



COURSE UNIT INFORMATION SHEET (SYLLABUS)

2020/2021

Name Motivated Thinking
Teaching staff (Also indicate the Professor in charge) André Mata
ECTS 6
Functioning 2 theoretical + 2 practical hours weekly, and a research project
Learning goals Students should fulfill the following learning goals (LG): LG1 - Demonstrate that they understand the psychological processes involved in motivated thinking and the fundamental debates in this literature. LG2 - Think critically about research in the field of motivated thinking. LG3 - Generate new hypotheses in the field of motivated thinking and plan research to test them. LG4 - Understand / predict the implications of motivated thinking for applied domains.
Skills to be developed - Critical reading, thinking and discussion about research on motivated thinking. - Research skills: Generate and test new hypotheses on the topic of motivated thinking.



- Application of fundamental knowledge: There is also the possibility of exploring implications for applied domains.

Prerequisites (precedences) *

None

Contents

1. Introduction to motivated thinking:

1a. Scope

1b. Basic concepts

2. Comparative biases: How we think we are better than others

2a. The better-than-average effect

2b. Unrealistic optimism

2c. Strategies for self-enhancement: Redefining the self, others, and social concepts

3. Reasoning: How we believe in favorable information and reject unfavorable information

3a. Self-serving attribution

3b. Selective attention/exposure

3c. Strategic thinking: Regulation of quantity and quality of processing

4. Memory: How we remember the good things but not the bad things

4a. Selective recall

4b. Reconstruction of the past

5. Forecasting: How we expect the future to be favorable

5a. Theories of change

5b. Motivated affective forecasting

5c. Heuristics for forecasting sports results



6. Perception: How we see what we want to see

6a. Ambiguous figures

6b. The positivity-proximity hypothesis

7. Language: How we manipulate the world through language

8. Self-deception: How we deceive ourselves (though not always)

8a. The problem of self-deception and solutions

8b. Plausibility constraints

8c. Conclusion

Bibliography

Baumeister, R.F., & Newman, L. S. (1994). Self-regulation of cognitive inference and decision processes. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 20, 3-19.

Helzer, E. G., & Dunning, D. (2012). On motivated reasoning and self-belief. In S. Vazire & T. D. Wilson (Eds.), *Handbook of self-knowledge* (pp. 379-396). New York: Guilford.

Kunda, Z. (1990). The case for motivated reasoning. *Psychological Bulletin*, 108, 480-498.

Molden, D. C., & Higgins, E. T. (2005). Motivated thinking. In K. Holyoak & R. G. Morrison (Eds.), *The Cambridge Handbook of Thinking and Reasoning* (pp. 295-320). New York: Cambridge University Press.

(Texts specific to each topic will be made available in each class)

Teaching methods

In the first part of the course, students will get to know and discuss past research on motivated thinking. For each topic, there will be a discussion of a fundamental research article. After this discussion, I will present and discuss other studies and problems related to this topic.

In the second part of the course, students will generate new hypotheses on the topic of motivated thinking and, together with me, think of ways to test them. The aim is to develop students' research skills.

Evaluation Regimes (General and/or Alternative)



General

Alternative evaluation regime to be adopted in the event of a new state of emergency: The evaluation elements "Discussion of research articles" and "Research report" (see below) will be delivered via email, in group assignments. The "Written exam" element will be carried out on an online platform, individually.

Evaluation Elements

(Dates due, weights, minimum required grades)

Discussion of research articles (1/3 of the final grade)

Written exam (1/3 of final grade)

Research report (1/3 of the final grade)

Passing the course requires the mandatory completion of all the evaluation elements, with a classification equal to or greater than 9.5 values for each evaluation element.

Rules for grade improvement

Possible for the 2nd and 3rd evaluative elements: exam and report.

Rules for students having previously failed the course unit *

Requirements on attendance and punctuality

Students must attend at least 2/3 of the classes in order to perform the 1st evaluation element.

Rules for special students

(workers, elite athletes, student body leaders, military, fathers/mothers, with special needs) *

Language of instruction

Portuguese (or English, if students prefer)

Disciplinary violations and penalties



According to the Evaluation of Learning Regulation of the Faculty of Psychology of the University of Lisbon, the following behaviors are considered as disciplinary offenses subject to disciplinary action:

- a) To use or attempt to use materials, information, notes, study resources or other objects and equipment not authorized in academic exercises;
- b) To help or try to help a colleague in committing a disciplinary offense;
- c) To submit the same written work for evaluation in different course units without permission from the instructors, even if with minor changes;
- d) To present someone else's work as one's own;
- e) To forge, or change without permission from the author, any information or citation in an academic work;
- f) To interfere, change or attempt to change grades;
- g) To try to prevent or interfere with the proper functioning of classes, research or other academic activities;
- h) To make false accusations regarding instructors, governance bodies, other students or non-teaching staff of the FPUL;
- i) To falsify signatures in attendance sheets, documents relating to evaluation elements or in any official document relating to an academic process or status.

Disciplinary offenses committed in any assessment element can lead to its annulment, and must be reported to the Pedagogical Council or, considering their gravity and repetition, may lead to other penalties, to be determined by the Rector of the University of Lisbon.

* If applicable