

PSYC SPECIAL TOPICS COURSES 2022-2023 – COURSE DESCRIPTIONS

PSYC 350 Fall 2022 (Dr Morningstar) – Developmental Social Neuroscience

How do children and adolescents learn to make sense of the social world around them? This course focuses on research that aims to answer this question, leveraging neuroimaging techniques to better understand how the developing brain parses, processes, and responds to social and emotional information.

PSYC 399 Fall 2022 (Dr Fitneva) - Language

What is the role of language in how we think and interact? What does it take to comprehend and speak, and how do the skills to use language develop? What is the role of language in our communities and our culture? The course will provide an overview of the psychological study of language, sampling from topics such as language evolution, language development, communication, and social learning, among others.

PSYC 420 Fall 2022 (Dr O'Connor) - Face Perception

In this course we will discuss the cognitive neuroscience of face perception. Topics will include the structural and functional mechanisms of face processing and recognition, cognitive processes such as attention allocation and memory, and dysregulation and dysfunction of face perception. Practical applications and social implications will be discussed.

PSYC 420 Fall 2022 (Dr Smallwood) - Research into spontaneous thought

In this course you will gain an understanding of recent work on ongoing thought patterns as they occur in the laboratory and in daily life. The class will cover recent perspectives from psychology, as well as views from cognitive neuroscience on how the brain generates different ongoing thought patterns. You will gain an understanding of the methods that are used in these studies, as well as insight into how scientists conceptualize these important aspects of how we think and feel.

PSYC 435 Fall 2022 (Dr Vine) - Affective Psychophysiology

This course explores complexities in the study of psychophysiology to understand human experience. We consider questions like, how is the body involved in generating emotional experience? What can we learn about socially important processes by measuring activity in the body? How does measuring the body help us understand why some people thrive and others struggle with mental health? Students will learn about body systems involved in socio-emotional outcomes and how they are measured and will consider benefits and interpretive challenges inherent to this area of research.

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PSYC 450 Fall 2022 (Dr Hollenstein) - Socioemotional Development in the Digital Age

In this course, we will consider and apply theories of social and emotional development to the understanding of digital experiences of children and their families. In doing so, we will critically evaluate the frequent causal made in the field and in public discourse. The overarching aim of the course is to foster a deeper understanding of digital experiences in the context of human development and identify just how much we really do not yet know.

PSYC 320 Winter 2023 (Dr Wammes) - Principles of Memory

Memory is absolutely fundamental to our everyday functioning. We rely on memory when we interact with friends or peers, walk a familiar route, or complete a course exam. As memory researchers, we attempt to understand the different kinds of memory; how memories are acquired, changed, and stored; what helps or hinders memory; how we forget; and how all of these are instantiated in the brain. The topics that this course covers may include the history of memory research, contemporary theories, common methodologies, patient work, and neuroscientific approaches. The course may also address differences between sensory, short-term, working, procedural, semantic, and episodic memory systems. Last, the course may cover related topics and real-world applications, including memory and the legal system, autobiographical memory, amnesia and dementia, emotional memory, and memory in education.

This is a lecture-based course with a textbook and assigned readings. Students will be evaluated on a mix of exams, participation quizzes, and occasional short written or hands-on assignments. This course should take up approximately 8-10 hours per week on average (though this will change depending on due dates). 3 hours will be in class, and the remainder will be finishing the assigned reading and working on assignments, when applicable.

PSYC 330 Winter 2023 (Dr Bowie) – Laboratory in Clinical Psyc

The content will focus on clinical interviewing, psychological assessment, and basic therapy skills. The course will include a focus on theoretical underpinnings and research evidence for a scientifically informed practice of clinical psychology and demonstration of tools. Students will be able to determine the validity of clinical psychology tools and techniques and demonstrate capacity for foundational clinical psychology skills.

PSYC 340 Winter 2023 (Dr O'Connor) - Aggression

In this course we will examine the social psychological theories of aggression. We will discuss different forms of aggression, contextual factors, and interactionist perspectives. Aggression will be examined at the individual and group level, in the context of both current and historical events. Topics will include intergroup conflict, bullying, media violence, as well as strategies for reducing and preventing aggressive behaviour.

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PSYC 398 Winter 2023 (Dr Smallwood) - Experience Sampling from lab to daily life

Experience Sampling from lab to daily life: how to map patterns of ongoing thought. In this class you will learn how the technique of experience sampling is used by scientists to study the nature different patterns of ongoing thought, and the methods and techniques that allow this information to be related to objective measures of cognition.

PSYC 440 Winter 2023 (Dr Hauser) - Language and Reasoning

This course will explore the science behind how seemingly-innocuous changes in language can impact how people think about social concepts. For instance, do metaphorical frames impact how we think about diseases (such as cancer and COVID19)? Do subtle variations in wording (such as talking about climate change vs global warming) influence whether we intend to live more “green” lives? This course sheds light on how language structures shapes the mental models that we use to understand and reason about complex social phenomena.

PSYC 450 Winter 2023 (Dr Sabbagh) – Conceptual Change in Children

It is well established that children are not born as “blank slates.” Even young infants have systematic ways of perceiving and categorizing the experiences they have, which in turn set the stage for learning. Yet, how infants understand the world are is not the same as children just a few years older. Instead, children’s conceptual understanding of the world is continually evolving in response to their cognitive developments and how those cognitive developments interact with their particular experiences. In this course, we will examine the research that seeks to better understand the developmental trajectories of conceptual change in a handful of domains, and the mechanisms that promote these changes throughout childhood.

PSYC 480 Winter 2023 (Dr Kilik) – Applied Clinical Psychology

This course is designed to orient students to the field and profession of clinical psychology. This course offers a survey of major topics in clinical psychology, including a brief history of clinical psychology; common theoretical approaches in assessment and intervention; ethical, professional and theoretical issues; and emerging trends. Students also will be briefly introduced to subspecialties within clinical psychology, such as clinical Neuropsychology. Professional activities of clinical psychologists (e.g., consultation) will also be discussed.

PSYC 485 Winter 2023 (Dr Tusche) – Decision -Making Motivations

This course examines fundamental theories and research findings on rational choice, drawing on research conducted by psychologists, economists, and biologists. We will compare basic principles of rationality with actual choice behavior and illustrate how the way that we think about decision problems systematically deviates from rationality. We will also discuss factors that underlie systematic biases in

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human decision-making and “irrational” behavior (including emotions and social aspects), “nudges” that utilize characteristics of the human choice architecture, and applications of JDM theories and results in various fields. Studying the principles of rational decision-making and systematic discrepancies with actual behavior is not only fascinating, but it is also actually practically useful, as it can help us to improve the quality of choices in our daily lives. Assessments include weekly reaction papers on the required reading, student presentations, and a final essay.