Psychology 203 Learning, Language, and Memory Fall Quarter, 2010 11:30 – 12:20 M - Th

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Required Texts

Ashcraft, M.H. (2010). Cognition. 5th Ed. New York: Prentice Hall.

Suprenant, A.M., Francis, G., & Neath, I. (2005) *CogLab Reader*. Belemont, CA: Wadsworth

Overview of the Course

Cognitive Psychology is the study of mental processes, including perception, attention, memory, language, knowledge, problem-solving, and reasoning. It will likely be unlike any other psychology you have ever studied, as its emphasis is not on observable behavior. Instead, we look at behavior to give us clues about how mental processes work. In this way, it is like detective work, or reverse engineering; we need to use logic, inference and data to figure out what is going on inside the mind. We will also use observations of brains (through neuroimaging and studies of broken brains) to infer how the mind is built. **Disclaimer:** This is not a course about cognitive therapy or learning disabilities.

Many students find this to be a difficult class. A great deal of emphasis is put on the experiments and methods that cognitive psychologists use to make inferences about how the mind works. Sometimes it will feel like mental gymnastics, but trust me, it's a good feeling when it all makes sense. To do well in class you will need to do assigned readings before class, keep up-to-date on your assignments, and really think about what you are learning.

Exam Dates:

Midterm 1: October 28 Midterm 2: December 2 Final Exam: December 6 @ 11:30

Grading

There are 500 possible points in this course:

- 1. Quizzes (50 points). There will be 6 quizzes on course content, worth 10 points each. Only five of the quizzes will count, and you may drop your lowest score. There will be no make-up quizzes for any reason. If you miss a quiz, you will get a grade of 0. Quizzes will not take more than 15 minutes, and will be multiple choice. The purpose of the quizzes is to keep you up to date on the content we have covered in the course. I will announce in class when the quizzes will be, it is your responsibility to know when we will have a quiz.
- 2. Experiment Journal (50 points). You will need to get a composition book to use as your journal. This will consist of a 1-page summary of each experiment we study in the course including experiments discussed in your text as well as in your CogLab Reader(details attached). We will do the first few summaries together to give you some practice. You may use your journal during essay tests, so it is in your best interest to do a good job. Your experiment journal is due at the final exam and will be graded at that time. However, I will collect them to make sure you are on the right track after each essay test. Some journal entries will come from your text, and some will come from your CogLab reader (I will clearly note where each study can be found). You may choose to have 2 journals (one for each exam) if all of the assigned studies do not fit into one.
- 4. Midterms (Essay Tests -- 200 points). There will be two essay tests, worth 100 points each. Essay questions will be very conceptual, requiring you to use experiments to support a theory or position. You will be able to use your journal during these tests. If you are unable to write the test because of a documented medical or legal emergency, you must contact me *before* the test to schedule a make-up. Make-up tests will not be available for other reasons. The time and format of the make-up test is at my discretion.
- 6. Final Exam (100 points). The final exam will consist of 50 multiple choice questions, and will be cumulative. It will be taken during the final exam period. The final exam schedule is already printed in the class schedule, *so make your travel plans accordingly*.
- 7. CogLab (100 points). CogLab is a webpage that has re-created some classic experiments. You will need to purchase an entry code. You are expected to read the CogLab Reader article that accompanies each CogLab experiment assigned. Information for journal enteries will come from both the text and your CogLab Reader. Instructions for accessing CogLab will be covered in class and will be available on MyBC as will a list of which experiments you are to do and their due dates.

Journal Assignment

Your journal should be in a bound, composition notebook, with the pages numbered. Leave a few pages at the beginning for a table of contents. You may write only one page (one side) on each experiment. You will see that each journal entry has a number – these correspond to page numbers in your journal. I should be able to turn to everyone's page 56, and find the same experiment. Not every single experiment we discuss will go in your journal, but the most important ones will.

The point of the journal assignment is to have you think about the experiments and what they tell us about cognition. You will also have a record of those experiments that you will be able to use on essay tests. **Do not copy from the textbook** – think about the experiment, and describe it in your own words. Although you will need to rely on the text for some experimental details (number of trials, stimuli etc), the question and the implications should be in your own words. The act of translating the experiment into your own words will help you to understand it. Just a warning, I have read the textbook cover-to-cover seven times. If you use the words of the author, I'll know it.

Although you are free to form discussion groups to discuss the experiments, writing the journals is an independent assignment. Plagiarism from the text and copying the work of others constitute academic dishonesty, and will be reported to student affairs. Besides, you won't learn anything that way.

You will submit your journal with each essay test, and I will check them to make sure you are on the right track. Your journal will be graded at the end of the semester. Journals are graded on completeness, accuracy, and quality of your interpretations. Your journal must be submitted at the final exam. The whole point of the journal is for it to be a study aid (although *making* the journal will be a better aid than *having* the journal). Thus, I will not extend the journal deadline for any reason.

You will be given a list of studies that you will include in your journal.

Format for a typical journal entry follows:

Authors and Year:

Question: What question were the researchers trying to answer, or what was their hypothesis?

<u>Method</u>: Be as detailed here as possible – because the text summarizes an experiment, it won't give you all the details. A good way to figure out the method is to ask yourself, "If I was a subject in this experiment, what would happen to me, or what would I be doing?" You *may* need to add a section to the method called logic – if your reader needs help understanding how the method could possible produce an answer to the question. Not every experiment will need a logic section.

<u>Results</u>: Again, detail. A graph or table may help.

<u>Implications</u>(optional): What do those results tell us about cognition? This is the most important part, and the hardest part to do. Do not just restate the results here. A good question to ask yourself is, "what does this experiment tell me about how the mind works?" Make a link between the data and the implications. What theory does this data support, or refute?

Grading: Here are some general guidelines on the grading of journals:

A. An A journal is complete and accurate. What distinguishes an A journal is the implications of each experiment. Are you able to go beyond the data, and tell me what the data means for our understanding of how the mind works? Although not every experiment will have profound implications for cognitive psychology, you should have meaningful implications for a significant number of experiments.

B. A B journal is complete and accurate. Although you have discussed the implications, you may not have expanded on them, or linked them to theory, or explained how this experiment tells us something important. Or you might have done this for some experiments, but not often. You could also get a B is you did a great job on the journal entries, but the journal was not quite complete (but still had at least 90% of the entries).

C. A C journal may have a few holes in it – some journal entries are missing (but not more than 30%), or some important experiments are not explained correctly. There may be a few errors in the method or results. Generally, you have not adequately discussed the implications.

D. A D journal is lacking in completeness, accuracy, and quality. For example, fewer than 70% of journal entries made, errors in method or results, shallow discussion of implications.

F. It would be really hard to get an F on a journal. Generally, fewer than 50% of journal entries made, factual errors, difficult to follow, entries are missing key information etc.