I. The Sociology of Thinking

January 24  Introduction; empiricism and rationalism; cognitive individualism and universalism; methodology; readings; assignments


January 31  The impersonal, normative, and conventional aspects of cognition; the social construction of reality; intersubjectivity; reification, essentialism, and ethnocentricity; a comparative approach to cognition; language and typification; thought communities; cognitive traditions; cognitive norms; cognitive socialization; cognitive politics

Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the
II. Perception, Attention, and Memory

February 7  Sociomental lenses; worldviews; perspectives; optical communities; optical norms; optical traditions; optical socialization; epistemic revolutions

Zerubavel, *Social Mindscapes*, pp. 23-34.

February 14  The social organization of attention; mental focusing; sociomental filters; the social organization of relevance and noteworthiness; framing; norms of focusing

Zerubavel, Social Mindscapes, pp. 35-52.

**February 21** Noticing and ignoring; figure and background; tact; taboo; political correctness; civil inattention; open secrets; conspiracies of silence; the social structure and dynamics of denial; the double wall of silence


**February 28** Collective memory; mnemonic communities; impersonal recollections; social sites of memory; rules of remembrance; mnemonic traditions; mnemonic socialization; mnemonic battles

Zerubavel, Social Mindscapes, pp. 81-99.

**III. Classification**

**March 7** Mental differentiation; boundaries; difference and similarity; lumping and splitting; rites of
passage; mental divides and quantum leaps; mental distance: metric vs. topological
Eviatar Zerubavel, Time Maps: Collective Memory and the Social Shape of the Past (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), pp. 82-100.

March 21 Order vs. chaos; the rigid mind: compartmentalization, polarization, purity and contamination; the fuzzy mind: mental integration

March 28 Culture and classification; the politics of classification; etics and emics; distinctive features; fuzzy

**IV. Meaning**

**April 4**  
Language and meaning; representation and symbolism: signifiers and signifieds, semiotic contrast


**April 11**  
Cognitive asymmetry: markedness and unmarkedness

Zerubavel, *The Seven-Day Circle*, pp. 107-08, 113-20, 133-38.
Wayne H. Brekhus, “A Sociology of the Unmarked: Redirecting Our Focus,” *Sociological
Zerubavel, *Time Maps*, pp. 25-34.

V. Identity

**April 18**  
Classification and identity; integrators and segmentors; mental weighing


**April 25**  
Marked and unmarked identities; identity lifestylers, commuters, and integrators; the cognitive politics of identity; identity careers


**May 2**  
The social organization of relatedness; genealogical communities, genealogical identities; the one-drop rule; the politics of ancestry and descent
