

Psychology 2320

Cognition and Perception: Thinking and Seeing

Section A: Spring, 2007

10:50–12:05, Tuesday & Thursday in PE275

John R. Vokey
Department of Psychology
University of Lethbridge

Objective

The objective of the course is to familiarize you with the two related areas of perceptual and cognitive psychology. Although the main emphasis will be on theoretical aspects of these areas, there will be some discussion of practical aspects of perception and cognition and the relation of perceptual and cognitive psychology to other areas of psychology, including evolutionary and social psychology. Topics to be covered include: visual perception, mental imagery, categorization, short and long term memory, false memories, unaware uses of memory, social perception, and social reasoning.

Textbook

The textbook for the course is a book of readings available at the bookstore. It consists of a series of articles, many of them “classics” of the discipline,

taken from both the professional literature and magazines such as *Scientific American*.

Structure of the course

The course will proceed in roughly the order of the readings in the textbook. The reading for a given lecture will define the core material of the lecture and the “launching point” for discussion of subsequent and related material. Emphasis will be on, first, developing a clear understanding of the readings, and, second, integrating this understanding with both related material and the broader themes of the course. In no case should the perspective of the authors of the readings necessarily be taken as the “correct” answer on some issue. As with most areas of human endeavour, many of the readings are important or “classics” not because they were or are “right”, but because they identified an important area or phenomenon, or because they were so thoroughly wrong that they promoted a flurry of research into what the correct approach should be.

Questions and Discussion

All questions and discussion about the course material should occur during class time, including questions and discussion about the exams, so that all students benefit from the discussion. Students are encouraged to post their questions and commentary to the class email list: psyc2320a@uleth.ca, both to invoke discussion, and to receive clarification (if needed) from the instructor; doing so will most often result in a prompt and considered response. Also, the webCT site for the course has chat rooms available for your use. Please use them.

Although the instructor is more than happy to discuss research and the latest research results and ideas with students individually, under no circumstances will the instructor discuss grades or exam performance with the individual student.

Course web sites

Psychology 2320 has two web-sites devoted to it. The main site, where various supplementary materials and exercises for the course may be found, is <http://classes.uleth.ca/200701/psyc2320a>. The second site, a webCT site (<http://webCT.uleth.ca>), is where you'll take the quizzes, view your grades to date, visit the course chat rooms, etc.

Evaluation

Your grade in this course will be based on a midterm exam (worth 50%) and a final exam (worth 50%). The midterm will occur around the middle of the semester, and the final in the final examination period. For both exams, you will have approximately one week during which to write the exam. Each exam will be computer administered via WebCT. It will be up to you to go to the testing centre some time within the allotted periods to take the exams. The exams will contain multiple guess questions and may contain short answer questions. *Make-up exams will not normally be provided.* Your final letter grade will be calculated as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Conversion of percentage to letter-grade.

Percentage	Letter-grade	Percentage	Letter-grade
90-100	A+	67-70	C+
85-90	A	63-67	C
80-85	A-	60-63	C-
77-80	B+	55-60	D+
73-77	B	50-55	D
70-73	B-	<50	F

Important dates

February 28–March 5, 2007 — Midterm exam period. No March 1 class.

April 12, 2007 — No meeting of the last class period.

April 19–25, 2007 — Final examination period.

A note on course orientation

It is a fundamental belief in this course that university students are responsible adults and competent learners, capable of organising their time and study habits to accommodate the rigours of university courses and adult life. There are at least two consequences of this belief. First, the exams are set up in such a way that they may be taken at your convenience; consequently, although that convenience provides the opportunity for abuse, it is assumed that, as responsible adults, such violations of academic integrity will not happen (students should be aware of the student discipline policy in the University Calendar). Second, by the nature of its content, this course is among the more challenging courses that the Department of Psychology offers at the 2000 level; it deliberately is not an “easy” science credit. Rather, to do well in the course requires that as a responsible, capable adult, you will keep up with and come to understand the course material by reading and thinking seriously about the course material (which includes asking questions of the material, analysing the author’s intentions, etc.) before the class discussions, by actively participating in class demonstrations, by using the demonstrations and supplementary materials provided on the class web-site, by raising questions in class, and by engaging in debate and discussion with the instructor and fellow students on the class email list and chat rooms. This is not a course for the dilettante (i.e., one who hopes to skate through by a last minute reading of the material or a friend’s lecture notes).

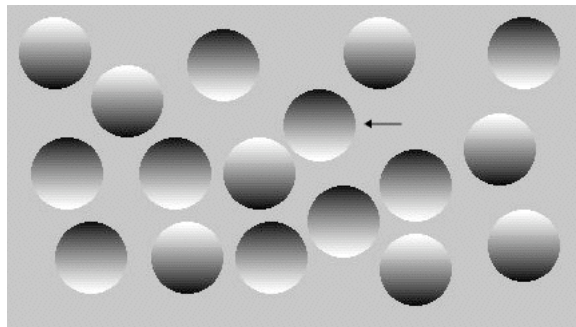


Figure 1: (Rotate the page and watch the indicated figure.)

That being said, there is much in this course that is fascinating, fun, and intellectually rewarding, and I sincerely welcome you to it. — J. R. Vokey