

# Psychology of Childbirth

PSYC 207  
Section 001  
Term 1  
Year: 2024/25



## Psych 207: Contemporary Topics in Biological and Cognitive Psychology

Kalina Christoff Hadjilieva  
Professor  
Department of Psychology

This course examines different forms of human knowledge and how cognitive, biological, and social processes can shape and sometimes misshape this knowledge. Our knowledge about the process of giving birth comes from multiple sources, including scientific evidence, cultural beliefs, medical practices, the mass media, and personal experiences. The ways by which we come to possess, use, and question the validity of this knowledge will be discussed.

### Location and times for classes

Lecture room: Buchanan A, Rm A104 (1866 Main Mall)

Lecture times: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 11:00 am - 12:20 pm

### Inclusive Learning Statement

I am committed to creating an accessible learning environment for all class members. Please reach out to the [Centre For Accessibility](#) very early in the semester if you have particular learning needs. You do not need to inform me if you are registered with them. The Centre for Accessibility will administer your exams, if you are registered for that with them, and they will communicate with me if necessary. Please let me know if there are any other ways in which I can remove any barriers to your learning. Being inclusive of people with diverse backgrounds and experiences benefits everyone's learning. It is my intent that all students are well served by this course, and that the diversity that all students bring to this class be viewed as a resource, strength & benefit. Your suggestions are encouraged and appreciated.

Please note: This course focuses on the importance and role that knowledge plays in society and everyday life. It is important to acknowledge that while having such conversations, some individuals have historically been left out and continue to be left out to this day. Language has often been used in the past to identify anyone who gives birth as "woman" and the category of people who get pregnant and give birth as "women". With the goal of reaching greater inclusiveness, in this course, I will try to use gender-neutral language whenever possible, for example, "pregnant person", "birthing person", and "partner".

#### **Instructor:**

**Kalina Christoff Hadjilieva** (they/them)  
Rm. 3410, Psychology Dept (2136 West Mall)  
Office hours: by appointment

*The best way to get in touch with me is to talk to me right after class. If you want to request an appointment, this is also the best way for us to schedule it (i.e., in person, right after lecture). Emailing me ([kchristoff@psych.ubc.ca](mailto:kchristoff@psych.ubc.ca)) is also possible but it may take longer for me to respond.*

#### **Teaching Assistant:**

**Andre Zamani**

[azamani@psych.ubc.ca](mailto:azamani@psych.ubc.ca)

Office hours: by appointment

*Andre is a PhD student in Cognitive Neuroscience under the supervision of Prof. Christoff.*

*Please email Andre about any questions to do with assignments, exams, and so on.*

### Land acknowledgment

UBC's Point Grey Campus is located on the traditional, ancestral, occupied, and unceded territory of the xwməθkwəy̓əm (Musqueam) people.

### Learning objectives

By the end of this course, you should be able to:

1. Identify and analyze the sources (e.g., social, personal, scientific) of your own knowledge about birth.
2. Understand the cognitive, biological, and social mechanisms that shape our knowledge about birth.
3. Know some basic information about brain function, including how the brain mediates:
  - the acquisition and use of various types of knowledge, such procedural and declarative knowledge, habits, and deliberate and intuitive evaluations;
  - the experience of pain, fear and other physiological and emotional states that can influence the process of childbirth.
4. Distinguish the different domains of knowledge about birth (e.g., scientific, medical, personal, traditional, visceral); question the validity of knowledge within each domain; understand how different domains interact to form our overall knowledge of birth.
5. Use course material across different course parts to form a critical understanding of our knowledge about birth.

### Required materials

There will be no textbook for this class. There are a number of required films for viewing. The main films will be:

- **The Business of Being Born (Original Documentary)**
- **More Business of Being Born**
- **Microbirth**

The original documentary *The Business of Being Born* and *More Business of Being Born* (both episodes) can be viewed through "McIntyre Media platform", a UBC library resource (accessed here: [1](#), [2](#)). The films can also be purchased and downloaded from [www.thebusinessofbeingborn.com](http://www.thebusinessofbeingborn.com).

*Microbirth* can be viewed through "Kanopy", a UBC library resource ([accessed here](#) - then search title).

### UBC Canvas

This course will require you to use the course's [UBC Canvas](#) site. To access it, you will need to log in with your UBC CWL. Important updates, information, assignments, assigned readings, and other materials and announcements will be posted and completed through UBC Canvas. You are responsible for checking the site frequently.

### Resources

Powerpoint slides from each lecture will be made available online on the course's [UBC Canvas](#) site after each lecture. A pre-lecture set of slides will be posted on UBC Canvas on the morning prior to each lecture. Those pre-lecture slides will include most of the slides that will be used during lecture and will be helpful for using if you take electronic notes on PDF files during lecture. Assigned readings and viewings are going to be posted on the [UBC Canvas](#) site.

**The following is a provisional list of topics and assignments. PLEASE KEEP IN MIND THAT EXACT DATES AND TOPICS MAY CHANGE AS WE GO ALONG WITH THE COURSE. The due dates for assignments noted on Canvas will be the official due dates.**

Date	Topics Covered	Assignments due and readings
Sept 5	01. Introduction	After class, watch “The business of being born (Original Documentary)” & “More business of being born”
Sept 10	02. Life, condensed	
Sept 12	<b>No in-person class:</b> Watch Microbirth	<b>Assignment 1 Due</b>
Sept 17	03. Can knowledge change pain (Part 1)	First 2 PDFs in “For Midterm 1/Group 1” Readings Due (Files “01.THE UTERUS...” & “02.THE UTERUS...”)
Sept 19	04. Can knowledge change pain (Part 2)	<b>Assignment 2 Due</b> Last PDF in “For Midterm 1/Group 1” Readings Due (File “03. The nervous system...”)
Sept 24	05. Why does labour hurt? (Part 1)	Two optional readings in Canvas folder: “Readings/Background materials (not tested on exams)”: Nerve Conduction.pdf & Blood Vessels and Lymphatic Vessels.pdf
Sept 26	06. Why does labour hurt (Part 2)	<b>Assignment 3 Due</b>
Oct 1	07. More than nociception (Part 1)	First 2 PDFs in “For Midterm 1/Group 2” Readings Due (Files “01. Controlling Pain...” & “02. Nociception and Pain Experience”)
Oct 3	08. More than nociception (Part 1)	<b>Assignment 4 Due</b> Last 2 PDFs in “For Midterm 1/Group 2” Readings Due (Files “03. Carlino...” & “04. Kerstin...”)
Oct 8	09. Pain, conclusion	
Oct 10	Midterm 1 Review session	Bring your questions about midterm 1 material
Oct 15	<b>MIDTERM 1 EXAM</b> (location: our classroom; the exam will be held during our usual class time)	material covered prior to Midterm 1 will be tested + all Readings in “For Midterm 1” folder on Canvas
Oct 17	10. Associative memory	

Date	Topics Covered	Assignments due and readings
Oct 22	11. Heuristics vs Statistics	First PDF in "For Midterm 2" Reading Due (File "01.highlighted parts from Moreridge and Kahneman 2010 TICS.pdf")
Oct 24	12. Motivated reasoning	<b>Assignment 5 Due</b>
Oct 29	13. Medical knowledge	2nd & 3rd PDFs in "For Midterm 2" Readings Due (Files "02. Medical Reversals..." & "03. Michelle Harrison...")
Oct 31	14. Medicolegal pressures	<b>Assignment 6 Due</b>
Nov 5	15. Values and moral norms	Last PDF in "For Midterm 2" Reading Due (File "04. Kotaska 2017 Informed consent and refusal in obstetrics.pdf")
Nov 7	<b>No class</b> (UBC reading break)	
Nov 14	16. Reasoning about childbirth	<b>Assignment 7 Due</b>
Nov 19	Midterm 2 Review session	Bring your questions about midterm 2 material
Nov 21	<b>MIDTERM 2 EXAM</b> (location: our classroom; the exam will be held during our usual class time)	material covered between Midterm 1 and 2 will be tested + all Readings in "For Midterm 2" folder on Canvas
Nov 26	17. Causal complexity (Part 1)	First PDF in "For Final" Reading Due (File "1.Mythbusters_Csections...")
Nov 28	18. Causal complexity (Part 2)	<b>Assignment 8 Due</b> 2nd and 3rd PDFs in "For Final" Readings Due (Files "2.1.University of Rhode Island..." & "2.2 Timing of Childbirth Evolved...")
Dec 3	19. Can we control birth	
Dec 5	20. Conclusion (Tradition, Knowledge, and Birth)	Last 3 PDFs in "For Final" Readings Due (Files "2.3 Chimps give birth like humans...", "2.4 only highest from Hirata...", & "2.5 Paternal Hamsters...")
Check Exam Schedule	<b>FINAL EXAM</b>	The Final is cumulative: All assigned readings throughout the course (i.e., all PDF files in the "For Midterm 1", "For Midterm 2", and "For Final" folders on Canvas) and all lecture material will be testable.

## COURSE CONTENT AND STRUCTURE

There will be two main themes in the class that will be discussed and introduced. The two themes will appear in lectures through out the term.

### **Theme 1: Common knowledge about birth**

This theme will discuss notions that have become “common knowledge” about birth (e.g., “Birth is painful” and “Birth is dangerous”), including the cognitive, biological, and social mechanism underlying the following topics:

- How attention shapes knowledge
- How experience shapes knowledge, including the role of expectations, explanations, and interpretations
- How culture shapes our associative memory and associative learning
- How our associative memory shapes our intuitive judgments, including the role of processing fluency

### **Theme 2: Specialized knowledge about birth**

This theme will discuss different domains of knowledge about birth, as listed below, and the cognitive and biological mechanisms by which various factors shape this knowledge.

- Scientific knowledge
- Medical knowledge
- Traditional knowledge
- Visceral knowledge
- Personal knowledge
- Authoritative Knowledge

Throughout the course, we will discuss the mechanisms by which various factors shape our knowledge about birth, including: Emotions and Risk, Language and Metaphor, Attention, Technology, Evolution, Resource Scarcity, Pain and Morality

<b><u>Final Course Grade Composition</u></b>		
Evaluation	Due Date	% of Final Grade
<b>Midterm Exam 1</b> Covering material from Sept 10 to Oct 8, including Microbirth film	October 15 (Tuesday)	25%
<b>Midterm Exam 2</b> Covering material from Oct 17 to Nov 14 (not including Microbirth film)	November 21 (Thursday)	25%
<b>Final Exam</b> Covering all material from Jan 10 to Dec 5	Date set by registrar during UBC final exam period (Dec 10 to Dec 21 inclusive, Saturdays and Sundays included)	30%
<b>8 Short Paper Assignments</b> Papers will be approximately 250-500 words long. Each paper will receive a pass or fail evaluation.	Due Tuesdays or Thursdays by 11:59 pm	2.5% each for a total of 20%

### **Exams format and content and missed exams**

Exams will be based on the material covered in class and on the assigned readings. Exams will consist mostly of **multiple-choice questions**, but may also contains a few **fill-in-the-blanks and short answer questions**. **The final exam will be cumulative and will also include questions that have to do with material that has not yet been tested on the midterms.** More details about the exams will be provided closer to exam dates.

### **Missed midterm exams**

**If you must miss any of Midterm Exams 1 or 2, for any reason, the weight for your other midterm exam will be automatically adjusted to 30% and your final exam will be worth 50% of your course grade.** *This adjustment in exam weights will be done automatically, you do NOT need to email us about it.* Note that the final exam is going to be harder, so it is best not to miss midterm exams 1 or 2.

### **Missed final exams**

If you must miss the final exam, you must apply for deferred standing (an academic concession) through Academic Advising no later than 48 hours after the missed final exam/assignment. Students who are granted deferred standing write the final exam/assignment at a later date. Please consult [your Faculty's webpage on academic concession](#).

### **If you do miss class because of illness**

- Make a connection early in the term to another student or a group of students in the class. You can help each other by sharing notes. If you don't yet know anyone in the class, post on the discussion forum to connect with other students.
- Consult the class resources on Canvas. We will post the slides for each class day.
- Use any discussion forum for this class that students have set up for help
- If you are concerned that you will need to miss a particular key activity due to illness, contact us to discuss.

### **Academic concessions**

If you miss marked coursework for the first time (e.g., an assignment) and the course is still in-progress, speak with me immediately to find a solution for your missed coursework.

If this is not the first time you have requested concession or classes are over, fill out Arts Academic Advising's [online academic concession form](#) immediately, so that an advisor can evaluate your concession case.

If you are a student in a different Faculty, please consult [your Faculty's webpage on academic concession](#), and then contact me if appropriate.

### **Class attendance**

Regular attendance of classes is expected by UBC, however, this expectation is not always reasonable or possible given the complexity of human existence. If you miss class, you are responsible for obtaining missed notes and important announcements. Your classmates are a vital resource, so don't forget to ask them.

### **If the instructor is sick**

I will do my best to stay well, but if I am ill (for example, if I develop flu symptoms), then I will not come to class. If that happens, here's what you can expect:

If I am well enough to teach, but am taking precautions to avoid infecting others, we may have an online session or two. If this happens, you will receive an announcement in Canvas telling you how to join the class. You can anticipate that this would very likely be a last minute notification. Our classroom will still be available for you to sit and attend an online session, in this (hopefully rare) instance.

### **Is this course right for you?**

Psych 207 is a special topics course and every section is completely different. This section focuses on the Psychology of Childbirth. If this topic is not what you are looking for, you could examine the alternative offerings in other sections of Psych 207 (which are taught by different instructors). Psych 207 is not a required course, though it can serve as an elective or a Credit/D/Fail elective: <http://www.students.ubc.ca/coursesreg/registering-courses/credit-d-fail/>).

### **Learning Commons**

The [Learning Commons](#) website is UBC's online hub for study and research support. This interactive website provides you with a wealth of academic resources, from tutoring and workshops to study groups and online technology tools. It also offers plenty of information on a variety of academic topics, and links to nearly all of the academic resources offered at UBC.

### **Writing Skills**

The [UBC Writing Centre](#) has tutoring services, including an [Online Writer's Workshop](#). Also, Purdue University offers an amazing collection of information about writing at their [Online Writing Lab](#).

### **UBC Academic Regulations**

Information about academic regulations, course withdrawal dates and credits can be found in the [University Calendar](#).



### **Academic Accommodation for Students with Disabilities**

Academic accommodations help students with a disability or ongoing medical condition overcome challenges that may affect their academic success. Students requiring academic accommodations must register with the [Centre for Accessibility](#). The Centre will determine that student's eligibility for accommodations in accordance with [Policy LR7: Academic Accommodation for Students with Disabilities](#). Academic accommodations are not determined by your instructors, and instructors should not ask you about the nature of your disability or ongoing medical condition, or request copies of your disability documentation. However, your instructor may consult with the Centre for Accessibility should the accommodations affect the essential learning outcomes of a course.

### **Psychology Department Grading Policies**

In the Psychology Department, we aim to offer learning experiences that welcome and challenge all students to engage meaningfully in our discipline. We strive for grades that accurately reflect student learning and achievement of course learning objectives, rather than solely reflecting their performance relative to others.

In Psychology at UBC-V, we employ department-wide grading standards to promote equitable alignment, supporting students and course instructors as they learn and teach across many diverse courses and sections. For each Course Section, instructors should aim for a grade average in the following Target Ranges (before any bonus HSP points are added, but including any mandatory HSP points): **B- (68-71%) in Introductory 100-level and 200-level courses**; B (72-75%) in Intermediate 300-level courses; B+ (76-79%) for Advanced 400-level courses and Selective-Entry lower-level courses (e.g., PSYC 277, 278, 312, 370, 371, 349, 359, 365). Ranges are intended to provide some flexibility to instructors and account for differences that can occur between classes. Ranges increase across year levels to account for improvements in student learning, and students' ability to self-select into more specialized courses.

During the course, instructors may choose to adjust grades and/or difficulty of the assessments, to align with the Target Range. At the end of the course, if the average falls outside the Target Range (either direction), instructors will typically be expected to use a linear transformation to adjust final grades (i.e., add or subtract the same number of points to all students' marks, while ensuring no student fails the course due to this transformation). If a course mean falls in within one +/- letter grade band above the Target Range (e.g., in the B+ range for Intermediate courses), and the instructor believes these grades to be justified, the instructor may submit a justification request using the departmental approval final grades submission form, and the grades may stand. This Upper Range is intended to inspire further excellence in learning and teaching, and allow for the possibility that some classes select for higher performing students. Courses with means exceeding the Upper Range will be expected to provide justification as well as use a linear transformation to fall within the Upper Range.

Grades are not official until they appear on students' academic record. Students will receive both a percent and a letter grade for this course. At UBC, they convert according to the key below:



Percent Grade	0-49%	50-54%	55-59%	60-63%	64-67%	68-71%	72-75%	76-79%	80-84%	85-89%	90-100%
Letter Grade	F	D	C-	C	C+	B-	B	B+	A-	A	A+

### **UBC Policy on Academic Integrity**

Our work at the University of British Columbia and academia more broadly is founded on honesty, civility, and integrity. As members of academia, all students are expected to know, understand, and follow the codes of conduct regarding academic integrity. At the most basic level, this means submitting only original work done by you and acknowledging all sources of information or ideas and attributing them to others as required. This also means you should not cheat, copy, or mislead others about what is your work. Violations of academic integrity (i.e., misconduct) lead to the breakdown of the academic enterprise, and therefore serious consequences arise and harsh sanctions are imposed. For example, incidences of plagiarism or cheating may result in a mark of zero on the assignment or exam and more serious consequences may apply when the matter is referred to the Office of the Dean. Careful records are kept in order to monitor and prevent recurrences. A more detailed description of academic integrity, including the University's policies and procedures, may be found in the UBC Calendar: Student Conduct and Discipline.

### **Extra Credit via the Human Subject Pool (HSP)**

As part of this course, you can earn up to 3% extra credit. Most students choose to earn these credits by **participating in psychology studies (worth 1% point for each hour of participation)** through the Department of Psychology's Human Subject Pool (HSP) system. You can locate, create an account, and sign up for studies by going to <https://hsp.psych.ubc.ca> **Please register in the system by the end of the first month of classes to have the opportunity to earn your first ½ hour credit with a brief online survey that will increase your eligibility for more studies.**

**For Frequently Asked Questions about HSP, see:**

<https://psych.ubc.ca/undergraduate/opportunities/human-subject-pool/>

**For outstanding questions, please email:** [hspresearch@psych.ubc.ca](mailto:hspresearch@psych.ubc.ca)

Once registered in the system, you will be able to browse through and select which studies you wish to participate in, sign up for an available timeslot, and confirm your accumulated credits afterward. **At the end of the last day of class for the term, the subject pool is closed.** At that point, you will no longer be able to receive credits. I strongly urge you to participate in and confirm your credits long before the last week of class since **many studies will not offer timeslots near the end of the term and you may be locked out before allocating your credits to your desired course.** Further instruction on how to use the HSP online system can be found at <https://psych.ubc.ca/undergraduate/opportunities/human-subject-pool/> in the document entitled "Subject Pool Information for Participants."

Alternative assignment:

### **The Library Option**

As an alternative to participation in psychology subject pool experiments, you may complete a library-writing project. Such projects consist of reading and summarizing 1) the research question, 2) the methods and 3) the results (in written form) of a research article from the peer reviewed journal Psychological Science. You will receive one (1) research participation credit for each article summary that meets the following requirements.

Requirements:

- The article must have been published in the journal titled “Psychological Science”
- The article must have a publication date from the year 2000 to present (i.e. papers from 2001 are acceptable; those from 1999 or earlier are not)
- The article must be a research article; it cannot be a review article, a news item, a notice, or a letter to the editor, for example
- The summary should be approximately 500 words in length
- You must include your name, student number, course, section, instructor and email address on each summary
- You must log on to the Human Subject Pool (HSP) system (<http://hsp.psych.ubc.ca/>) and create an account before submitting your article summaries. Your credit is assigned using the online system.

For each course, you may obtain the same number of extra credits via the library option as specified in the course syllabus (i.e. the same number of credits available for students who participate in research).

Summaries must be submitted no later than 10 days before the end of classes.

You are to submit your article and your summary to turnitin.com. If you don't have a turnitin account already (from a previous course), you will need to create a user account in Turnitin. **For the library assignment the class ID is 45334826, class name is "HSP 2024-2025 W1" and password is "Research"**. See [www.turnitin.com](http://www.turnitin.com), and click on the “Training” link at the top of the page for detailed instructions on how to submit papers to Turnitin. Any student who is suspected of plagiarism will, at a minimum, not be granted credit, and their course instructor will be notified. Further action may be taken at a departmental or university level.

### **HSP Online Study Credit Limit (NEW PILOT PROGRAM):**

We will no longer have an online credit limit. Instead, students are free to receive their HSP bonus credits from any combination of “in-lab” and “online” studies. However, “in-lab” studies will offer a bonus 0.5 credits on top of the standard 0.5 credits per 30 minutes of participation (e.g., a 1 hour “in-lab” study will award 1.5 credits, while an equivalent “online” study will award 1 credit).