

## **Psy3850: Mechanisms of Human Perception**

**Prof. Javid Sadr**

Spring 2013, University of Lethbridge  
Lectures: Thr 6:00-8:50pm, Rm. AH116

### **Course Goals and Requirements**

Our goal in this course is for students to actively learn and master concepts, issues, and research findings concerning the mechanisms of human perception (and, to some extent, Psychology, science, and critical thinking in general), and we pursue this primarily through the course readings and lectures. This course extends and critically relies on material acquired at an introductory level in Psy1000, Psy2320, and Neu2600 and benefits from additional background in Psy2030. Three examinations and frequent quizzes will evaluate students' progress and their comprehension and mastery of the course readings and lecture material.

### **Pre-requisite Courses**

There are two mandatory pre-requisite courses that must be successfully completed before taking Psy3850; these provides crucial background necessary for succeeding in Psy3850 and these pre-requisites will not be waived. These courses are: Psy2320 (Cognition and Perception) and Neuro2600 (Brain and Behaviour); because Psy1000 (Basic Concepts of Psych.) is a pre-requisite for Psy2320, it is assumed that all students in Psy3850 have also successfully completed Psy1000. The registrar's office has been asked to produce a report of all enrolled students and to de-register any students lacking these pre-requisites prior to the add/drop deadline; these students are advised to transfer to another course instead of being removed by the registrar.

Along with these pre-requisites, completion of Methods and Statistics (Psy2030) is strongly recommended.

### **Course Readings**

- Textbook: "Sensation & Perception," by Wolfe et al, 2nd edition (2009); ISBN: 978-0-87893-953-4
- Primary source readings, etc: This course also involves reading and critical analysis of other assigned material (e.g., research articles) that go beyond the simplified overviews and range of topics in the textbook. These will be provided in print, electronically, or as references for the student to locate and obtain.
- VERY important: students are required to read and study/prepare assigned chapters and readings **before** attending lectures related to that material (e.g., read and study Chpt. 1 before attending lecture on Jan. 17).

### **Course Exams, Evaluations, and Grading**

Students' final grades will reflect their performance on a number of exams and in-class quizzes and activities as well as their lecture attendance, punctuality, conduct, and preparation for each class. More details about these components are provided below, and they will also be discussed in greater detail in lectures as we proceed (e.g., specific information for each exam). These items contribute to the final grade as follows:

- 30% exam 1
- 32% exam 2
- 38% exam 3 [final exam period]

Final letter grade assignment across grade boundaries (e.g., B+ vs A- at ~80%) is based on end-of-term evaluation of students' quizzes, in-class activities, assignments, attendance, punctuality, preparation, and conduct. The standard UofL guidelines will be used to convert total percentage scores into final letter grades:

|               |              |              |              |
|---------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| 90% - 100% A+ | 77% - 80% B+ | 67% - 70% C+ | 55% - 60% D+ |
| 85% - 90% A   | 73% - 77% B  | 63% - 67% C  | 50% - 55% D  |
| 80% - 85% A-  | 70% - 73% B- | 60% - 63% C- | 0% - 50% F   |

### **"Is this going to be on the exam?"**

"Yes."

The quizzes and exams will cover assigned readings as well as material from the lectures. There will be substantial overlap of lecture material and assigned readings; however, exams and quizzes will include assigned reading material that is not specifically discussed in lecture, and lecture material (including in-class activities, hand-outs, videos, etc) that might not appear in the textbook/readings. As such, it's important to take very good notes in lecture to study along with the readings. Then, as to whether exams are "cumulative":

- The first exam covers all lectures and assigned readings up to the time of the first exam.
- The second exam covers all the material that comes after the first exam and before the second exam.

However, many of these topics, concepts, and terms build on material from the first third of the course. So, although the second exam is not explicitly "cumulative," understanding the material in the first third of the course is very important for doing well in the second exam and, just as importantly, throughout the course.

- The third exam will be more comprehensive than the first two. The main focus of this exam (and the majority of its questions) will be on the material that follows after the second exam; in addition, however, there will be questions on the first two thirds of the course. As such, the third exam will be "cumulative," although the selection of questions will be strongly aimed at material from the last third of the course.

### **"Make-Up" Exams, Quizzes, etc**

There will be no "make-up" exams, quizzes, or other graded work. There is no system to exclude low scores or missed work, exams, or quizzes from the total final grade. Also, there are no sources of "extra credit".

No special arrangements can be made for alternate exams or exam times, and students are advised to not make travel plans or other commitments beyond the official dates for UofL holidays or to begin prior to the end of the final exam period. The timing of the third exam, during final exam period, will be based on the registrar's scheduling (see below for currently anticipated date/time).

Students who miss a lecture must immediately obtain the missed lecture notes from one or preferably more classmates, including missed announcements, details on readings/assignments due for the next lecture, etc.

[ Serious emergency medical situations -- which must always be specifically supported by documentation obtained the same day, signed and dated by a medical Doctor -- will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis. ]

### **Attendance, Daily Preparation, Punctuality, Note-Taking, etc**

Students are expected to attend all lectures. Attendance, punctuality, proper note-taking, and appropriate, well-prepared participation in class are important components of each student's evaluation and crucial for digesting, relating to, and mastering the course material. Classes will provide a forum for demonstrations, activities, elaboration, ancillary material, and evaluations, as well as a context for students to further clarify, explore, and apply the material read, studied, and prepared outside of class. It is in the students' best interest to attend lectures regularly also because lectures will include examinable material not present in the readings, and because there will be a number of in-class quizzes and other activities throughout the semester.

Along with other aspects of class conduct, students who distract themselves and/or others by text-messaging, reading, talking or communicating by writing notes, etc, will lose all credit for attendance on that day.

Students are expected to arrive on time for each class (ideally, a few minutes early) to be ready to start on schedule without disturbing other students or the Professor. Also, many in-class quizzes and activities will occur at the beginning of class (and not repeated or extended later into the lecture), so punctuality is crucial.

It should be clear that attendance and proper conduct at lecture is necessary -- but not sufficient -- for students to succeed in this course. Students are required to prepare for lectures by reading and studying relevant textbook and other material before each lecture. It is an extremely bad idea to bring the textbook to

class to read, review, or consult during lecture -- do not do this. At lecture, students are advised and expected to actively take notes on the material presented; well-prepared students will find this much easier, avoiding unnecessary duplication of textbook material/figures, focusing instead on new material presented in lecture. Outlines or duplicates of lecture material (i.e., notes, diagrams, etc) will not be created or distributed.

### **BestBuy in the Classroom**

During lectures, all cell-phones, smartphones, PDAs and text-messaging devices (e.g., Blackberry, iPhone, etc), gaming devices (electronic or otherwise), and all other portable entertainment or communication devices (e.g., radios, music/video players, etc) must be turned off and put away. The same is required during exams.

Students are not permitted to use a computer in class without the Professor's prior permission [very rare]. Students are very strongly advised to take lecture notes with pen and paper, and spare paper is required for completing and submitting quizzes and activities. Very rarely, by prior arrangement, special exceptions to this guideline might be considered on an explicit and individual basis (e.g., certain students requiring assistive technology, or rare individuals who formally demonstrate -- and continue to demonstrate -- to the Professor exclusive note-taking activity, as well as exceptional maturity and conscientiousness, with their computer use; wireless/internet use is prohibited and must be disabled by anyone pre-approved for electronic note-taking).

As noted above, students who distract themselves and/or others by text-messaging or using other devices gain no credit at all for attendance and will be asked to stop doing so or to leave the classroom. In terms of grades and actual learning, there is no value at all in physically attending lecture while being mentally absent.

### **Academic Honesty, Cheating, and Code of Conduct**

All students are required to learn and follow university policies on academic honesty and student conduct; these are outlined in the University Calendar for Undergraduate Programs, particularly in Part 4.

These policies include specific notes on cheating, plagiarism, proper citation, shared/combined work, repeat submissions, etc. They relate not only to exams, quizzes, and assignments but to one's daily life at the UofL.

It is a mistake to consider some transgressions to be minor or inconsequential, e.g., looking at a neighbor's answers for "inspiration" during a quiz or questionnaire. If, for example, suspiciously similar answers are seen on two or more quizzes or exams, all students involved will typically suffer serious sanctions; note that it is usually impossible to establish who copied from whom and/or, just as importantly, lack of consent, so it is as important to protect your work as it is to not exploit the work of others. It certainly has happened that students have earned marks of zero for tainted work and academic dishonesty (e.g., duplicate answers on quizzes or exams) and thus received failing course grades and additional sanctions and disciplinary action.

### **Announcements, Course Material, and Communication Online or via Email**

Lectures will be the primary source for course announcements, assignments, exam information, hand-outs, etc; however, some online/mailed announcements and materials may also be necessary. From the start of the semester, it is the students' responsibility to regularly and frequently check their university email account and the Moodle system at [moodle.uleth.ca](http://moodle.uleth.ca) for additional course announcements, materials, assignments, and other communication. For all computer-, email-, and Moodle-related questions or problems please email [help@uleth.ca](mailto:help@uleth.ca) or visit [www.uleth.ca/it](http://www.uleth.ca/it)

Email sent to the Professor will be read during business hours usually within two or three business days and responded to either via email or in person at the classroom. All course-related email must be given a title that starts "**psy3850 - "** and has a clear, descriptive subject line, otherwise it will likely be sorted as junk mail.

**Students with Documented Disabilities** must consult the Disabilities Resource Centre immediately for guidelines on arranging accommodations: <http://www.uleth.ca/ross/disabilities/index.html>

**Students on University Sports Teams** must provide a schedule of anticipated absences, endorsed and signed by their coach; this must be done in the first two weeks of classes, providing advance explanation of missed lectures due to games/travel. However, no exams can be rescheduled to cover an athletics conflict.

### Some Important Dates and Deadlines

|     |           |                           |
|-----|-----------|---------------------------|
| Tue | Jan 15    | Add/Drop deadline         |
| Thr | Feb 7     | <b>Exam 1</b>             |
|     | Feb 18-22 | Reading Week (no classes) |
| Thr | Mar 21    | <b>Exam 2</b>             |
|     | Apr 22-30 | UofL Final Exam Period    |
| Thr | Apr 25    | <b>Exam 3</b> (6pm - 9pm) |

**Additional Comments:** It is very important and helpful to immediately get to know a few classmates in order to cover gaps left by missed lectures or incomplete/messy notes. (Recall that it's not the Professor's responsibility to repeat missed lecture material, announcements, or reading assignments for absent students.) At the same time, be extremely careful about your privacy and security before sharing any personal/contact information. Over time, most students find that studying in groups is usually not productive, however; for most people, active reading, note-taking, and serious study is best pursued alone. That said, it is sometimes helpful to supplement one's studying with group quizzing/discussion/review sessions, which may benefit from multiple viewpoints and questioning styles/interests.

Over the course of the first few lectures, we may also discuss some other strategies for approaching the study of the readings and textbook material in particular, as well as the course content in general.

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As we proceed, some syllabus items will be described in greater detail (e.g., exams), potentially updated (e.g., exam schedule), or corrected. For complete, up-to-date details on course events, requirements, etc, this syllabus cannot substitute for regular lecture attendance (and attention to supplementary information via email/Moodle).