

**PSYC 309**  
**Sensation & Perception**  
**Fall 2023**  
**last updated 8/7/2023**

**Section 001:** 10:30- 11:45am Tuesday & Thursday

**Location:** Thompson Hall 1018

**Instructor:** Dr. Matt Peterson

**Office:** 2058 David King Hall

Ph: 993-4255

email: mpeters2 at gmu dot edu

(please put PYSC 309 in the subject header)

**Office Hours:** 12:30-1:15 Tuesdays or by appointment.

<https://gmu.zoom.us/j/99532905402> (or use link in Blackboard)

I fully encourage you to contact me by email if you have any questions about the class.

**Text:** Sensation & Perception **11th** Edition, E. Bruce Goldstein & Laura Cacciamani, Cengage,  
ISBN: 9780357446478 **(You only need the text, not the access card or other add-ons)**

**Article:** Macknik SL, King M, Randi J, Robbins A, Teller, Thompson J, Martinez-Conde S. (2008).  
Attention and awareness in stage magic: turning tricks into research. *Nature Reviews Neuroscience*.  
9(11), 871-879.

[http://smc.neuralcorrelate.com/files/publications/macknik\\_martinez-conde\\_nrn08.pdf](http://smc.neuralcorrelate.com/files/publications/macknik_martinez-conde_nrn08.pdf)

**Prerequisites:** Psych 300 AND Psych 301 (C- or better) or permission of instructor.

Students who fail to attend the initial meetings of both lecture and lab sections may be dropped from the course.

**Course Description** This course is an introduction to how the brain receives and processes information from the environment. Course deals with sensation -- information must be received in a manner in which our nervous system can respond to it. We will also discuss perception - how the brain interprets information and attaches meaning to it. The study of sensation and perception is one of the earliest areas of study in Psychology.

**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. I will communicate only through GMU email accounts.

**Technology Requirement** Students are expected to be competent in word processing skills, Internet use, compiling of bibliographies, literature review searches, and downloading pictorial material from computers.

**Attendance Policy:** I expect (barring unforeseen circumstances) to see you in class each week.

Keep in mind that many of the topics discussed in class are not discussed (or at least not in as much detail) in your textbook. Although I occasionally put some lecture notes on the web, they will not 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. NO CELL PHONES.

*If you are in quarantine or otherwise cannot make it to class, your absence will not affect your grade. Please let me know if you cannot make it to class so that I can make adjustments in my grade book.*

**Cancellation Policy:** This course follows GMU cancellation policy for inclement weather, and GMU will send an alert to your GMU email account and/or cell phone if any of their facilities are closing for inclement weather. If I need to cancel a class meeting, I will email the class about the cancellation.

**GMU Honor Code:** George Mason University has a code of Honor that each of you accept by enrolling as a student. My expectation is that all of the work you do for me 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.** Having said that, 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."

A+	97+	<b>Grading</b>	Attendance	3
A	93-96		Lab	33
A-	90-92		<u>Exams (4)</u>	<u>65</u>
B+	87-89			101 points total
B	83-86			
B-	80-82			
C+	77-79			
C	73-76			
C-	70-72			
D	60-69			
F	0-59			

**Exams (65%):** There will be 4 exams, consisting of multiple-choice, fill-in-the-blank, and/or short answers. Your lowest exam is dropped (best 3 out of 4), but keep in mind that the fourth exam is mandatory. If you fail to take the fourth exam (without permission), then the fourth exam is counted as a zero and all four exams are averaged together (4 out of 4).

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, and if not taken, will count as a zero, and all four exam grades will be used to determine your final exam grade (i.e. the lowest is not dropped). 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.). Papers will not be accepted beyond the due date.

**Lab (33%):** The lab will account for 33% of your total grade in Psychology 309. Late assignments will receive partial credit. *This course fulfills all/in part the Writing-Intensive requirement in the Psychology Department.*

**Attendance:** 3% of your grade will be based on attendance, as I expect you to come to class. I will randomly sample throughout the semester without notice.

**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.

Note that August 28th is the last day to add this class and September 12th is the last day to drop this class.

Date	Day	Chapter	Topic
22-Aug	Tues	1	Intro + Psychophysics
24-Aug	Thurs	Appendix, 2	Signal Detection, Physiology
29-Aug	Tues	2	Physiology
31-Aug	Thurs	3	The Eye and the Retina
5-Sep	Tues	3	The Eye and the Retina
7-Sep	Thurs		Review for Test 1
12-Sep	Tues		TEST1
14-Sep	Thurs	4	Visual Cortex and Beyond
19-Sep	Tues	5	Perceiving Objects and Scenes
21-Sep	Thurs	5	Perceiving Objects and Scenes
26-Sep	Tues	6	Visual Attention
28-Sep	Thurs	6	Visual Attention
3-Oct	Tues	6 + Article	Visual Attention
5-Oct	Thurs		Test 2
10-Oct	Tues	<b>No Class</b>	
12-Oct	Thurs	9	Perceiving Color
17-Oct	Tues	9	Perceiving Color
19-Oct	Thurs	8	Perceiving Motion
24-Oct	Tues	8	Perceiving Motion
26-Oct	Thurs	10	Perceiving Depth and Size
31-Oct	Tues	10	Perceiving Depth and Size / review
2-Nov	Thurs	7 (149-161, 165-167)	Action / Review
7-Nov	Tues		Test 3
9-Nov	Thurs	11	Sound and Auditory System

14-Nov	Tues	11	Sound and Auditory System
16-Nov	Thurs	12	Hearing and the Environment
21-Nov	Tues	12	Hearing and the Environment
23-Nov	Thurs	<b>No Class</b>	Speech Perception
28-Nov	Tues	13	
30-Nov	Thurs	13	Speech Perception
<b>12-Dec</b>	<b>Tues</b>		<b>Test 4 (chapters 11-13)</b>

```
if NumberOfExamsTaken < 4:
    if Test4Taken == True:
        BestThree = dropLowestExam(ExamGrades)
        return average(BestThree)
    else if Test4Taken == False:
        if Permission == True:
            BestThree = dropLowestExam(ExamGrades)
            return average(BestThree)
        else:
            ExamGrades[4] = 0
            return average(ExamGrades)
if NumberOfExamsTaken == 4:
    BestThree = dropLowestExam(ExamGrades)
    return average(BestThree)
```