

Cognitive Processes (PSYC 309A 902) Course Syllabus

Tuesday; 5:00pm – 7:30pm @ BUCH A102

Instructor

Brandon Tomm

PhD Candidate (Cognitive Science)

Office location: Zoom

Office hours: By appointment

Email: brandon.tomm@psych.ubc.ca (please write “PSYC 309A” in the subject line)

Background: I was born and raised in BC. My research uses attention and numerical perception to study financial decision-making.



Teaching Assistant

Shayden Schofield-Lewis

MA Student

Office location: TBA

Office hours: TBA

Email: ssl@psych.ubc.ca (please write “PSYC 309A” in the subject line)

Background: I am a second-year Master's student in behavioural neuroscience working in the Floresco Lab. My research focuses on the neural networks underlying risk-reward decision-making.



Course Description

This course explores the scientific study of the mind. We will focus on experiments and theories starting from ~1960 through to the present day. The goal of this course is to highlight the modern view of human cognition and understand the classic research that brought us where we are today. The topics covered in this course will include attention, perception, memory, language, problem solving, and decision-making.

I have designed this course to be as simple as possible for the student to focus on the material. The information sources are the lectures and the textbook. Students are graded using two mid-term exams, one final exam, and one written assignment. I hope that this course helps you develop a working understanding of modern cognition, develop an appreciation for creative thinking (not just critical thinking!), and practice professional skills.

Required Textbook

Title: *Cognitive Psychology: Connecting Mind, Research, and Everyday Experience* (5th edition)

Author: E. Bruce Goldstein

Publisher: Cengage

Notes: This book is required. It is available at the bookstore. You can choose a hardcover copy or the digital-text version. The 5th edition is required. Earlier editions are not permitted because all students will need to reference specific page numbers from the 5th edition for the writing assignment.

Course Website

Lecture slides, assignments, and grades will be available on UBC Canvas.

Grades

Title	Date	Percent of Total Grade
Midterm 1	February 14	25%
Midterm 2	March 14	25%
Written Assignment	Due on: February 28	15%
Final Exam	Between April 17-28	35%
Total		100%
Bonus credit available for research participation:	Due by: April 13	2%

Examinations

All exams are closed-book and will consist of multiple-choice and short-answer questions. The mid-term exams are non-cumulative. The final exam is cumulative.

Written Assignment

For the assignment, you will be asked to use cognitive mechanisms to explain the positive and/or negative attributes of a software interface, such as an app or website. For example, what makes TikTok easy to use, or, why is Amazon.ca difficult to use? Use your creativity to imagine how principles of cognition explain how people interact with the user interface. Details of the formatting requirements and permitted subjects will be specified in a separate assignment document.

Please note that this written assignment will be graded partially upon the quality of writing, which includes correct spelling, grammar, and punctuation. If English is not your first language or you do not yet feel comfortable with upper-level academic writing, I encourage you to visit the UBC Centre for Writing and Scholarly Communication (website: <https://writing.library.ubc.ca/>). They provide consultations and other resources to improve your writing skills.

Turnitin

All students will be asked to submit their written assignment to both Canvas and Turnitin.com. The assignment is not considered submitted until it is submitted to both Canvas and Turnitin. If you do not yet have an account, create one on www.turnitin.com. If your alias on Turnitin is different from your real name, please let me know (otherwise I cannot verify that you have submitted to Turnitin). Here are the details needed to join the class on Turnitin:

- Class ID: **37768159**
- Enrollment key: **8099774**

Bonus Credits for Research Participation

You may earn up to 2% of bonus credits by participating in ongoing research projects posted on <https://ubc-psych.sona-systems.com>. Please register in this online system by the end of the first month of class. The Human Subject Pool (HSP) system closes on the last day of classes. More information on the HSP process is available at <https://psych.ubc.ca/undergraduate/opportunities/human-subject-pool>.

As an alternative to participating in studies, you may choose to complete library writing assignments to earn bonus credit. For each 1% credit you will need to summarize one research article from the journal Psychological Science. More information on the library writing assignment is available at <https://psych.ubc.ca/undergraduate/opportunities/human-subject-pool>.

University Policies

UBC values respect for human dignity and the intellectual contributions of all members of the academic community. Suppression of academic freedom is not tolerated, nor is harassment in any form. UBC values academic honesty and students are expected to acknowledge the ideas of their peers and to uphold the highest academic standards in all their actions. UBC provides appropriate accommodation for students with disabilities and for religious observance. More details of UBC policies are available at <http://www.calendar.ubc.ca/vancouver/index.cfm?tree=3,0,0,0>.

Course Policies

Attendance

Attendance will not be monitored. If you cannot attend a lecture, I recommend that you ask a friend to take notes for you. Although I will post lecture slides online, the slides alone will not be sufficient to learn the material. Lectures will not be recorded. It is the student's responsibility to receive the information delivered during lectures.

If you are not able to come to class for several weeks at a time (i.e., you are unable to enter the country, under quarantine, or other reason), please contact me. I will do my best to accommodate your needs by answering your questions during my office hours, and answering questions over email, but I will not be able to provide significant accommodations if there are many students. Some students will inevitably need to miss classes during the term, and I would suggest getting notes from a classmate and coming to my office hours in that case. However, I would advise students to move to a different section of the course or take a different class if it is known prior to the start of the course that you will miss significant class time. Again, it is important to attend lectures in-person for this class, and lectures will not be recorded.

Classroom Behaviour

Every individual student is responsible to maintain the optimal learning environment for all other students. If you use an electronic device to take notes, do not engage in activities that may be distracting for others, such as gaming, shopping, watching videos, listening to music, etc. If you insist on using your computer for activities other than taking notes, I will ask you to leave the lecture room or move to an area where other students cannot see your screen.

Assignments

The written assignment must be handed in both on Canvas and on Turnitin. Assignments that are not submitted to both Canvas and Turnitin by the deadline will be considered late. Late assignments will be deducted by one mark (approximately 7%) for each day the assignment is late.

Illness

If you are sick, please do not come to class. If you are sick the day of a mid-term exam, please email me as soon as possible and do not come to the exam. I will make alternative arrangements with you. If you are sick the day of the final exam, do not come to the exam. Instead, you must apply for an academic concession (deferred standing) by contacting Arts Academic Advising. Students who are granted deferred standing will write the final exam at a later date.

During Exams

Exams will require you to fill out a Scantron sheet in response to multiple-choice questions. It is the student's responsibility to bring their own pencils and eraser to every exam. Ink pens are not permitted to be used to fill out Scantron sheets (using a pen to fill out the student's name and personal information is permitted).

Students will not be allowed to write the exam if they arrive more than 30 minutes late, or after another student has already submitted their exam (whichever occurs first).

When the time allowed for the exam has run out, students must stop writing immediately, remain quiet, and submit their exam. Students will not be given extra time to write their name on their exam or change an answer. Failure to comply with any of these instructions will result in a grade of 0% for that exam.

Missing Exams

If you are aware of scheduled UBC-sanctioned sport travel or religious obligation that conflicts with the date of an exam, you must contact the instructor within the first week of classes so that alternate arrangements may be made. If you miss an exam for a valid reason, you must contact the instructor before the exam. It is the student's responsibility to schedule a make up exam within 2 weeks of the original exam date (unless the circumstance warrants a longer period). If you miss an exam for any other reason (e.g., sleeping in, forgetting there was an exam, etc.), you will receive a grade of 0% for that exam.

Reviewing Exams

You may review your midterm exam after the exam marks are released by requesting to see it during TA office hours. Your TA will be available to answer any questions or concerns regarding your exams. If you are unable to attend TA office hours, you may arrange a separate appointment to see your exam within 2 weeks of grades being released. After this two-week period, your exam may not be available.

Accessibility

If you have been granted an accommodation please send accommodation letter to the instructor during the first week of class. UBC is committed to equal opportunity in education for all students including those with documented physical disabilities or learning disabilities. If you have a disability that affects your learning or performance on exams please visit <https://students.ubc.ca/about-student-services/centre-for-accessibility> and take the necessary steps to ensure your success at UBC.

Grades Scaling

The Psychology Department has a policy of scaling grades to reduce grade inflation and maintain equity across multiple course sections. According to departmental norms, the average grade in a 300-400 level class is 75% for a strong class, 73% for an average class, and 71% for a weak class, with a standard deviation of 13%. Scaling may or may not be used to comply with these norms. Grades may be scaled up or down by the instructor or the Department. Grades are not official until they appear on a student's academic record. You will receive both a percent and a letter grade for this course.

Academic Misconduct

Cheating on exams will result in a score of 0% for that exam, and will be reported to the University for appropriate action. The President of UBC has the right to impose penalties for academic misconduct including a failing grade for the course, suspension from the University, cancellation of scholarships, or a notation added to a student's transcript.

If you have questions as to whether or not what you are doing is even a borderline case of academic misconduct, please consult with me. Details on University policies on academic misconduct are available at <http://www.calendar.ubc.ca/vancouver/index.cfm?tree=3,54,111,959>.

Important Dates

Last day to withdraw without a "w" on transcript	January 20
Midterm 1	February 14
Midterm Break	February 20-24
Written Assignment Due	February 28
Last day to withdraw with a "w" on transcript	March 3
Midterm 2	March 14
Final Exam	Between April 17-28

Course Schedule

Week	Date	Topic	Readings
1	January 10	Introduction; History	Syllabus; Chapter 1
2	January 17	Brain Systems; Perception	Chapter 2; Chapter 3
3	January 24	Perception; Attention	Chapter 3; Chapter 4
4	January 31	Attention	Chapter 4
5	February 7	Attention; Midterm Review	Chapter 4
6	February 14	Midterm 1; Memory (pre-recorded lecture)	Midterm 1 material: All prior material except Syllabus; Post-midterm memory reading: Chapter 5 (only pages 129-149), Chapter 6 (only pages 161-184)
7	February 21	Midterm Break (no class)	
8	February 28	Memory (assignment due)	Chapter 7 (only pages 191-221); Chapter 8 (only pages 225-253)
9	March 7	Conceptual Knowledge; Visual Imagery	Chapter 9; Chapter 10
10	March 14	Midterm 2	Midterm 2 material: Memory, Conceptual Knowledge, & Visual Imagery
11	March 21	Language	Chapter 11
12	March 28	Problem Solving; Decision-Making	Chapter 12; Chapter 13
13	April 4	Decision-Making	Chapter 13
14	April 11	Final Exam Review	

Student Resources

Centre for Accessibility

<https://students.ubc.ca/about-student-services/centre-for-accessibility>

[604-822-5844](tel:6048225844)

Provides accommodations for students with physical and mental disabilities.

Wellness Centre

<https://students.ubc.ca/health/wellness-centre>

Peer-hosted space to get tips and resources on stress, study tips, or university life.

Crisis Support

<https://students.ubc.ca/health/crisis-support>

Links to phone and online chat resources for immediate need of help.

[1-833-590-1328](tel:18335901328) (Student Assistance Program) for “in-the-moment” support.

[9-11](tel:911) if you or someone else is in immediate risk of harming yourself or others.

[604-872-3311](tel:6048723311) for the BC Crisis Line (get 24/7 emotional support).

[1-800-suicide](tel:1800suicide) ([1-800-784-2133](tel:18007842133)) if you are in distress or worried you or someone else may hurt themselves (24/7).

Counselling Services

<https://students.ubc.ca/health/counselling-services>

[604-822-3811](tel:6048223811)

If you are feeling persistently stressed, anxious, or sad, you can book a counselling appointment by phone.

Student Health Services

<https://students.ubc.ca/health/student-health-service>

[604-822-7011](tel:6048227011)

Book an appointment with doctors, nurses, or other medical professionals.

Mood Disorders Centre

http://www.vch.ca/Locations-Services/result?res_id=1276

[604-822-7512](tel:6048227512)

Get assessment, diagnosis, and treatment recommendations for depression and bipolar.