Welcome to “Cognitive Sociology,” where we will venture to explore the fascinating relations between the social and the mental. Using classical and contemporary works in sociology, anthropology, psychology, history, geography, linguistics, and philosophy, we will examine the sociocultural underpinnings of major mental processes (perception, attention, memory, classification, signification) as well as the sociocognitive foundations of identity. In so doing, we will be drawing on major theoretical traditions such as phenomenology, social constructionism, ethnomethodology, symbolic anthropology, structuralism, frame analysis, and semiotics. Throughout the semester, you will use these traditions in a variety of substantive contexts, acquire an intellectually pluralistic perspective that promotes engagement with different theoretical perspectives, and produce original, thematically-inspired pieces of sociological thinking.

There are six books we will be using extensively throughout the course – Eviatar Zerubavel’s Social Mindscapes (ISBN 0-674-81390-1), Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann’s The Social Construction of Reality (ISBN 0-385-05898-5), Eviatar Zerubavel’s The Fine Line (ISBN 0-226-98159-2), Christena Nippert-Eng’s Home and Work (ISBN 0-226-58146-2), Wayne Brekhus’s Peacocks, Chameleons, Centaurs (ISBN 0-226-07292-4), and Eviatar Zerubavel’s Ancestors and Relatives (ISBN 978-0-19-933604-3). They have all been ordered through the University’s bookstores (the Douglass one as well as the Barnes & Noble by the train station). All the other required course readings are posted on the course website on sakai.rutgers.edu. You are expected to read all the assigned readings prior to the class for which they are assigned.

There are four written course assignments: a ten-page paper on attention due on October 9, a ten-page paper on classification due on October 30, a ten-page paper on semiotics due on November 20, and a ten-page paper on identity due on December 16. Each of these assignments will count for 25% of your final grade.

The Rutgers Sociology Department strives to create an environment that supports and affirms diversity in all manifestations, including race/ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, religion, age, social class, disability status, region/country of origin, and political orientation. We celebrate diversity of theoretical and methodological perspectives and seek to create an atmosphere of respect and mutual dialogue, and have zero tolerance for violations of these principles.
September 4  The Sociology of Thinking

Sociology and cognition; empiricism and rationalism; cognitive individualism and universalism


September 11  The Sociology of Thinking (continued)

The impersonal, normative, and conventional aspects of cognition; the social construction of reality; intersubjectivity; reification, essentialism, and ethnocentricity; language and typification; thought communities; cognitive traditions; cognitive norms; cognitive socialization; the politics of cognition

Zerubavel, *Social Mindscapes*, pp. 6-22, 100-10.

September 18  The Sociology of Perception

Sociomental lenses; worldviews and perspectives; optical communities; optical traditions; optical socialization; epistemic revolutions

Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago: University of Chicago
Zerubavel, *Social Mindscapes*, pp. 23-34.

**September 25  The Sociology of Attention**

Attention and inattention; noticing and ignoring; figure and background; mental focusing; framing; relevance and irrelevance; joint attention; the social structure and dynamics of co-denial; the double wall of silence


**October 2  The Sociology of Attention (continued)**

The social organization of attention; sociomental filters; the social organization of relevance and noteworthiness; norms of attending and disattending

Zerubavel, *Social Mindscapes*, pp. 35-52.

**October 9**

**The Sociology of Memory**

Collective memory; mnemonic communities; impersonal recollections; social sites of memory; norms of remembrance; mnemonic traditions; mnemonic socialization; mnemonic battles; plotlines and narratives; the social construction of historical continuity and discontinuity


**October 16**

**Classification**

Categories and boundaries; difference and similarity; lumping and splitting; rites of passage; mental divides and quantum leaps; mental distance: metric vs. topological; the rigid mind: compartmentalization, polarization, purity and contamination

Zerubavel, *Time Maps*, pp. 82-100.
Friedman, *Blind to Sameness*, pp. 80-86.

**October 23**

**Classification (continued)**

The fuzzy mind; culture and classification; the politics of classification; etics and emics; fuzzy sets and prototypes; hybridity and liminality; the flexible mind: essence vs. potential, ambiguity, polysemy

Friedman, *Blind to Sameness*, pp. 141-49.

**October 30**

**Symbols and Meaning**

Language and meaning; representation and symbolism: signifiers and signifieds, semiotic contrast


**November 6  Social Marking**

Asymmetrical experience of space; asymmetrical experience of time

Zerubavel, *The Seven-Day Circle*, pp. 107-08, 113-20, 133-38.
Zerubavel, *Time Maps*, pp. 25-34.

**November 13  Social Marking (continued)**

Cognitive asymmetry; markedness and unmarkedness; the explicit and the implicit; taken-for-grantedness

November 20  A Sociocognitive Look at Identity

Classification and identity; integrators and segmentors


December 4  A Sociocognitive Look at Identity (continued)

Mental weighing; marked and unmarked identities; identity lifestylers, commuters, and integrators; the cognitive politics of identity


December 11  A Sociocognitive Look at Identity (continued)

Lineage; kinship; bloodlines and blood ties; genealogical capital: pedigree; common ancestry; co-descent; genealogical communities: family, ethnicity, nationhood and citizenship; genealogical narratives: origins, “roots,” indigenousness, matrilineal and patrilineal descent, the one-drop rule; the social organization of relatedness; the politics of ancestry and descent; genealogical engineering: purity, assimilation, endogamy and exogamy, integration and segregation; symbolic kinship and descent