

PSYC 317 - Cognitive Psychology



Time: TR, 1:30 – 2:45 pm

Location: Robinson Hall B220

Instructor: [Dr. Eva Wiese](#)

Office: 2068 David King Hall

Phone: 703-993-5266

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Office Hours: Thursday, 11 – 12 pm and by appointment

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

Prerequisites: 6 hours of psychology or consent of instructor

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 on 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 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. The assignments you work on in this class need to 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.**

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 **September 27th, 2016**. The final paper is due on **November 29th, 2016**. **If you miss any of these deadlines, I will deduct one point for every day the submission is past the deadline.***

Exams

There will be 4 exams, consisting of multiple-choice questions. The 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 ($3 \times 28\% = 84\%$) and your worst will be worth 0%. The 4th exam is mandatory and cannot be dropped.

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, then the exam can only be made up if you (a) receive my permission before the day of the exam or (b) have a valid excuse (note from a doctor, judge, etc.).

Extra Credit

You may earn up to 5 extra credits by participating in experiments. The experiments need to be lab experiments and credits need to be assigned via SONA. You can create a SONA account and sign up for experiments via the following website: '<http://gmu.sona-systems.com/>'. **NO EXTRA CREDIT FOR ONLINE SURVEYS.**

Drop dates

Note that **September 6th is the last day to add and drop this class (without penalty).**

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
30-Aug	Tues	0	Organization
01-Sep	Thurs	1	Introduction
06-Sep	Tues	2	Cognitive Neuroscience
08-Sep	Thurs	2	Cognitive Neuroscience
13-Sep	Tues	3	Perception
15-Sep	Thurs	3	Perception
20-Sep	Tues		REVIEW 1
22-Sep	Thurs		EXAM 1
27-Sep	Tues	4	Attention – Paper Approval DUE
29-Sep	Thurs	4	Attention
04-Oct	Tues	5	Working Memory
06-Oct	Thurs	5	Working Memory
11-Oct	Tues		Columbus Day
13-Oct	Thurs	6	Long-Term Memory

18-Oct	Tues	7	Long-Term Memory
20-Oct	Thurs		REVIEW 2
25-Oct	Tues		EXAM 2
27-Oct	Thurs	8	Everyday Memory
01-Nov	Tues	9	Knowledge
03-Nov	Thurs	9	Knowledge
08-Nov	Tues	10	Visual Imagery
10-Nov	Thurs	10	Visual Imagery
15-Nov	Tues	11	Language
17-Nov	Thurs		REVIEW 3
22-Nov	Tues		EXAM 3
24-Nov	Thurs		Thanksgiving
29-Nov	Tues	12	Problem Solving – Paper DUE
01-Dec	Thurs	13	Decision Making
06-Dec	Tues	13	Decision Making
08-Dec	Thurs		REVIEW 4
13-Dec	Tues		FINAL EXAM

Official Communications via GMU E-mail

Mason uses electronic mail to provide official information to students. Examples include communications from course instructors, notices from the library, notices about academic standing, financial aid information, class materials, assignments, questions, and instructor feedback. Students are responsible for the content of university communication sent to their Mason e-mail account and are required to activate that account and check it regularly.

Technical Equipment used in class

Projector, Video