

## Psychology 315: Cognition Fall 2006

**Instructor:** Dr. Sarah Johnson

**Phone:** 610-625-7013

**Office:** 224 PPHAC

**Office Hours:** M 10-11am; T 1-3pm, F 9-11am

**When:** MWF 11:30-12:20pm

**Where:** 301 PPHAC

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**Overall Course Goal:** This course will explore mental processes. We will read about and discuss research examining a variety of areas in cognition, esp. memory. This course will give you a deeper understanding of your mind (be afraid!) and the way it interprets the information it receives from the world. Feel free to turn back now...

**Specific Course Objectives:** By the end of this course, you should be able to:

1. Discuss important theories and findings from major subdivisions of cognitive psychology—e.g., perception, attention, memory, language—including knowing some of the important researchers in these areas.
2. Understand the major themes of cognitive psychology as put forth by Matlin and be able to discuss how research from different areas within this field applies to those themes.
3. Discuss how research in areas of cognitive psychology is relevant to everyday life and understanding of oneself and others.
4. Take a topic in an area of psychology, esp. cognitive, and use electronic databases such as PsycInfo and PubMed to find articles pertinent to a particular question in that area.
5. Better evaluate articles in terms of how well they serve a particular purpose and in terms of how well the findings really support the research claim.
6. Communicate to others the gist of a piece of research and provide reasoning for why that research is or is not strong, esp. in the context of scientific debate.

**My expectations of you:**

1. Arrive on time for every class session and be prepared to be engaged and to participate. I will solicit comments and feedback from you during class and many classes will involve group discussion. I expect active responses, as per the attendance grade described below.
2. Take good notes and ask questions when you need clarification. Try to determine the main point and come up with your own examples rather than frantically copying down everything (the posted lecture notes should mitigate the need for copying during lectures). Your goal should be to understand the principles more than to memorize facts.
3. Read all assigned readings carefully and thoroughly in advance of class. Come and see me if you do not understand part or all of the reading.
4. Read assignments carefully and come see me before the due date if you do not understand any part of the assignment.
5. Turn in assignments on time. Before turning in any assignment, check it thoroughly and edit it for clarity, conciseness, and spelling and grammar mistakes.
6. All work (assignments and tests) should be *your own!* Your work that makes reference to other sources should be paraphrased in your own words! My goal is not to assess your ability to QUOTE others' words; I want to see that you UNDERSTAND their words, and your ability to paraphrase is part of this understanding.

**What you should expect from me:**

1. I will arrive on time, or if possible early, for every class session and will be prepared to be engaged and to participate.
2. I will provide lecture notes via Blackboard (*password = mind*). To the best of my ability I will post these in advance of lectures. If not, the notes will be up on Blackboard later that day. These handouts will give you an outline of what we will be covering but you will need to fill in additional information or expand on the outline during class. I am not responsible for giving you this info in the event that you miss class. You should arrange to get missing info from a classmate who attended class on that day.
3. I will be available in my office during office hours, and can be reached outside of office hours via email for questions and concerns. I am on email frequently and can usually answer simple questions very quickly. I will typically wait for you to tell me that you need help, but I will be more than happy to meet with you when you do.
4. I will announce ahead of time any changes from the syllabus to readings, assignments, or exams. I may occasionally make minor lecture topic changes without announcement.

**Textbook:** *Cognition*, 6<sup>th</sup> ed., by Matlin. Additional readings will be journal articles, provided in class or via Blackboard or researched and obtained by you in conjunction with the debate project.

**Course Evaluation:**

**Attendance/Assignments:** You will be given a grade each week based on your participation in class discussions and/or in-class writing assignments. You will be given up to 3 absences (excused or unexcused), and starting with the fourth absence, your participation grade will be a 0/F for any class you miss. Showing up late to class will result in a reduction in your weekly attendance grade by one letter. Come see me if you have a legitimate reason for repeated lateness or absence. Participation will be graded on the scale below; you are welcome to meet with me at any point during the semester to find out where your participation grade stands.

- A:** Participates in discussion by bringing up own points and responding to other's points, but without overly dominating the discussion. Asks questions/makes points that are insightful and thought-provoking.
- B:** Answers questions sufficiently when directly asked; demonstrates preparation with regard to the material. Consistently attentive and engaged but does not generally contribute; only occasionally adds own comments or questions.
- C:** Prepares to some extent but does not add anything to discussion, or contributes to discussion but shows evidence of poor preparation.
- D:** Shows up but doesn't participate and shows little or no evidence of having prepared with regard to material. Disengaged from class.
- F:** Unexcused absence

In addition to the above, over the course of the term you will be given several short (2 pgs max) writing assignments, to be completed either during class-time or as take-home assignments. You are expected to complete these assignments independently. The attendance/assignments portion of your grade will be determined as follows: 70% attendance/class participation; 10% each written assignment (3 over the course of the term; specific grading guidelines and descriptions to be provided later).

**Exams:** There will be three exams during the course of the semester. A cumulative final exam will be offered as a possible substitute for a lower exam grade. Exam format will be a combination of multiple choice, short answer/identification, and short essay. Exams can include questions on anything in the assigned text chapters, handouts, or readings even if not discussed in lecture. Study guides will be posted on Blackboard as each exam approaches. The study guides will include important terms to know for the exam as well as sample exam questions. You will be allowed to use the grade on the cumulative final to replace a lower score from the earlier exams or to substitute for a missed exam provided you had a *legitimate* and *documentable* excuse for missing the exam.

**Missed exams:** If you have a *legitimate, documentable* excuse for missing an exam, contact me as soon as possible and we will plan to have you skip that exam and use the cumulative final to substitute for it. If you know in advance that you will be absent during an exam (e.g., because of travel for a sports team or an interview) then you need to let me know as soon as possible before the exam. You may not use the cumulative final to replace a missed exam if you skipped the exam without legitimate reason for absence.

**Debate:** There will be a debate project that will involve several deadlines throughout the term. The debate assignments add up to a grade that is treated like an exam, for a total of 5 scores (see below). This project is a group project, but the evaluation is individualized. Important dates are given on the class schedule, but more information on the expectations and grading of the debate assignments will be given in a separate handout.

**Overall grades- breakdown:**

Your final grade will be determined by the mean of five scores:  
 $(\text{Exam 1} + \text{Exam 2} + \text{Exam 3} + \text{Debate grade} + \text{Attendance/Assts}) \div 5$

The final can replace one of the Exam grades. It cannot be used to replace either the Debate or Attendance grade. Unless otherwise noted, I will use the following scale for translating letter grades and calculating final grades:

Letter	Score	Grade range
A	100	95-100
A-	92	90-94
B+	88	87-89
B	85	83-86
B-	81	80-82
C+	78	77-79
C	75	73-76
C-	71	70-72
D+	68	67-69
D	65	63-66
D-	61	60-62
F	0	0-59

**Late policy:** Late assignments (both debate assignments and other assignments) will be accepted for up to three days after the due date and, unless otherwise noted, will be *penalized one letter grade for every calendar day late* beginning at 5pm on the day the assignment is due. After the three-day period, a paper will not be accepted and a grade of 0 will be applied. **NO** exceptions will be made to this rule, including situations involving legitimate and documentable excuses and technical difficulties. In addition, I will only accept assignments that are turned in by email if you have arranged with me to do so for a particular assignment.

Note that it is within my purview as instructor to use qualitative judgments in determining grades for assignments, papers, participation, or other aspects of the course (e.g., exam essays).

**Plagiarism and cheating:** Any work that you turn in for this class must be entirely your own work. Any sources used must be properly documented, and I will ask you not to use any direct quotes in assignments. For more information on plagiarism and cheating, refer to the Student Handbook and the following website regarding academic responsibility at Moravian College: <http://www.moravian.edu/studentLife/handbook/academic2.htm>

As this site clearly explains, the consequences for cheating or plagiarism can range from failing the assignment to receiving an F for the final course grade to expulsion, depending on the severity of the case and prior history of offenses. Although I am not generally opposed to your discussing assignments with fellow students from the class, all of the work you submit to me must be entirely your own, and in some cases I may ask you not to collaborate with fellow students. For the debate project, in which collaboration is an important component, I will ask you to provide an indication of the extent to which each member of the group participated. You will have the opportunity to indicate how work was divided between the group members and whether any group member shouldered an unfairly large or small portion of the work.

I will spend class time discussing ways to avoid plagiarizing, but apart from this it is your obligation to come see me if you have any questions about your use of sources or when/in what way it is okay to collaborate with other students in the class.

**Disabilities:** The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) provides for some accommodations to be made for students with certain disabilities. If you have such a disability and are willing to disclose it, you may take advantage of such accommodations. In order to do so, you are required to meet with Mrs. Laurie Roth in the Office of Learning Services (for learning disabilities and/or ADD/ADHD) or Dr. Ronald Kline in the Counseling Center (for all other disabilities). Accommodations cannot be offered until I have received authorization from one of these centers based on documentation of your disability.

It is your obligation to come and see me if you have any questions or concerns about class in general or about your performance in this class. I am always willing to meet, so don't let things snowball; if you are having trouble, come and see me as soon as possible!

**Class Schedule** (This schedule is tentative. I reserve the right to make announced changes.):

<b>Week:</b>	<b>Class topics/activities:</b>	<b>Text &amp; Readings/Debate Assts:</b>
<b>1 – Aug 28</b>	M Introduction and course overview	Ch. 1
	W	
	F Visual and Auditory Perception	Ch. 2
<b>2 – Sept 4</b>	M <b>No class Mon [Labor Day]</b>	
	W Perception cont'd	Simons & Levin reading; <i>Perception asst due</i>
	F	
<b>3 – Sept 11</b>	M Attention	Ch. 3
	W	
	F	
<b>4 – Sept 18</b>	M Mental Imagery	Ch. 7
	W	
	F	<b>Debate: Abstracts due</b>
<b>5 – Sept 25</b>	M <b>Debate meeting (small groups)</b>	
	W <b>Exam 1</b>	
	F Memory: General Concepts	
<b>6 – Oct 2</b>	M Working Memory	Ch. 4
	W	
	F	<i>Working Memory asst due</i>
<b>7 – Oct 9</b>	M <b>No class Mon [Fall break]</b>	
	W Long-Term Memory	Ch. 5
	F <i>Memento</i> clips to be shown in class (Parts of Chs. 8 & 11; total time = 8 min)	<b>Debate: First article summary due</b>
<b>8 – Oct 16</b>	M Long-Term Memory cont'd	Leichtman & Ceci reading (on blackboard)
	W Memory Dev't	Ch. 13 (pp. 452-79)
	F	
<b>9 – Oct 23</b>	M General Knowledge	Ch. 8
	W	
	F	

<b>10</b>	– Oct 30	M	General Knowledge cont'd	
		W	<b>Exam 2</b>	
		F	Language	Ch. 9-10
<b>11</b>	– Nov 6	M	Language cont'd	
		W		<b>Debate: Second article summary due</b>
		F		
<b>12</b>	– Nov 13	M	Language Dev't	Ch. 13 (pp. 480-494)
		W	<i>Debate meeting (small groups)</i>	
		F		Newman et al. reading (on blackboard)
<b>13</b>	– Nov 20	M	Problem Solving	Ch. 11 (pp. 378-398)
		W	<b>No class [Thanksgiving break]</b>	
		F	<b>No class [Thanksgiving break]</b>	
<b>14</b>	– Nov 27	M	<i>Debate meeting (large groups)</i>	
		W	Decision Making	Ch. 12 (pp. 413-449)
		F		<b>Debate: Your-issue write-up due</b>
<b>15</b>	– Dec 4	M	<b>Exam 3</b>	
		W	Debate Presentation	
		F	Debate Presentation	
<b>16</b>	– Dec 11	M	Course overview/wrap-up	<b>Debate: Other-issue write-up due</b>
<b>Finals Wk</b>			Final exam schedule TBA	

Exam 1 – Chs. 1-3, 7, Simons & Levin article

Exam 2 – Chs. 4-6, 8, 13 (pp. 452-479), Leichtman & Ceci article

Exam 3 – Chs. 9-12, 13 (pp. 480-494), Newman et al. article

Final Exam – Cumulative