

Course Description & Syllabus
Cognitive Psychology
Fall, 2012

GENERAL INFORMATION

<i>Course Designation:</i>	Psychology 317, Section 001
<i>Instructor:</i>	Leisha Colyn 337Aquia Bldg. ~ (703) 993-5212 ~ leisha.colyn@gmail.com Office hour: Wednesday 10:30-11:30 and by appointment
<i>Class Schedule:</i>	Monday and Wednesday 9-10:15 am, East Building Room
<i>Required Text:</i>	Ashcraft, M. H., & Radvansky, G. A. (2010). <i>Cognition</i> (5th ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson. (Required text) Schacter: Schacter, D. L. (1999). The seven sins of memory: Insights from psychology and cognitive neuroscience. <i>American Psychologist</i> , 54, 182-203. (Available on line through GMU Library databases.)
<i>Technology:</i>	Students will be expected to access and use Blackboard on a regular basis (mymason.gmu.edu). Important class information, such as the syllabus and articles, will be posted here. To access Blackboard, students should use their George Mason email ID and password. In addition, students should check their GMU email account regularly. Be sure to check that new messages can be received and that you are not over the message limit. You also have the option for your GMU account to be forwarded to another email address. Finally, students will use the internet to complete online searches using library e-journals and (optionally) PsycINFO or another electronic database for accessing journal articles
<i>Students with Special Needs:</i>	If you are a student with disability and you need academic accommodations, please see me and contact the Disability Resource Center (DRC) at 709-993-2474 . All academic accommodations must be arranged through that office.

COURSE GOALS & METHODS

Cognitive psychology is the scientific study of the mind; how humans perceive the world, remember, reason, think, and learn. This course is designed to provide students with a basic understanding of the principles of the cognitive approach as well as the ability to comprehend experimental research carried out in this domain.

Cognitive psychologists ask questions like:

- How do we see a 3-D world even though our eyes provide only a 2-D image?

- Can we easily divide our attention between tasks (e.g. driving and talking on a cell phone)?
- What factors determine how quickly we learn and how well we recall new information?
- What is language? Could animals ever learn human language?
- How does thought emerge from the brain? How is thought affected by damage to the brain?

The quest for answers to questions like these uses methods as diverse as laboratory experiments, building computer models, imaging the working brain, and studying the effects of brain damage on cognition. We will discuss all of these approaches during the course, while on the way learning about key theories and research findings that have emerged from the field of Cognitive Psychology.

After successfully completing this course, you should be able to:

1. Relate key research findings to cognitive theories
2. Understand research methods in cognitive psychology, their strengths and weaknesses
3. Describe current issues in cognitive psychology research
4. Explain some of the broader implications of findings from cognitive psychology

More generally, I hope that the course will help you to develop your ability to understand and critique scientific ideas, apply these critical faculties to the ideas and information you encounter in your daily life, and explain your own ideas in a clear and concise style.

COURSE STRUCTURE

Lectures & readings. The lectures provide the core content of the course, introducing key ideas and research findings in cognitive psychology. This information is supplemented by readings from the textbook and additional articles. Not all material in the readings will be covered in the lectures, and vice versa.

Lecture slides. To reduce your writing burden in lectures, copies of the slides will be provided on the course website, giving you a greater opportunity to think about the ideas presented. The slides provide only an outline; they do not contain all of the information presented in the lecture. For example, the lecture notes might pose a question, but you won't know the answer to the question if you're not at the lecture to find out! **REVIEWING THE SLIDES IS NOT AN ADEQUATE SUBSTITUTE FOR ATTENDING CLASS.** Additional section outlines and supplementary learning materials are available from the companion website for the textbook, and it is strongly recommended that you take advantage of these resources.

COURSE EVALUATION

Article Summaries and Critiques (40 pts):

Each of you will be required to summarize and critique one article from recent psychological literature and briefly discuss why the article might (or might not) be important in understanding psychological concepts and/or applying them in the “real world.”

The article is one of your choosing that closely relates to the course material. Appropriate articles (a) must be recent (2007 ff.), (b) must describe original empirical studies, and (c) must relate to course material. Articles cannot also have been used (or be used in the future) to complete a similar assignment in another class, unless both instructors approve. Please note that articles describing empirical studies usually include Method, Results, and Discussion sections.

You must clear the article with me beforehand to ensure that it is acceptable. To clear an article, please e-mail me either the full reference and the abstract or a link to the article itself. **You must turn in electronic copies of both the article and the critique.**

Before I grade the review/critique, I will read the article’s abstract and method sections and look over the rest of the article to ensure that your descriptions are accurate and that no plagiarism is involved. I reserve the right to award a grade of F to anyone convicted of an honor violation.

The total length of the summary/critique should be 3-4 pages, excluding title page, appendices, etc. (11-12 point font; 1-inch margins). You must use APA style and format. An abstract is not required. About two-thirds of each paper should consist of a summary in which you (a) identify the research question; (b) describe the method used, including identification of the independent and dependent variables, where appropriate; (c) summarize the results; and (d) summarize the conclusions. The rest of the paper should include your evaluation of these aspects of the paper. You should also include a paragraph or so discussing why this paper is important in the psychology literature and/or how the results/conclusions apply to you.

Unless special arrangements are made ahead of time and for valid reasons (e.g., illness, family emergency), late papers will not be accepted.

****NOTE**** Writing assignments will only be accepted through SafeAssign, which is an anti-plagiarism tool accessed through Blackboard.

Podcast & Blog (75 pts):

For this assignment, students will work in groups of 3-4 to develop a video or podcast that will be posted online. Groups will review a recent article from a top peer-reviewed academic journal. Acceptable journals include Trends in Cognitive Sciences, Advances in Experimental Social Psychology,

Journal of Experimental Psychology, Journal of Cognitive Neuroscience, Quarterly Journal of Experimental Psychology, Cognitive Psychology, Cognition, Neuropsychologia, Psychophysiology, and Emotion.

The article must cover a topic in cognitive psychology. All articles must be approved by me. Groups will present articles in class early in the semester to demonstrate comprehension of the article and to give the class a preview of the podcast. Presentation times and podcast/blog due dates will be determined in class.

Groups will be responsible for three major tasks, each of which will be assigned to one person. Group members will be credited on the class blog for their contributions as the author of the task.

- 1) Create a(n) audio or video interview with either the author of the article or another area expert that covers questions based on, or related to, information from the article and/or related developmental concepts.
 - a. Interview questions should be created in such a way that tells an interesting story but still applies a critical analysis to the research.
 - i. A few good examples of this type of podcast include [Philosophy Bites](#), [Radiolab](#), [EconTalk](#), and [Freakonomics](#).
 - b. The interview should be engaging and educational.
 - i. Tell us about the topic and why it is interesting or worth knowing.
 - c. “Expert” includes the author of the article, an author of an article that cites the article or was cited in the article, a GMU psychology professor who does work in the topic area, or a graduate student who studies the particular topic area.
 - d. Audacity is a free software program that allows users to record and edit audio. It is relatively easy to use and available on Mac and PC. Personal cell phones, Skype, webcams, and other such recording equipment can be used as well. If you have any questions or concerns about the technology requirements, please contact me.
- 2) Write a summary of the interview and describe the current relevance of the article. Post this summary along with the podcast, the historical summary, and a link to the article on the class blog.
 - a. This summary should be approximately 2 pages typed (1” margins, double spaced, 12-point, Times New Roman font).

- b. Must cite at least 2 popular press sources.
 - c. Blog information will be provided at a later date.
- 3) Write a brief, but adequate history of the topic discussed in the podcast/article to be posted along with the podcast and interview summary on the class blog.
- a. This summary should be approximately 3 pages typed (1" margins, double spaced, 12-point, Times New Roman font).
 - b. Must cite at least 3 popular press sources.

Grading: Each student will submit an evaluation of all of the members of his/her group. This can be done anonymously. I will consider these evaluations when awarding final grades.

Grading on the podcast assignment will be similar to the grading of the article analysis with regard to content. Additional attention will be given to the degree to which the podcast is interesting and educational.

My goal for this project is for the class to create a long-lasting, technologically-relevant educational tool that is accessible and interesting to the average person.

Quizzes (150 pts): There will be a 15-item quiz given in class at the end of each chapter covered (12 chapters = 12 quizzes). Because some topics may take longer than expected to cover, quiz dates are tentative. It is your responsibility to attend class and to ensure that you do not miss the quizzes. The lowest 2 quiz scores will be ignored in computing your final grade; thus, no makeup quizzes will be allowed.

In-class Discussions and Participation:

There may be times in class that I will ask for active discussion and participation. One of the best ways to really learn information is to engage in conversation or interactive activities with other students. Throughout the semester, I may assign small activities or homework (that are not on the syllabus) to complement the lecture. When the activities are in-class activities or discussions, points will be credited to those who participate, which is limited to the students who attend that particular class period. When outside homework is assigned, the assignment will be posted to Blackboard in addition to being described in class. Thus, any student in the class has the opportunity to earn those extra points.

You should be aware that if any homework is assigned, those points are not extra credit points, but will be included in the calculation of your grade. Thus, if you do not complete a homework assignment that was given in class and posted to Blackboard, you will receive a zero grade for that assignment.

Clearly, students will benefit greatly in several ways by regularly attending class.

CLASSROOM ETIQUETTE

In order to create a positive experience in the classroom, there must be a few rules.

- Be on time.
 - Cell phones must be turned off.
 - Raise your hand when you want to speak.
 - Be respectful of others' opinions and ideas.
 - Participate often. Don't be afraid to make mistakes!
-

HONOR CODE

All provisions of the GMU Honor Code will be followed in this class, and suspected violators will be reported to the Honor Committee for action. During exams and quizzes, no books, notes, cell phones, or student interaction will be permitted. For journal reviews/critiques, all work submitted must be original or based on feedback from draft review. In the reviews, quotations are permitted, but they must be correctly cited and should be few in number and short in length. Other students/sources may be consulted for information regarding format, grammar, etc., but, again, the writing must be completed by the individual submitting the paper.

TENTATIVE COURSE SCHEDULE

<i>Week</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Assigned Chapters</i>	<i>Lecture Material</i>
One	M – August 27	1	Introduction to the course
	W – August 29	1	Overview of Cognitive Psychology
Two	M – September 3	--	Labor Day—No Class
	W – September 5	2	The Cognitive Science Approach Chapter 1 Quiz
Three	M – September 10	2	The Cognitive Science Approach
	W – September 12	3	Perception and Pattern Recognition Chapter 2 Quiz
Four	M – September 17	3	Perception and Pattern Recognition
	W – September 19	3	Perception and Pattern Recognition
Five	M – September 24	4	Attention Chapter 3 Quiz
	W – September 26	4	Attention
Six	M – October 1	4	Attention
	W – October 3	5	Short-term working memory Chapter 4 Quiz

Seven	M– October 8	5	(NO CLASS)
	W – October 10	5	Short-term working memory
Eight	M – October 15	5/6	Short-term working memory Learning and Remembering
	W – October 17	6	Learning and Remembering Chapter 5 Quiz
Nine	M – October 22	6	Learning and Remembering
	W – October 24	7	Knowing Chapter 6 Quiz
Ten	M – October 29	7	Knowing
	W – October 31	8	Using Knowledge in the Real World Chapter 7 Quiz
Eleven	M– November 5	8	Using Knowledge in the Real World Paper Assignment Due
	W – November 7	9	Language Chapter 8 Quiz
Twelve	M – November 12	9	Language
	W – November 14	10	Comprehension: Written and Spoken Language Chapter 9 Quiz
Thirteen	M – November 19	10	Comprehension: Written and Spoken Language
	W – November 21	-	Thanksgiving Break—No Class
Fourteen	M – November 26	11	Decisions, Judgments, and Reasoning Chapter 10 Quiz
	W – November 28	11	Decisions, Judgments, and Reasoning
Fifteen	M – December 3	11/12	Decisions, Judgments, and Reasoning Problem Solving
	W – December 5	12	Problem Solving Chapter 11 Quiz
Sixteen	M – December 10	-	Study Week—No Class
	W – December 12	-	Study Week—No Class
Finals Week	M – December 17	-	FINAL EXAM 7:30-10:15 Chapter 12 Quiz