

PSYC 317-006 Cognitive Psychology
George Mason University
Spring 2006, MWF 10:30 – 11:20 am
Robinson Hall A247

Instructor Dr. Christopher Monk **Office:** David King 2059, (703) 993-3408
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Web Access This course will use WebCT (<https://webct41.gmu.edu>)

Office hours Mondays and Fridays, 11:30am-12:30pm (right after class) or by appointment.

Course Objectives

This course will introduce some of the major issues, theories, and experimental findings in cognitive psychology. Some of the topics that will be covered include sensory perception, attention, memory, imagery, language, reasoning, and problem solving. Although the format will be primarily lecture-based, in-class discussion is encouraged. You will be expected to understand the facts and theories of cognitive psychology and also the research methods used in cognitive psychology — in other words, how human cognition can be studied scientifically, and why the results of experimental investigations support particular theories of human cognition.

Textbook (required)

Willingham, D. (2004). *Cognition: The Thinking Animal* (2nd Edition). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Examinations and Grading

Exams: There will be five (5) non-cumulative exams, including the final, based on readings and lectures. Your lowest exam score will *not* count towards your grade. Each exam will count 20% towards your grade (80% total for exams). The exams will consist of multiple-choice and short answer questions.

The exams will test your knowledge and understanding of the material covered in both the lectures and the text. To receive a high grade in this course you will need to demonstrate understanding of the key concepts from both the lectures and the text. Mere memorization of the “facts” presented in the course will not be sufficient to receive a high grade in the course. If you are having any difficulties with the material, be sure to get in touch with me.

Article Critique: You will summarize and critique one research article from recent the cognitive psychology literature (I will provide a list of journals from which to choose). The article summary will count 20% towards your final grade. Approximately half of the paper should consist of a summary in which you (a) identify the research question, (b) identify the independent and dependent variables, (c) summarize the results, and (d) summarize the researcher(s)’ conclusions. The remainder of the paper should include your evaluation of the method, conclusions, and larger implications of the research. *Be sure to clear your chosen research article with me before you submit your paper.*

Grades: A (100-90); B (89-80); C (79-70); D (69-60); F (below 59). Please note that the actual grading standard will be based on class performance on each exam and the article critique. I reserve the right to adjust grades favorably for students who participate in class.

Study Guides

It is recommended that you use some of the on-line study resources from the book publisher (Prentice Hall). It includes chapter-by-chapter outlines, flashcards, and practice exams.

http://wps.prenhall.com/hss_willingham_cognition_2

Extra Credit and Make-Up Exams

Extra credit may be obtained by participating in experiments sponsored by the Psychology Department. Each hour of extra credit will raise your final grade by 0.5%. Students may receive up to 3 additional percent (3%) in their final grade (6 hours max). However, participation in experiments is not a course requirement, and non-participation will not reduce the final grade.

Because the lowest exam score will be dropped, no make-up exams will be given. If more than one exam is missed, please consult with me.

Honor Code

All exams must follow the guidelines of the GMU Honor Code. Students may consult with other students and use books, notes, and other sources in preparing for exams. However, when taking exams, no books, notes, or student interaction will be allowed.

Attendance

Class attendance is essential, as the lectures will frequently present information not found in the textbooks, and the material for the exams will be drawn from both lectures and readings. The lecture slides will be made available after each lecture via the web. However, please note that having access to the lecture slides is NOT a substitute for attending class AND taking notes. Relying only on the lecture slides will not be sufficient for you to score well on the exams.

Special Help

If you are a student with a disability and you need academic accommodations, please see me during the first week of class and contact the Disability Resource Center (DRC) at 703-993-2474. All academic accommodations must be arranged through that office.

Access to Computers

Students must have access to their GMU Email account. Students should feel free to communicate with me via email. Updates and notifications will be posted on WebCT and may also be sent out to the class email list. If you need to use university facilities, you can find out about location and hours of university facilities at <http://www.labs.gmu.edu/> or ask at the information desk at the Johnson Center.

You can access WebCT from the login page: <https://webct41.gmu.edu>. Your login is your GMU Email login and password. If you do not know how to use WebCT, please contact the ITU Support Center (support@gmu.edu). Contact me if you have any difficulty.

I will ONLY use your GMU Email address to contact you. Please use and check this address frequently. You may forward your GMU Email to another address if you like, but please ensure that you are receiving the email to your GMU Email address.

Course Outline

Any schedule changes or changes in assignments will be announced in class in advance. After an absence, students are responsible for contacting the instructor to obtain accurate information.

Week	Topic	Reading
1	Introduction, History, the Cognitive Approach	Chapter 1
2	Interlude—The Brain	Interlude (Ch. 1)
3	Visual Perception	Chapter 2
4	Exam 1; Attention	Chapter 3
5	Sensory and Primary Memory	Chapter 4
6	Memory Encoding	Chapter 5
7	Exam 2; Memory Retrieval	Chapter 6
8	Spring Break	
9	Memory Storage	Chapter 7
10	Visual Imagery	Chapter 9
11	Exam 3; Decision Making	Chapter 10
12	Deductive Reasoning; Article Critique Due	Chapter 10
13	Problem Solving	Chapter 11
14	Exam 4; Language	Chapter 12
15	Language	Chapter 12
Finals	Exam 5	

Important Dates

First Day of Class	Jan. 23
Last Day to Add	Feb. 7
Exam 1	Feb. 13 (Monday)
Last Day to Drop	Feb. 24
Elective Withdrawal Period	Feb. 25 – Mar. 24
Exam 2	Mar. 6
Spring Break	Mar. 12 – 19
Exam 3	Apr. 3
Article Critique Due	Apr. 7 (must turn in hardcopy at <i>beginning</i> of class—no exceptions)
Exam 4	Apr. 24
Exam 5	May 10 – Finals week: Wed. 10:30am – 1:15pm
