

PSCH 352 (Memory and Cognition)

Instructor

Prof. Stellan Ohlsson

Email: stellan@uic.edu

Office: 1050C in BSB

Learning Goal

The purpose of this course is to give you a better understanding of the intellectual functions of your mind by teaching you to think like a cognitive psychologist. Intellectual functions include memory, thinking, imagery and language. In the cognitive approach, intellectual functions are explained in terms of knowledge-related processes. For each function, we ask what knowledge is involved, and what processes are applied to it. We relate the answers to your own everyday experience as well as to classroom demonstrations and laboratory phenomena from the research literature. The goal is that you should be able to use the concepts and principles introduced in the course to explain cognitive phenomena, whether in yourself or in others.

Format

The format of the course is a mixture of lectures, reading materials and outside-of-class activities. Dr. Ohlsson does not take attendance at lectures, but you cannot do well in the course without coming to class, because there will occasionally be concepts introduced in class that are not covered, or poorly covered, in the textbook. Dr. Ohlsson will post the MSWord and PowerPoint files that support the lectures on the Blackboard site at the end of each week.

The materials include a textbook and some handouts. There are some concepts in the textbook that will not be covered in the lectures, so you will have to read those parts of the text on your own. The class assignments include two written reports (see below), and participation in demonstration experiments ("labs", as we will call them).

Handouts, course documents, announcements, assignments, lab instructions, etc., will be posted on the **Blackboard** site for the course. Because you are reading this, you obviously found your way to the site. If you have questions about or problems with Blackboard, contact the course TAs as your first step in fixing it. Pay attention to Blackboard, because all course announcements will be posted there.

Materials

E, Bruce Goldstein (2005, 2nd ed.), *Cognitive psychology: Connecting mind, research and everyday experience*, Thomson/Wadsworth, 2008.

In addition, you need the *CogLab Online Manual Version 2.0 With Access Code*, a blue soft cover book. Notice that you cannot buy a used copy of this, because the access code of a used book is no longer valid.

Handouts written by the instructor will be posted on Blackboard.

Special instructions for how to do each course assignment, on-line lab, etc. will also be posted on Blackboard.

Activities

There are multiple outside-of-class activities. They are all voluntary, but they earn you points towards your grade and you cannot do well in the course if you skip them. On the other hand, if you do all of them, you are almost assured of a good grade.

Activity 1: Write a Group Discussion Report

You can earn points by participating in a group study event in which 5-9 students enrolled in the course get together and discuss some topic covered in the course for at least 2 hours. There can be no fewer than 5 participants and no more than 9. Look at the Blackboard site under "Assignments" for the detailed instructions about how to do the group discussion and how to write the report.

Activity 2: Participate in Experiments

The major activity outside class is to participate in or carry out demonstration experiments. For each lab, you download an instruction booklet from the "Assignment" folder on the Blackboard site. The booklet is self-explanatory; you follow the instructions and then turn in the data sheet that comes with the booklet to the instructor. The TA's will enter the data into a data file and do some analyses; we then discuss the results in class.

Because on-line lab results are pooled across students for discussion in class, they are of little use if they are handed in late. Check the course schedule (a separate document posted on Blackboard next to this one) for the due dates for each lab.

Activity 3: Keep a Diary of Memory Failures

Keep a diary of memory failures that happen to yourself during the semester, interpret each failure in terms of the concepts in the course and analyze their similarities and differences. Memory failures are of all different kinds – forgetting to mail a letter, not remembering someone's name, forgetting how to do something you once knew how to do - - all of them are relevant. You may find the detailed instructions for how to do the Memory Diary on the Blackboard site, in the "Assignments" folder.

Activity 4: Take the Examinations

There will be two “midterm” examinations, at the end of the 5th and 10th weeks, respectively, and one Final Examination. The final exam consists of three parts. The first part of the final covers the same material as the first “midterm” and serves as a make-up opportunity for that exam; the second part of the final likewise consists of questions covering the same material as the second “midterm”. The third part of the final covers the material discussed in the last third of the semester. Once we know the date for the final,
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Dr. Ohlsson will announce an alternative time later in the day before, and early the day after the regular time. Those are the only make-up opportunities for the final exam. Details will be posted on the Blackboard site.

All three exams consist of multiple choice questions. There will be 20 questions on each of the two “midterms”. The questions are worth 1 point each, for a total of 20 points. The final exam will have three parts, each with 20 questions, for a total of 60 questions. The exams are not graded with letter grades. They are merely activities among others, and the points you earn on them are added to the points you earn through other activities. You can earn a maximum of 60 points by taking the exams.

The relation between the “midterms” and the final exam are handled as follows: Your score on the first part of the course is *either* your score on the first “midterm” *or* your score on the first part of the final, *whichever is highest*. Likewise for the second part of the final. This means that you can't lose points by trying to improve your score.

Neither the “midterms” nor the final exam are mandatory. In particular, you can choose which section(s) of the final exam you want to take. If you do well on one of the “midterms”, you have the option of skipping the corresponding part of the final.

Grading

The grading system is simple: You earn points for every activity you participate in, and the sum of your points at the end of the semester determines your grade. This includes the exams; they are just one type of activity among the others. The course as a whole is worth a total of 120 points. See the table below for what each activity is worth in terms of points.

Table 1. The points for the various course activities.

Activity	Max points
Group Discussion Report	10
Memory Diary Report	25
	35
False Memories Lab	5
Operations Span Lab	5
Mental Rotation Lab	5
Prototypes Lab	5
Selection Task Lab	5
	25
Midterm Exam 1	20
Midterm Exam 2	20
Final, Part III	20
	60
Sum	120

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Table 2. The grading scale.

Score interval	Grade
108 - above	A
95 - 107	B
80 - 94	C
65 - 79	D
0 - 64	F

Notice that the grading scale is in terms of *points earned*, not *percentage points*. The cut-off point for a C grade is 80 points, not 80 % of 120.

Also notice that the exams can earn you no more than a total of 60 points; that is not even sufficient to pass the course. **YOU CANNOT PASS THIS COURSE BY ACING THE EXAMS.** You have to engage in at least one other activity to get a "D", let alone a higher grade. However, if you do all the reports and all the labs and collect $35+25 = 60$ points, you only need to collect a total of 35 more points on the three exams to get a B; that's only half the questions. In fact, if you turn in all activities on time and collect 35 points on the two midterms exams, you could earn 95 points, and hence be ensured of a B grade. Of course, if you want an "A", you'll have to work harder and do every activity and do well on all three exams.

Dr. Ohlsson does NOT grade on a curve. You do not compete against other students. If you help another student study, and he or she does better as a result, this will not affect your own grade. The ideal outcome of the course is that everyone gets an "A".

Policies on Late Submissions Etc

Dr. Ohlsson's policies on extra credit, late submissions, missed exams, incompletes and academic dishonesty are detailed in a separate document posted on the Blackboard site under "Course Information." You should read that document. Dr. Ohlsson will not accept "I didn't know this because I didn't read it" as a valid excuse for not adhering to the rules in that document.

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