One of the most important things that develops after birth is an understanding of people. The area of research that refers to the ability to understand people is called socio-cognition. Socio-cognition covers the understanding of the foundational perceptual skills that allow us to discriminate between people and objects, to the development of mental state awareness (from consciousness to theory of mind) to name a few. Recent research on socio-cognitive development has documented that the capacities of children to process information, remember experienced events, and make cognitive and behavioral decisions as they interact with their social environment are more sophisticated than previously believed.

Although the study of socio-cognitive development has answered many important questions and revealed significant developmental milestones, the lack of integration of the diverse developmental, behavioral and neurological methodologies, have failed to provide a comprehensive account of the developmental trajectories of children’s capacities. In order to achieve a more thorough understanding, research orientations and methods must combine in order to reveal the mechanisms of change and how these account for brain and behavioral functioning in order to present an integrated look of development. Definitions of some brain measure techniques will be provided in the detailed syllabus.

**Purpose of the course**

In this course, we will examine the work of scholars, who each, through the use of several methodologies, have revealed how the child’s perceptual, social and cognitive abilities interact, thereby providing a comprehensive picture of socio-cognitive development.

We will be using readings from *The Developing Infant Mind: Integrating Biology and Experience (Guilford Publishers)*, edited by Drs. Maria Legerstee (York University), David Haley (University of Toronto), and Marc H. Bornstein, (NICHD).

In the first week of classes I will give an overview of the course. I will distribute a paper that details theoretical approaches and research during the first 4 years of life. This paper presents much of the research I conducted: *Legerstee, M., (2009) The role of*
I will further highlight some aspects of nonverbal children’s (infant) understanding of other people through showing the particular infant abilities with small video clips. Nothing is more revealing and supportive of infants’ understanding of people than actual test performance.

During the subsequent weeks, student led seminars will explore theory and research on the various topics discussed in the book. I will provide you with copies of the chapters (the book is not published yet). These copies are copyrighted to the authors, the editors and the publishers (see title above), and should be referenced as such. Other articles should be referenced as indicated.

EVALUATION

1) All students should read the required readings every week (2 papers) and prepare some questions/comments that you would like to discuss in class. These discussion points should be typed, not longer than a page, and submitted at the end of each class. Questions and participation to discussion is 25%.

2) During these student led seminars you must choose a topic for your paper based on the readings, develop an oral presentation and lead a discussion in class on this topic (pls use power point presentations). These PPT presentations should be circulated 2 days prior to class, so that each student can participate in the discussion of the oral and provide ‘expert’ opinion and advice. All papers must address a theoretical controversy (introduction), derive a hypothesis from this controversy (the present study), and develop a solution (method), either quantitative or qualitative. These in class presentations will be worth 25%.

3) The oral presentations are the foundation to the preparation of the final paper. The final paper should be written as a journal article or research grant proposal, and should not be longer than approx. 15 pages excluding references. This format will be discussed further in class. The final paper is 50% of the total mark.

A more detailed syllabus will be handed out at the beginning of class.