

# Thinking

PSY 330

Summer Term, 2012

**Time/Place:** Monday—Thursday in Straub 142

**Instructor:** Jason Isbell ([isbell@uoregon.edu](mailto:isbell@uoregon.edu))

**Office Hours:** Mon. and Wed. directly after class, Straub 37 (in the basement)

**Textbook:** Robertson, I., *Types of Thinking* (not required but may be helpful)

**Other recommended reading:** Kahneman, D., *Thinking, Fast and Slow*

**Course Description:** “Psychological methods involved in problem solving, complex learning, and various forms of rational and irrational reasoning and belief systems.”  
~ UO Course Catalogue

Some of the course will be dedicated to understanding *general* cognition since this underpins the more *specific* types of cognition such as thinking, reasoning, etc. But essentially, this course is about how we go about solving problems and the obstacles we commonly encounter when doing so. My goals for the course are, above all, to discuss how we might all become better thinkers and consumers of information.

The amount of candidate topics to cover in this course barely fit into a 10-week term, let alone a 4-week summer term. Hence, we will move fast and cover a lot. If you feel you are getting left behind or want some clarification then I strongly urge you to ask questions in class, send me emails, and/or visit my office hours. I am very much dedicated to assisting you in whatever way I can. It is extremely important to me that you understand the material so, given the time constraints, I have chosen to go into greater detail about fewer topics rather than barely scratch the surface of many topics. That being said...

## **Attendance is absolutely critical!!!**

See above. Burn it into your mind. All evaluation will be done based on information in the lecture. Therefore, you need to attend class. Let me state that again: All evaluation will be done based on information in the lecture. I am happy to go over various topics as much as you may require, but as you can also surely understand I have no desire to give my lectures 2 or 3 times each, once in class, once via email, and/or once during office hours. So questions and emails such as, “I was gone Tuesday. What did we go over?” will be ignored. You need to attend class. If you cannot attend class regularly then you should drop the course immediately. If you do not attend class regularly then you will undoubtedly fail. No one wants that. (Seriously, I want you all to succeed!) So, please, attend class regularly or drop.

## **Tentative Class Schedule:**

Week 1: Syllabus, Intro to Thinking, Intro/Overview of Cognition

Week 2: Cognitive Development, System 1 and System 2

Week 3: Biases, Heuristics, and Problem-Solving

Week 4: Formal Logic and Intelligence

This is subject to modification depending on how quickly we get through the material. Your understanding is more important to me than some inflexible set of criteria, so if we have to slow down a bit then no worries.

**Exams:** We will have an exam on the last day of every week (i.e., every Thursday). If you wish, the first 20 minutes of class can be dedicated to review and then I will administer the exam.

There will be 4 exams total. However, only your best 3 scores will be calculated in your grade. Each exam will be equally weighted (for a total of 90% of your grade) and none of them will “technically” be comprehensive. (That is, I will not intentionally and explicitly test you on the previous week’s material; however, some of the topics within the course are built upon previously learned topics, so in that sense it will be a little comprehensive.)

The benefit of dropping one exam is obvious because you get to put your best foot forward. Please keep in mind, however, that due to this policy and due to the short duration and fast pace of the class, there will be **ABSOLUTELY NO MAKE-UP EXAMS**. There are no exceptions, for any reason, forever and ever until the end of time. Don’t even try. If you are not certain you can at least make it to class 3 Thursdays then I strongly suggest you drop the course now.

**Paper:** There will be one paper due on the last day of class. There will be *no extensions for any reasons*. It is to be no shorter than 3 pages and no longer than 4 (double spaced). Points will be deducted for shorter *or* longer papers, so try to be efficient. This is a 300 level college course. Proper grammar, spelling, etc., is required. The paper will comprise the remaining 10% of your grade. You may choose from the following two topics:

- 1) What are your suggestions for how critical thinking skills could be improved in the U.S.? This would likely be done via the educational system, but if you can think of other routes then that is great too. In either case, please provide a clear discussion with some specific examples. Avoid being overly vague and speaking in generalities.
- 2) What are some ways that you plan to improve your critical thinking skills in your own life? They can be things you learned in class or elsewhere. How might you do this? Please provide a clear discussion with some specific examples. Avoid being overly vague and speaking in generalities.

**Grades:** Grades will be assigned in the following way:

93-100%= A	73-76.99%= C
90-92.99%= A-	70-72.99%= C-
87-89.99%= B+	67-69.99%= D+
83-86.99%= B	63-66.99%= D
80-82.99%= B-	60-62.99%= D-
77-79.99%= C+	59.99%-below= F

I do reserve the right to curve at the end of the course but it is *highly unlikely* that I will do so, so as to attenuate grade inflation. There is no reason why any of you should get a poor grade in this course if you are willing to work. However, if everyone does poorly then it suggests I did a bad job at calibrating the difficulty of the course, I failed in instructing adequately, or everyone is stupid. Since I am good at what I do and you are all brilliant, I find it unlikely that a curve will be necessary. And again, I want you all to do well. Please use my office hours, emails, and questions in class as a resource.

**Suggestions for Lecture:** I will provide you with my lecture slides, via Blackboard. Although they contain the skeleton of the course material, I will flesh them out as I speak. I strongly recommend you print them out, bring them to class, and annotate them as I speak. If I speak too fast for you to write or you miss something I say then raise your hand, blurt out, throw something at me, or otherwise get my attention and ask me to slow down, repeat myself, etc. Again, my goal on the horizon is your education, not simply rambling through a bunch of stuff incoherently.

**Cheating and Plagiarism:** Don't do it. Seriously. Don't be that guy or gal. Although I will if necessary, I do not want to kick anyone out of my class, etc. Anyway, as cliché as it may sound, the old saying is true: You are only cheating yourself. I feel I give you plenty of opportunity to learn so please maintain your dignity and do not cheat, plagiarize, or engage in other forms of douche baggery.

**Students with Disabilities:** If you have a documented disability and anticipate needing accommodations in this course, please make arrangements to meet with me as soon as possible. Also, please request that the Counselor for Students with Disabilities (Hillary Gerdes, [hgerdes@oregon.uoregon.edu](mailto:hgerdes@oregon.uoregon.edu), tel. 346-3211, TTY 346-1083) send a letter verifying your disability.

By signing this I, the undersigned, am stating that I have read this syllabus, I understand its content, and I agree to the conditions of this course contained herein.

For 3 points extra credit, staple a picture of yourself below. Then sign on the line below that:

---

Print here

Sign here

Date