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, philosophy, and cultural studies, 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), Wayne Brekhus’s Culture and Cognition (ISBN 978-0-7456-7177-2), 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), 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 February 29, a ten-page paper on classification due on March 28, a ten-page paper on semiotics due on April 25, and a ten-page paper on identity due on May 13. Each of them 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, seek to create an atmosphere of respect and mutual dialogue, and have zero tolerance for violations of these principles.
January 25  The Sociology of Thinking I

The social and the mental; empiricism and rationalism; cognitive individualism; cognitive universalism; cognitive pluralism


February 1  The Sociology of Thinking II

The impersonal, collective, normative, and conventional aspects of cognition; the social construction of reality; intersubjectivity; reification, essentialism, ethnocentricity and contempocentricity; phenomenological sociology; language and typification; thought communities; cognitive subcultures; cognitive traditions; cognitive norms and cognitive deviance; cognitive politics: cognitive disputes, sociomental control; cognitive socialization; the social distribution of knowledge

Zerubavel, *Social Mindscapes*, pp. 6-17, 100-10.

February 8  The Sociology of Perception

Sociomental lenses; worldviews, standpoints, and perspectives; optical communities; optical norms and
optical deviance; optical traditions; optical socialization; epistemic revolutions

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

**February 15**  
**The Sociology of Attention I**

Attention and inattention; noticing and ignoring; figure and background; mental and moral focusing; framing: the out-of-frame; sociomental filters; relevance and irrelevance


**February 22**  
**The Sociology of Attention II**

The social organization of attention; the social organization of relevance and noteworthiness; attentional traditions; norms of attending (focusing) and disattending; attentional socialization; attentional deviance; joint attention; agenda-setting; co-denial; the double wall of silence

February 29  Classification I

Categories; delineation and separateness: boundaries; difference and similarity; lumping and splitting; rites of passage; mental divides and quantum leaps; the social construction of historical discontinuity; mental distance: metric vs. topological; rigid mindedness: compartmentalization, polarization, purity and contamination

Friedman, *Blind to Sameness*, pp. 80-86.
Brekhus, *Culture and Cognition*, pp. 59-64, 75-79.

March 7  Classification II

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


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

March 21 Classification and Identity

Identity and alterity; human and non-human; monosexuality, omnisexuality, and polysexuality; private and public time; home and work; integrators and segmentors; intersectionality


March 28 Symbols and Meaning

Language and meaning; semantics, syntactics, and pragmatics; semiotics; representation and symbolism: signifiers and signifieds; structuralism: semiotic contrast; message and code; the fetishism of commodities; conspicuous consumption; metaphor; analogy


Zerubavel, Social Mindscapes, pp. 68-80.

April 4  Markedness and Unmarkedness I

Marking; markedness and unmarkedness: the ordinary and the special, the typical and the unusual; taken-for-grantedness; assumptions and cognitive defaults; lexical absences: the unarticulated; semiotic asymmetry; semiotic subcultures; socio-semiotic conventions and traditions; socio-semiotic norms

Zerubavel, The Seven-Day Circle, pp. 113-20, 133-38.

April 11  Markedness and Unmarkedness II

Language and speech; semiotic engineering; semiotic inversion: unmarking, marking the unmarked; automatic and deliberate cognition: deautomatization; defamiliarization; foregrounding;
ethnomethodology; expectation and surprise

Zerubavel, *Hidden in Plain Sight*, pp. 82-89.

**April 18**

**Markedness, Unmarkedness, and Identity**

Marked and unmarked identities; semiotic weight; nouns and adjectives; naming and namelessness; the normal and the abnormal; the politico-semiotics of identity: semiotic disputes, semiotic exclusion, othering and abnormalization; genericization and neutralization; normalization and naturalization; cognitive hegemony; semiotic invisibility

April 25  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

Zerubavel, Social Mindscapes, pp. 81-99.
Zerubavel, Time Maps, pp. 11-36, 52-54.
Brekhus, Culture and Cognition, pp. 107-09, 149-60.

May 2  Memory and Identity

Periodization and identity; kinship; genealogical capital: pedigree; common ancestry; co-descent; genealogical communities: family, ethnicity, nationhood and citizenship; genealogical narratives: origins, “roots,” indigenousness, antiquity, out-pasting; 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; awakening narratives: sociomental elevators and staircases, the temporally divided self

Zerubavel, Time Maps, pp. 102-10.