

# PSYC 203: Cognition

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Office: Sharpless 414

Office hours: Thursday 4:10 – 5:10, or by appt.

*Please note this course meets every Tuesday and Thursday 2:30 – 3:55pm in Hilles 108.  
All course materials are available on Moodle.*

## Overview

### **Course Description**

This course provides an overview of topics in cognitive psychology. Essentially, this course will examine the scientific study of mental processes from the ground up.

In the first half of the course, we will begin with the basic mechanics of the brain (*What makes neurons work? How do they compose a functioning cognitive system?*), examine the low-level processes that enable much of our cognition (*How do we go from cones in the eye to sight? What does attention actually do?*), and investigate how we acquire and store information (*How do we learn to ride a bike? Will we really always remember it?*).

In the second half, we will turn to “higher-level” cognition, looking at fundamental building blocks of thought like language and concept learning (*How do infants go from no words to 1,000+ by age 2? How do they know that Chihuahuas and Great Danes belong to one category?*) and then at the high-level, conscious deliberations we engage in when we make decisions (*Why did you come to this school not another one? What makes people donate to charities?*). The course will conclude with lectures on a topic chosen by you, the students.

### **Course Objectives**

After taking the course, you will have:

- An appreciation of the seminal theories and experiments in cognitive psychology
- An understanding of the different research methods used across different domains of cognitive psychology
- An ability to critically apply this knowledge to your everyday life
- *Long-term*, lasting memories of all of the above

### **Reading Material**

All readings will be posted on Moodle at least a week before they are assigned. No textbook is required. However, readings may change as the course continues; I will adjust the readings to the class strengths and interests.

## Course Schedule

Week	Day	Question	Reading	Assignment
1	1/23	Intro: What is Cognition?		
	1/25	Psych Methods & The Brain	Carandini et al. (2012); Sternbergs Ch 2	Watch Split Brains Video
2	1/30	Basic Neuroscience & How to read articles	Maguire et al. (2000)	Watch TMS video
	2/1	Methods of CogNeuro: Good and Bad	Young et al. (2010)	Scientific Paper Summary #1 2/4
3	2/6	The Visual System	Ch 4.2 'Seeing'	Watch Ed Yong video
	2/8	Perception	Gao et al. (2010)	Scientific Paper Summary #2 2/11 <b>Quiz #1 Friday</b>
4	2/13	Attention	Resnick (2018)	Try out Best Illusions of 2023
	2/15	Memory 1	Murphy et al. (2019)	Scientific Paper Summary #3 2/18
5	2/20	Memory 2	Baddeley (2002); Sternbergs Ch 6	Watch H.M. video
	2/22	Learning	Roediger & Karpicke (2006)	Scientific Paper Summary #4 2/25
6	2/27	Learning & Education	Rohrer (2009)	
	2/29	Concepts	Murphy (2002)	<b>Quiz #2 Friday</b>
7	3/5	Language	Senghas et al. (2004)	Watch Ted-Ed Language video
	3/7	Language & Thought	Yong (2010)	
8	3/12-3/14	<b>Spring Break</b>		
9	3/19	<i>Cognitive Development 1</i>		
	3/21	<i>Cognitive Development 2</i>		<b>Quiz #3 Friday</b>
10	3/26	<i>Social Cognition</i>		
	3/28	<i>Reasoning</i>		Annotated bibliography due Friday
11	4/2	<i>Reasoning Errors</i>		
	4/4	<i>Magical Thinking &amp; Irrationality</i>		
12	4/9	<i>Moral Reasoning</i>		<b>Quiz #4 Friday</b>
	4/11	<i>Catch-up</i>		
13	4/16	<i>Topics chosen by students</i>		Proposal Rough draft due 4/16
	4/18			
14	4/23	<i>Topics chosen by students</i>		
	4/25			Peer Feedback due Friday
15	4/30 - 5/2	<i>Topics chosen by students</i>		<b>Quiz #5 Friday</b>
<b>Research Proposal due at end of Finals period</b> (5/11 for graduating seniors; 5/17 for everyone else)				

\*Starting in Week 13, class topics and papers will be chosen democratically by the class.  
The syllabus will change to reflect the topics you select. Please note *assignment* dates do not change.

# Evaluation

## Grade Breakdown:

Quizzes	40%
Article summaries	15%
Article presentation	10%
Research proposal	35%

## Grading Guidelines:

Grade	Points	Grade	Points
A / 4.0	94-100	C+ / 2.3	77-79.99
A- / 3.7	90-93.99	C / 2.0	73-76.99
B+ / 3.3	87-89.99	C- / 1.7	70-72.99
B / 3.0	83-86.99	D+ / 1.3	67-69.99
B- / 2.7	80-82.99	D / 1.0	60-66.99
		F / 0.0	59.99 and below

## Assessments

### Quizzes – 40%

Roughly every other week, I will distribute a short (e.g., 15-question) quiz on Moodle. The quiz will cover both the reading assigned for those weeks *and* material discussed in previous classes. This quiz is intended as a comprehension check for both you and me so that we both know how much you are understanding. It is also an incentive for you to review your notes *throughout* the semester and do the assigned reading. I expect that if you come to class regularly and do the reading, you will be able to do well on all quizzes. However, at the end of the semester, I will drop the lowest quiz grade for each student. Should you have to miss class for an extended period of time due to an emergency, contact me and I will arrange for you to take a quiz when you return.

### Article summaries – 15%

You will write two 2-page papers summarizing journal articles in the first half of the semester. Each week, I will be assigning a short journal article. In the first 5 weeks of the semester, I expect you to write two papers summarizing and responding to the paper.

### Article Presentation – 10%

With a partner, you will present one of the journal articles assigned as optional reading. The goal is much the same as the article summaries: concisely present the key elements of the paper and evaluate its claims.

### Research Proposal – 35%

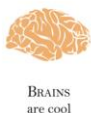
Over the course of the semester, you will conduct a literature review on a question of your choosing (within the realm of cognition). You will then propose a new study that goes

beyond prior work to address this question in a new way. This project will be the focus of the second half of the course, and you will complete several assignments as you build up to the final version:

- 1) Annotated bibliography (5% of total grade): You will find 5-6 sources addressing your question and write very brief summaries of each.
- 2) Rough draft (10%): you will write a paper summarizing this previous literature and outlining a new study.
- 3) Peer feedback (5%): You will then give feedback to peers on their rough drafts.
- 4) Final draft (15%): you will incorporate my and your peers' suggestions and submit a revised research proposal due at the end of finals period.

## Class Policies

*In this class,*  
**WE BELIEVE**



**You are my priority.** The purpose of this class is to foster your learning, not to produce a certain amount of papers and talks. So, if you are choosing between your health and the completion of an assignment, I would always rather you choose your health. If you are facing difficulties, let me know, and we can figure out a solution. Like a good mattress, my class policies are firm but not rock-hard: individual cases may involve extenuating circumstances that would allow for changing many of the policies below. I encourage you to **contact me** if you have any questions.

**Office hours:** I strongly encourage you to come to office hours! This is the ideal time to address questions about the course and ask me anything else. **I'd love to get to know you** and hear what you're passionate about! I hope to see each of you at least once. And if the times don't work for you, email me and I'll happily set up a meeting!

**Deadlines.** Papers and quizzes are due by **11:59pm at the end of the day** posted on the syllabus. However, if it's 15 minutes late, that's fine.

**No-questions-asked extensions.** To minimize stress, all students have **two 24-hour no-questions-asked extensions**. These extensions can be used for any *non-final, non-presentation assignment*. Please notify me before the deadline if you want to use an extension. You may also **use both extensions** on the same assignment (i.e., creating a 48-hour extension). Otherwise, acceptance of late work is at my discretion; if you are experiencing difficulties, please talk to me and we will likely be able to work out a brief extension. If you do not use or successfully request an extension, I will deduct 10% for each 24-hour period the assignment is late.

**Plagiarism.** Students are required to abide by Haverford College's Honor Code and academic integrity policies, which can be found online at <http://honorcouncil.haverford.edu/the-code/>. If you are in doubt about what constitutes academic dishonesty, speak with me before the assignment is due and/or examine the College's web site. As a general rule, you should never produce an assignment identical to another student's, nor should your assignments be identical to any other source (e.g., an article abstract). All writing must be your own, or quoted and cited appropriately. Please note that in general, I consider text produced by ChatGPT or other chatbots to not constitute your own writing. Any exceptions to this will be explicitly mentioned in class, or if you feel there is a helpful way of using this technology, reach out to me and we can discuss it *before* you complete the assignment.

**Paper formatting.** Paper formatting needs to be easily readable: use **1-inch margins** and a **reasonable font size**, like 12 pt Times New Roman, or 11 pt Arial. In general, I expect citations to be in APA style. However, if you are unfamiliar with APA and would prefer a different style, let me know and I will likely agree. Papers need not be precisely formatted in APA style.

**Inclusive learning policy.** I view my job as helping each of you to succeed, and I want every student to **feel welcome** in my classroom. I strive to make my classroom a place where you will be treated with respect, and I welcome individuals of all ages, backgrounds, beliefs, ethnicities, social classes, gender identities, gender expressions, national origins, documentation statuses, religious affiliations, sexual orientations, abilities, and other visible and nonvisible differences. To make a better, more inclusive psychological science, we must always hold each other accountable for creating a **respectful and supportive environment**. This means that when we disagree in this class—and this is a topic area full of disagreements—I expect we will consider others' perspectives thoughtfully and disagree constructively. If something was said in class (by anyone, including myself) that made you feel uncomfortable, please talk to me about it. I'm here to help all of you succeed and will always do my best to support you.

**Accommodations requests.** I am committed to partnering with you on your academic and intellectual journey and recognize that you bring many strengths, perspectives and strategies as you navigate this journey. I encourage you to think proactively and strategically about leveraging these strengths, in partnership with the many resources on campus. These resources include CAPS (free and unlimited counseling is available), Office of Academic Resources, Writing Center, Student Diversity Equity and Access Team, Health Services, Professional Health Advocate, Religious and Spiritual Life, the GRASE Center, and the Advising Deans. At times you may experience challenges or stressors that impact your ability to fully engage intellectually. If the stressors are academic, I welcome the opportunity to discuss and address those stressors with you in order to find solutions together. If you are experiencing challenges or questions related to emotional health, finances, physical health, relationships, learning strategies or differences, or other related topics, I hope you will consider reaching out to the many resources here on campus. Additional information can be found at <https://www.haverford.edu/deans-office-student-life/offices-resources>.

Additionally, Haverford College is committed to creating a learning environment that meets the needs of its diverse student body and provides equitable access to students with disabilities. If

you have (or think you may have) a disability related to mental health, chronic health, neurological state, and/or physical condition – please contact the Office of Access and Disability Services (ADS) at [hc-ads@haverford.edu](mailto:hc-ads@haverford.edu). It is never too late to request ADA accommodations – our bodies and circumstances are continuously changing. Please know that all inquiries and health-related information is handled in a sensitive and confidential manner.

Students who have already been approved to receive academic ADA accommodations and want to use these in this course should share their accommodation letter and make arrangements to meet with me as soon as possible to discuss how their accommodations will be implemented in this course. Please note that accommodations are not retroactive and require advance notice in order to successfully implement.

If, at any point in the semester, a disability or personal circumstances affect your learning in this course, please do not hesitate to reach out to me. I want to be sure you are aware of the full range of resources and options available to you.

It is a state law in Pennsylvania that individuals must be given advance notice that they may be recorded. Therefore, any student who has a disability-related need to audio record this class must first be approved for this ADA accommodation by Access and Disability Services and then must communicate approval to me. I will then make a general announcement to the class that audio recording may occur while respecting students' right to privacy by not identifying the individual.

**Title IX.** Haverford College is committed to fostering a **safe and inclusive living and learning environment** where all can feel secure and free from harassment. All forms of sexual misconduct, including sexual assault, sexual harassment, stalking, domestic violence, and dating violence are violations of Haverford's policies, whether they occur on or off campus. Haverford faculty are committed to helping to create a safe learning environment for all students and for the College community as a whole. If you have experienced any form of gender or sex-based discrimination, harassment, or violence, know that **help and support are available**. Staff members are trained to support students in navigating campus life, accessing health and counseling services, providing academic and housing accommodations, and more.

The College strongly encourages all students to report any incidents of sexual misconduct. Please be aware that **all Haverford employees** (other than those designated as confidential resources such as counselors, clergy, and healthcare providers) **are required to report information about such discrimination and harassment** to the Bi-College Title IX Coordinator:  
<https://www.haverford.edu/users/ktaylor4>

Information about the College's Sexual Misconduct policy, reporting options, and a list of campus and local resources can be found on the College's website:

<https://www.haverford.edu/sexual-misconduct>

#### Things to remember:

1. Learning means sometimes making mistakes; often, those help you learn better.
2. I believe you can succeed, and I am here to support you.