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 five 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), Wayne Brekhus’s *Peacocks, Chameleons, Centaurs* (ISBN 0-226-07292-4), and Eviatar Zerubavel’s *Taken for Granted* (ISBN 978-0-691-17736-6). 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 21, a ten-page paper on classification due on March 21, a ten-page paper on semiotics due on April 18, and a ten-page paper on identity due on May 9. 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 17  The Sociology of Thinking I

The sociomental; empiricism and rationalism; cognitive individualism; cognitive universalism; the impersonal, collective, normative, conventional, and political aspects of cognition; sociomental control; cognitive pluralism; cognitive socialization; the social distribution of knowledge; verstehen


January 24  The Sociology of Thinking II

The social construction of reality; intersubjectivity; phenomenological sociology; language and typification; thought communities; cognitive subcultures; cognitive traditions; cognitive norms and cognitive deviance; cognitive disputes; cognitive conventions; reification and essentialism; ethnocentricity and contempocentricity

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

January 31  The Sociology of Perception
Sociomental lenses; worldviews, standpoints, and perspectives; optical communities; optical norms and optical deviance; optical traditions; optical socialization; epistemic revolutions; optical pluralism


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


**February 7  The Sociology of Attention I**

Attention and inattention; noticing and ignoring; figure and background; background persons; focusing; mental and moral focusing, focused and unfocused interaction; provinces of meaning; framing: metamessages, the out-of-frame; sociomental filters; relevance and irrelevance


**February 14  The Sociology of Attention II**

The social organization of attention; the social organization of relevance and noteworthiness; attentional communities; attentional traditions; norms of attending (focusing) and disattending; attentional socialization; attentional deviance; attentional battles; joint attention; joint disattention: co-denial, conspiracies of silence; agenda-setting; foregrounding


February 21  Classification I

Categories; delineation and separateness: mental partitioning, boundaries; difference and similarity; lumping and splitting; mental differentiation; rites of passage; mental divides and quantum leaps; the social construction of historical discontinuity; mental distance: metric vs. topological, mental compression and mental inflation; rigid mindedness: compartmentalization, polarization, purity and contamination, one-drop thinking; formal sociology: methodological implications

Eviatar Zerubavel, Time Maps: Collective Memory and the Social Shape of the Past (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), pp. 82-100.
Friedman, Blind to Sameness, pp. 80-86.

February 28  Classification II

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

March 7  Classification and Identity

Identity and alterity; human and non-human; monosexuality, omnisexuality, and polysexuality; private and public time; home and work; integrators and segmentors; the grammar of identity


March 21  Symbols and Meaning

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


March 28  Markedness and Unmarkedness I

Marking and labeling; markedness and unmarkedness: presence and absence, the ordinary and the special, the common and the exceptional; semiotic weight; semiotic asymmetry; taken-for-grantedness; the implicit: assumptions and cognitive defaults; lexical gaps: semiotic superfluity, the unarticulated; semiotic communities; marking traditions and conventions; socio-semiotic norms; marking disputes

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

April 4  Markedness and Unmarkedness II

Marked and unmarked identities; naming and namelessness; normality and abnormality; the politico-semiotics of identity: semiotic exclusion, pathologization and othering; the exotic; the basic and the derivative; deviance; the sacred and the profane; representativeness and generalizability: genericization, neutralization; normalization and naturalization; assimilation; dominance and unmarkedness; self-evidence and cognitive hegemony; semiotic invisibility
Zerubavel, *Taken for Granted*, pp. 32-59.

**TBA**  
**Markedness and Unmarkedness III**

Language and speech; language and thought; backgrounding and foregrounding: unmarking, marking the unmarked; naming and de-naturalization: nouns and adjectives, deautomatization, defamiliarization; awareness raising; ethnomethodology; expectation and surprise; mocking normality; marking shifts and assumption reversals: retronyms

Zerubavel, *Hidden in Plain Sight*, pp. 82-89.
Zerubavel, *Taken for Granted*, pp. 60-98.

**April 18**

**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, *Time Maps*, pp. 11-36, 52-54.

**April 25**

**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