

Syllabus, PSYC 033: Cognitive Psychology
Swarthmore College, Fall 2006
Prof. Frank H. Durgin

Class time: Kohlberg 115, MWF 9:30-10:20
LAB: Trotter 201 (*when announced – will be on Fridays 9:30-10:20*)
Office Hours: Mon. 10:30-11:30; Thurs. 12:30-1:30
Text: Smith, E. E., & Kosslyn, S. M. (2007). *Cognitive Psychology: Mind and Brain*.
Reader: Suprenant, A. M, Francis, G., & Neath, I. (2005). *CogLab Reader*.
Lab program: CogLab

This course will survey the motivations, foundations, and basic findings of modern Cognitive Psychology, which is one of the major contributing fields to cognitive science. Cognitive Psychology is concerned with the experimental analysis of mental processes and structures. In part, it is an attempt to provide an empirical science to replace "folk psychology" regarding such mental concepts as attention, memory, perception, thought and language. It draws on a variety of ideas from information theory, philosophy of mind, neuroscience, logic, linguistics, and computer science. We will explore some of these roots, but the main body of Cognitive Psychology consists of experimental study of theoretical questions concerning the nature of human cognition. The course will be based around three kinds of intellectual material: (1) A textbook that organizes the field into a series of problems and paradigms. The text will also provide background concerning current conceptions of the neural bases of cognitive processes. (2) A set of readings and lectures aimed at developing important theoretical issues, and (3) A series of labs designed to provide experience with methods that have been employed to address these. At the beginning of the course we will discuss foundational issues for an experimental science of the mind.

Requirements:

Reading and Participation: I expect you to become familiar with the material covered by the text and to be prepared to discuss the readings assigned. Bring questions you may have about readings to class, or e-mail me. Note: supplementary readings will often be assigned.

Responses: You will frequently be asked to write a brief (1 page), informal response piece on supplementary readings. What I am looking for in these is simply your thoughts on the material. (e.g., Write about an aspect of the reading that strikes you as particularly interesting.) I will assign 7 of these; you must write 6 of them.

Papers: There will be a (3 page) paper due four weeks into the semester (10/2) and a longer paper (6-8 pages) due in mid November (11/13).

Exams: There will be a (short-answer) midterm exam after fall break (10/27*) and a non-cumulative final. The final will be a mix of short-answer questions and essays.

Late paper policy: Please get things in on time. In fairness to those who do, late papers will be penalized by 10% of the earned grade for each week or part thereof. If requested 48 hours in advance, a three-day extension may be granted with only a 3% penalty.

Grading. Papers and exams receive about equal weight and account for most of your grade. The remaining part of your grade is based on class participation including attendance (no more than two absences will normally be allowed).

* N.B. Unfortunately, I will be out of the country on the day of the midterm. Wednesday morning, 10/25, will be your last chance to ask questions of me before the exam. I will have extra office hours that week if requested.

Cognitive Psychology, Brief Schedule, Fall 2006

We will follow the textbook, with the exception that the second week of class will be devoted to a more general discussion of the nature of scientific inference in psychology.

Sept 4-8 Mind and Brain – history and foundations (Text, Chapter 1)

Sept 11-15 The scientific method – what is a science of psychology?

Sept 18-22 Perception (Text, Chapter 2)

Sept 25-29 Attention (Text, Chapter 3)

Oct 2-6 Memory Representation (Text, Chapter 4) (Paper due Monday)

Oct 9-13 Encoding and Retrieval (Text, Chapter 5)

Fall Break

Oct 23-27 Working Memory (Text, Chapter 6) (*midterm* on Friday)

Oct 30- Nov 3 Executive Process (Text, Chapter 7)

Nov 6-10 Emotion and Cognition (Text, Chapter 8)

Nov 13-17 Decision Making (Text, Chapter 9) (Paper due Monday)

Nov 20-22 Problem Solving and Reasoning (Text, Chapter 10) (Thanksgiving)

Nov 27- Dec 1 Motor Cognition and Simulation (Text, Chapter 11)

Dec 4-8, 11 Language (Text, Chapter 12)

Final Exam

In addition to reading the textbook over the course of the semester, we will read about 2/3 of the Reader (~20 pages/week) and do many of the Experiments available through CogLab. We will frequently do labs as a group on Fridays during our normal class time.

Lab and supplementary reading schedules will be distributed separately.