

COURSE UNIT INFORMATION SHEET (SYLLABUS)**2021/2022****Study Programme** ___**Masters in Cognitive and social psychology**_____

Name Motivated Thinking
Teaching staff (Also indicate the Professor in charge) André Mata
ECTS 6
Functioning In the first part of the course, students will get to know and discuss past research on motivated reasoning. For each topic, there will be a discussion of a research paper. After that, the professor will present and discuss other findings related to that topic. In the second part of the course, students will generate new hypotheses on the topic of motivated reasoning and, together with the professor, think of ways of testing them. The goal here is to develop students' research skills.
Learning goals Students that successfully finish this CU will be able to attain the following Learning Goals (LG): LG1 – Demonstrate an understanding of the psychological processes involved in motivated thinking, as well as of the major debates in this literature. LG2 – Think critically about past 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/foresee 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 the possibility to explore implications for applied domains.

Prerequisites (precedences) *

Contents

1. Introduction to motivated thinking:
 - a. Scope
 - b. Basic concepts
2. Comparative biases: How we come to think that we are better than others
 - a. The better-than-average effect
 - b. Unrealistic optimism
 - c. Strategies for self-enhancement: Redefining the self, others and social concepts
3. Reasoning: How we come believe in favorable information and discredit unfavorable information
 - a. Defensive attribution
 - b. Selective attention/exposure
 - c. Strategic thinking: Regulating quantity and quality of processing
4. Memory: How we remember the good but not the bad
 - a. Selective recall
 - b. Reconstructing the past
5. Forecasting: How we come to expect the future to be favorable
 - a. Theories of change
 - b. Heuristics for prediction of sports results
6. Perception: How we see what we want to see
 - a. Ambiguous images
 - b. The positivity-proximity hypothesis
7. Language: How we manipulate the world through language



8. Self-deception: How we manage to trick ourselves (though not always)

- a. The problem of self-deception and solutions
- b. Plausibility constraints
- c. 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.

Mata, A., Sherman, S. J., Ferreira, M. B., & Mendonça, C. (2015). Strategic numeracy: Self-serving reasoning about health statistics. *Basic and Applied Social Psychology*, 37, 165-173.

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.

Sloman, S. A., Fernbach, P. M., & Hagemayer, Y. (2010). Self-deception requires vagueness. *Cognition*, 115, 268-281.

Stanley, M. L., & De Brigard, F. (2019). Moral memories and the belief in the good self. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 28, 387-391.

Teaching methods

The teaching methodologies were specifically devised to serve the learning goals:

- For each topic, there will be a discussion of a research paper. This is meant to introduce students to research on the Psychology of motivated thinking (related to LG1), and to prompt them to engage in critical thinking and discussion about research in the field of motivated thinking (related to LG2).
- After that discussion, the professor will present and discuss other findings related to that topic. This presentation is meant to cover a comprehensive body of research on the Psychology of motivated thinking, from early fundamental research to the most recent research on this topic (related to LG1, LG3 and LG4).
- Finally, students will generate new hypotheses on the topic of motivated thinking, with a particular focus on implications for economics and business (related to LG3 and LG4).

Evaluation Regimes (General and/or Alternative)

General

Evaluation Elements



(Dates due, weights, minimum required grades)

Discussion of research papers (1/3 of the grade);

Written individual exam (1/3);

Research report (1/3).

Minimum grade for all elements: 9.5

Rules for grade improvement

Improvement is possible for the research report and the exam.

Rules for students having previously failed the course unit *

Requirements on attendance and punctuality

Students are expected to be punctual and to attend at least 2/3 of all classes

Rules for special students

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

Language of instruction

Portuguese (but all evaluation elements can be done in English).

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