



MASTERS OF COGNITIVE AND SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY
COURSE UNIT INFORMATION SHEET (SYLLABUS)

2021/2022

Name

Situated Cognition

Teaching staff

(Also indicate the Professor in charge)

Tomás Palma (Professor in charge)

Mário Boto Ferreira

ECTS

6 ECTS

Functioning

1 theoretical lecture per week (2 hours) + 1 practical lecture per week (2 hours)

Learning goals

The Situated Cognition questions the individualistic conceptions of Social Cognition, defending the situated character of cognition and, consequently, of action. By retaking and reformulating some past ideas of Social Psychology, situated cognition promotes the redefinition and reframing of the investigation and analysis of cognition and human action. From this new conception, the following assumptions emerge: 1) cognition is functional; 2) cognition is permeable to different situations and contexts; 3) cognition is distributed across objects and persons; 4) cognition draws on sensory and motor systems (i.e., is embodied).

In this UC will be discussed each one of the assumptions mentioned above, the empirical evidence that supports them as well as their main theoretical models. Will also be addressed and discussed some of the criticisms commonly made to situated cognition, as well as their contributions to the understanding of psychological processes.



The primary objective of this UC is to provide students with the opportunity to get in touch and/or deepen their knowledge with the approach of Situated Cognition, and with some of the central themes in which it has focused. This UC seeks to complement the knowledge acquired within the scope of the UC of Social Cognition.

The student should meet the following learning objectives:

- i) Understand the key assumptions of Situated Cognition and be able to integrate them with knowledge about Social Cognition and Social Psychology;
- ii) To be able to discuss the conclusions and methods of the experiments that investigated each of the presuppositions of Situated Cognition;
- iii) Develop a critical and up-to-date view of the current research in the area;
- iv) Generate new hypotheses in the field of Situated Cognition and come up with research to test them;
- v) Acquire additional methodological tools, thus broadening the range of tools available to them in the development of their own research;

Skills to be developed

Ability to understand the core concepts of the programmatic contents addressed and how these concepts were investigated.

Ability to think critically about the research that underlies certain scientific knowledge, including the appropriateness of the methods used to answer the question in focus and the conclusions drawn from the results.

Ability to formulate new questions and develop new research ideas.

Prerequisites (precedences) *

There are no prerequisites to attend to this UC

Contents

1. What is meant by Situated Cognition?

- 1.1. Origins of Situated Cognition
- 1.2. Common and Differentiating Aspects of Social Cognition
- 1.3. Common misconceptions about situated cognition
- 1.4. Main assumptions of situated cognition

2. Assumption I: Cognition is functional



2.1. The concept of affordances

2.1. Relations between cognition and action

3. Assumption II: Cognition is permeable to different situations and contexts

3.1. Main theoretical models

3.2. Context effects in categorization

3.3. Context effects on stereotypes, attitudes, and impression formation

4. Assumption III: Cognition is distributed by objects and persons

4.1. The concept of scaffolding

4.2. Cognition is distributed throughout the physical environment

4.3. Cognition is distributed across people and groups

5. Assumption IV: Cognition draws on sensory and motor systems.

5.1. Main theoretical models: amodal versus modal theories

5.2. The role of the body in the processing and representation of concrete concepts

5.3. The role of the body in the processing and representation of abstract concepts

5.4. Criticisms to the assumption that cognition is embodied

Bibliography

Barsalou, L. W. (2008). Grounded cognition. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 59, 617- 645.

<https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.psych.59.103006.093639>

Garrido, M. V., Azevedo, C., & Palma, T. A. (2011). Cognição Social: Fundamentos, formulações actuais e perspectivas futuras. *Psicologia*, 15, 113-157.

Semin, G. R., Garrido, M. V., & Palma, T. A. (2012). Socially Situated Cognition: Recasting Social Cognition as an Emergent Phenomenon. In S. T. Fiske & C. N. Macrae (Eds.) *Sage Handbook of Social Cognition* (pp. 138-164). Sage.

Smith, E. R., & Semin, G. R. (2004). Socially situated cognition: Cognition in its social context. *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology*, 36, 53-117. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0065-2601\(04\)36002-8](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0065-2601(04)36002-8)

Bibliografia específica será indicada em cada aula.

Teaching methods



Theoretical lectures - In the theoretical lectures, the teachers will expose the programmatic contents. The expectation is that students do not just listen, but engage and discuss the content presented.

Practical lectures - In the practical lectures, articles will be presented (proposed by teachers) on the central assumptions of situated cognition. These articles will be presented by groups of students. In these presentations, students are expected to be able to synthesize the fundamental ideas of the presented articles, describe the research carried out, present the main results obtained, and discuss how these results respond to the initial problems.

In the penultimate practical lectures, the groups of students will present a proposal for an experimental study framed in one of the themes addressed in the classes. There will be some time from previous practical classes to support the development of these presentations.

In the last practical lecture, the students will perform an individual work consisting of the answer to a question about the points of the program.

Evaluation Regimes (General and/or Alternative)

In the event that a State of Emergency is decreed, classes will take place online (e.g., via Zoom) on the day / time indicated in the calendar. In this context, the evaluation elements indicated below remain the same, with the only difference being that the presentations will be made online.

Evaluation Elements

(Dates due, weights, minimum required grades)

(1) Group work I (25% of final grade): Presentation of an article. Groups must not exceed four elements. The constitution of the groups, choice of articles to be presented and presentation dates will be made in the first practical lecture.

2) Group work II (35% of the final grade): Presentation of a proposal for an experimental study within one of the topics addressed in the lectures.

3) Individual work (40% of the final grade): Answer (max. 2 pages), with consultation, to a question about the points of the program. The criteria for evaluating the response will be explained in the first practical lecture. Delivery time will be scheduled in the first practice lecture.

Rules for grade improvement

Only the individual work can be improved.



Rules for students having previously failed the course unit *

No rules

Requirements on attendance and punctuality

85% attendance in theoretical lectures and practical lectures is a requirement for approval in the UC. The expectation is that the students are punctual - the beginning of the class will be given after 10 min. of the time stipulated in the schedule (as recommended by the Pedagogical Council).

Rules for special students

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

These students should talk with the professor.

Language of instruction

Portuguese or 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