

**Sensation and Perception**  
**Spring Semester, 2011**  
**Rutgers University Psychology Department**

**Course Information:**

Rutgers Course Number: 01:830:301:08  
Date and Time: Tuesday and Thursday, 3:20-4:40 PM  
Location: Hill Center for the Mathematical Sciences, Rm 114 (HLL-114)  
Prerequisite: 830:101 Introduction to Psychology

**Instructor:**

Dr. John P. McGann  
Email: jmcgann@rci.rutgers.edu  
Office: Psych 308 (Busch Campus)  
Office Hours: Thursdays from 4:45 to 5:45 (after class)

**Teaching Assistant:**

Marley Kass  
Email: marleyk@eden.rutgers.edu  
Office: Psych 309/318 (Busch Campus)  
Office Hours: Thursday 1:30-2:30

**Learning 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. (2009) Second Edition, Sinauer Associates.

We will be using the textbook *Sensation and Perception* by Wolfe et al, Second Edition, from Sinauer Associates (ISBN 978-0-87893-953-4). Older editions of this book may not contain the same information, so you are strongly advised to purchase the second edition. There is an optional CD called PsyCog you can purchase with this book – it is fairly interesting, but we will not be using it in this class. 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. I will not be taking attendance, but I strongly encourage you to attend every class. In past classes there was a strong correlation between class attendance and final grade.

**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](http://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 will 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%. Please be aware that correct sentence structure, grammar, and spelling are expected in answers to all written test questions, and that 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.

### **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.**

Tuesday, Jan. 18

Reading: this syllabus

Topics: Course overview, physical traits determine perception, history of perception research

Thursday, Jan. 20

Reading: S&P Chapter 1: Introduction

Topics: Psychophysics

Tuesday, Jan. 25

Reading: S & P Chapter 1 (cont.)

Topics: Elementary neuroscience and physiological methods in perceptual research

Thursday, Jan. 27

Reading: S&P Chapter 2: The First Steps in Vision

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

Tuesday, Feb. 1

Reading: S&P Chapter 3: Spatial Vision

Topics: Visual acuity, subcortical and cortical visual processing

Thursday, Feb. 3

Reading: S&P Chapter 3: Spatial Vision (cont.)

Topics: Selective adaptation, visual development, middle vision

Tuesday, Feb. 8

Reading: S&P Chapter 4: Perceiving and Recognizing Objects

Topics: Middle vision (cont) and object recognition, how to read a scientific paper

Thursday, Feb. 10

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

Topics: Quiroga et al., review of material for exam

**Tuesday, Feb. 15 – FIRST MIDTERM EXAM**

Thursday, Feb. 17

Reading: S&P Chapter 5: The Perception of Color

Topics: Trichromatic vision, color representation in the brain

Tuesday, Feb. 22

Reading: S&P Chapter 6: Space Perception & Binocular Vision

Topics: Stereopsis, depth cues, etc.

Thursday, Feb. 24

Reading: S&P Chapter 7: Motion Perception

Topics: Neural computation of motion, using motion information

Tuesday, March 1

Reading: S&P Chapter 9: Hearing: Physiology & Psychoacoustics

Topics: Auditory system structure, hearing characteristics

Thursday, March 3

Reading: S&P Chapter 10: Hearing in the Environment

Topics: Sound localization, complex sound recognition, auditory scene analysis

**Tuesday, March 8 – NO CLASS**

Thursday, March 10

Reading: S&P Chapter 12: Touch

Topics: Structure and function of the somatosensory system

**Tuesday March 15 & Thursday March 17: SPRING BREAK – NO CLASS**

Tuesday, March 22

Reading: S&P Chapter 12: Touch

Topics: Structure and function of the somatosensory system (cont.) & review

**Thursday, March 24 – SECOND MIDTERM EXAM**

Tuesday, March 29

Reading: Iriki et al. (1996). Coding of modified body schema during tool use by macaque postcentral neurons. *Neuroreport* 7:2325-2330.

Topics: Haptic perception, Plasticity in sensory systems.

Thursday, March 31

Reading: S&P Chapter 13: Olfaction

Topics: Olfactory system structure and physiology, olfactory psychophysics

Tuesday, April 5

Reading: S&P Chapter 13: Olfaction (cont.)

Topics: Behavioral neuroscience of olfaction

Thursday, April 7

Reading: S&P Chapter 8: Attention and Scene Perception

Topics: Smell (cont.) and begin attention, visual search

Tuesday, April 12

Reading: S&P Chapter 8 (cont.)

Topics: Physiological basis of attention, attentional disorders

**Thursday, April 14 – NO CLASS**

Tuesday, April 19

Reading: S&P Chapter 14: Taste

Topics: Structure and function of the gustatory system, gustatory psychophysics

Thursday, April 21

Reading: S&P Chapter 15: Spatial Orientation and the Vestibular System

Topics: Angular/linear motion and tilt, structure & function of the vestibular system

Tuesday, April 26

Reading: S&P Chapter 15 (cont.)

Topics: orientation perception, vestibular reflexes; course material wrap-up

Thursday, April 28

Reading: Review your notes for questions

Topics: Structured review & discussion of the entire course.

Tuesday, May 3

**MAKE-UP EXAMINATION** for students with excused absences from midterm exams.

**FINAL EXAM: Will be offered at the time and date listed at <http://finalexams.rutgers.edu>.  
I expect the date will be Wednesday, May 11, from 4-7 PM, but it has not actually  
been posted yet at that site.**