

Sensation and Perception
Professor John P. McGann
Spring Semester, 2018
Rutgers University Psychology Department

Course Information:

Rutgers Course Number: 01:830:301:01
Date and Time: Mondays and Wednesdays 1:40-3:00
Location: SEC-111
Prerequisite: 830:101 Introduction to Psychology

Instructor:

Dr. John P. McGann
Email: john.mcgann@rutgers.edu
Office: Psych 311 (Busch Campus)
Office Hours: Wednesdays from 3:15-4:15 (after class)
Note: When office hours are crowded we usually move to the lobby outside Psych 307.

Teaching Assistant:

Sten Knutsen
Email: sten.knutsen@rutgers.edu
Office: Psych 319 (Busch Campus)
Office Hours: By appointment

Goals for this Course: There are several goals for students in this course. First, you should expect to learn the fundamental principles and many details about how the nervous system gives rise to your perception of the world around you. Second, you should gain experience in the critical reading of primary scientific literature. Third, you should gain an improved understanding of how modern neuroscientific research advances. Finally, you will hopefully walk away with an informed appreciation of the complexity and beauty of the interaction between mind and brain.

Textbook: *Sensation & Perception*, by Jeremy Wolfe, et al. (2018) Fifth Edition, Sinauer Associates.

We will be using the textbook *Sensation and Perception* by Wolfe et al. from Sinauer Associates (ISBN 9781605356419 for the 5th Edition hardcover). I have arranged for my students to receive a discount on the book in either hardcover or loose-leaf format if purchased directly from the publisher. Please see the Announcements section of the class Sakai site for details. There are many audiovisual examples on the textbook publisher's website and cited in the book – you should get in the habit of looking at them.

Papers: In the course of the semester, your textbook reading will be supplemented with papers from the primary scientific literature, as listed below. These readings are mandatory, and you should ensure that you understand and are capable of succinctly summarizing the background, methods, results, and discussion of each of them, as this is a common exam question. The papers can be downloaded from the class Sakai site under the Resources tab.

Reading: This class will cover a lot of material quickly, and you are responsible for the information in the book chapters and papers as well as the content of the lectures except when explicitly told otherwise in class. You are *strongly advised* to keep up with the reading and to read for both detail and understanding.

Attendance: You should plan to attend every lecture because there will be some material covered in lecture that is not included in your reading. In past classes there was a strong correlation between class

attendance and final grade. If you expect to miss one or two classes, please use the University's absence reporting website at <https://sims.rutgers.edu/ssra>.

Conduct: Students are expected to pay attention in class. Use of computers and other electronic devices for anything other than note-taking is distracting to fellow students and is not permitted. Should I perceive a student's behavior to be disruptive to fellow students in the class, I will ask the student to leave the classroom, and, if this occurs on a regular basis, I may judge the disruptive student to be unable to successfully complete the course with a passing grade.

Sakai: The course has a dedicated Sakai site at sakai.rutgers.edu. All registered students should automatically be members of the site. The site includes downloadable readings for the course, this syllabus, a chat room, and a venue for announcements to the class. This is the tool I will use to email the entire class when necessary. You may also find me in the chat room occasionally.

Evaluation: There will be two mid-term examinations in this course, plus a comprehensive final exam. Because of the large enrollment, these exams will be primarily multiple-choice, but short answer and essay questions are possible. Exam questions will be drawn from any assigned chapter in the textbook, the assigned papers, and any subject covered in lecture. The midterm exams will each count for 25% of your final grade, while the final will count for 50%. You must bring an appropriate writing implement to answer Scantron-based multiple choice questions. I will not consider requests for extra credit for extra work during or after the semester. Do not ask. I will not consider requests for re-grading of exam questions except in the case of a computation error by the grader. Do not ask.

Make-up Exams: All students are expected to take the exams on the day they are offered. If you are so ill that you cannot physically take the exam on the scheduled day, you must notify me by email *before* the exam starts. A make-up exam will be offered during the reading period at the end of the semester. This exam will be different than the corresponding midterm exam and will be entirely composed of written questions, such as definitions, short answer, and essay questions.

Final Exam: The final exam will test all of the material covered during the semester and will be offered at the time and date listed at <http://finalexams.rutgers.edu>. As of today, the final exam is tentatively scheduled for May 8 at 12 PM in our regular classroom (I will advise you if that is changed by the Registrar's office). Students may not take the exam early. Students with excused absences from the final exam will be permitted to take a written makeup exam at a date and time to be scheduled in May.

Cheating

All students are required to comply with the University's Academic Integrity Policy, as presented at <http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu>. Cheating on exams or assisting others in cheating on the exams will be punished.

Special Circumstances for Students with Disabilities

If you receive special accommodations for exams, you must provide your official Letters of Accommodation to Professor McGann at least one week prior to the first exam. You must ALSO make appropriate arrangements with the Office of Disability Services for them to proctor your exam at the same day and time as the rest of the class. The ODS requires you to make these arrangements at least five business days ahead of each individual exam. If you fail to make arrangements through ODS, you will not receive special accommodations and will be required to take the exam with the rest of the class.

Course Schedule for Sensation & Perception

NOTE: The dates of the exams are definite, but the exact schedule of which material is covered on which day may vary slightly.

Wednesday, Jan. 17

Reading: this syllabus

Topics: Overview, physical traits determine perception, history of perception research

Monday, Jan. 22

Reading: Chapter 1: Introduction

Topics: Psychophysics

Wednesday, Jan. 24

Reading: Chapter 2: The First Steps in Vision

Topics: Elementary neuroscience and physiological methods in perceptual research

Monday, Jan. 29

Reading: Chapter 2: The First Steps in Vision (cont.)

Topics: Structure of the eye, retinal information processing, adaptation

Wednesday, Jan. 31

Reading: Chapter 3: Spatial Vision

Topics: Visual acuity, subcortical and cortical visual processing

Monday, Feb. 5

Reading: Spatial Vision (cont.)

Topics: Selective adaptation, visual development, middle vision

Wednesday, Feb. 7

Reading: Chapter 4: Perceiving and Recognizing Objects

Topics: Middle vision (cont.) and object recognition

Monday, Feb. 12

Reading: Quiroga et al. (2005) Invariant visual representation by single neurons in the human brain. *Nature* 435:1102-1107.

Topics: Quiroga et al. paper; review of material for midterm exam

Wednesday, Feb. 14 – NO CLASS

Monday Feb. 19 – FIRST MIDTERM EXAM (Lectures 1-8)

Wednesday, Feb. 21

Reading: Chapter 5: The Perception of Color

Topics: Trichromatic vision, color representation in the brain

Monday, Feb. 26

Reading: Chapter 6: Space Perception & Binocular Vision

Topics: Stereopsis, depth cues, etc.

Wednesday, Feb. 28

Reading: Chapter 8: Visual Motion Perception

Topics: Neural computation of motion, using motion information

Monday, March 5

Reading: Chapter 9: Hearing: Physiology & Psychoacoustics

Topics: Auditory system structure, hearing characteristics

Wednesday, March 7

Reading: Chapter 9: Hearing: Physiology & Psychoacoustics (cont.)

Topics: Auditory system continued

Monday, March 12 and Wednesday March 14 – SPRING BREAK – NO CLASS

Monday, March 19

Reading: Chapter 10: Hearing in the Environment

Topics: Sound localization, complex sound recognition
Wednesday, March 21
Reading: Chapter 11: Music and Speech Perception
Topics: auditory scene analysis
Monday, March 26
Reading: Chapter 13: Touch
Topics: Structure and function of the somatosensory system, haptic perception
Wednesday, March 28
Reading: McGann (2017). Poor human olfaction is a 19th century myth. *Science* 356:597 pii: eaam7263.
Topics: Touch (cont.) & Human olfaction
Monday, April 2 – SECOND MIDTERM EXAM (Lectures 9-17)
Wednesday, April 4
Reading: Chapter 14: Olfaction
Topics: Olfactory system structure and physiology, olfactory psychophysics
Monday, April 9
Reading: Olfaction (cont.)
Topics: Behavioral neuroscience of olfaction
Wednesday, April 11
Reading: Chapter 7: Attention and Scene Perception
Topics: Attention, visual search
Monday, April 16
Reading: Attention and Scene Perception (cont.)
Topics: Physiological basis of attention, attentional disorders
Wednesday, April 18 – NO CLASS
Monday, April 23
Reading: Chapter 15: Taste
Topics: Structure and function of the gustatory system, gustatory psychophysics
Wednesday, April 25
Reading: Chapter 12: Spatial Orientation and the Vestibular System
Topics: Angular/linear motion and tilt, structure & function of the vestibular system
Monday, April 30
Reading: Review your notes for questions
Topics: Question-driven review & discussion of the entire course.
Tuesday, May 1
MAKE-UP EXAMINATION, time and location to be announced.
For students with excused absences from midterm exams only.

MAY 8, 2018: COMPREHENSIVE (ALL MATERIAL) FINAL EXAM at 12:00 PM in SEC-111.