

PSY 235: Attention, Fall 2022

11:50 a.m. – 1:10 p.m. Mondays and Wednesdays in RKC 115

Instructor

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Office: RKC 130

Office hours: Tuesdays 10:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m., Fridays 2:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m., or by appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION

To deal with the impossibility of handling all inputs at once, the nervous system has evolved mechanisms that are able to bias processing to a subset of things, places, ideas, or moments in time. These mechanisms are collectively referred to as attention and play a critical role in the way we interact with and experience the world. This course will focus on the physiological basis of attention, the ways attention shapes perception, the limits of attention, and strategies for cultivating attention. In addition, we will critically consider claims that our attention is being “hacked”, that attention spans are decreasing, and that we are ancient brains in a high-tech world.

REQUIRED READING AND COURSE MATERIAL

All readings and assignments, and lecture notes will be made available through the course google drive: [PSY 235 - Attention Google Drive](#)

COMPONENTS OF THE COURSE GRADE

Exams (200 points)

There will be two exams, each worth 100 points. The first exam will be an in-class exam on **Wednesday, October 5th**. This exam will contain fill-in-the-blank and short answer questions encompassing material covered in class and the assigned readings. I will provide you with a study guide one week prior to the exam. Make up exams will only be scheduled with a written excuse from the Dean of Students or medical professional. The second exam will be an open-notes take-home exam due on **Wednesday, December 14th**. This exam will require an understanding of the content of the course and the ability to apply experimental methods and analysis we learn over the course of the semester. The exam will be made available on **Monday, December 5th**.

Participation in Class Experiments (6 x 10 points each)

Over the course of the semester, you will be expected to participate in 6 experiments (see schedule). All of these experiments will be completed online and a link to each experiment will be posted on the course google drive. Links will be posted the class period before they are to be completed. Experiments will take between 10 and 30 minutes and we will be looking at the results from these experiments throughout the class.

Attention in Popular Media (25 points)

In this assignment you will first identify a psychology-related headline or social media post that refers to published research in the form, “X leads to increases/decreases in Y”, where Y refers to something related to attention (e.g., mind wandering, focus, distraction). Next, you will identify and read the source article supporting the claim. Finally, you will write and submit a summary which includes the headline, a description of the research in your own words, and discussion of the extent to which the research supports the claim. This assignment is due on **Monday, September 19th**. Additional information about this assignment will be provided over the course of the semester.

Article Presentation (25 points)

During class on **Monday, October 24th** you and two partners will present an empirical article on a topic related to attention. I will provide a list of potential articles to choose from, however you are welcome to choose other articles that are of interest to you. Your choice of article must receive approval from Tom by **Monday, October 17th**. Presentations will be approximately 10 minutes.

Experiment Proposal (25 points), Data Collection (25 points), and Poster Presentation (25 points)

You and two partners will propose an experiment for which you will collect and analyze data. You will submit an initial proposal for your experiment (**Monday, November 7th**) and will meet with Tom to discuss. You will then collect data from 10 – 20 participants and submit your completed dataset (**Monday, November 21st**). Finally, you will create a poster for the class end of year poster session (**Wednesday, November 30th**).

Class Participation (25 points)

You should come to class each day prepared to engage with the material. Class participation consists of active contributions to interactive experiences, group work, and thoughtful speaking and listening. If you tend to be uncomfortable speaking up in classes, please speak to me early in the semester to discuss ways to help you succeed. In addition to your performance in the classroom, frequent unexcused absences will have a negative impact on your class participation grade.

Extra Credit Opportunities (5 points)

Over the course of the semester there will be three psychology-sponsored colloquia. These occur on Thursdays at 4:00 p.m. See the psychology program website <http://psychology.bard.edu> for dates. You can earn a maximum of **5 points** towards your final grade through attending ONE of these talks. To receive credit, attend a talk and submit one question you would have for the speaker to me via email at thutcheo@bard.edu within 48 hours after the talk. If you have a conflict with this time, but would still like an opportunity to earn extra credit, please speak with me by Monday, October 3rd.

Grading Breakdown

Point Allocation	Grading Scale
Exam 1	A = 93% and above
Exam 2	A- = 92.9% to 90%
Class Experiments	B+ = 89.9% to 87.0000%
Attention and Popular Media	B = 86.9% to 83.%
Article Presentation	B- = 82.9% to 80%
Experiment Proposal	C+ = 79.9% to 77%
Data Collection	C = 76.9% to 73%
Poster	C- = 72.9% to 70%
<u>Class Participation</u>	D = 69.9% to 60%
Total Points	F = 59.9% and below

$$\text{Final Grade} = ((\text{Total Points Earned} + \text{Extra Credit})/410) * 100$$

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**Late Assignments**

An assignment will be considered late if it is not submitted prior to the start of class on the day it is due. All late assignments will be subject to 50% reduction in maximum possible score on that assignment. Late assignments can be submitted at any point during the semester up until the last day of our class (**Wednesday, December 14th**) but will automatically incur the 50% late penalty.

Academic Integrity

All students are assumed to have read the Bard College Handbook and are familiar with the school's policies regarding Plagiarism and Academic Dishonesty. Violations of these policies are taken extremely seriously and one violation will result in a failing grade for the course and a referral to the Dean of Students for further action.

Academic Accommodations

Your experience in this class is important to me. I am committed to meeting the needs of all students in this course and will work with you to ensure your accommodations are adequately met. If you have already established accommodations, I will receive a letter from the Learning Commons Disability Support Services with additional information. If you have not yet established services through the Learning Commons, but have a temporary health condition or permanent disability that requires accommodations (conditions include but are not limited to: mental health, attention-related, learning, vision, hearing, physical or health impacts), please review the Student Accessibility Resources website: <https://www.bard.edu/accessibility/students/>

Respect for Diversity

It is my intent that students from diverse backgrounds and perspectives be well-served by this course, that students' learning needs be addressed both in and out of class, and that the diversity that students bring to this class be viewed as a resource, strength and benefit. It is my intent to present materials and activities that are respectful of diversity: gender, sexuality, disability, age, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, race, and culture. Your suggestions on ways that I can improve the course and incorporate more diversity are encouraged and appreciated.

Important College-wide Dates

Wednesday, September 7th – Drop/Add period ends

Wednesday, September 28th – Late drop period ends, pass/fail grading deadline

Friday, December 2nd – Last day to withdraw from a class.

BARD LAND ACKNOWLEDGMENT

In the spirit of truth and equity, it is with gratitude and humility that we acknowledge that we are gathered on the sacred homelands of the Munsee and Muhheaconneok people, who are the original stewards of this land. Today, due to forced removal, the community resides in Northeast Wisconsin and is known as the Stockbridge-Munsee Community. We honor and pay respect to their ancestors past and present, as well as to Future generations and we recognize their continuing presence in their homelands. We understand that our acknowledgment requires those of us who are settlers to recognize our own place in and responsibilities toward addressing inequity, and that this ongoing and challenging work requires that we commit to real engagement with the Munsee and Mohican communities to build an inclusive and equitable space for all.

The Psychology of Attention Schedule – Fall 2022

Monday, August 29th: Welcome to the Psychology of Attention

Wednesday, August 31st – Introduction to Attention

Read: Wood & Cowan (1995). *The Cocktail party phenomenon revisited.*

Experiment 1: Stroop

Monday, September 5th – Attention and Perception

Read: Reisberg (2019). *Visual Perception.*

Wednesday, September 7th – Attention and Perception

Read: Wolfe (1992). *The parallel guidance of selective attention.*

Experiment 2: Visual Search

Monday, September 12th – Attention and Perception

Read: Chabris & Simons (2009). *I think I would have seen that.*

Wednesday, September 14th – Attention and Perception

Read: Forster & Lavie (2007). *High perceptual load makes everybody equal.*

Experiment 3: Attentional Blink

Monday, September 19th – Attention and Popular Media

Due: Headline analysis

Wednesday, September 21st – Attention to Multiple Tasks

Read: Drews et al (2008). *Passenger and Cell Phone Conversations in Simulated Driving.*

Monday, September 26th – Attention to Multiple Tasks

Read: Stothart et al (2015). *The attentional cost of receiving a cell phone notification.*

Experiment 4: Task switching

Wednesday, September 28th – Attention to Multiple Tasks

Read: Zimmerman (2016). *Welcome freshman, look at me when I talk to you.*

Read: Costa (2018). *The nuance of note taking.*

Monday, October 3rd – Exam Review

Wednesday, October 5th – **Exam 1**

Monday, October 10th: No Class, Fall Break

Wednesday, October 12th – Mind wandering

Read: Killingsworth & Gilbert (2010). *A wandering mind is an unhappy mind.*

Monday, October 17th – Mind wandering

Read: Raichle et al. (2001). *A default mode of brain function.*

Deadline to select article for Group Presentations

Wednesday, October 19th – Individual and Cultural Differences in Attention

Read: Conway et al (2001). *The Cocktail party phenomenon revisited: The importance of working memory capacity.*

Monday, October 24th: **Group Presentations**

Wednesday, October 26th – Individual and Cultural Differences in Attention

Read: Feldman & Reiff (2014). *Attention deficit-hyperactivity disorder in children and adolescents.*

Monday, October 31st – Individual and Cultural Differences in Attention

Read: Goldinger et al. (2009). *Deficits in cross-race face learning.*

Wednesday, November 2nd – The Impact of the Environment on our Attentional Systems

Read: Hari (2022). *Stolen focus (chapter 1).*

Experiment 5: Flanker

Monday, November 7th – Group Meetings

Deadline to submit Experiment Proposal

Wednesday, November 9th – The Impact of the Environment on our Attentional Systems

Read: Rosen et al (2013). *Facebook and texting made me do it.*

Monday, November 14th – The Impact of the Environment on our Attentional Systems

Read: Chiu et al. (2013). *Association between traffic-related black carbon exposure and attention.*

Experiment 6: Attention and Metacognition

Wednesday, November 16th – Strategies for Taking Control of Your Attention

Read: Gazzaley & Rosen (2016). *The distracted mind (chapter 10).*

Monday, November 21st – Strategies for Taking Control of Your Attention

Read: *Tristan Harris' slide deck.*

Deadline to submit dataset

Wednesday, November 23rd – No Class, Thanksgiving Break

Monday, November 28th – Strategies for Taking Control of Your Attention

Read: McClean et al. (2010). *Intensive meditation training improves perceptual discrimination and sustained attention.*

Wednesday, November 30th – **Poster Session**

Monday, December 5th – Recap

Wednesday, December 7th – No Class, Advising Day

Monday, December 12th – No Class, Completion Days

Wednesday, December 14th – **Exam 2 Due**