

Psychology 315: Cognition  
Spring 2008

**Instructor:** Dr. Sarah Johnson  
**Phone:** 610-625-7013  
**Office:** 224 PPHAC  
**Office Hours:** M 2-3pm; T/R 12:30-2pm  
and by appointment

**When:** M/F 8:50-10:00am  
**Where:** 330 PPHAC  
**Website:** <http://blackboard.moravian.edu/>  
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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.

**Attendance:** Attending class will benefit you for multiple reasons: learning how to learn and think critically, discussions of specific learning- and memory-related tips, participation in a variety of activities designed to promote active learning and integration of information, gaining a better idea of my expectations for assignments or exams, and promoting my recognition of you as one of my students, which can only add to my interest in helping you if and when you need it.

With that said, I hold a rather liberal attendance policy for this class. You will be given up to 3 absences (excused or unexcused), and starting with the fourth absence, your Assignments grade will be reduced by 15% for each additional class you miss. Apart from this policy, there are some days on which attendance is required, in conjunction with the debate project; these dates will be listed in the schedule on that handout.

**Lateness:** A legitimate reason for being late can happen to anyone now and then, but repeated lateness is disrespectful to me and to your classmates. Come see me if you have a legitimate reason for repeated lateness or absence.

**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:**

**Assignments:** Over the course of the term you will be given one take-home writing assignment (~3-6 pg), one in-class assignment (Mon., January 28<sup>th</sup>), and numerous shorter reaction paper assignments. The reaction papers will involve finding and discussing real world applications or examples of cognitive processes (~1-2 pgs each). More information about each type of assignment will be provided in separate handouts. The assignments portion of your grade will be determined as follows: 40% for the article assignment, 20% for the in-class assignment, and 40% for the Real World Cognition mini-assignments.

**Exams:** There will be three exams during the course of the semester (third exam during finals). 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. **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 take a make-up. 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 take a make-up 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.

**Late policy:** Late assignments (both debate assignments and other assignments) will be accepted for up to four days after the due date and, unless otherwise noted, will be **penalized one letter grade (10%) for every calendar day late** beginning at 5pm on the day the assignment is due. After the four-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.

### **Overall grades- breakdown:**

Your final grade will be determined by the mean of five scores:  
(Exam 1 + Exam 2 + Exam 3 + Debate grade + Assignments) ÷ 5

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).

**Extra credit:**

An extra credit opportunity (in the form of experimental research participation) will be made available partway through the semester. However, do come and see me at any point during the semester if you feel you could be doing better than you are. We can work together to improve your performance on exams or assignments, e.g., I can help you better understand my expectations, we can re-cover especially difficult material, or I can help you figure out better ways to prepare for certain methods of assessment.

**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. Some changes may be made to the precise layout of course coverage and to the assigned readings, in particular regarding the last few weeks of the course. Any changes will be announced in class and listed on Blackboard.):

| <b>Week:</b> | <b>Class topic/activities:</b>                   | <b>Text Chs/Assignments:</b>                             |
|--------------|--|--|
| <b>1</b>     | Jan 14 M Introduction and course overview        |  |
|              | Jan 18 F   | Ch. 1  |
| <b>2</b>     | Jan 21 M <b>No class – M. L. King day</b>        |  |
|              | Jan 25 F Visual and Auditory Perception          | Ch. 2  |
| <b>3</b>     | Jan 28 M <b><i>In-class group assignment</i></b> | Read Simons & Levin article                              |
|              | Feb 1 F Attention                                | Ch. 3  |
| <b>4</b>     | Feb 4 M Mental Imagery                           | Ch. 7  |
|              | Feb 8 F  | <b>Debate: Abstracts due</b>                             |
| <b>5</b>     | Feb 11 M <b>Exam 1</b>                           |  |
|              | Feb 15 F Memory: General Concepts                |  |
| <b>6</b>     | Feb 18 M Working Memory                          | Ch. 4  |
|              | Feb 22 F   | <b>Debate: First article summary due</b>                 |
| <b>7</b>     | Feb 25 M Long-term Memory                        | Ch. 5  |
|              | Feb 29 F   |  |
| <b>8</b>     | Mar 3-7 <b>NO CLASSES – SPRING BREAK</b>         |  |
| <b>9</b>     | Mar 10 M <i>Memento</i> and Clive Wearing clips  | Ch. 8; <b>Evaluating evidence asst</b> (memory articles) |
|              | Mar 14 F General Knowledge                       |  |
| <b>10</b>    | Mar 17 M   | <b>Debate: Second article summary due</b>                |
|              | Mar 21 F <b>No class – Easter break</b>          |  |

| <b>Week:</b>  | <b>Class topic/activities:</b>       | <b>Text Chs/Assignments:</b> |
|---------------|--------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| <b>11</b>     |                                      |                              |
| Mar 24 M      | Decision Making                      | Ch. 12 (pp. 413-449)         |
| Mar 28 F      | <b>Exam 2</b>                        |                              |
| <b>12</b>     |                                      |                              |
| Mar 31 M      | Language                             | Chs. 9-10                    |
| Apr 4 F       |                                      |                              |
| <b>13</b>     |                                      |                              |
| Apr 7 M       | Language Dev't                       | Ch. 13 (pp. 480-494)         |
| Apr 11 F      |                                      | Read Petitto et al. article  |
| <b>14</b>     |                                      |                              |
| Apr 14 M      | <i>Debate meeting (small groups)</i> |                              |
| Apr 18 F      | <i>Debate meeting (large groups)</i> |                              |
| <b>15</b>     |                                      |                              |
| Apr 21 M      | <b>Debates</b>                       |                              |
| Apr 25 F      | <b>Debates &amp; course evals</b>    |                              |
| <b>Finals</b> | <b>Exam 3</b>                        |                              |

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

Exam 2 – Chs. 4-5, 8, 12, Memory articles

Exam 3 – Chs. 9-10, 13, Petitto et al. article (note: cumulative essays)

Unless otherwise noted, I will use the following scale for translating letter grades and calculating final grades:

| <b>Letter</b> | <b>Score</b> | <b>Grade range</b> |
|---------------|--------------|--------------------|
| 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               |