. *Environment and Behavior*.

WEEK 9
 SPRING BREAK

WEEK 10 22-Mar
 ECOLOGICAL APPROACH TO PERCEPTION

Johnston, L., Miles, L., & Macrae, C. N. (2010). Male or Female?: An Investigation of Factors that Modulate the Sex-Categorization of Strangers. In *The social psychology of visual perception* (eds. E. Balcetis & G. D. Lassiter). New York: Psychology Press.

Montepare, J. (2010). "Cue, View, Action:" An Ecological Approach to Person Perception. In *The social psychology of visual perception* (eds. E. Balcetis & G. D. Lassiter). New York: Psychology Press.

Schnall, S., Zadra, J., & Proffitt, D. R. (in press). Direct evidence for the economy of action: Glucose and the perception of geographical slant. *Perception*.

Selections from: Tomasello, M., & Carpenter, M. (2005). The emergence of social cognition in three young chimpanzees. *Monographs of the Society for Research in Child Development*, 70.

WEEK 11 29-Mar
NEUROLOGICAL BASES OF SOCIAL VISUAL PERCEPTION

Discuss "talking with the media" assignment. Turn in document in class and be prepared to discuss.

- Todd, R., & Anderson, A. (2010). The Role of the Amygdala in Vision. In *The social psychology of visual perception* (eds. E. Balcetis & G. D. Lassiter). New York: Psychology Press.
- Viggiano, M. P., & Marzi, T. (2010). Context and Social Effects on Face Recognition. In *The social psychology of visual perception* (eds. E. Balcetis & G. D. Lassiter). New York: Psychology Press.
- Adolphs, Ralph (2008) Fear, faces, and the human amygdala. *Current Opinion in Neurobiology*, 18 (2), pp. 166-172.
- Tong, F., Nakayama, K., Vaughan, J. T., & Kanwisher, N. (1998). Binocular rivalry and visual awareness in human extrastriate cortex. *Neuron*, 21, 753-759.

WEEK 12 5-April
EMBODIED PERCEPTION

- Oberman, L., Winkelman, P., & Ramachandran, V. (2010). Embodied Simulation: A Conduit for Converting Seeing into Perceiving. In *The social psychology of visual perception* (eds. E. Balcetis & G. D. Lassiter). New York: Psychology Press.
- Wilson, M., & Knoblich, G. (2005). The Case for Motor Involvement in Perceiving Conspecifics. *Psychological Bulletin*, 131, 460-473
- Schubert, T. (2005). Your Highness: Vertical positions as perceptual symbols of power. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 89, 1-21.
- Winawer, J., Huk, A., & Boroditsky, L. (2008). A Motion Aftereffect From Still Photographs Depicting Motion. *Psychological Science*, 19(3), 276-283.

WEEK 13 12-April
PERCETUAL EXPERIENCE AS AN EMOTIONAL PRODUCT

- Weierich, M., Feldman-Barrett, L. (2010). Affect as a Source of Visual Attention. In *The social psychology of visual perception* (eds. E. Balcetis & G. D. Lassiter). New York: Psychology Press.
- Stefanucci, J. (2010). Emotional High: Emotion and the Perception of Spatial Layout. In *The social psychology of visual perception* (eds. E. Balcetis & G. D. Lassiter). New York: Psychology Press.
- Niedenthal, P. M. (2007). Embodying emotion. *Science*, 316, 1002-1005.
- Chouchourelou, A., Matsuka, T., Harber, K., & Shiffrar, M. (2006). The visual analysis of emotional actions. *Social Neuroscience*, 1, 63-74

WEEK 14 19-April
PERCETUAL EXPERIENCE AS A CULTURAL CONSTRUCT

- Isaacowitz, D., & Fung, H. (2010). Motivation Across Time and Place: What Gaze Can Tell Us About Aging and Culture. In *The social psychology of visual perception* (eds. E. Balcetis & G. D. Lassiter). New York: Psychology Press.
- Duffy, S., & Kitayama, S. (2010). Cultural Modes of Seeing Through Cultural Modes of Being: Cultural Influences on Visual Attention. In *The social psychology of visual perception* (eds. E. Balcetis & G. D. Lassiter). New York: Psychology Press.
- Ji, L., Peng, K., & Nisbett, R. E. (2000). Culture, control, and perception of relationships in the environment. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 78, 943-955.
- Gutchess, A. H., Welsh, R. C., Boduroglu, A., & Park, D. C. (2006). Cultural differences in neural function associated with object processing. *Cognitive, Affective, & Behavioral Neurosciences*, 6, 102-109.

WEEK 13 26-April
PERCEPTION FOR SELF-REGULATION 1

Veltkamp, M., Aarts, H., & Custers, R. (2008). Perception in the service of goal pursuit: Motivation to attain goals enhances the perceived size of goal-instrumental objects. *Social Cognition, 26*, 720-736.

Veling, H., & Aarts, H. (2009). Putting behavior on hold decreases reward value of need-instrumental objects outside of awareness. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology, 45*, 1020-1023.

Wieber, F., & Sassenberg, K. (2006). I can't take my eyes off of it: Attention attraction effects of implementation intentions. *Social Cognition, 24*(6), 723-752.

Papies, E. K., Stroebe, W., & Aarts, H. (2008). The allure of forbidden food: On the role of attention in self-regulation. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology, 44*, 1283-1292.

WEEK 13 3-May
PERCEPTION FOR SELF-REGULATION 2

Hare, B., Call, J., & Tomasello, M. (2001). Do chimpanzees know what conspecifics know? *Animal Behavior, 61*, 139-151.

Morales, M., Crowson, M. M., Neal, A. R., & Delgado, C. E. F. (2005). Individual differences in infant attention skills, joint attention, and emotion regulation behaviour. *International Journal of Behavioral Development, 29*, 259-263.

Mather, M., & Carstensen, L. L. (2003). Aging and Attentional Biases for Emotional Faces. *Psychological Science, 14*, 409-415

Richardson, D. C., Dale, R., & Tomlinson, J. M. (2009). Conversation, gaze coordination, and beliefs about visual context. *Cognitive Science, 33*, 1468-1482.

7-May
RESEARCH PROPOSAL DUE