SOCIAL COGNITION AND AGING
SYLLABUS FOR DEP 6409 (section 01DF)
SPRING, 2013  Psychology Bldg, room 129  Wednesdays 2:00-4:45

Professor:   Robin Lea West, Ph.D.
Office:         530 McCarty-C             EMAIL:   rwest.geron@gmail.com

Office Hours:  by appointment (best on Tuesdays or after class)

COURSE OBJECTIVES: The purpose of this class is to give students a broad acquaintance with the theories, empirical evidence, and research methods related to social cognition and cognitive self-regulation in aging. There is no textbook. This course will be taught in seminar format with readings and discussion each week. Lectures will be included, as needed, to provide introduction to important concepts that will aid students in their reading. This syllabus carries the course through spring break. Coverage of topics toward the end of the course will be driven by the interests of students and their specific research projects.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS: 1) five brief Comment Papers on the readings, 2) two take-home essay exams, 3) one research presentation, 4) class participation. Details can be found at the end of the syllabus.

Jan. 9  Introduction to the course and requirements

Jan.16  STUDENTS MAKE DATE CHOICES FOR ASSIGNMENTS, IF THEY WISH
Basic concepts; Leader: Robin West

Required reading:

Jan. 23  Overview of social cognition and aging; Leader: Robin West

Required reading:
Jan. 30  
**STUDENTS SELECT TOPIC FOR RESEARCH PRESENTATION**  
**Stereotyping processes; Leader: Carla Strickland-Hughes**

Required reading:

Feb. 6  
**Self-efficacy; Leader: Kim Smith**

Required reading:

Feb. 13  
**STUDENTS RECEIVE MIDTERM ESSAY QUESTIONS**  
**Goals and feedback; Leaders: Aylin Tasdemir & Hsiao-Wen Liao**

Required reading:

Feb. 20 RESEARCH TOPIC (final decision) AND 3 ANNOTATED REFERENCES DUE
Control beliefs; Leader: Josh Kirton

Required reading:

Feb. 27 MIDTERM ESSAYS DUE AT 2 PM; NO CLASS

March 6 SPRING BREAK

March 13 Beliefs and Training; Leader: Zamarys Roman

March 20  DRAFT OF POWERPOINT FOR RESEARCH PROPOSAL, WITH PDF FOR REQUIRED READING --DUE FOR APRIL 3.
Lifestyle/Activities and Cognition; Leaders: Paul Arthur & Sunil Swami


March 27  DRAFT OF POWERPOINT FOR RESEARCH PROPOSAL, WITH PDF FOR REQUIRED READING --DUE FOR APRIL 10.
Selection, Optimization, and Compensation; Leader: Lin Tian


April 3  Graduate student presentations of research proposals
**Leaders: Carla Strickland-Hughes and Zamarys Roman**
DRAFT OF POWERPOINT FOR RESEARCH PROPOSAL, WITH PDF FOR REQUIRED READING --DUE FOR APRIL 17.

April 10  Graduate student presentations of research proposals
**Leaders: Kim Smith, Sunil Swami, and Josh Kirton**
STUDENTS RECEIVE FINAL ESSAY QUESTIONS
DRAFT OF POWERPOINT FOR RESEARCH PROPOSAL, WITH PDF FOR REQUIRED READING --DUE FOR APRIL 24

April 17  Graduate student presentations of research proposals
           Leaders: Hsiao-Wen Liao and Lin Tian

April 24  Graduate student presentations of research proposals
           Leaders: Aylin Tasdemir and Paul Arthur

April 30  FINAL ESSAYS DUE AT 2 PM

REQUIREMENTS

COMMENT PAPERS- 50 points total, 10 points each:
Each student must complete 5 Comment Papers (10 points each) due by 2 pm, on the Tuesday before class. Late papers lose 2 points per day. Students should use the LAST 3 DIGITS of their UF-ID as a header and use no names or identifying information on these papers. Comments will be distributed to the whole class to facilitate discussion. The goal of a Comment Paper is to encourage all of us to think analytically about a topic before we discuss the readings in class. Students will be assigned to specific days for these papers so that they can plan ahead (request particular dates to do or not do these papers by January 16). Comment papers should be typed (200-500 words) discussions of the assigned readings for that day. Students have considerable choice in the approach they take to write comments, but these comments should integrate the readings for that week. Students may comment by comparing the methodologies used in the papers and suggesting new methodologies for this field. The comments may focus on a theoretical issue raised by the papers, or may consider how these papers relate to other topics already discussed in class or general psychological topics of interest to the student. Comments could consist of a critique of the selected papers, noting limitations in the theory or methodology. The important thing is that each Comment Paper should focus on no more than 1 or 2 ideas or concepts, and relate that selected issue to most of the assigned papers-- it should not be miscellaneous notes or just a summary of what the papers say.

EXAMS- 100 points total, 50 points each
There will be two take-home exams. Each exam will consist of 2-3 questions designed to encourage you to integrate the readings across different topics. The exam questions will be given to you at least two weeks in advance. All exams should be typed. Students should use their selected 3 DIGIT CODE as a header and as a file title and use no names
or identifying information on these papers. All papers must be turned in no later than 2 pm on the due date. Each essay should be 400-750 words. Late papers lose 5 points per day.

CLASS PARTICIPATION- 50 points total
Class participation includes a number of components. A) All students are expected to have spent some time with the readings before each class, so that they can contribute to an interactive class discussion of the readings every week. B) Each student will be assigned to be a discussion leader for at least one class (depending on the number of students enrolled, you could be assigned to do this as an individual or with a partner). Discussion leaders are expected to know the readings very well (theories, methods, research questions, key findings, problems/critical comment) and to have prepared, in advance, at least 3 questions for the group to consider. These questions should be integrative, if possible, in the sense that an issue raised in a Comment Paper would be integrative, tying together the assigned papers in some respect. C) Class attendance is expected. Students should have no more than one unexcused absence during the semester—for an excused absence, students should contact Dr. West before class to explain a serious illness, required travel for family emergencies, etc.

RESEARCH PROPOSALS- 50 points total
Each student will be required to complete a research proposal, designed to provide new insights into a specific research area, and present it to the class. Topics must be selected and handed in, in writing, by Feb. 20, along with 3 annotated references. An annotated reference is a copy of the abstract page of the article, including all citation information, and a one-paragraph statement describing specifically why you selected that article for your topic. You should identify at least one paper that the whole class will read in preparation for the research presentation. Approx. 50-60% of your presentation should be conceptual (that is, related to theories or important concepts in your chosen subfield) and the remainder should consider methods, hypotheses, and interpretation of expected results. Plan on a presentation of 30-40 minutes with additional time for questions/discussion. No presentation-discussion for one topic will last more than a total of 55 minutes. A draft of the research proposal powerpoint is due by 2 pm, when class starts, two weeks before the presentation date. Late papers lose 2 points per day. If the powerpoint is received on time, I will provide written comments and a detailed critique in sufficient time for students to revise and improve their powerpoint before their presentation date. A final copy of the powerpoint must be submitted the day before the presentation by 2 pm so that it can be distributed to fellow students for note-taking.
Students are permitted wide latitude in selecting research proposal topics. If you have a topic idea that is not listed here, please feel free to discuss it with me. In the list below, cognition is assumed to include any topic related to memory, attention, problem-solving or other aspects of cognition. Possible topics for research proposals include the following, but I am open to others as well:

Social communication (elderspeak)
Collaborative cognition
Cognitive intervention (in relation to beliefs/self-regulation/social cognition)
Culture and cognition
Emotion regulation and cognition
Correspondence bias
Social aspects of autobiographical memory
Stereotype threat in cognition
Possible selves, health and cognition
Performance expectations
Implicit theories and cognition
Impression formation/social judgments; trait diagnosticity
Motivational influences on information processing
Metamemory beliefs and cognition
Social problem-solving
Life goals in relation to cognition
Social-emotional selectivity
Cognitive strategies in relation to beliefs

OVERALL GRADING:
EXAM I  50
EXAM II  50
COMMENTS  50
CLASS  50
RESEARCH PROP.  50