DALHOUSIE UNIVERSITY

Faculty of Science Course Syllabus

Department of Psychology and Neuroscience

PSYO / NESC 2130

Introduction to Cognitive Psychology

Fall 2026 Asynchronous Online

	name	email	office hours
Instructor:	John Christie	john.christie@dal.ca	M10:00-11:30

Brightspace Online Course Schedule: there are 13 sessions of classes in the time period online asynchronous

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Course Description

This course provides an introduction to cognitive psychology. It will introduce such topics as perception, attention, memory, mental representations, language, and thinking.

Course Prerequisites

PSYO 1011.03 (or PSYO 1021.03 or PSYO 1031.03) and PSYO 1012.03 (or PSYO 1022.03 or PSYO 1032.03); OR SCIE 1506.09/1507.09 (or SCIE1505X/Y.18). All prerequisite courses must have a grade of B- or better.

Course Objectives/Learning Outcomes

You should acquire a basic understanding of the fundamentals of cognition. We'll focus primarily on how we find things out (methods) and the discoveries that have been made that appear robust. It is my goal that you'll be able to apply psychological concepts, theories, and research findings as these relate to cognitive psychology.

Course Materials

With an online course we need a common frame to aid discussion. We will be carefully going through the textbook so you absolutely need a copy.

Farmer, & Matlin (2023). Cognition (11th Edition). US: Wiley & Sons, available online.

The Dal bookstore link is <https://bookstore.dal.ca/>. Do a search under textbook for this course and you'll get links to purchasing. The rest of the course materials are online and detailed in session guides for each session and include videos, links to websites, and other documents. Note that the prior edition of the text is not ideal for the course. There is some extra material in certain chapters and some missing material we cover. I won't support it directly. None of the session guides will work ideally with it.

Course Assessment

There is an assessment that you have to complete online for every session. This will be a test. You can start the assessment any time from 12:01 AM of session start but must complete by session end. Assessments will generally be timed but you will be allowed to begin it at your convenience any time

during the session. The assessment from each session, except session 1, will all be worth the same amount and the lowest session grade will be dropped at the end of term with the rest averaged together. That is your entire grade. There are no other exams or assignments.

There is a special assessment for Chapter 1. This does include a test but it is optional. Consider it a practice test for what comes later. This one is not included in the average and the grade is not counted. But if you take the test you automatically get one bonus point on the term. You will be expected to understand terminology introduced in Chapter 1 regardless, in order to complete the rest of the material.

Students will have the opportunity to participate in experiments in the department for a maximum of two bonus points, on the SONA system.

It is important for students to note that all video and assigned reading material will be fair game in the tests. The readings are intended to supplement the videos and vice versa. Tests are naturally, but not explicitly, cumulative. That means that a test in session 3 may depend on your understanding material from session 2 but will not explicitly ask a question from session 2.

Conversion of numerical grades to Final Letter Grades follows the Dalhousie Common Grade Scale

A+ (90-100)	B+ (77-79)	C+ (65-69)	D (50-54)
A (85-89)	B (73-76)	C (60-64)	F (<50)
A- (80-84)	B- (70-72)	C- (55-59)	

Course Policies

Please be reasonable people and read the boiler plate in section B from faculty of science, and in section C also on Brightspace. There's a brief guide to netiquette in the Brightspace Tips folder. Please follow it.

Assessments submitted late will be ignored. Note that you can select the time you wish to work on the assessment. It just has to be some time during the session. Do not consider the deadline for the assessment the time you must do the assessment. I do not, and neither should you. Any requests for extensions or accommodations on time will consider that you typically have the full time period during which you could have done the assessment. Nevertheless, I recognize life happens and please feel free to contact me if you need some accommodation for a session. Missed sessions will be counted as 0. Therefore, one missed session is allowed as this would become the dropped grade (see above). More than one missed session will contribute to your average.

Should there be a short essay question word limits count, don't go over. Small violations of word limits for essays (<4 words) will result in a marker bias such that if the material lies between two grades they will consult the word count and select the lower one. Higher violations will result in removing sentences from the end of the essay until it is under the word limit. For example, if you're over by 10 words and the last sentence is 17 words, all of them will be ignored. If that answer was over by 18, the last 2 sentences would be ignored. *(for this term there are no short essay questions)*

On the other hand, if the assessment is multiple choice keep in mind standard rules. There may be more than one answer that could be correct but only one best answer in the context of the material studied. The best answer is always the correct answer. For multi-select questions any number could be correct from zero to all. I grade those by answer so that if there were 5 in the multi-select they are each worth 0.2.

One thing to keep in mind in this course is that I expect you to be active learners because that's the way brains learn of any species. There is quite a bit of research on how just passively absorbing information is not the best way to retain said information, some of which will be covered in this class. Videos in the class are there to just help you through difficult bits, help focus some issues in the text, provide some experiential learning, or as additional background. A substantial portion of them don't just tell you something but instead guide you through an activity. I don't provide long videos of voice over slides for two reasons. A considerable amount would be redundant with the textbook and would increase your

workload. That will be high enough and I have no desire to exacerbate it. Further, I selected a textbook that doesn't need a lot of clarification, correction, or expansion. In addition, videos are very hard to study from. You essentially study from your notes for the videos and those may contain errors.

Consider me, your instructor, as your guide on the side. **A good method to best utilize me is to write down questions when reading, or viewing the videos.** As you go further they may get answered and, if they are then jot down those answers. It will help you remember them. If there are any unanswered questions left over please feel free to send me them or ask during checkins. I will be happy to address them.

As a final note regarding policy, many students find, in a course like this one, that they feel like they are teaching themselves. I hope that you find that, at this stage in your education, that happens more and more often. My job is to provide you an environment, schedule, and guidance that allows you to facilitate your learning. It's the best, and really the only, genuine way to learn. Consider driving. You drove and that's how you learned. Your instructor only offered guidance, correction, and a sometimes a safety intervention or two as your learned. But make no mistake, you taught yourself to drive, otherwise you couldn't.

Accessibility

Refer to the Student Accommodation Policy for information on how Dalhousie instructors and staff work collaboratively with students to create and sustain an accessible educational environment.

If there are aspects of this course, including but not limited to its design, teaching approaches, learning activities, and assessments, that result in barriers to your learning or do not align with your formal academic accommodations, reach out to me to collaboratively find a solution that meets your needs.

You are eligible for accommodations based on protected characteristics such as religion. If you have religious, cultural, or community-significant observances that conflict with course requirements, reach out to me to collaboratively find alternatives for completing the course requirements.

To begin the process of requesting a formal academic accommodation, contact the Student Accessibility Centre (or the Student Success Centre for Faculty of Agriculture courses).

Academic Integrity

Dalhousie expects all students to be responsible learners, demonstrating the values of intellectual honesty, trust, fairness, and respect in your work. Key aspects of academic integrity include, but are not limited to: avoiding plagiarism, not engaging in cheating, submitting original work, and acknowledging sources of information and ideas when they are not your own. Refer to the Statement on Intellectual Honesty for definitions of various academic offences. Failure to meet Dalhousie’s academic integrity standards will result in appropriate disciplinary and/or corrective measures.

Course Content and Schedule

The schedule is the same for all but the first two sessions. We'll go through the chapters in the text book in order over sessions. All but the first two sessions will open in Brightspace on a **Wednesday. at 12:01 AM** ADT and close the following **Monday at 6:00 PM**. Each session will include a session outline (guide), videos that highlight specific points in the chapter, a checkin, and an assessment. The specific details will be explained in each session guide on Brightspace. Note that it is critical that you read the session guide. If you dive right into watching videos then some of them may not make much sense without reading the guide. This is your schedule but there are, as indicated, exceptions for the first two sessions. The chapter 1 and 2 sessions will both open at the same time on the first day of the course. Session 1 must be completed by Saturday, and Session 2 by Tuesday night (10 PM) the following week. This is to give people time to complete session 1 and see what the tests are like and then start in on session 2. These two sessions do not have to be done in order. If you'd rather skip session 1 you can just go right into session 2, although this is

not advised. Therefore, be cautious, **the course starts quickly but the pace eases up after the first two weeks.**

Another piece of content is a checkin online using MS Teams every session where I'll share some useful additional information as well as answer questions. This is tentatively scheduled for **12:35 Thursdays**. This will not go more than 1 hour. A recording will be attempted so that, if you can't make the live checkin, you can check out the recording. But it is much more useful to make the live checkin and bring chapter questions.

M**ake sure to read the section on Brightspace labelled "Tips."** Do this early because it is important to understand how to take the tests in the course and how to think about them. There are also other small important documents in there that are helpful.

Here is the content by session. Again note that the actual grade for Chapter 1 is not counted but the assessment for it can be taken as a bonus. You can expect that content in that session will be referred to in questions as if you have familiarity with it.

Session #	Topic
1*	Chapter 1, Introduction to Cognition
2	Chapter 2, Visual and Object Recognition
3	Chapter 3, Attention and Consciousness
4	Chapter 4, Working Memory
5	Chapter 5, Long-Term Memory
6	Chapter 6, Memory Strategies and Metacognition
7	Chapter 7, Mental Imagery and Cognitive Maps
8	Chapter 8, General Knowledge
9	Chapter 9, Introduction to Language and Language Comprehension
10	Chapter 10, Language Production and Bilingualism
11	Chapter 11, Problem Solving and Creativity.
12	Chapter 12, Deductive Reasoning and Decision Making
13	Chapter 13, Cognitive Development Throughout the Lifespan

Appendix

The standard syllabus appendix is available online.

https://dalu.sharepoint.com/sites/learn-teach/SitePages/syllabus-appendix.aspx