

**SOCIAL AND COGNITIVE NEUROSCIENCE (PSYC 4345-003)**  
**Fall 2020**  
**Monday, 1:30-2:50 pm (online)**

Instructor            Dr. Hannah Volpert-Esmond  
Office:                103 Psychology Building  
Email:                hivolpertes@utep.edu  
Class time:           Monday, 1:30-2:50 pm  
Office hours:        Thursday, 2:00-3:00 pm

## OVERVIEW AND GOALS OF THE CLASS

This class will survey a broad array of topics within social and cognitive neuroscience, which represents a merging of social science questions with the methods and theory of cognitive neuroscience. I aim for you to finish the class with:

- 1) A broad understanding of human neuroscience methods.
- 2) A broad familiarity with a number of research topics in social and cognitive psychology that have been examined using neuroscience methods.
- 3) The ability to critically evaluate science reporting, seek out and understand relevant scientific sources, and communicate science to a general audience.
- 4) The ability to survey the literature on a particular research topic and write an empirical literature review (or summarize the empirical knowledge on a particular topic in some other way).

## COURSE MATERIALS

The course will be built on a combination of readings, videos (both from external sources and pre-recorded mini-lectures), and other source materials. In addition to reading empirical scientific articles, we will read chapters from the following books:

- Lieberman, M. D. (2013). *Social: Why our brains are wired to connect*. New York: Crown.
- Richtel, M. (2014). *A Deadly Wandering: A Mystery, a Landmark Investigation, and the Astonishing Science of Attention in the Digital Age*. New York: Harper Collins.
- Feldman Barrett, L. (2017). *How Emotions Are Made: The Secret Life of the Brain*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.

Note: PDF scans of all chapters will be provided, so purchase of the books are not necessary to succeed in this course. However, I still recommend getting a copy if possible. These chapters will be supplemented by additional empirical and review articles, which I will also provide PDFs of.

## COURSE COMMUNICATION

Because this is an online class, we will primarily communicate and meet through Blackboard. You will find all reading materials, assignment descriptions, video links, lectures, and other materials relevant to the course on Blackboard. I will make announcements regarding the course via Blackboard periodically, so please check Blackboard several times per week. **We will meet every week on Mondays from 1:30-2:50 pm.** These meetings are required; however, if you need to miss class, just let me know. In addition to meeting for class discussions, there are a number of ways for us to communicate:

- **Office hours:** In addition to class time, I will set aside office hours on Thursdays from 2:00-3:00 pm. Office hours are not just for people who are struggling in the course and

need extra help—they are also to create open channels of inquiry, ask about how to apply for grad school, give me restaurant recommendations, talk about a paper you came across, etc. Since we won't meet in person, I would love to have the opportunity to get to know you better, so please come to office hours!

- **Class Q&A:** If you have a question about an assignment, reading, or anything else about the course, there's a pretty good chance someone else has the same question! So if you post in the Class Q&A section of the Blackboard course, I will answer it there so that everyone can benefit from your question. You'll find the Class Q&A in your navigation bar in Blackboard under Announcements.
- **Email:** If there's something you want to communicate with me about in a non-public way, you can also contact me via email ([hivolpertes@utep.edu](mailto:hivolpertes@utep.edu)). I will do my best to read and respond to your email within 24-48 hours, although I am less likely to respond during evenings or weekends. When emailing me, be sure to email from your UTEP student account and please put the course number in the subject line. In the body of your e-mail, clearly state your question. At the end of your e-mail, be sure to put your first and last name, and your university identification number. To practice (and show that you've read the syllabus), please send me an email with a gif or meme describing how you're feeling about the upcoming semester—it will count as your first assignment (due by 6 pm on Thursday, 8/27). Here's some general tips for emailing your professors: <https://www.wikihow.com/Email-a-Professor>
- **Announcements:** Check the Blackboard announcements frequently for any updates, deadlines, or other important messages.

## GRADES AND PARTICIPATION

Your grade for the course will be based on reading quizzes, participation in discussion boards, a final research paper or approved alternative, and additional assignments. You can earn a total of **135 points** in the course with the following breakdown:

### Reading quizzes:

30 points

### Discussion boards:

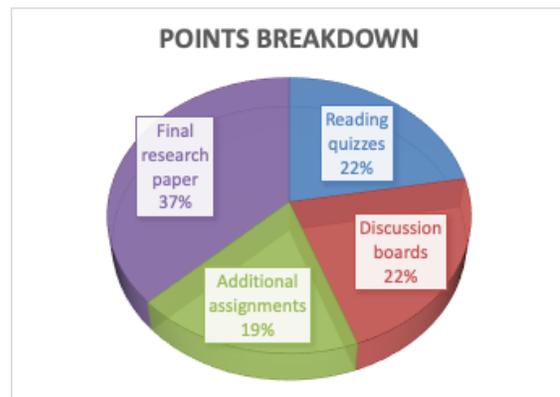
30 points

### Additional assignments:

25 points

### Final research paper or alternative project:

50 points



To calculate your grade, simply divide how many points you have earned with how many points are available to be earned to get your grade percentage. The following scale will be used to translate a grade percentage into a letter grade:

A = 90% and above

B = 80%-89%

C = 70%-79%

D = 60%-69%

F = 59% and below

### Reading quizzes

In some modules, you will be expected to complete a reading quiz that tests your engagement with the provided materials for that week. Quizzes will be administered via Blackboard and will be open book/open notes format (you may reference the course material when completing the quiz) but you may not consult with others in the course before or while taking the quiz. In each module where a reading quiz is assigned, **the deadline for completing the quiz will always be at noon on the Monday corresponding to that module.**

### Discussion boards

In some modules, you will be expected to respond to a given prompt. You should first compose your response to the prompt and **post your response as a new thread in the discussion board by 6 pm on the Thursday corresponding to that module.** I recommend composing your initial thoughts and posting before reading anyone else's posts, in order to avoid having your initial thoughts be influenced by someone else. Then, you will be required to respond to at least one other person thoughts. Responses should be thoughtful, relevant, and respectful. **Responses to others' posts will be due by noon on the Monday corresponding to that module.**

### Additional assignments

In some modules, you will have other kinds of assignments, like making a short video summarizing a particular reading, or keeping an emotion journal. Details about these assignments and due dates can be found on Blackboard.

### Final research paper or alternative project

The largest part of your grade will come from the final research paper, which will be on a topic of your choice that falls under the broad umbrella of social or cognitive neuroscience. The purpose of the paper is to write a review of the scientific literature that has been published on a particular research topic or question of your choice. To do this, you'll search for peer-reviewed journal articles that report investigations of this particular research question, and synthesize the information provided in each of the articles to describe the overall state of knowledge on that research question. As an example, let's imagine that you're interested in the topic of gender stereotypes and believe it would be important to understand how information about gender, as a social construct, is processed in the brain. In your review paper, you would want to introduce the topic of gender and gender stereotypes, review previous research showing the prevalence of gender stereotypes, how they function and how they influence behavior, and then discuss your particular research question related to gender stereotypes. For instance, are they represented in the brain in the same way as other stereotypes (e.g., stereotypes related to race or age) or other semantic knowledge (e.g., that birds can fly, but not all birds fly)? How do we form gender stereotypes, and does that learning rely on similar neural networks as other forms of knowledge or attitudes? What can neural representations about gender tell us about how men and women are evaluated in the work place? Then, your review paper would present findings from previous empirical articles that tell us something about the answer to your research question, and possibly finish with a "Future directions" paragraph or section in which you discuss gaps in the existing literature (i.e., what scientists still don't know). We'll talk more about specifics as the semester progresses. Because this may seem somewhat daunting, the entire process will be broken down into stages.

First, you will **choose your research topic and submit it to me for approval by 10/26** (5 points). This will be your opportunity to tell me what you think you would like to write about, but with the understanding that your topic needs approval before you go forward with it. In class, we will talk about strategies for picking a topic that is interesting and formulating an appropriate

research question to guide your search of the scientific literature.

Then, you will **search for 4-8 empirical articles relevant to your research question and submit a short bullet-point summary of each article by 11/9** (10 points). This is to encourage you to start the process at a point in the semester when you can still change course if need be. If there is not enough published in the literature about your particular question, you may have to pivot and change your research question slightly.

Then, you will **submit an outline for your final paper that shows how you are planning on organizing your review paper by 11/23** (10 points). This will give me the opportunity to give feedback on your organization and suggest areas of improvement. Writing is an iterative process that requires many rounds of revision, and the organization of the review paper is key in clearly communicating what you want to communicate to the reader.

Finally, you will **submit the final draft of your paper by 12/9** (25 points). Because of the numerous opportunities for feedback along the way, I expect all of you to be able to do well on this assignment and am looking forward to seeing the final products that you all come up with.

If writing a review paper is not the best way for you to engage with the written literature on your research topic and communicate the findings of your review with others, you may propose an alternative assignment. The sky is the limit for your imagination—you can propose some sort of infographic, video summary, or other creative outlet that shows engagement with the scientific literature on a particular topic, integration of the studies you read, and communication of the current state of our scientific knowledge on that topic to someone else. However, you will have to write a formal proposal that explains exactly what you are intending to do so that I can judge whether it is an acceptable alternative. This proposal will be due when you submit your research question on 10/26 and you will still be expected to complete the other stages (submitting bullet-point summaries of the articles you find and submitting an outline).

## EXPECTATIONS

### Participation in class

We will meet synchronously every Monday from 1:30-2:50 pm using Zoom within Blackboard. I expect you to attend class every week, to have read all of the readings and completed your assignments before class, and to be prepared to discuss your response to the readings with the rest of the class. Class will be heavily dependent on discussions rather than lecture, so I expect all of you to be active participants as much as possible. I prefer that you have your cameras on to facilitate connection with each other but I understand that may not always be possible or appropriate. If you must have your camera off, please update your profile in Zoom to include a picture of you, which will display when your camera is off. All class meetings will be recorded and provided on Blackboard so that you can review them or view them if you missed class. Please do not share these recordings with anyone outside of class.

### Late assignments

Assignments will be accepted up to 36 hours after the deadline; however, the assignment will be penalized 10% of the total score for every 24 hours it is late. I strongly suggest that you submit your work with plenty of time to spare in the event that you have a technical issue with the course website, network, and/or your computer. In general, I will work with you as best as I can, and if you are experiencing difficulties, please email me as soon as possible so we can address the problem as soon as possible.

### Extra credit

There will be some opportunities for extra credit throughout the course, which will be announced as they come up. Check the Announcements on Blackboard frequently so you don't miss these opportunities.

### Ground rules for discussions

Since our class time will primarily consist of discussions, it's important to set ground rules so that everyone feels valued, respected, and intellectually challenged. Please remember to follow these ground rules throughout the semester.

1. **Respect Each Other.** In order to create a climate for open and honest dialogue and to encourage the broadest range of viewpoints, it is important for class participants to treat each other with respect. Name calling, accusations, verbal attacks, sarcasm, and other negative exchanges are counterproductive to successful teaching and learning about topics. If something was said by anyone in class that made you feel uncomfortable, please talk to me about it (anonymous feedback is also an option).
2. **Discuss with the Purpose of Generating Greater Understanding.** The purpose of class discussions is to generate greater understanding about different topics. The expression of the broadest range of ideas, including dissenting views, accomplishes this goal. However, in expressing viewpoints, students should try to raise questions and comments in way that will promote learning, rather than defensiveness and conflict in other students.
3. **Don't Personalize the Dialogue.** Keep the discussion and comments on the topic, not on the individual. Don't personalize the dialogue. Rather than personalizing the dialogue, please direct challenging comments or questions to the instructor or the entire class.
4. **Agree to Disagree.** Remember that it is OK to disagree with each other. The purpose of dialogue and discussion is not to reach a consensus, nor to convince each other of different viewpoints. Rather, the purpose of dialogue in the classroom is to reach higher levels of learning by examining different viewpoints and opinions.
5. **Participate and Share.** Everyone is expected to share.
6. **Do not use any vulgar language or derogatory terms.**

### Diversity and inclusion

I recognize that within the class we each bring forth our own experiences and perspectives from our lived experiences. I aim to create a learning community in which those diverse thoughts and experiences are valued. I aim to value and respect your unique identities (including race, gender, class, sexuality, religion, ability, etc.). If you feel comfortable sharing, please let me know what pronouns you use and/or if you have a name that differs from the official course record. I realize we are living in tumultuous times and there may be times when your life outside the class affects your performance within the class. I encourage you to be open with me about these situations so I can be a resource for you. I want each student to be successful in this class and will do my best to support you.

### Copyright statement

The materials used in this course are copyrighted. This includes, but is not limited to: syllabi,

quizzes, readings, in-class activities, class notes, class recordings, and supplemental materials. You do not have the right to copy or distribute these items, unless I specifically grant you permission.

## UTEP POLICIES

### Academic Integrity & Scholastic Dishonesty

It is the official policy of the university that all suspected cases or acts of alleged scholastic dishonesty must be referred to the Dean of Students for investigation and appropriate disposition. Any student who commits an act of scholastic dishonesty is subject to discipline. Scholastic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to cheating, plagiarism, collusion, the submission for credit of any work or materials that are attributable in whole or in part to another person, taking an examination for another person, any act designed to give unfair advantage to a student or the attempt to commit such acts. Cheating or plagiarism in this class will result in penalties that may include a letter in the student's file as well as failing the course. The academic honesty code is available online at: <http://sa.utep.edu/osccr/academic-integrity/>

### Incompletes & Add/Drop

Incompletes will not be given in this course except under extremely rare circumstances that require documentation and adherence to University policies. The FINAL drop date without the Deans' approval is **October 30th**. Students will not be able to drop the course after this date without the Dean's approval.

## UTEP COVID POLICIES

1. You must STAY AT HOME and REPORT if you (1) have been diagnosed with COVID-19, (2) are experiencing COVID-19 symptoms, or (3) have had recent contact with a person who has received a positive coronavirus test. Reports should be made at [screening.utep.edu](https://screening.utep.edu). If you know anyone who should report any of these three criteria, encourage them to report. If the individual cannot report, you can report on their behalf by sending an email to [COVIDaction@utep.edu](mailto:COVIDaction@utep.edu).
2. For each day that you attend campus—for any reason—you must complete the questions on the UTEP screening website ([screening.utep.edu](https://screening.utep.edu)) prior to arriving on campus. The website will verify if you are permitted to come to campus. Under no circumstances should anyone come to class when feeling ill or exhibiting any of the known COVID-19 symptoms. If you are feeling unwell, please let me know as soon as possible, and alternative instruction will be provided. Students are advised to minimize the number of encounters with others to avoid infection.
3. Wear face coverings when in common areas of campus or when others are present. You must wear a face covering over your nose and mouth at all times in this class. If you choose not to wear a face covering, you may not enter the classroom. If you remove your face covering, you will be asked to put it on or leave the classroom. Students who refuse to wear a face covering and follow preventive COVID-19 guidelines will be dismissed from the class and will be subject to disciplinary action according to Section 1.2.3 *Health and Safety* and Section 1.2.2.5 *Disruptions* in the UTEP Handbook of Operating Procedures.
4. Students are not permitted on campus when they have a positive COVID-19 test, exposure or symptoms. If you are not permitted on campus, you should contact me as soon as possible so we can arrange necessary and appropriate accommodations.

<b>ADDITIONAL ASSISTANCE</b>	
<a href="#"><u>Classroom Support</u></a>	If you have a documented disability or need that requires assistance, please contact the Center for Accommodations and Support Services (CASS) by phone at 747-5148 or by email at <a href="mailto:cass@utep.edu"><u>cass@utep.edu</u></a> . Students can request accommodations virtually by logging into the Accessible Information Management system (AIM) using their UTEP credentials at <a href="http://cassportal.utep.edu"><u>cassportal.utep.edu</u></a> .
<a href="#"><u>Student Support Services</u></a>	Provides assistance with academic advising.
<a href="#"><u>University Writing Center</u></a>	Provides writing assistance and editing services. Students get writing coaching on specific course papers or projects.
<a href="#"><u>Financial Assistance</u></a>	Provides financial assistance (for example, emergency loans to purchase textbooks)
<a href="#"><u>Technology Support</u></a>	Provides technological support for students. This should be your first contact if you are experiencing problems with Blackboard or other university software.
<a href="#"><u>Counseling Services</u></a>	We all can feel overwhelmed at times; this is especially true during a global pandemic. I encourage all students to care for their mental health and visit the counseling services as needed. Services are being offered remotely.

## Course Calendar and Readings

<b>Introduction</b>	<b>8/24</b>
<b>Module 1: Background</b>	<b>8/25 – 8/31</b>
Readings:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Harmon-Jones, E. &amp; Inzlicht, M. (2016). A brief overview of social neuroscience: Biological perspectives on social psychology. In E. Harmon-Jones &amp; M. Inzlicht (Eds.), <i>Social neuroscience: Biological approaches to social psychology</i> (pp. 1-10). New York, NY: Psychology Press.</li> </ul>	
Assignments:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Read the syllabus.....</li> <li>• Discussion board.....</li> </ul>	<p><b>Due @ 6 pm, 8/27 (Thurs)</b>  <b>First post due @ 6 pm, 8/27 (Thurs)</b>  <b>Response due @ noon, 8/31 (Mon)</b></p>
<b>Module 2: Default Mode Network – no class this week!</b>	<b>9/1 – 9/7</b>
Readings:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chapter 2 in <i>Social</i></li> </ul>	
Assignments:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discussion board.....</li> </ul>	<p><b>First post due @ 6 pm, 9/3 (Thurs)</b>  <b>Response due @ noon, 9/7 (Mon)</b></p>
<b>Module 3: Attention control + Technology (Part 1)</b>	<b>9/8 – 9/14</b>
Readings:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chapter 11, <i>A Deadly Wandering</i></li> <li>• Chapter 14, <i>A Deadly Wandering</i></li> <li>• Chapter 16, <i>A Deadly Wandering</i></li> </ul>	
Assignments:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reading quiz.....</li> </ul>	<p><b>Due @ noon, 9/14 (Mon)</b></p>
<b>Module 4: Attention control + Technology (Part 2)</b>	<b>9/15 – 9/21</b>
Readings:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chapter 20, <i>A Deadly Wandering</i></li> <li>• Chapter 24, <i>A Deadly Wandering</i></li> <li>• Bermúdez, J. P. (2017). Social media and self-control: the vices and virtues of attention. In C. G. Prado (Ed.), <i>Social Media and Your Brain</i> (pp. 57–74). Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger.</li> </ul>	
Assignments:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reading quiz.....</li> </ul>	<p><b>Due @ noon, 9/21 (Mon)</b></p>
<b>Module 5: Social and physical pain</b>	<b>9/22 – 9/28</b>
Readings:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chapter 3, <i>Social</i> (pages 39-59, 64-70—everything EXCEPT the sections “What does the dACC really do?”</li> </ul>	

and “Our alarm system”)

- Chen, Z., Williams, K. D., Fitness, J., & Newton, N. C. (2008). When hurt will not heal: Exploring the capacity to relieve social and physical pain. *Psychological Science*, 19(8), 789-795.

Videos:

- Watch clip from documentary film Reject:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A3UTXsJzAj4>

Assignments:

- Reading quiz..... **Due @ noon, 9/28 (Mon)**

**Module 6: dACC and aversiveness**

**9/29 – 10/5**

Readings:

- Chapter 3, *Social* (pages 59-64—the sections you didn’t read last week)
- Inzlicht, M., Bartholow, B. D., & Hirsh, J. B. (2015). Emotional foundations of cognitive control. *Trends in Cognitive Sciences*, 19(3), 126-132.

Videos:

- What you need to know about ERPs

Assignments:

- Reading quiz..... **Due @ noon, 10/5 (Mon)**

**Module 7: Social groups, bias, and control**

**10/6 – 10/12**

Readings:

- Amodio, D.M. (2014). The neuroscience of prejudice and stereotyping. *Nature Reviews Neuroscience*, 15, 670-682
- Ratner, K.G., & Amodio, D.M. (2013). Seeing “us vs. them”: Minimal group effects on the neural encoding of faces. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 49, 298-301.
- Gonsalkorale, K., Sherman, J.W., & Klauer, K. C. (2009). Aging and prejudice: Diminished regulation of automatic race bias among older adults. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 45, 410-414.

Assignments:

- Discussion board..... **First post due @ 6 pm, 10/8 (Thurs)**  
**Response due @ noon, 10/12 (Mon)**

**Module 8: Theory of Mind**

**10/13 – 10/19**

Readings:

- Chapter 5, *Social*

Videos:

- Watch clip of Dr. Uta Frith:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N6ylH-LYjOM>

Assignments:

- Discussion board..... **First post due @ 6 pm, 10/15 (Thurs)**

Response due @ noon, 10/19 (Mon)

10/20 – 10/26

**Module 9: Empathy and Autism**

Readings:

- Chapter 7, *Social*
- Shield, A., Pyers, J., Martin, A., & Tager-Flusberg, H. (2016). Relations between language and cognition in native-signing children with autism spectrum disorder. *Autism Research*, 9(12), 1304-1315.

Videos:

- TedTalk: How I learned to communicate my inner life with Asperger's: <https://tinyurl.com/pcdprxb>
- TedTalk: What it's really like to have Autism: <https://tinyurl.com/yyxg4j8w>

Assignments:

- Discussion board.....
- Research question due (and proposal for alternate assignment, if applicable).....

First post due @ 6 pm, 10/22 (Thurs)

Response due @ noon, 10/26 (Mon)

Due @ noon, 10/26 (Mon)

**Module 10: Emotion**

10/27 – 11/2

Readings:

- Chapter 4, *How Emotions Are Made*
- End of Ch 6, *How Emotions Are Made* (pages 125-127)
- Chapter 7, *How Emotions Are Made* (pages 128-140)

Extra credit:

- Read: Kragel, P. A., Knodt, A. R., Hariri, A. R., & LaBar, K. S. (2016). Decoding spontaneous emotional states in the human brain. *PLoS biology*, 14(9), e2000106.

Videos:

- Intro to classical theory of emotion

Assignments:

- Vote for M12 and M13 topics.....
- 3-6 minute video summarizing readings.....

Due @ noon, 11/2 (Mon)

Due @ noon, 11/2 (Mon)

**Module 11: Emotion regulation**

11/3 – 11/9

Readings:

- Chapter 9, *How Emotions Are Made* (pages 175-189)
- Coan, J. A., Schaefer, H. S., & Davidson, R. J. (2006). Lending a hand: Social regulation of the neural response to threat. *Psychological Science*, 17(12), 1032-1039.

Assignments:

- Daily emotion journal assignment.....
- Reference summary due.....

Due @ noon, 11/9 (Mon)

Due @ noon, 11/9 (Mon)

**Module 12: TBD**

**11/10 – 11/16**

Readings: TBD  
Assignments: TBD

**Module 13: TBD**

**11/17 – 11/23**

Readings: TBD  
Assignments:

- Review paper outline due..... **Due @ noon, 11/23 (Mon)**

**Final review paper..... Due @ noon, 12/9 (Wed)**

Potential topics for Modules 12/13:

- Poverty's effects on the brain
- Anger and aggression
- Prosocial behavior
- Cultural neuroscience
- Loneliness and the brain
- Trait impressions and updating
- Social synchrony

**If you have a disability and need classroom accommodations, please contact The Center for Accommodations and Support Services (CASS) at (915) 747-5148, or by email to [cass@utep.edu](mailto:cass@utep.edu), or visit their office located in UTEP Union East, Room 106. For additional information, please visit the CASS website at <https://www.utep.edu/student-affairs/cass/>.**