



# Cognitive Psychology

## PSY 340, Spring 2014, CRN#22499

**INSTRUCTOR: Dr. Michael C. Hout**

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Website: [www.michaelhout.com](http://www.michaelhout.com)

Office hours: Mondays and Tuesdays, 2:30 – 4 pm (or by appointment)

Classroom: Gerald Thomas Hall, room 190; MWF, 11:30 – 12:20 pm

**TEACHING ASSISTANT: Ryan Sams**

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Office: Science Hall, 309

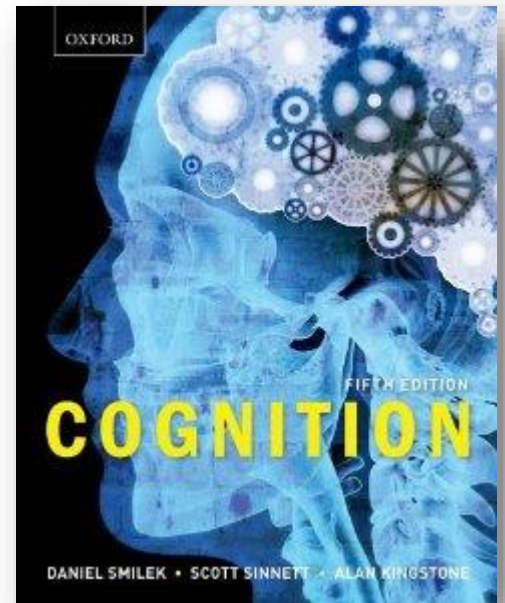
Office hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 1 – 2pm and 4 – 5pm (or by appointment)

**Please review this syllabus and Canvas before you send an email.** Most of your questions can be answered using this document.

**COURSE MATERIALS:**

**1) Suggested (optional) textbook:** Cognition, 5<sup>th</sup> Edition by Daniel Smilek, Scott Sinnett, and Alan Kingstone. ISBN: 978-0-19-544749-1. I will also periodically assign other research articles or readings, which will be posted on Canvas.

**2) Canvas:** Everything you need to know about this course can be found on Canvas at <https://learn.nmsu.edu>. This includes the syllabus, grades, readings (other than the book), and all other course material. I will also post announcements occasionally. Content on the Canvas site will be updated constantly as we progress through the course. It is your responsibility to check Canvas on a regular basis! That means once per day (preferably in the morning, especially on days when you have class).



**3) Study Resources:** I very strongly encourage you to make friends in this course. Other students can often be helpful study partners, and can provide you with notes in case you need to miss class. I will NOT repeat lectures for you if you are absent, so you must acquire notes from another student if you are to miss class. If you encounter any difficulties keeping up with the course content, come to meet with me sooner (rather than later). I'm happy to help out, but be prepared to meet with me, and leave adequate time before the next exam, end of semester, etc.

**4) Pre-requisites:** For this course, you need to have taken PSY 201G; one of STAT 251G, STAT 271G, or AST 311; and PSY 310. If you have not taken these courses (and passed them successfully) then you will be at a disadvantage in my class.

### **COURSE GOALS:**

This course is intended to provide you with an introduction to cognitive psychology, a branch of psychology that is primarily concerned with human information processing. Over the course of the semester, I hope to provide you with an appreciation for the complex mental feats which you accomplish every day, and which you likely take entirely for granted. Together, we will examine the theory (and data!) behind a variety of cognitive phenomena, including (but not limited to) attention, memory, perception, categorization, language, and thought. For some topics, we will delve deeper than others. We will examine both classic and more recent experiments; however, very little time will be spent reviewing research methods. PSY 310 (Experimental Methods) is a pre-requisite for this course, so I assume at the outset that you possess a basic level of knowledge about experimental methodology and statistics.

My overall goal in this course is to spark your interest in the complexities of the human mind, and to provide you with the tools and training necessary to delve into cognitive psychology for yourself. By the end of this course, I hope (through in-class demonstrations, supplemental readings, etc.) to provide you with a deeper understanding of cognitive science than you would ordinarily gain from textbooks or lectures alone. Maybe I'll even make a cognitive psychologist out of one or two of you! I'm excited to teach this course, and I hope you're excited to take it.

### **COURSE FORMAT:**

This course will largely be composed of traditional lectures, but I will also include many hands-on demonstrations. I want you to get an idea of what it is like to participate in the various experiments I will be discussing. So that means you will often participate in mock experiments during class, for demonstrative purposes. Please make sure to participate! As

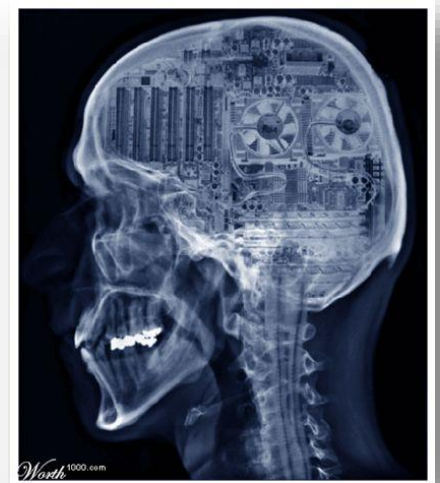
will become extremely clear, our intuitions about cognitive life are almost invariably wrong, so participating in the demonstrations will allow you to be immersed in the research experience, and see for yourself that the mind often performs its tasks in unexpected and interesting ways!

That being said, a lot of what I discuss in lecture will be experimental research. Theories are important, but they are meaningless without supporting evidence. We will discuss data nearly every day in class. So get used to hearing me talk about how an experiment was conducted, and start trying to predict the results for yourself. This can be a lot of fun, even when you're wrong about how you think an experiment will turn out.

A quick note about dates and people... throughout this course, as we discuss the various topics, I will tend to do so in chronological fashion. That is, we'll start with early ideas about (for example) attention. And we'll move through how the ideas changed throughout the years, as new experiments/data were conducted/collected. As such, you will learn a lot of new names, and see a lot of dates. These things are really just references for you, and are my way of giving credit to the researchers and theoreticians that developed these ideas. I will NOT be testing you on the names or dates of experiments. On the exams, you will often see names and dates, to jog your memory for the experiment to which I may be referring, but I will NEVER ask you to recall someone's name or the date of an experiment for credit. That's silly. I want you to learn about cognitive psychology. I couldn't care less if you are able to regurgitate names/dates. I want you to be able to recognize the ideas, predict and understand the findings, and comprehend the implications for what they mean about how our minds work.

### **SOME NOTES ON THE LECTURES & READINGS:**

I will NOT post my lecture slides online prior to class. I will, however, post the slides after each lecture. This is done for two reasons. First, this will be a very active course. I will often ask you to make predictions about the outcome of an experiment, or present something funny or unexpected in my slides. If you have a copy of them beforehand, you will be tempted to skip ahead and spoil all of my fun. Second, I want you to pay attention. Having the slides in front of you may detract from actually taking in the material. As such, the best strategy is to simply relax and absorb the material as we discuss it. Take some notes here and there, but don't worry about copying down each bullet point verbatim or drawing figures of the data. I'll give them to you



after each class. Simply take down notes anywhere you think that the slides themselves would be inadequate to refresh your memory.

This means that coming to class is critically important. It is NOT sufficient to simply look over my slides after the fact. You need to be around to hear me discuss the topics. I cannot stress this enough.

Importantly, as already stated above, if you miss a class, you must get the notes from another student; I will not repeat lectures individually! Never. Not for any reason. Don't even ask. I won't give study guides either. Never. Not for any reason. Don't even ask. You will have all my slides, so a study guide would be superfluous. The textbook we use will be largely supplemental to the material I cover in class. The exams will be entirely based on what I cover in lecture.

Occasionally, there will be required readings, usually in the form of published journal articles (somewhere between 2 and 4 per section of the course). I may or may not discuss these articles in class, so you must read them. There will be exam questions on each reading, I assure you. These readings will always be freely available to you.

You can, if you choose, use a tablet or laptop computer to take notes. This will save trees, but don't abuse this privilege. It's obvious when people are screwing around on their computers. I can hear you typing more furiously than you would to take notes, I can see Facebook reflected on your glasses, and it's entirely evident when someone is paying more attention to their screen than they are to me. Don't do that. I will call you out on it, I assure you. If you can't pull yourself away from social media for an hour, I encourage you to stay home and do it in bed, in your PJs. That'd be way more fun for both of us.



**One final note: reproducing my slides on any note-hosting website constitutes (a) copyright infringement and (b) a violation of the student code of conduct. If I find out my slides are reproduced, shared, or copied, I will take full legal action on the student in question. Please don't make me do this!**

### **GRADING POLICIES:**

Everyone should get an A or B (or at least a C) in this course, hopefully. I'd be happy if everyone got an A. Truly. That'd be super cool. If you come to class regularly, participate, pay attention, and study a little, there is no reason you should not get a decent

grade. I have no interest in failing students, or intentionally making this class difficult. I'd rather it be fun, and that you... you know, learn something.

**Exams:** Your grade in this course will be based on four exams, each worth 25% of your grade. You will be responsible for all material covered in lecture, and all assigned material, including readings not discussed in class. Exams will be a combination of multiple choice and short answer questions. Short answer questions should require only a few sentences to answer. Exams will not be cumulative, with the exception of the optional final (more on this below).

If for any reason you cannot attend class the day of an exam, you must contact me at least 24 hours before class to schedule a make-up exam. I will not require any form of documentation, but please note that the make-up may be significantly more difficult than the standard exam and must be taken within 1 week of the original exam date. Failure to inform me 24 hours in advance or failure to take the exam within 1 week of the scheduled date will result in a grade of zero. This is non-negotiable.

If the situation arises wherein you receive a zero on an exam, you are not entirely out of luck. There will not be an official final in this course, but I will allow students to take an optional cumulative final exam (similar to the other exams, but longer) during the official scheduled time (see calendar, below). If you decide to take this exam, you do so at your own personal risk or reward. This exam may be used to replace a zero, or to replace your lowest exam score (reward!). However, if you score lower on the final than your lowest exam score, the grade you receive on the final will replace it (risk!). This may be harsh, but it is designed to encourage you to make it to every exam, and to do well on the first four (and save yourself the hassle of a cumulative final!).

**Curves:** For each exam, I will curve each student's score in the following way. I will take the mean (average) of the top 5% (treating that value as the perfect-score mark), and adjust all other scores accordingly. For instance, if there were 100 students, I would calculate the average for the 5 students who scored the best. Say that average came out to be 95%. I would then bump every student's score up by 5% ( $95\% + 5\% = 100\%$ ). That way, if an exam is particularly difficult for the entire class, grades will be adjusted accordingly. It also means that the top 2.5% may receive a score over 100% on any particular exam. This is a generous policy, but in practice, it often does little to change people's scores. The reason for this is that there are often several students who score 100% on my exams. The closer that top 5% gets to a perfect score, the smaller the curve. So don't rely on the curve to bump up your grade!

**Attendance, participation, & extra credit:** You're all adults, so you can choose whether or not you want to come to class. It makes no difference to me. However, please be aware that 1) exams are based largely on material covered in lecture, 2) lecture slides do not provide 100% of the information that was covered in class, and 3) I will not repeat lectures for individual students. It is thus in your best interest to attend class regularly, to pay attention, and to make friends that will provide notes in the event you have to miss class.

Because this is a relatively small class, I'd like it to be highly interactive. You will be strongly encouraged to participate in discussions, and may occasionally be called upon to answer questions. Especially if you sit in the back of the room and try to hide from me. I'll find you. And I'll call on you when you're busy texting your BFF. And then you'll feel silly.

On that note, turn your phones off, or on silent. Do not check your phone during class. You're in class. You're an adult. You pay for this course. So behave accordingly.



There will be some opportunities for extra credit which are not-so-subtly designed to encourage class attendance and participation. However, they will come in one form, and one form only. On randomly distributed days throughout the semester, I will administer pop-quizzes or small-scale exercises. On pop-quiz days, you'll receive a single question to which you will write a short answer. Correct answers will earn you 2 points on the forthcoming exam; incorrect answers will still earn you 1 point (so long as you at least attempt to answer the question). You will also receive 1 point

if you can make me laugh. For real. You will not have an opportunity to earn these points if you don't attend class! On exercise days, you'll receive 2 points just for indulging me (usually in the form of some informal experiment). Please note, that this is the only opportunity you have for extra credit. Do not ask for additional opportunities, and do not try and bargain with me for a "re-do". If you ask once about more extra credit (even once!), I will remove every extra credit point you have earned for the entire semester.

**A comment on scholarships, graduation and the like:** Very often, students come to me and tell me that if they do not receive a certain grade in my course, they are going to lose their scholarship, or they won't graduate, or they will become ineligible for something or other. Let me be clear: I can relate. I understand how hard it is to succeed in education, to pay for school, etc. I in no way wish for anything bad to happen to anyone as a result of failing my course. But it is your responsibility to get a good grade in my course; it is not my responsibility to give you a good grade. You must earn it. Do NOT ever tell me about

these types of concerns. Please. It puts an unfair pressure on me as an instructor, whether it is done intentionally or not. I will never assign a student a grade that s/he did not earn, so please do not come to me saying “I need a grade bump or I will lose my scholarship”. It would be completely unfair to the rest of the class to grant anyone a grade they did not earn. Besides, many of your fellow classmates also have scholarships, graduation concerns, etc. Please keep that in mind.

You may see this policy as cold. I see it as being fair to everyone in the course. If you are worried about something like this and need to drop the course, come to see me early, and we can discuss options for withdrawal, figure out if it is possible for you to pass the course (given your current scores), etc. In this regard, my door is always open. Just do not pressure me to give you a better grade.

**Grade calculation:** Each exam is worth 25% of your grade. Any extra credit points you earned during a given section will be added to that exam score, and that one alone. If you take the optional cumulative final, it will replace the lowest of your other 4 exam scores.

Final letter grades are assigned as follows:

Percentage	Letter Grade
> 97.6%	A+
92.6 – 97.5%	A
89.6 – 92.5%	A-
87.6 – 89.5%	B+
82.6 – 87.5%	B
79.6 – 82.5%	B-
77.6 – 79.5%	C+
69.6 – 77.5%	C
59.5 – 69.5%	D
< 59.5%	F

Incompletes (I Grades): The grade of I (incomplete) is given for passable work that could not be completed due to circumstances beyond the student’s control. The “I” grade will not be used to avoid a student receiving a D or F grade.

**DISABILITIES:**

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) cover issues relating to disability and accommodations. If a student has questions or needs an accommodation in the classroom (all medical information is treated confidentially), contact:

Trudy Luken

Student Accessibility Services (SAS) - Corbett Center, Rm. 244

Phone: 646.6840 E-mail: [sas@nmsu.edu](mailto:sas@nmsu.edu)

Website: [www.nmsu.edu/~ssd/](http://www.nmsu.edu/~ssd/)

### **DISCRIMINATION:**

NMSU policy prohibits discrimination on the basis of age, ancestry, color, disability, gender identity, genetic information, national origin, race, religion, retaliation, serious medical condition, sex, sexual orientation, spousal affiliation and protected veterans status. Furthermore, Title IX prohibits sex discrimination to include sexual misconduct, sexual violence, sexual harassment and retaliation.

For more information on discrimination issues, Title IX or NMSU's complaint process contact:

Gerard Nevarez or Agustin Diaz

Office of Institutional Equity (OIE) - O'Loughlin House

Phone: 646.3635 E-mail: [equity@nmsu.edu](mailto:equity@nmsu.edu)

Website: <http://www.nmsu.edu/~eoo/>

### **CHEATING/PLAGIARISM POLICY:**

Plagiarism is using another person's work without acknowledgment, making it appear to be one's own. Intentional and unintentional instances of plagiarism are considered instances of academic misconduct and are subject to disciplinary action such as failure on the assignment, failure of the course or dismissal from the university. The NMSU Library has more information and help on how to avoid plagiarism at <http://lib.nmsu.edu/plagiarism/>

### **IMPORTANT DATES:**

- Monday, January 20<sup>th</sup>: No class, Martin Luther King Holiday
- Tuesday, March 11<sup>th</sup>: Last day to drop the course with “W”
- Monday, March 14<sup>th</sup>: No class, I will be out of town
- Monday – Friday March 24<sup>th</sup> – 28<sup>th</sup>: No class, Spring Break
- Friday, April 18<sup>th</sup>: No class, Spring Holiday
- Wednesday, May 7<sup>th</sup> (10:30 – 12:30pm): Optional cumulative final exam!
- Tuesday, May 13<sup>th</sup>: Final grades will be entered



**DISCLAIMER:**

This syllabus is subject to change without notice!

**EMAIL / CONTACT POLICY:**

My typical response time to emails is between 24 and 72 hours. If you don't get a reply, please double check that you have the correct address ([mhout@nmsu.edu](mailto:mhout@nmsu.edu)) and try emailing me again (or stop me in class).

**TENTATIVE COURSE SCHEDULE:**

<b>Date</b>		
1/17/14	Class intro, policies, expectations, etc.	Syllabus
1/20/14	No class! – Martin Luther King Day	
2/12/14	Exam 1	Covers Section 1 and Readings
3/5/14	Exam 2	Covers Section 2 and Readings
3/14/14	No class! – Mike out of town	
3/24/14	No class! – Spring Break	
3/26/14	No class! – Spring Break	
3/28/14	No class! – Spring Break	
4/7/14	Exam 3	Covers Section 3 and Readings
4/18/14	No class! – Spring Holiday	
5/2/14	Exam 4	Covers Section 4 and Readings
5/7/14	Optional Cumulative Final: 10:30am – 12:30pm	

\*\*\* Please note: This schedule is subject to change, according to class demands! \*\*\*