Instructor: Mike Dodd

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Meeting Time and Location: Wednesdays 2:30 – 5:20
Regular Meeting Room: Teachers College Hall 139
Note: We will not meet on November 26th

Objective: This course will cover a variety of topics in the domain of human attention and performance. Each week we will hold a critical discussion on current theories, data, and/or trends. Students will have the opportunity to discuss and critique current research via weekly discussions, thought papers, presentations, and a major paper.

Text: There is no required text for this course. If you are interested in a background text in attention I’d suggest either Pashler’s “The Psychology of Attention” or Johnson and Proctor’s “Attention: Theory and Practice.” And we may discuss the book Blink in this course, which is an excellent read.

Readings: approximately 3-4 current research articles each week (listed below and available on the course webpage)

Course Web Page: http://psych.unl.edu/mdodd/Psy498/

How the class will proceed: This class will be run as a seminar to allow for the free exchange of ideas and criticism/discussion of current issues in attention/performance. I will start off each class with an introduction to the topic area for the week, along with the relevant background. After this introduction, we will have a student(s) presentation which should lead into a discussion on the weeks readings. There will be no exams in this course.

Evaluation:

Presentation (10%): Each week, one student will begin class by briefly presenting a current research article (preselected by me) that is not on the core reading list for the week. This 10-15 minute presentation is simply intended to lead into a discussion of the issues/results/theories presented in the other articles that week. To that end, the presenting student is also responsible for generating a few questions regarding the week’s and leading the discussion. Other students are also required to send in questions ahead of
time also, however, so I can post them on the web and get people thinking about relevant issues. This way, the presenting student will have access to all questions to keep things going smoothly throughout the class/

**Thought Papers (40%)**: Throughout the term you are required to submit a series of thought papers on the articles/issues contained within that week’s readings. The papers are to be no more than one page double spaced (about 250-300 words). Your 8 highest scoring thought papers will count towards your final mark. You have the choice, therefore, to either submit more than 8 papers and have me count your best 8 or to simply submit only 8 papers through the term, all of which will count towards your mark. Try to take a different approach with the papers each week (e.g., don’t make every paper a criticism of that week’s research). There is no requirement regarding what you write. You can criticize some of the research, pitch ideas for related studies, talk about applications of the work, etc. The thought papers are due at the end of each class.

**Major Paper (30%)**: The major paper can take one of two forms. You can either write a critical review of an area of research or you can write a research proposal that more briefly reviews an area of cognition and presents a new empirical idea. In either case, the paper is expected to be 6-8 pages, not counting title page, references, etc. The paper is due at the beginning of class on April 23rd.

**Note for graduate students taking this course**: Your paper will be required to be in the 12-15 page range, or you can opt to write 2 shorter papers of 6-8 pages each on two different topics.

**Questions (10%)**: Each week all students are required to submit 2-3 questions to me that we will address during the seminar. The presenting student for the week will be required to compile the questions and use them to lead the discussion.

**Attendance/Participation (10%)**: Given that this course has no exams and is intended as a seminar/discussion group, attendance is critical. It is also important to contribute to the discussion which means you should have the articles read prior to class and come with something to discuss (I’ll post discussion questions on the website by Tuesday and you should look these over). I will be particularly disappointed if I read a good idea in a thought paper that was not raised during class. Given the small class size everyone should have a chance to participate amply.

**Penalty for Lateness**: The research proposal is due at the start of class on April 23rd. The penalty for lateness is 5% per day (including weekends). The thought papers are due at the end of each class.
## Tentative Schedule for Lectures and Reading Assignments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topics</th>
<th>Article Readings</th>
<th>Big Picture Question</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aug. 27th</td>
<td>Organizational meeting</td>
<td>See below</td>
<td>How many separate sensory systems and why?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sept. 3rd</td>
<td>Sensory Memory, Pattern Recognition, the lead up to attention</td>
<td>See below</td>
<td>How is attention represented (spotlight, zoom lens, distribution)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sept. 10th</td>
<td>Attention basics, development of attention</td>
<td>See below</td>
<td>How is attention represented (spotlight, zoom lens, distribution)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sept. 17th</td>
<td>Gaze cues, faces, arrows, other cues</td>
<td>See below</td>
<td>What shifts attention and why?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sept. 24th</td>
<td>Object/Location Attention</td>
<td>See below</td>
<td>Does attention select objects or locations? Advantages of each?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct. 1st</td>
<td>Change Blindness/Inattentional Blindness</td>
<td>See below</td>
<td>How much are we not seeing?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct. 8th</td>
<td>Visual search in and out of the lab</td>
<td>See below</td>
<td>What factors influence visual search and how important are they to day-to-day cognition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct. 15th</td>
<td>Automatic/Controlled Processing</td>
<td>See below</td>
<td>Why do we do things automatically even when it’s bad to do so</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oct. 22nd</td>
<td>Eye Movements (with some aging thrown in)</td>
<td>See below</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Oct. 29th</td>
<td>Perception and Action/Performance</td>
<td>See below</td>
<td>What are the most critical perceptual systems for action?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nov. 5th</td>
<td>Errors of Attention/Perception, Visual Illusions</td>
<td>See below</td>
<td>Why can some illusions be overcome while others can’t</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nov. 12th</td>
<td>Emotion and Attention</td>
<td>See below</td>
<td>Does emotion help or hurt cognition?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nov. 19th</td>
<td>Video Games and Performance</td>
<td>See below</td>
<td>Video games…good or bad?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nov. 26th</td>
<td>No class, student vacation</td>
<td>See below</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dec. 3rd</td>
<td>Cognitive disorders, effect on attention</td>
<td>See below</td>
<td>What do disorders tell us about normal function?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dec. 10th</td>
<td>Blink, rapid cognition</td>
<td>No reading: lecture and discussion</td>
<td></td>
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Articles

Note: The presenting student each week is required to read and present about the paper denoted by the *. Other students can feel free to also read that article if they want to but it is not required. Thus, there are only 2-3 short readings required each week.

Sensory Memory, Pattern Recognition, the lead up to Attention


Attention basics, development of attention


Gaze cues, faces, arrows, other cues


Object/Location attention


**Change blindness/inattentional blindness**


**Visual search in and out of the lab**


**Automatic and Controlled Processing**


**Eye Movements (with some aging thrown in)**


**Perception and Action/Performance**


**Errors of Attention/Perception, Visual Illusions**


**Emotion and Attention**


**Video Games and Performance**


**Cognitive Disorders, effect on attention/performance**


**Blink: Rapid Cognition**