

## **Psychology 607 - Perspective Taking and Empathy**

**Spring 2004**

Thursdays, 3:00-5:00, Straub 156

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### **COURSE CONTENT:**

What does it mean to take another person's perspective? If we put ourselves in someone else's place, do we really feel what she feels? Does having a more accurate perception of another person's state of mind make us more sympathetic to his plight? These are questions that won't be answered by this seminar--but they will be asked and discussed.

In this seminar, we will examine two related and sometimes overlapping concepts of perspective taking and empathy. The former is often associated with a cognitive skill, the latter with an emotional capacity. However, even a brief survey of the psychological literature on these topics reveals that the distinction between the two is often blurred, reversed, or not even made. In addition, both concepts have been studied as a stable individual difference as well as the outcome to a variety of transitory manipulations.

Although I have no objections to people exhibiting empathic behavior, the goal of this seminar is to examine and understand the phenomenon, rather than to serve as a "how- to" course (ask me about the nasty email a similar comment prompted a few years ago!). Given that my background is in social cognition, a greater proportion of the readings will be drawn from social cognition and empirical social psychology sources than one might assume with this particular topic. However, despite using social cognition as a starting point, the seminar will branch out into other directions. Furthermore, I am very interested in exploring other topics within the seminar that are related to the background and interests of the seminar participants.

### **COURSE OBJECTIVES:**

- 1) Overview of various definitions and measurement and methodological tools used in the study of perspective taking and empathy.
- 2) Sample both classic "landmark" studies as well as very recent readings on the topic of perspective taking and empathy.
- 3) Explore perspective taking and empathy as topics that integrate different fields of study within psychology.

4) Provide the opportunity for an in-depth examination of specific issues related to empathy and perspective taking. It is hoped that these opportunities will lead participants to pursue new research questions that either stem directly from the course content, or are related to participants' other research interests.

5) Provide a forum to engage in activities critical to field of psychology: the generation, presentation and discussion of ideas.

## **COURSE READINGS:**

Readings include recent articles and some classics. The majority are from social psychology sources, with additional sources from other areas of psychology. There is no textbook for the course. Readings are to be read by everyone before the seminar meets. Master copies of readings will be available in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor Psychology copy room (Straub 352). If you have problems with this arrangement, please let me know. If you know of legal ways that any of the readings are available electronically, please share them with other class members (I'll do the same). Unfortunately, a lot of the readings are from journals to which the UO does not have electronic access. Full references are provided for all the readings, so you may read them in the original journal or book if you wish.

## **COURSE REQUIREMENTS:**

**1) Class participation:** This course is a seminar, thus class participation is extremely important. Your contributions are part of the course material for other students. All participants are expected to read all required readings prior to class and be prepared to discuss them fully. In particular, participants should try to go beyond the information provided in the readings, raising new questions, critiquing methodology, and making connections to other readings.

As a formal contribution to each discussion, each week participants should prepare either a set of questions prompted by the readings that they would like to discuss OR an outline of an experiment to test some idea prompted by the readings. The goal of this assignment is to promote high level discussion of the current week's readings, but questions or ideas about previous weeks' material are not discouraged (especially if you can link past readings to the current ones). It's my hunch that if you actually have a hard copy of your ideas in front of you, you will be more likely to bring them up in class, so please bring a copy for yourself, but please also send your question/ outline to other seminar participants via email by 1:30 on Thursday (I will provide you with a class email list after the first class).

Because attendance is a prerequisite of in-class participation, please attend. If you know in advance that you must miss a class, I would appreciate it if you let me know. Keep in mind that your absence affects the quality of other participants' experience in the seminar.

**2) Leading Discussion:** Although you should always be prepared to contribute to the class, each seminar participant will be asked to lead discussion one week during the quarter. Part of the goal for leading discussion is to bring out the main points and issues of the readings but your facilitation should also go beyond summarizing the readings. When you lead discussion, you should include something to stimulate discussion that is not in the readings. This may be a topic related to your paper (see below),

an additional article or articles that you read, or something related to your particular area of expertise. If you draw on additional readings not on the syllabus, it would be very helpful if you could bring or email a list of the references to the class. You might link the week's readings to another area of psychology, apply the readings to a "real life" context or social problem, raise unasked and unanswered questions (and suggest possible answers), and/or identify emergent frameworks or recurrent themes. Please feel free to talk with me about your ideas for leading discussion.

**3) Research paper:** Each seminar participant will write a final paper in one of two possible formats:

a. You may write an introduction and methods section for an empirical study (or series of studies). If it is not explicitly clear from the theory outlined in your introduction, you should also provide expected results. I encourage students to use this option as a way to develop a viable research project that can actually be conducted. **OR**

b. You may write a theoretical paper about a topic related to the class. The theoretical paper should be Psychological Review type paper, outlining a novel theoretical interpretation of pre-existing literature (thus, this paper is NOT just a review of the literature).

Whichever format you pick, a description outlining what you plan to do for your paper (about a page or two) is due in class the week on May 20. I encourage you to discuss your ideas about your paper with me at any point. The first draft of your paper is due TUESDAY June 1 (not a regular class meeting time; we will arrange logistics). Each of you will read and provide feedback on the paper of another seminar participant and thus, each of you will be given feedback that you should consider incorporating into your final draft, which is due Friday, June 4 (4 pm). The final paper (either format) should be written in APA style.

### **GRADING:**

The course may be taken graded or pass/no-pass. In order to pass the course, each separate component (participation, presentation, and paper) must be at a passing level (non-compensatory model). If you take the course for a grade, your paper will be 60% of your grade and participation (weekly contributions, plus presentations) will be 40% of your grade.

### **OTHER DETAILS:**

As listed in the bulletin, registration for the seminar requires the instructor's permission. Psychology Department graduate students are automatically eligible.

If you have a documented disability and anticipate needing accommodations in this course, please make arrangements to meet with me soon. Please request that the Counselor for Students with Disabilities send a letter verifying your disability.

### **COURSE SCHEDULE:**

This schedule will be adhered to as closely as possible. Should changes occur, you will be notified.

## **April 1 - Week I. Organizational Meeting and April Fooling.**

## **April 8 - Week II. Definitions and Basics.**

Chlopan, B. E., McCain, M., L., Carbonell, J. L., & Hagen, R., L. (1985). Empathy: Review of available measures. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 48, 635-653.

Coke, J. S., Batson, C. D., & McDavis, K. (1978). Empathic mediation of helping: A two-stage model. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 36, 752-766.

Davis, M. H. (1983). Measuring individual differences in empathy: Evidence for a multidimensional approach. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 44, 113-126.

Eisenberg, N., Murphy, B. C., & Shepard, S. (1997). The development of empathic accuracy. In W. Ickes (Ed.), *Empathic Accuracy* (pp. 73-116). New York: Guilford

Ickes, W., Buysse, A., Pham, H., Rivers, K., Erickson, J. R., Hancock, M., Kelleher, J., & Gesn, P. R. (2000). On the difficulty of distinguishing "good" and "poor" perceivers: A social relations analysis of empathic accuracy data. *Personal Relationships*, 7, 219-234.

## **Apr 15 - Week III. Cognitive Mechanisms & Processes** (the "taxing" elements of perspective taking...hee, hee, hee)

Carr, L., Iacoboni, M., Dubeau, M., Mazziotta, . C., & Lenzi, G. L. (2003). Neural mechanisms of empathy in humans: A relay from neural systems for imitation to limbic areas. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Science*, 100, 5497-5502.

Dijksterhuis, A., & van Knippenberg, A. (1998). The relation between perception and behavior, or how to win a game of trivial pursuit. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 74, 865-877.

Hodges, S. D., & Wegner, D. M. (1997). The mental control of empathic accuracy. In W. Ickes (Ed.), *Empathic Accuracy* (pp. 311-339). New York: Guilford.

Ruby, P., & Decety, J. (2001). Effect of subjective perspective taking during simulation of action: A PET investigation of agency. *Nature Neuroscience*, 4, 546-550.

Sabbagh, M., & Taylor, M. (2000). Neural correlates of "theory of mind" reasoning: An event-related potential study. *Psychological Science*, 11, 46-50.

Singer, T., Seymour, B., O'Doherty, J., Kaube, J., Dolan, R. J., & Frith, C. D. (2004). Empathy for pain involves the affective but not sensory components of pain. *Science*, 303, 1157-1162.

## **Apr 22 - Week IV. Extending the Self to Others.**

Batson, C. D., Chang, J., Orr, R., & Rowland, J. (2002). Empathy, attitudes and action: Can feeling for

a member of a stigmatized group motivate one to help the group. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 28, 1656-1666.

Batson, D. C., Polycarpou, M. P., Harmon-Jones, E., Imhoff, H. J., Mitchener, E. C., Bednar, L. L., Klein, R. R., & Highberger, L. (1997). Empathy and attitudes: Can feeling for a member of a stigmatized group improve feelings toward the group? *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 72, 105-118.

Davis, M. H., Conklin, L., Smith, A., & Luce, C. (1996). Effect of perspective taking on the cognitive representation of persons: A merging of self and other. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 70, 713-726.

Galinsky, A. D., & Moskowitz, G. B. (2000). Perspective-taking: Decreasing stereotype expression, stereotype accessibility, and in-group favoritism. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 78, 708-724.

Levy, S. R., Freitas, A. L., & Salovey, P. (2002). Construing action abstractly and blurring social distinctions: Implications for perceiving homogeneity among, but also empathizing with and helping, others. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 83, 1224-1238.

#### **Apr 29 - Week V. Projection and self perspective taking.**

Keysar, B., & Barr, D. J. (2002). Self-anchoring in conversation: Why language users do not do what they "should." In T. Gilovich, D. Griffin, & D. Kahneman (Eds) *Heuristics and biases: The psychology of intuitive judgment* (pp. 150-166). New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.

Loewenstein, G. (1996). Out of control: Visceral influences on behavior. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, 65, 272-292.

Nickerson, R. S. (1999). How we know--and sometimes misjudge--what others know: Imputing one's own knowledge to others. *Psychological Bulletin*, 125, 737-759.

Stephenson, B., & Wicklund, R. A. (1983). Self-directed attention and taking the other's perspective. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 19, 58-77.

Van Boven, L., & Loewenstein, G. (2003). Social projection of transient drive states. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 29, 1159-1168.

#### **May 6 - Week VI. Culture & Gender Differences.**

Eisenberg, N., & Lennon, R. (1983). Sex differences in empathy and related capacities. *Psychological Bulletin*, 94, 100-131.

Cohen, D., & Hoshino-Brown, E. (in press). Insider and outsider perspectives on the self and social world. To appear in R. Sorrentino, D. Cohen, J. M. Olson, & M. P. Zanna (Eds.), *culture and social behavior: The Ontario symposium* (Vol. 10). Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.

Ickes, W., Gesn, P. R., & Graham, T. (2000). Gender differences in empathic accuracy: Differential

ability or differential motivation? *Personal Relationships*, 7, 95-109.

Klein, K. J. K., & Hodges, S. D. (2001). Gender differences, motivation and empathic accuracy: When it pays to understand. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 27, 720-730.

Vorauer, J. D., & Cameron, J. J. (2002). So close, and yet so far: Does collectivism foster transparency overestimation? *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 83, 1344-1352.

### **May 13 - Week VII. Empathy & Shared Experience.**

Batson, D. C., Sympson, S. C., Hindman, J. L., Decruz, P., Todd, R. M., Weeks, J. L., Jennings, G., & Burris, C. T. (1996). "I've been there, too": Effect on empathy of prior experience with a need. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 22, 474-482.

Hodges, S. D., Klein, K. J. K., Veach, D., & Villanueva, R. (2004). Giving birth to empathy: The effects of similar experience on empathic accuracy, empathic concern, and perceived empathy. Unpublished manuscript, University of Oregon.

Houston, D. A. (1990). Empathy and the self: Cognitive and emotional influences on the evaluation of negative affect in others. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 59, 859-868.

Mendoza, R. J. (1996). Introduction to the topic of empathy. Unpublished manuscript, Stanford University.

Pistrang, N., Solomons, W., & Barker, C. (1999). Peer support for women with breast cancer: The role of empathy and self-disclosure. *Journal of Community and Applied Social Psychology*, 9, 217-229.

Stinson, L., & Ickes, W. (1992). Empathic accuracy in the interactions of male friends versus male strangers. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 62, 787-797.

### **May 20 - Week VIII. Empathy & Conflict.**

Bjoerkqvist, K., Oesterman, K., & Kaukiainen, A. (2000). Social intelligence - empathy = aggression? *Aggression and Violent Behavior*, 5, 191-200.

Kemmelmeier, M. & Winter, D. G. (2000). Putting threat into perspective: Experimental studies on perceptual distortion in international conflict. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 26, 795-809.

Lanzetta, J. T., & Englis, B. G. (1989). Expectations of cooperation and competition and their effects on observers' vicarious emotional responses. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 56, 543-554.

Zechmeister, J. S., & Romero, C. (2002). Victim and offender accounts of interpersonal conflict: Autobiographical narratives of forgiveness and unforgiveness. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 82, 675-686.

Evolution and empathy reading, TBA

### **May 27 - Week IX. Empathy Costs.**

Batson, C. D., Early, S., & Salvarani, G. (1997). Perspective taking: Imagining how another feels versus imagining how you would feel. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 23, 751-758.

Fritz, H. L., & Helgeson, V. S. (1998). Distinctions of unmitigated communion from communion: Self-neglect and overinvolvement with others. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 75, 121-140.

Hodges, S. D. & Klein, K. J. K. (2001). Regulating the costs of empathy: The price of being human. *Journal of Socioeconomics*, 30, 437-452.

Maner, J. K., Luce, C. L., Neuberg, S. L., Cialdini, R. B., Brown, S., & Sagarin, B. J. (2002). The effects of perspective taking on motivations for helping: Still no evidence for altruism. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 28, 1601-1610.

Shaw, L. L., Batson, C. D., & Todd, R. M. (1994). Empathy avoidance: Forestalling feeling for another in order to escape the motivational consequences. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 67, 879-887.

### **June 3 - Week X. Empathy & Close Relationships**

Arriaga, X. B., & Rusbult, C. E. (1998). Standing in my partner's shoes: Partner perspective taking and reactions to accommodative dilemmas. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 24, 927-948.

Simpson, J. A., Ickes, W., & Blackstone, T. (1995). When the head protects the heart: Empathic accuracy in dating relationships. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 69, 629-641.

Simpson, J. A., Orina, M. M., & Ickes, W. (2003). When accuracy hurts, and when it helps: A test of the empathic accuracy model in marital interactions. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 85, 881-893.

Kilpatrick, S. D., Bissonnette, V. L., & Rusbult, C. E. (2002). Empathic accuracy and accommodative behavior among newly married couples. *Personal Relationships*, 9, 369-393.

Mikulincer, M., Gillath, O., Halevy, V., Avihou, N., Avidan, S., & Eshkoli, N. (2001). Attachment theory and reactions to others' needs: Evidence that activation of the sense of attachment security promotes empathic responses. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 81, 1205-1224.