

COMPLEX COGNITION

PSYC 209

PAUL THIBODEAU • FALL 2018 • OBERLIN COLLEGE

How do we get so smart? How are we able to perceive the world around us, learn languages, make decisions, remember the past, and predict the future? How does a mass of neural tissue think? What are thoughts made of? These are the questions we will attempt to answer as we survey some of the major topics in cognitive psychology.

Course Learning Goals

Specifically, in this course you will learn...

1. ...about some of the major theoretical frameworks in cognitive science.
2. ...how to reason scientifically about psychological phenomena and to critically evaluate basic psychological research.
3. ...how to apply ethical standards to evaluate research practices in cognitive science. We will also consider the practical implications of research findings in cognitive science.
4. ...skills to enhance communication and collaboration.

Structural Stuff

Time & Place Tuesdays & Thursdays 3-4:15 (Seve 132B)
Instructor Paul Thibodeau (Seve 213; paul.thibodeau@oberlin.edu)
Textbook Kahneman, D. (2011). *Thinking, Fast and Slow*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux. (*TFS*)

Office Hours

I'd be happy to meet with you whenever we can find a convenient time. Just send me an email. It can be as simple as, "Hi Paul, Can we meet sometime to talk about stuff in Complex Cognition?" I will also hold formal office hours at a few key times during the semester.

Rhythm and Pacing

- A reading and online quiz will be due most Monday nights (at 11:59PM; before the next day's class). The reading (30ish pages) will be from *Thinking, Fast and Slow (TFS)*, which is an informative and accessible overview of the cognitive psychology of decision making.
- There will typically be something to read or watch or listen to before the Thursday class. Details about exams, assignments, quizzes, and readings will be posted on Bb.

Grade Breakdown and Important Dates

Exams (3)	60%	i) Due Wednesday, 10/3 by 11:59PM (submitted on Bb) ii) Due Wednesday, 11/14 by 11:59PM (submitted on Bb) iii) Due Thursday, 12/20 by 9PM (submitted on Bb)
Quizzes (12)	20%	Due Monday nights at 11:59PM (submitted on Bb)
Assignments	20%	See back

Exams

There will be three exams. They are designed to (a) give you an opportunity to synthesize and apply knowledge from the course and (b) give me an opportunity to assess what you have learned. The exams will be take-home and open-note. You will have roughly a week (including one class period) to complete each exam so that you have sufficient time to think about the questions and your response.

Quizzes

Weekly online quizzes will accompany the readings from *TFS* (due Monday nights). They are designed to highlight important information from the book and connect it to the class topic for the week. There will be 12 quizzes — about 15 questions each (multiple choice, true/false, short answer). These quizzes will be graded. Your lowest quiz score will be dropped. Quizzes will be available for a week. They will be open-note and open-book, but they are to be taken individually. Since we will spend class time talking about material covered on the quiz (and because each quiz will be available online for a week), you will not be able to make up a missed quiz.

Assignments

The rest of your grade will be based on a few key assignments. These include two experiment summaries, two article summaries, and a presentation. For the presentation, you will be working with a group — conducting research on a one of several possible topics related to cognitive psychology and reporting back to the class on what you learned. Assignments will simply be graded for completion. However, for an assignment to be considered “complete,” it will have to meet certain standards that will be discussed during the course.

Notes

- I will do my best to maintain the schedule presented, but some modification may become necessary as the semester progresses. Blackboard is the final word.
- Follow the Oberlin Honor Code in this course. Details about how the honor code will apply on specific assignments will be provided with the assignments.
- Let me know ASAP if you have an educational accommodation or if you anticipate missing a significant number of classes.

Questions and Notable Assignments by Week

Week(s)	Question	Assignments to submit
1.	What is intelligence?	
2.	Do we think in images?	Experiment summary (due 9/12)
3.	How are concepts organized?	Summary of Collins & Quillian (1969) (due 9/19)
4.	How and why do we categorize?	
5.		EXAM 1 (10/3)
6.	Is the mind modular?	
7.	Does language affect perception?	Experiment summary (due 10/17)
8.	Do animals have language? Critical period?	Summary of Senghas & Coppola (2001) (due 10/31)
9.	Does language shape thought?	
10.		EXAM 2 (11/14)
11.	How do we think about complex problems?	
12.	How can we think better?	
13.	What did you learn about?	Presentations (12/4 & 12/6)
14.	Insights for everyday life?	
		EXAM 3 (12/20)