

PSY 352: Learning and Memory

Spring 2009, T Th 2:00-3:15

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Course Overview and Objectives

PSY 352 surveys fundamental concepts, key theories, and current issues in the area of learning and memory. Topics covered include classical conditioning, reinforcement learning, short- and long-term memory, retention and forgetting, implicit memory, and reconstructive processes in memory. A primary goal of the course is to familiarize you with the basic concepts and findings in these areas, but we will frequently consider real-world examples and applications of the material (e.g., drug tolerance, eyewitness memory, repressed memory) in order to emphasize the relevance of the concepts to our daily lives. As a result, you will gain a better understanding of learning and memory and how it relates to everyday behavior, education, and marketing and advertising, among other things. In addition, you will learn techniques that are effective for improving your own learning and memory.

Course Format

PSY 352 will be taught at a level suitable for upper-level undergraduates. PSY 250, Research Methods in Psychology, is a prerequisite and will be useful for understanding the numerous experiments that we will discuss in the course. No prior knowledge of learning and memory is assumed, however. Much of the course will be presented in lecture format, but there will also be many demonstrations, exercises, examples, and illustrations to promote interaction and discussion. Several class periods will be devoted to "focus topics" that tend to be less formal, more applied, and more discussion-oriented.

Course Material

The textbook for the course is *Learning and Memory: Behaviorist and Cognitive Approaches*, which may be purchased through the bookstore. (Note that my name is on the cover, but I didn't write it. I merely put the book together as a custom textbook by selecting chapters from a variety of books.) There will also be some required supplemental readings that cover topics in greater depth, and these will be posted on RamCT, along with the PowerPoint presentations from class. Note that the reading material and lectures are designed to supplement one another, not repeat one another. Lectures will not be a simple restatement of the readings, but will include a considerable amount of new information that expands on the readings, and in some cases, covers completely new issues and topics.

Course Web Page

A RamCT page has been set up for PSY 352. You will need access to this page for the course, as it includes the syllabus, supplemental readings, in-class presentations, discussion boards, announcements, etc. You will also need to turn in your paper assignments via RamCT. Your grades on all assignments will also be posted there, as well.

Attendance

Classroom attendance will not be taken. If you wish to do well on the exams, however, it is important that you attend lectures regularly, because lectures will consist of a considerable amount of information that cannot be found in the readings. Also note that there will be opportunities to earn points from written responses solicited in class (see below). In the case of borderline grades, I reserve the right to use class participation as a basis for making adjustments to grades beyond what was earned in the course.

Evaluation

The method used for determining grades in this course is probably different from what most of you have experienced. The way this will work is that you need to attain a specified number of points to get the grade you desire, and those points can come from any of a variety of tests, papers, and assignments of your own choosing. The good news is that every single one of you can get an A in the course, provided you're willing to put in the effort. There will be a total of 700 points available, as shown here:

| | |
|--|------------------|
| Semester exams, 3 @ 100 points each: | 300 points |
| Semester quizzes, 3 @ 20 points each: | 60 points |
| Cumulative final: | 100 points |
| Papers, 3 @ 50 points each: | 150 points |
| Out of class assignment: | 30 points |
| On-line discussion: 10 @ 3 points each | 30 points |
| In-class participation: 10 @ 3 points each | <u>30 points</u> |
| TOTAL: | 700 points |

The points needed for each possible grade are as follows:

- A: 450+ points
- B: 400-449 points
- C: 350-399 points
- D: 300-349 points
- F: 0-299 points

Tests and Assignments

Semester Exams: Three non-cumulative exams will be given during the semester, splitting the course up into thirds. The exams will be worth 100 points each and will consist of true/false, multiple choice, and short answer questions. Note that after you get your exam back, you'll be given the opportunity to correct the questions you got wrong. Specifically, you can do a write-up in which you indicate what the correct answer is and why. You may use your notes and the readings for this. You'll then be given half credit for each of the questions you successfully corrected, and your exam score will be updated accordingly.

Semester Quizzes: Three quizzes will be given during the semester, interspersed between the three exams. The quizzes will be worth 20 points each and will consist of true/false, multiple choice, and short answer questions, just like the ones you'll get on the exams. They'll be administered at the very beginning of the class period on the days indicated on the schedule, so don't be late! As indicated below, there will not be any make-ups!

Cumulative Final: During finals week, a cumulative final will be given consisting of true/false, multiple choice, and short answer questions drawn from the entire semester's worth of material. The exam will be worth 100 points, and since given during finals week, there will be no opportunity to do exam corrections.

Papers: Three paper assignments will be interspersed throughout the semester, one for each 1/3rd of the course. For these papers, you'll be asked to select a topic from the course, find three recent journal articles related to that topic, and then write a 6-8 page paper in which you talk about how the information in the journal articles expand on what was covered in class. Additional details will be provided at a later date. Each paper will be worth 50 points, but to get credit for the paper, it must be well written and of strong quality (i.e., judged to be B work or better). If not, you will be asked to revise the paper based on the feedback I give you in order to get the 50 points. There is no partial credit here—you either get it up to “B” level work and get all 50 points, or you get no credit.

Out of Class Assignment: There will also be an out-of-class assignment offered later in the semester worth a total of 30 points. Additional details will be provided at a later date.

On-Line Discussion: Throughout the semester you will be given the opportunity to participate in on-line discussions appearing on the RamCT discussion boards. Discussion questions will be posted on the discussion boards for 10 of the 15 weeks of the semester. To get credit for participating in a particular week's discussion, you need to post one message of substance that week. You can get 3 points for each week that you participate, for a total of 30 points possible.

In-Class Participation: During class throughout the semester, I may ask you to think about a particular question or offer your opinion on some issue. Typically, I'll ask you to give a written response of one paragraph or less. There will be 10 of these occasions during the semester, completely unannounced, and each written response will be worth 3 points. Thus, there are a total of 30 points possible for the 10 written responses.

Make-up Policy

Because all of the scheduled quizzes and exams are essentially optional and you have a number of opportunities to make up missed points, ***there will be no make-ups in this course***. If you miss an exam, no matter what the reason, you can make up the points by choosing to do some of the other papers and assignments, the cumulative final, etc.

Late Assignments

The papers will be due by midnight on the date specified, to be turned in as an attachment in RamCT. Papers will be docked 10% for each *calendar day* that they are late. If a paper is 10 or more days late, no points are possible.

Correspondence

Don't hesitate to contact me if you need help with the course—I will gladly provide help outside of class! I have an open-door policy and do my best to make myself available. I usually work in my office with my door open—if you come by and see my door open, that means you're welcome to drop in unannounced. If you want to make sure you catch me, however, you should come by during our office hours or set up an appointment. E-mail is the best method for getting in touch with me to set up an appointment.

Course Schedule

| Date | Topic | Reading | Assignment Due |
|---------------|---|----------------------|--|
| Jan 20 | Introduction | | |
| Jan 22 | Foundations and Approaches | Chapter 1 | |
| Jan 27 | Habituation and Simple Stimulus Learning | Supplemental Reading | |
| Jan 29 | <i>Focus Topic: Infant Perception & Cognition</i> | Supplemental Reading | |
| Feb 3 | Classical Conditioning | Chapter 2 | |
| Feb 5 | Quiz 1 ; Classical Conditioning | Chapter 3 | |
| Feb 10 | <i>Focus Topic: Drug Tolerance</i> | Supplemental Reading | |
| Feb 12 | Operant Conditioning | Chapter 4 | |
| Feb 17 | Operant Conditioning | Chapter 4 | Paper 1 |
| Feb 19 | Exam 1 | | |
| Feb 24 | Applications | Chapter 5 | |
| Feb 26 | Associative vs. Cognitive Processes | Chapter 6 | |
| Mar 3 | Stage Models of Memory | Chapter 7 | Paper 1 Re-Write Exam 1 Corrections |
| Mar 5 | Stage Models of Memory | Chapter 7 | |
| Mar 10 | Quiz 2 ; Processing Accounts of Memory | Chapter 8 | |
| Mar 12 | <i>Focus Topic: Environment and Memory</i> | Supplemental Reading | |
| Mar 17 | Spring Break: No Class | | |
| Mar 19 | Spring Break: No Class | | |
| Mar 24 | Forgetting | Chapter 9 | |
| Mar 26 | Forgetting | Chapter 9 | Paper 2 |
| Mar 31 | Exam 2 | | |
| Apr 2 | Remembering | Chapter 10 | |
| Apr 7 | Remembering | Supplemental Reading | |
| Apr 9 | <i>Focus Topic: Memory and Amnesia</i> | Supplemental Reading | Paper 2 Re-Write Exam 2 Corrections |
| Apr 14 | Implicit Memory | Chapter 11 | |
| Apr 16 | Quiz 3 ; Implicit Memory | Chapter 11 | |
| Apr 21 | Reconstructive Processes in Memory | Chapter 12 | |
| Apr 23 | Reconstructive Processes in Memory | Chapter 12 | |
| Apr 28 | <i>Focus Topic: Eyewitness Memory</i> | Supplemental Reading | Paper 3 |
| Apr 30 | Exam 3 | | |
| May 5 | <i>Focus Topic: Repressed Memory</i> | Supplemental Reading | |
| May 7 | <i>Focus Topic: Repressed Memory</i> | Supplemental Reading | Paper 3 Re-Write Exam 3 Corrections |
| May 14 | Cumulative Final (9:10-11:10) | | |