PS4101 Selves and Identities

The central theme of the course is the balance between fluidity and stability in the way we define ourselves and others, personally and socially. This framing allows the possibility of exploring a range of important phenomena in personality and social psychology that are linked by that broad theme. The course is also intended to balance theoretical models of the self and social perception with practical outcomes like personal wellbeing and social change.

1. Introduction to the themes of stability and variability
2. Personality: Models of stability and variability; role-based variability, self-concept clarity.
3. Stereotyping: stability and variability of groups, homogeneity, lay theories, essentialism
4. Dual-process models: Impression formation, entitativity
5. Social Identity Theory and Self-categorization Theory approaches to stability and fluidity of social selves.
6. Multiple self-aspect models (e.g. McConnell, Linville, Marcus, Simon).
7. An integrated SCT model of personal, social, role and other selves.
8. Faces: When is a face a person? The categorization and identification of faces.
9. Ideologies and Religious Identities at the nexus of personal and social identities?
10. Action-based identities, models of identity and collective action, models of personal behaviour change.
11. Conclusions and Integrations

For the majority of weeks, teaching will largely follow the standard structure of senior honours modules in psychology, with a mix of lectures and student-led discussions. The introductory lecture will provide students with the basic tools and concepts necessary to frame the specific topics covered. There will also be a 2-hour lecture in week 7 that summarises the more traditional topics covered in the first half and providing an integrated theoretical framework before moving into the final section looking at specific issues from this perspective.

In addition to the lectures and discussions, some practical sessions will run in the computer lab to allow the class to explore a number of scales and measures used to look at different aspects of self.