Welcome to “Cognitive Sociology,” where we will explore the fascinating relations between the social and the mental. Using classical and contemporary works in sociology, anthropology, psychology, history, geography, linguistics, memory studies, 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, 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:

1. Eviatar Zerubavel’s *Social Mindscapes* (ISBN 0-674-81390-1)

I will supply you with copies of the first, third, fourth and sixth books. The other two you should get on your own. 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 three written course assignments, which I will discuss in our first meeting: a ten-page paper on attention due on October 14, a ten-page paper on classification due on November 4, and a ten-page paper on markedness and unmarkedness due on December 9. Each of them will count for one third 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, have zero tolerance for violations of these principles and have instituted procedures for responding to grievances.

Unless the situation changes, the course will be conducted in person. Other than during office hours, the best way to reach me is by email. I also make a point of being highly available on one-on-one video chats on either FaceTime or Zoom, so feel free to reach me whenever you want to talk.
September 2  The Sociology of Thinking

The sociomental; 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


September 9  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.

September 16  Concept-Driven Sociology

Concept-driven research; social pattern analysis; generic (formal) sociology; transcontextual theorizing; decontextualizing; focusing; epistemic readiness; sensitizing concepts; proto-concepts; generalizing;
exampling: multiple-cultural, multihistorical, multidomain, multilevel; extrapolating; analogizing: cross-cultural, cross-historical, cross-domain, cross-level; parallels ("Simmelarities")


### September 23 The Sociology of Attention I

Worldviews, standpoints, and perspectives; optical communities; optical norms and optical deviance; optical traditions; optical socialization; epistemic revolutions; optical pluralism; attention and inattention; noticing and ignoring; figure and background; background persons; focusing: intellectual, moral, and erotic; focused and unfocused interaction; framing: metamessages, the out-of-frame; sociomental filters; relevance and irrelevance

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

### September 30 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


October 7 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


Friedman, *Blind to Sameness*, pp. 80-86.

October 14 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
October 21  
Classification and Identity

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


October 28  
Semiotics

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


**November 4**

**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; semiotic superfluity, the unarticulated; semiotic communities; marking traditions and conventions; socio-semiotic norms; marking disputes


**November 11**

**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; dominance and unmarkedness; self-evidence and cognitive hegemony; semiotic invisibility


Zerubavel, *Taken for Granted*, pp. 32-59.

**November 18** | **Markedness and Unmarkedness III**

Language and speech; 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.

**December 2** | **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; 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: the temporally divided self


