This seminar is designed to expose you to the realm of sociological research that focuses on the dynamics of interaction and the role of small groups in organizing society. Much of the heritage and unique contribution of sociology, of course, is to examine states, institutions, organizations, transcendent forces, and Durkheim social facts. Microsociology takes a different approach, equally sociological. Our task is to examine the structure and the process of interaction. We examine those elements that are local and are observable. This is our mandate as microsociologists.

We will be reading a considerable number of texts this quarter. Because of the amount of reading, I will assign a primary reader for each text each week, and I will ask that you submit to me (and to each other) by email by noon on Wednesday a list of at least five questions from the readings that you think are important for our discussions. I expect you to know the fundamental arguments of each of the readings, and if you were called upon you could provide a reasonable exegesis of each reading. This does not mean that you need to have read every line of every reading. Informed skimming is a fundamental skill of graduate education. I should have no fear in giving you hundreds of pages of reading each week, assuming that you will be able to fit it into your schedule.

There are three ways that this graduate seminar can be run in terms of the requirements of the course. Each technique has its strengths and weaknesses, and I am open to each.

First, each of you can prepare a research paper on a topic of your choice related to microsociology. The advantage of this approach is that you will be able to choose the topic of greatest appeal to you. The disadvantages are that such an approach is likely to lead to a set of incompletes and, since I will ask for reports on your progress many weeks (in the last half of class), to a disjointed discussion.
Second, we can avoid an extended paper entirely, and instead you will be asked to hand in short papers (two to three pages) on some aspect of the assigned readings on six weeks. The advantage here is that there will be no incompletes. The disadvantage is that we will be sticking close to the readings without creating new knowledge. Doing research provides you with an opportunity to understand the methodologies of microsociological research.

Third, as a compromise, we can have shorter research papers (ten pages), coupled with a smaller number (three) of short papers. Like most compromises, this may provide the best or the worst of each world. The choice will be addressed the first week of class.

Books Necessary:
Sigmund Freud, Group Psychology
Erving Goffman, Presentation of Self in Everyday Life
George Herbert Mead, Mind, Self & Society
Eviatar Zerubavel, Social Mindscapes

September 21  INTRODUCTION
September 28  SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY AND SOCIOLOGICAL MINIATURISM

Eviatar Zerubavel, Social Mindscapes, 1997 (all).

October 5  IDENTITY/SELF

October 12  CULTURE


October 19  INTERACTION


October 26  GROUPS

Freud, 1921, all


November 2  EMOTIONS


NOVEMBER 23  THANKSGIVING

NOVEMBER 30  CLASS PRESENTATIONS