

PSY 317 003 Cognitive Psychology

Time: TR, 10:30 – 11:45 am

Location: Planetary Hall 224

Instructor: [Dr. Eva Wiese](#)

Office: 2068 David King Hall

Phone: 703-993-5266

Email: ewiese@gmu.edu

Office Hours: Thursday, 10:30 – 12 pm and by appointment

Text: *Cognitive Psychology (4th edition)*, Goldstein

Prerequisites: 6 hours of psychology or consent of instructor

Technology: Projector, power point, video



What is Cognitive Psychology?

Cognitive Psychology is the study of how people think. It is the study of how your visual system perceives stimuli in the environment and how your brain can focus on one task at a time while ignoring distracting information. Cognitive psychology also studies how you use information stored in memory to explain what you currently perceive and why you prefer one thing to another. It is the study of decision making, both analytically and in social interactions. In short, Cognitive Psychology attempts to understand the underlying computations that produce thinking.

Cognitive Psychology is a subset of *Cognitive Science*, which includes disciplines like Psychology, Artificial Intelligence, Linguistics, Philosophy, Neuroscience and Anthropology. The course *Cognitive Psychology* will focus on human cognition, with a special focus on attention, perception, memory, learning and decision-making. Since cognition is ultimately a function of the underlying neurological architecture, we will also discuss relevant findings in neuroscience.

Objectives

This course is designed to give you a thorough understanding of contemporary theories of human cognition. The format of this course is primarily lecture, with discussion as time permits. Questions are encouraged throughout the lecture.

The course as a LEARNING COMMUNITY

This course is an opportunity for us to establish a genuine learning community where both faculty and students learn from each other's knowledge and experience. Such communities imply a social contract between faculty and students. My view of this contract is as follows:

WHAT I OWE THE CLASS

- I promise to treat you with respect
- I promise to carefully listen to your questions and comments
- I promise to come to class prepared and provide structure to the course
- I convey a willingness to work with you in helping you master the material
- I promise to develop tests that are fair and that reflect the material covered in class
- I promise to try to relate the material to your own experience

WHAT THE CLASS OWES EACH OTHER AND THEMSELVES

- To treat the instructor and each other with respect
- To come to class prepared to discuss/reflect on the material
- Stay current in the readings
- To extend reasonable effort to learn the material
- Turn in assignments on time
- Regularly access the courses web page to check for updates

Attendance Policy

I do not grade on attendance. However, I expect to see you in class each week. Keep in mind that many of the topics covered in class are not discussed (or at least not in as much detail) in your textbook. Although I do put the lecture notes on the web, they will not necessarily be complete and will not necessarily match the presentation given in class. If you miss a class, it is up to you to learn the missed information. At times of low attendance, I may give extra credit to those that attended that day. NO CELL PHONES.

Cancellation Policy

In case class needs to be cancelled due to an unexpected event, students will be informed via email as soon as possible. Make-up sessions will be arranged for cancelled classes.

GMU Honor Code

George Mason University has a code of Honor that each of you accepts by enrolling as a student. My expectation is that all the assignments you work on in this class will be the work of one individual. **Plagiarism or any other violation of the honor code will be taken very seriously and reported to the Honor Committee.** That being said, I fully encourage you to discuss the readings and topics raised in this class with your fellow students.

Disabilities

If you are a student with a disability and you need academic accommodations, please see me and contact the Disability Resource Center (DRC) at 703-993-2474. All academic accommodations must be arranged through that office.

Assignments and Exams

Your grade will be determined by **four exams** and **one paper**. The paper is due at the end of the semester.

Paper

Your task in writing the paper will be to summarize and critique a journal article from the recent cognitive psychology literature (you can choose the article, but not older than 2009). Suggestions are *Psychological Science*, *Psychonomic Bulletin and Review*, and *Cognition*. All these journals feature shorter articles written for the broader scientific community. The papers should be no less than 5 pages in length (double spaced, and excluding title and references) and not longer than 10 pages. If you cite scientific papers in your summary, please add a reference list to your paper. Citation style needs to follow APA guidelines.

Approximately half the assignment should consist of a summary in which you (a) identify the research question, (b) identify the independent and dependent variables, (c) summarize the results, and (d) summarize the researchers' conclusions. The other half of the assignment should include your evaluation of the paper as well as one paragraph on why this study is important in the cognitive psychology literature.

*You must clear each article with me before you submit the paper, and you must turn in a copy of the article, which I will review and approve if appropriate. You need to get approval for the article you pick by **November 3rd, 2015**. The final paper is due on **December 8th, 2015**. If you miss any of these deadlines, I will deduct one point (out of 16) for every day the submission is past the deadline.*

Exams

There will be 4 exams, consisting of multiple-choice questions. Your exam with the lowest score will be dropped, and your overall test grade will be calculated based on the remaining 3. That is, your top 3 exams will be worth 28 points each ($3 \times 28 = 84$). Note that the 4th exam is mandatory. If you decide not to take the 4th exam, your final exam grade will be based on all 4 exam scores (including 0 points for the 4th exam) so that each one exam is worth 21 points ($4 \times 21 = 84$). The 4th exam can still be dropped if you took the 4th exam and it is your lowest grade.

Grading

Paper 16 Points

Exams 84 Points

Total 100 Points

Grading Scale

A+ 97+

A 93-96

A- 90-92

B+ 87-89

B 83-86

B- 80-82

C+ 77-79

C 73-76

C- 70-72

D 60-69

F 0-59

Exam Make-up Policy

You may take an exam after (or before) the scheduled date only if you receive my permission before the day of the test. If you miss an exam, your grade will be based on the remaining 3 exams. Keep in mind that the 4th exam is mandatory. If you miss more than one exam (or the 4th exam), then the exam can only be made up if you receive my permission before the day of the exam or (b) have a valid excuse (note from a doctor, judge, sergeant, etc.).

Extra Credit

You may earn up to an extra 5 credits on your final grade by participating in extra credit experiments. Each hour of participation is worth 1 credit. Opportunities for participation can be found at ['http://gmu.sona-systems.com/'](http://gmu.sona-systems.com/). **NO EXTRA CREDIT FOR ONLINE SURVEYS.**

Drop dates

Note that **September 8th is the last day to add this class** and **October 2nd is the last day to drop this class.**

Calendar

Note: The schedule below is tentative, and though I will try to follow it as closely as possible changes may occasionally be necessary. In the event that an exam date is changed, you will be notified at least one week in advance.

Date	Day	Chapter	Topic
01-Sep	Tues	0	Course organization
03-Sep	Thurs	1	Introduction to Cognitive Psychology
08-Sep	Tues	2	Cognition and the Brain
10-Sep	Thurs	3	Perception
15-Sep	Tues	3	Perception
17-Sep	Thurs		REVIEW
22-Sep	Tues		EXAM 1
24-Sep	Thurs	4	Attention
29-Sep	Tues	4	Attention

01-Oct	Thurs	5	Working Memory
06-Oct	Tues	5	Working Memory
08-Oct	Thurs	6	Long-Term Memory
13-Oct	Tues		No class – Columbus Day
15-Oct	Thurs	7	Long-Term Memory
20-Oct	Tues		REVIEW
22-Oct	Thurs		EXAM 2
27-Oct	Tues		Conference – Independent Working
29-Oct	Thurs		Conference – Independent Working
03-Nov	Tues	8	Everyday Memory – Paper Approval DUE
05-Nov	Thurs	9	Knowledge
10-Nov	Tues	10	Visual imagery
12-Nov	Thurs	11	Language
17-Nov	Tues	11	Language
19-Nov	Thurs		REVIEW
24-Nov	Tues		EXAM 3
26-Nov	Thurs		No class - Thanksgiving
01-Dec	Tues	12	Problem Solving
03-Dec	Thurs	12	Problem Solving
08-Dec	Tues	13	Decision Making - Final Paper DUE
10-Dec	Thurs		REVIEW
15-Dec	Tues		EXAM 4, 10:30 am