

Current Topics in Memory and Cognition

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Office: HW302

Office hours: Wednesday 2:00-3:00pm, or by appointment

Class time and location: Monday 1:00-3:00pm, MW140

Course description:

This course will provide an overview of different topics in memory and cognition across the life span. Topics include neural basis of cognition, attention processes, working memory, long term memory, executive functioning and development of representations. The format of this course is seminar-discussion. Each week students are required to read a series of papers and hold presentations/class discussions.

Course website: Blackboard

Here you can find the course syllabus, readings, presentation schedule, announcements and so on.

Course requirements:

There are total of five components to this course:

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|------------------------|-----|--------------------------------------|
| a) Presentation | 30% | |
| b) Reaction papers | 15% | (3x5%) |
| c) Peer feedback | 5% | |
| d) Class participation | 15% | |
| e) Research proposal | 35% | (5% outline, 30% completed proposal) |

Presentations (30%):

Each student is required to present once throughout the course. The presentations are done in pairs, however each student is required to present individually. Assignment of the groups to presentation weeks is done randomly and a presentation schedule will be posted. Each presentation should be around 45 minutes (including a 15 min presentation by each student, followed by 10-15 minutes of discussions held by the two students to discuss a life span view of the topic). There will be 5-10 min of general discussion after.

Reaction Papers (15%):

Each student is required to complete three, one-page (single-spaced) reaction paper on the readings assigned (a schedule will be prepared assigning each student to hand in reaction papers on selected weeks). Reaction papers are not simply summaries of the papers you have read, but rather critical reviews of the papers. You need to discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the papers and be able to integrate the articles you have read to generate an overall view of development across the life span.

A selected group of students who are assigned to write a reaction paper for a specific week will take on the role of discussants in that class meaning that they are required to lead the class discussion on that day (each student will be the discussant one time throughout the course). Here is your opportunity to engage the class by presenting your thought papers, potential questions, concerns and future directions on the topic. So be creative and have FUN with it!

Peer feedback (5%):

Each student is required to evaluate one presentation throughout the course (evaluation rubric will be provided). In addition, students will be asked to provide feedback on their peers' research proposal outlines (more details will be provided in class).

Class participation (15%):

This is a seminar course and hence, most of the classes will be based on class discussions. Thus, in order to have an interactive class, I need your help. All the students (regardless of whether they have been assigned as discussants) are required to participate in class discussions (yes this means in order to participate you need to be in class!). The discussion can be about anything related to the topic. Even if something is not clear for you and you believe it could have also been problematic for others, please share it. You learn from your peers as much as you learn from your instructor and it is crucial that you know how to effectively communicate with each other and share your thoughts. So please come prepared to talk.

Research Proposal (35%):

Each student is required to hand in a research proposal (maximum 15 pages, double spaced) on a topic of their interest, relevant to the material covered during the course. You need to propose a research question (one that includes a life span view) and suggest an appropriate methodology in order to investigate that question. A small results section also needs to be included, explaining the expected results if the study had actually been conducted. A one-page outline of this proposal (worth 5%) is due on June 27th. The complete research proposal is due on the last day of classes (Aug 8th). Late papers WILL NOT be accepted.

Policies on Missed Papers/Presentations:

Given that a large portion of your mark is based on your presentation and class participation, it is critical that you attend each class and actively participate. If you miss a day in which you were assigned to present or to act as a discussant you need to provide proper documentation. As a presentation schedule has been already prepared, there will be no opportunity to make up for missed presentations (unless a space becomes available). In that case your final paper will be reweighed accordingly. For missed reaction papers, provided that you submit proper documentation you will be given ONE extra week to hand in your paper, after that 10% deduction will be applied for every additional late day.

General Notes:**Academic Writing:**

Writing makes up a large component of this course. For a refresher on specific topics and/or questions regarding writing, please make use of the following resources:

UTSC Writing Centre (AC210): <http://ctl.utsc.utoronto.ca/twc/>

U of T Advice on Academic Writing: <http://www.writing.utoronto.ca/advice>

Academic Integrity: Please see <http://www.writing.utoronto.ca/advice/using-sources/how-not-to-plagiarize> for guidelines on how not to plagiarize. It is expected that all sources of ideas and information will be properly acknowledged.

AccessAbility:

If you have a disability/health consideration that may require accommodations, please feel free to approach me and/or the AccessAbility Services Office as soon as possible. The UTSC AccessAbility Services staff (located in SW302) are available by appointment to assess specific needs, provide referrals and arrange appropriate accommodations (416) 287-7560 or ability@utsc.utoronto.ca. The sooner you let us know your needs the quicker we can assist you in achieving your learning goals in this course.

Course Policies:

For academic regulations (such as UTSC's official grading practices policy, petitions, code of behaviour on academic matters etc.) please refer to the UTSC calendar.

Course Outline

| Week | Topic |
|---------|---|
| May 9 | Introduction |
| May 16 | Neural Bases of Cognitive Development and Aging |
| May 23 | Victoria Day (NO CLASS) |
| May 30 | Discussion: Development and Aging of Selective Attention |
| June 6 | Presentations: Topic 1: Are older adults more prone to driving accidents? (Discuss the role of attention) Topic 2: Can playing sports improve attention? What are the implications for aging? |
| June 13 | Discussion: Development and Aging of Executive functions |
| June 20 | Presentations: Topic 1: Does prejudice increase with age? Topic 2: Can video game playing improve cognitive abilities and/or reduce cognitive decline? |
| June 27 | Discussion: Working memory across the life span [Research Proposal Outlines Due] |

| Week | Topic |
|---------|---|
| July 4 | <p style="text-align: center;">Presentations:</p> <p>Topic 1: Role of expertise on memory (Do experts have better memory than novices?)</p> <p>Topic 2: Finding your way around. Who is more likely to get lost?</p> |
| July 11 | <p style="text-align: center;">Discussions: Long term memory across the life span</p> |
| July 18 | <p style="text-align: center;">Presentations:</p> <p>Topic 1: Are older adults better story tellers?</p> <p>Topic 2: Who is more prone to false memories? (e.g., eye witness testimonies)</p> |
| July 25 | <p style="text-align: center;">Discussion: Development of representations across the life span</p> |
| Aug 1 | <p>Labour Day (NO CLASS)</p> |
| Aug 8 | <p style="text-align: center;">Presentations:</p> <p>Topic 1: Can we trust elderly pilots? Preservation of skills in old age.</p> <p>Topic 2: Are autobiographical (self) memories of children, adults and older adults different? How?</p> |

** The above schedule, policies, procedures, and assignments are subject to change in the event of extenuating circumstances.*

** Depending on the class size, extra presentations might be scheduled on one or more of the discussion weeks to accommodate all the students. The topics for those weeks will be provided later in the course.*