

PSYC*4580, Course Outline: Winter 2025

General Information

Course Title: Special Topics in Behavioural Sciences

Course Description: This course provides an in-depth examination of specific theoretical and methodological advances for understanding human behaviour. Specific topics vary according to the expertise of the instructor. This section focuses on the use of cognitive-behavioural, psychophysiological, and cognitive-neuroscience techniques to test theories regarding links between mechanisms of human cognition and emotion. The corresponding topics will be covered in a seminar format.

Credit Weight: 0.50

Academic Department: Department of Psychology

Semester Offering: Winter 2025

This course is offered using the Face-to-Face format. The course has set days, time, and location of class.

Class Schedule and Location: M/W 10:00 AM - 11:20 AM in MCKN Room 115

Instructor Information

Instructor Name: Dr. Mark Fenske

Instructor Email: mfenske@uoguelph.ca

Expectations about Email Communication: I do my best to answer emails within 2 business days. I do not check or answer emails on Saturdays or Sundays. I prefer that you ask your questions during class so that everyone can benefit from the discussion. Only questions that can be answered simply (e.g., “yes” or “no”, or with a short sentence) will be answered by email. Questions requiring longer answers will result in a request for you to talk with me directly. If the matter is private, please come to office hours to discuss.

Office location and office hours: Room 3020 - MacKinnon Extension, TBA

GTA Information

GTA Name: Siobhon-Elora Weber

GTA Email: siobhone@uoguelph.ca

Course Content

Specific Learning Outcomes:

Critical & Creative Thinking:

Depth & Breadth of Understanding; Inquiry & Analysis; Problem Solving (Master)

Literacy:

Information; Methodological (Master)

Quantitative (Reinforce)

Communication:

Oral; Written; Reading (Master)

Integrative (Reinforce)

Professional and Ethical Behaviour:

Ethical Reasoning; Ethical Issues in Research (Reinforce)

These Learning Outcomes will be achieved through the successful completion of the following Objectives. By the end of this course you should be able to:

- 1) understand and effectively communicate to others contemporary methods and recent advances within cognitive-affective psychology and neuroscience.
- 2) demonstrate critical assessments of the usefulness of experimental designs and research techniques for revealing the psychological and neural substrates of cognition-emotion interactions.
- 3) show an ability to articulate the value of collaboration across scientific disciplines and the use of multiple converging approaches to address complex scientific questions.
- 4) demonstrate and assess the written, oral, and visual communication skills needed to effectively convey to others how research findings can help us understand how cognition and emotion interact to guide human thought, feelings, and behaviour and can otherwise aid successful outcomes in day-to-day activities.

Course Assignments and Tests:

Assignment or Test	Due Date	Contribution to Final Mark (%)	Learning Outcomes Assessed
Midterm Exam	Jan. 20	16	1, 2
Newspaper Assignment	Apr. 02	24	1, 2, 3, 4
Oral presentation	TBA	32	1, 2, 3, 4
Article Short-Answer Questions	Before each 'talks' class	14 (best 14 of 17)	1, 2
Talk Questions & Assessments	End of each 'talks' class	14 (best 14 of 17)	1, 2, 4

Additional Notes:

Midterm Exam: The Midterm exam will assess students' understanding of all material covered in the readings and in-class lectures on Theory and Methods. The format of the exam will be multiple-choice questions. Exam content will cover both lectures and any assigned readings.

Assignment – Newspaper Column: Each student will be required to translate and make accessible to the public-at-large a set of key cognitive-affective findings on a topic of their choice. The resulting written overview will take the form of a newspaper column. This project is designed to provide you with experience in the art of knowledge translation by requiring that you conduct a literature search, then read and summarize journal articles in a way that could be understood (and that would be of interest!) if read by a general audience without a background in psychology or neuroscience. The column must be typed and must not exceed 750 words.

Assignment – Oral Presentation: Each student will be required to complete an in-class presentation that effectively summarizes an empirical research paper within a strict 12-minute time-limit, followed by a 5-minute question and discussion period. Possible topics will be provided on CourseLink. This project requires you to search for and select a journal article reporting research using one or more cognitive-behavioural, psychophysiological, and/or cognitive-neuroscience techniques to address a critical research question within your assigned topic, and then develop a thorough understanding of how your chosen study fits within the context of prior research within that area. Such background knowledge will be critical for determining which details are crucial for understanding the advance in knowledge made by the study, and how to best translate this information to make it accessible to your classmates. In addition to the oral presentation, each presenter will be responsible for leading the subsequent class discussion of the presented research. This project is designed to enhance your inquiry and analysis skills, your depth and breadth of understanding, and your conceptual, and methodological, and quantitative literacy, while developing valuable visual and oral communication skills.

Assignment – Article Short-Answer Questions: For each class involving student presentations, each student not giving a presentation that day will be assigned one of the empirical research articles selected by the student presenters for that class. You must read each assigned article and provide brief written answers to a short series of questions about the content of the article prior to the class it is scheduled to be presented in. The questions will be posted and answered using the Quiz function on the CourseLink page before each of these classes. To account for the possibility of missed short-answer submissions due to sickness, only the best 14 of the 17-total possible submissions will count towards your final grade. If you miss completing and submitting answers to the questions about one of the articles, this will be treated as one of the three grades to be dropped—you do NOT need to provide documentation, nor inform the instructor. If you fail to submit article-question answers three times, each additional missed submission will be given a grade of zero and count as such toward your final grade unless appropriate documentation is provided within one week to the instructor as evidence of illness or compassionate circumstances.

Assignment – Talk Questions & Assessments: Each student will be required to watch and listen to every oral presentation (aside from their own) and provide their assessment of its effectiveness and at least one ‘burning question’ that came to mind during the talk. The questions and assessments will be completed on a paper-and-pencil form and submitted to the instructor at the end of each class. To account for the possibility of missed opportunities to observe presentations and submit questions-and-assessments forms due to sickness, only the best 14 of the 17-total possible forms will count towards your final grade. If you miss submitting a questions-and-assessments form, this will be treated as one of the three grades to be dropped—you do NOT need to provide documentation, nor inform the instructor. If you fail to submit a questions-and-assessments form three times, each additional missed submission will be given a grade of zero and count as such toward your final grade unless appropriate documentation is provided within one week to the instructor.

Course Schedule: This is tentative and subject to change throughout the semester.

Date	Topic
Jan. 06	Introduction: Cognition & Emotion in Brain, Body, & Behaviour
Jan. 08	Methods: Cognitive-behavioural
Jan. 13	Methods: Psychophysiology
Jan. 15	Methods: Neuroimaging
Jan. 20	Exam: Midterm
Jan. 22	Tutorial: How to give a good presentation.
Jan. 27	Talks 1
Jan. 29	Talks 2
Feb. 03	No class
Feb. 05	Talks 3
Feb. 10	Talks 4
Feb. 12	Talks 5
Feb. 17-21	No class: WINTER BREAK
Feb. 24	Talks 6
Feb. 26	Talks 7
Mar. 03	Talks 8
Mar. 05	Talks 9
Mar. 10	Talks 10
Mar. 12	Talks 11
Mar. 17	Talks 12
Mar. 19	Talks 13
Mar. 24	Talks 14
Mar. 26	Talks 15
Mar. 31	Talks 16
Apr. 02	Talks 17 (newspaper assignment due)

Course Resources

Required Text:

There is no course textbook.

Other Resources:

All readings will be announced and made accessible through CourseLink.

Course Policies

Grading Policies

Completed assignments must be submitted by the due date indicated above. Early submissions are welcome. Late submissions will not be accepted. Failure to submit an assignment on time will result in a grade of zero for that assignment.

Additional grade-related information can be found in the calendar under [Undergraduate Grading Procedures](#)

Course Policy regarding use of electronic devices and recording of lectures:

Electronic recording of classes is expressly forbidden without consent of the instructor. When recordings are permitted, they are solely for the use of the authorized student and may not be reproduced, or transmitted to others, without the express written consent of the instructor.

University Policies

Disclaimer:

Please note that a revision of the format of course offerings, changes in classroom protocols, and academic schedules is occasionally required. Any such changes will be announced via CourseLink and/or class email. This includes on-campus scheduling during the semester, mid-terms and final examination schedules.

Academic Consideration

When you find yourself unable to meet an in-course requirement because of illness or compassionate reasons, please advise the course instructor in writing, with your name, id#, and e-mail contact. See the academic calendar for information on regulations and procedures for

Academic Consideration:

[Academic Consideration, Appeals and Petitions](#)

Academic Misconduct

The University of Guelph is committed to upholding the highest standards of academic integrity and it is the responsibility of all members of the University community, faculty, staff, and students to be aware of what constitutes academic misconduct and to do as much as possible to prevent academic offences from occurring.

University of Guelph students have the responsibility of abiding by the University's policy on academic misconduct regardless of their location of study; faculty, staff and students have the responsibility of supporting an environment that discourages misconduct. Students need to remain aware that instructors have access to and the right to use electronic and other means of detection. Please note: Whether or not a student intended to commit academic misconduct is not relevant for a finding of guilt. Hurried or careless submission of assignments does not excuse students from responsibility for verifying the academic integrity of their work before submitting it. Students who are in any doubt as to whether an action on their part could be construed as an academic offence should consult with a faculty member or faculty advisor.

The Academic Misconduct Policy is detailed in the Undergraduate Calendar:

[Academic Misconduct Policy](#)

Illness

Medical notes will not normally be required for singular instances of academic consideration, although students may be required to provide supporting documentation for multiple missed assessments or when involving a large part of a course (e.g., final exam or major assignment).

Accessibility

The University of Guelph is committed to creating a barrier-free environment. Providing services for students is a shared responsibility among students, faculty and administrators. This relationship is based on respect of individual rights, the dignity of the individual and the University community's shared commitment to an open and supportive learning environment. Students requiring service or accommodation, whether due to an identified, ongoing disability or a short-term disability should contact [Student Accessibility Services](#) as soon as possible.

For more information, contact SAS at 519-824-4120 ext. 54335 or email accessibility@uoguelph.ca or the [Student Accessibility Services Website](#)

Student Feedback Questionnaire

These questionnaires (formerly course evaluations) will be available to students during the last 2 weeks of the semester. Students will receive an email directly from the Student Feedback Administration system which will include a direct link to the questionnaire for this course. During this time, when a student goes to login to CourseLink, a reminder will pop-up when a task is available to complete.

[Student Feedback Questionnaire](#)

Drop date

The last date to drop one-semester courses, without academic penalty, is Friday April 4, 2025. For regulations and procedures for Dropping Courses, see the [Schedule of Dates in the Academic Calendar](#)

[Current Undergraduate Calendar](#)

Additional Course Information

Course instructors are allowed to use software to help in detecting plagiarism or unauthorized copying of student assignments. Plagiarism is one of the most common types of academic misconduct on our campus. Plagiarism involves students using the work, ideas and/or the exact wording of other people or sources without giving proper credit to others for the work, ideas and/or words in their papers. Students can unintentionally commit misconduct because they do not know how to reference outside sources properly or because they don't check their work carefully enough before handing it in. Whether or not a student intended to commit academic misconduct is not relevant for a finding of guilt. Hurried or careless submission of assignments does not excuse students from responsibility for verifying the academic integrity of their work before submitting it. Students who are in any doubt as to whether an action on their part could be construed as an academic offence should consult with a faculty member or faculty advisor.

In this course, your instructor may be using Turnitin.com to detect possible plagiarism, unauthorized collaboration or copying as part of the ongoing efforts to prevent plagiarism in the College of Social and Applied Human Sciences.

A major benefit of using Turnitin is that students will be able to educate and empower themselves in preventing misconduct. In this course, you may screen your own assignments through Turnitin as many times as you wish before the due date. You will be able to see and print reports that show you exactly where you have properly and improperly referenced the outside sources and materials in your assignment.