

PSYC 6355: Seminar in General Psychology
Topic: Human Memory
MW 10:30-11:50 AM
Psychology 310

Professor: Wendy S. Francis

Office: Psychology Room 214 (Phone: 747-8956)

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Office Hours:

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Required Reading

The reading assignments will be articles from professional psychology journals. Readings will be distributed over e-mail.

Course Content

The course will begin with a general introduction to the field of human memory. Thereafter, a series of memory topics will be covered in greater depth through reading and discussion. Reading materials will include a combination of classic and current articles. Planned topics include short-term and working memory, forgetting, transfer appropriate processing, and other topics to be determined based on class interest.

Format of Class

Throughout most of the class, we will use a discussion format. For each topic, there will be core readings assigned to all students. Students will be asked to read these articles and submit meaningful questions by the day before the articles are to be discussed. Students are expected to come to class prepared to discuss the articles. After discussion of core readings, students will select from a pool of supplemental readings. Each student will be responsible for reporting and leading discussion on a different article and preparing a handout for the class. (Supplemental readings will be made available to the entire class.)

Course Objectives

This graduate-level course has three main learning goals. The first goal is for students to become familiar with the basic information that every cognitive psychologist should know about human memory. This will be accomplished through lecture, reading, and discussion of introductory material, as well as continued referral to such information in the context of class readings and discussions. The second goal is for students to understand how memory researchers test theories; that is, how they go from a theory or model to a hypothesis to a specific experiment meant to test the hypothesis, and how the results are used to constrain, support, or reject a theory. The third goal is for students to develop a deeper understanding of the specific topics covered and the processing perspective. Goals 2 and 3 will be accomplished through reading carefully selected articles, guided class discussion, and preparation for class reports. Assessment of progress in meeting these objectives will be accomplished through the activities detailed below.

Basis of Grading

1) Quality and Quantity of Participation (70%)

Most of your grade in this course will be based on the quantity and quality of your participation. Specifically, each student is expected to come to class prepared (and attend regularly), participate in class discussions by offering ideas and asking questions, and reporting/leading discussions on supplemental articles. For all core readings, students will be expected to submit questions by e-mail the day before they are discussed in class. The questions should show that you have read the article and thought deeply about the issues. Supplemental

article reports will require careful reading of your assigned article, taking notes on the main points, making handouts for the class, leading class discussion on the article, fielding questions from classmates, and engaging in some critical evaluation of the articles. Critical evaluation includes, for example, comparison or contrast with other readings (or material covered previously inside or outside the class), pointing out inconsistencies or areas of under-specification in a theory or model, offering alternative explanations for empirical outcomes, or suggesting alternative strategies to test a hypothesis.

2) Term Paper (30%)

The term paper will be a proposal for a study of human memory. Each student will choose a topic that must be approved. Topic selections will be due at the beginning of class on Wednesday, March 8th, and I will plan to give you the go-ahead on your topic or suggest a modification by the end of that week (before Spring break). The final paper will be due on Friday, May 5th (dead day) at 5:00 PM. A separate handout on the format and sections of the paper will be distributed in class before the topic due date.