

PSYCHOLOGY 409 COGNITIVE NEUROPSYCHOLOGY

Section 001 Winter 2023-24, Term 2
Tu-Th 2:00 - 3:30

INSTRUCTOR

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ACKNOWLEDGING THIS LAND AND ITS HISTORY

First, a moment for reflection. Please appreciate that we are all deeply fortunate to have our learning and living experiences take place in this most beautiful of locations, the ancestral territory and home of the Musqueam people. As the traditional caretakers of this land, it was taken out of their care in an unceremonious and disrespectful manner we should all acknowledge with true empathy and humility.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

This course is not a traditional survey of topics and issues in cognitive neuropsychology as one might find in a textbook. The goal is to develop an understanding of human neurocognitive function not through a brain-centric lens of neural systems and networks that process information in support of basic behavioral tasks, but rather, through a body-centric perspective of a physically mobile organism adapted to navigate its way through a physical and socio-cultural environment. Throughout, emphasis will be placed not on describing and detailing neurocognitive function in mechanistic, impersonal, third-person terms, but rather, from appreciating neurocognitive function as a first-person, subjectively lived experience that unfolds in the flow of everyday life. As such, at the end of the course, the successful student should be able to:

1. Understand the larger biological context for cognition and brain function, be able to answer the question of why we have brains, and be able to articulate why this is a critical question to address.
2. Understand the role of the body and environment in shaping human cognition and its evolution

BUYER BEWARE: ATTENDANCE AND LAPTOPS

Towards promoting a learning-positive agenda, this course has two important policies in place. First, learning begins with coming to class on a regular basis. To encourage this, ***there are regular in-class quizzes, assignments, and exercises that need to be turned in during class.*** So beware: this is not a good course for the attendance-challenged. Second, research has shown that the use of laptops in classroom settings (1) distract the user and those around them from class, and (2) students who take notes by hand show greater retention of material from class, relative to students who take notes on laptops. Likewise, please understand that not all students may have access to laptops/tablets, which arguably might confer an unfair advantage on those that do have laptop/tablet access. *As such, laptops, tablets, phones, and other forms of attention-distracting technology are not to be used in class.* For insight into the science on this, please see the "WHY NO LAPTOPS ETC. IN CLASS?" module on the course Canvas site.

RECORDING CLASSES

Although electronics are not permitted to be used in class, it is okay to audio record our discussions. Feel free to place your phone or other recording device on a table at the front of the podium prior to lecture if you'd like to exercise that option.

COURSE ORGANIZATION

This course is not lecture-based. Rather, as a small (for the Psychology Department), fourth-year course, it is taught in a seminar-based style, which emphasizes open discussion rather than formal lectures. **In terms of structure, the course is broken down into four modules, each three weeks (or 6 class days) in length:**

- Day 1: **Quiz** on an assigned paper.
- Day 2: **Question Assignment**
- Day 3: **Quiz** on an assigned paper.
- Day 4: **Question Assignment**
- Day 5: **In-class exercise**
- Day 6: **1-page written assignment**

ASSIGNED READINGS

Each module will have two assigned articles. All will be made available for download in pdf format from the course CANVAS site, on the MODULES page. To facilitate your reading of the papers, I have also included a short document on the MODULES page under ASSIGNED READINGS titled *Reading Strategies*; if you adopt them, these strategies will hopefully help you to maximize what you learn from the papers while minimizing the natural anguish and stress that can come with

reading material that feels difficult to digest. Please note that in order to keep things focused on the here-and-now, I will post assigned readings one at a time, in the order we will be reading them.

QUIZZES

To incentivize reading the assigned articles and attending class sessions, each assigned reading includes an in-class quiz. Each quiz (there will be 8 over the term) will ask 5 short questions concerning major themes/concepts/ideas from the assigned paper it is targeting. To aid in preparing for these quizzes, I will provide key questions to study from the article one or more days ahead of the quiz; these questions will either be given in class or posted on the course Canvas site. **Each quiz will be worth 5 points each, for a total of 40 possible points.**

QUESTION ASSIGNMENTS

To incentivize both attending class and engaging with the discussions raised by each assigned reading, **on Day 2 and Day 4 of each Module** you are expected to come to class with a question you have in light of the prior class day's discussion of the assigned reading (as per Day 1 and Day 3 of each module, when a quiz on the assigned reading will be given). At the start of class you will be given a sheet on which to fill out your question, and you will be asked to hand that sheet/question in at the end of class. We will use these questions to guide discussion for that class period. Questions will be marked based on the level of thought manifest in the question, and the extent to which the question reflects engagement with the discussion from the prior day's class. **Each of the 8 question assignments will be worth 5 points, for a total of 40 possible points.**

IN-CLASS EXERCISES

On **Day 5** of each module we will have an in-class exercise that will be turned in that day and marked; details will vary per each module and will be given at the start of class on **Day 5**. **Each exercise will be worth 5 points, for a total of 20 possible points.**

WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS

On **Day 5** of each module you will be given short written assignment to complete by hand and turn in on **Day 6** of each module. The assignment will build on an issue or topic from the papers and discussions from that module. You will need to be prepared to discuss your assignment in-class in a small-group setting on that day. The purpose is to facilitate (1) attendance, (2) discussion and class participation, and (3) linking the issues raised in class with your own, lived, everyday experience, and (4) preparing you for the Term Paper as described below. **These will be worth 10 points each, for a total of 40 possible points.**

TERM PAPER

In lieu of a final exam, a two-page term paper will be due on the day of our assigned final exam, at the time it is scheduled to start. You will need to upload your paper to the course Canvas site; versions sent by email or other means will not be accepted. The paper needs to be formatted in 12-point Times New Roman font, single-spaced with margins of 1" on each side. The actual topic of the paper will be given in class **in early April**, but it will focus on integrating material from the class with observations of your own everyday experiences. To be clear, APA format and referencing will *not* be required. Grading will be based on two dimensions: (1) the general comprehensibility and quality of the writing itself, and (2) the rigor/demonstrated ability of applying concepts and ideas from the class. AI assistance is not allowed for this assignment. **40 possible points.**

PARTICIPATION POINTS

At the end of term I will assign each student a participation mark in order to support three critical goals for the course: (1) incentivizing attendance on your part, (2) incentivizing person/name-learning on my part, and (3) maximizing the quality of in-class discussion and exercises by encouraging *everyone* to share their thoughts, questions, and perspectives. I do know that public speaking comes easier to some than others, but it is my hope that we can cultivate a sufficiently open and comfortable setting in class to help reduce the challenges some of us do face in social settings. **20 possible points.**

MISSED QUIZZES/EXERCISES/ASSIGNMENTS

If you miss a quiz or assignment, I do not need to be told or informed for the reason for your absence. There are no make-ups for missed quizzes; a missed quiz is a missed quiz and I am not in a position to judge whether or not a reason for missing is valid. Also please note that quizzes cannot be done remotely or done at an alternative time. Assignments can be handed in late, but will be downgraded according to the degree of lateness. Assignments will not be accepted electronically as a proxy for attending; I will only mark/grade hard copies handed in by the student doing the assignment (i.e., I do not accept copies of assignments handed in by friends or other students). Please understand that this course rewards attendance, and this is part of the incentive to attend. Please also note that not all circumstances regarding missed quizzes and assignments can be anticipated ahead of time, and so further grading policies in this domain may be specified to the class at later points in the term in order to fairly deal with such situations if they arise.

OVERALL COURSE MARKS

Course marks will be based on a sum total of quizzes (40 points), questions (40 points), in-class exercises (20 points), written assignments (40 points), participation (20 points), and the term paper (40 points) **for a total of 200 possible points.**

DEPARTMENT SCALING POLICY

In order to reduce grade inflation and maintain equity across multiple course sections, all psychology courses are required to comply with departmental norms regarding grade distributions for final course marks. According to departmental norms, the mean course mark in a 300-level class is 70 for a good class, 68 for an average class, and 66 for a weak class, with a standard deviation of 13. Final course marks may be scaled up or down as necessary by the professor or department in order to comply with these norms. For official UBC policy on grade scaling, please see: <http://students.ubc.ca/calendar/index.cfm?tree=3,42,96,0>.

CONTACTING THE INSTRUCTOR

To avoid having your emails automatically deleted as spam, the subject header must read "Psych 409." The answers to questions regarding lecture/reading content may often be useful for the entire class to hear. As a consequence, questions may be answered in the live lecture rather than via email. Please also note that while I try to be responsive to student emails, there are limits that must be put in place. Unfortunately, to keep things fair for everyone, I can not respond to students who generate excessive/frequent emails or who generate long lists of questions, as it would be impossible for me to provide this level of service to all students. **Finally, in order to promote good problem solving skills, I will deduct 1 point from a student's final course mark for each email question that can be answered by consulting this syllabus, the Department of Psychology web page, and/or the UBC web page.** Examples of such questions would be *When is the next quiz?*, *Where/when is the final?* and *What are the assigned readings for the next exam?*

PLEASE ALSO NOTE: I DO NOT USE OR MONITOR THE EMAIL SYSTEM ON CANVAS. I WILL ONLY BE MONITORING EMAIL TO MY ADDRESS LISTED AT THE TOP OF THE SYLLABUS.

ACADEMIC CONCESSIONS

Arts Students must contact Arts Advising as soon as you are aware you may need an [in-term concession](#). Please review [their website](#) for concession criteria as well as process to follow. Students in other Faculties should contact their Faculty advising office for direction.

OUTSIDE RESOURCES

If you run into trouble and need information on effective studying, preparing for exams, how to take notes, or manage your academic time, free workshops and advice are available from the Student Resources Center, which can be reached through the School and College Liaison Office at 822-4319. UBC provides resources to support student learning and to maintain healthy lifestyles but recognizes that sometimes crises arise and so there are additional resources to access including

those for survivors of sexual violence. UBC values respect for the person and ideas of all members of the academic community. Harassment and discrimination are not tolerated nor is suppression of academic freedom. UBC provides appropriate accommodation for students with disabilities and for religious and cultural observances. UBC values academic honesty and students are expected to acknowledge the ideas generated by others and to uphold the highest academic standards in all of their actions. Details of the policies and how to access support are available here: (<https://senate.ubc.ca/policies-resources-support-student-success>)

MODULE TOPICS AND DATES

Module 1 — Holistic Brain Frameworks

Weeks of January 16th, January 23rd, and January 30th

Module 2 — Dementia

Weeks of February 6th, February 13th, and February 27th

Module 3 — Cognitive and Mental Wellness

Weeks of March 5th, March 12th, and March 19th.

Module 4 — Human Neurocognitive Uniqueness

Weeks of March 26th, April 2nd, and April 9th.