

# Thinking (Psy 330)

Winter Term 2012, CRN: 26930; University of Oregon

## *The Meeting Time:*

MW, 4:00-5:20pm

207 Chapman Hall (CHA; [Map](#))

## *The Instructor:*

Dr. Peter Sparks ([psparks@uoregon.edu](mailto:psparks@uoregon.edu))

Office Hours: MW, 2:30-3:45 (Rm. 326 in Straub)

## *The Teaching Assistant:*

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

Office hours: By Appointment Only

## *The Textbook:*

I. Robertson, *Types of Thinking* (Routledge/Tyler and Francis, Publishers)

There will be other readings assigned. They will be announced in class and posted in Blackboard

## Description:

"Psychological methods involved in problem solving, complex learning, and various forms of rational and irrational reasoning and belief systems." ~ UO Course Catalogue

Essentially this is a course about the mental processes involved in Thought and Decision Making. In this course, we will explore the process of thought in terms of how we come up with new information, the factors which influence this process and the short-cuts which we apply to solve problems in situations when thought cannot occur, including the failures of these "cuts". We will also explore topics related to thought including Expertise, Intelligence, Creativity and Language. If there is time remaining, we can consider topics such as Happiness, Meditation, Play. My goals for the course are to help you understand that much to our dismay, there are many automatic biases in our ability to think and by understanding them, you may have the ability to improve your skill at thinking, and critique other people's thoughts.

*Hope Springs Eternal!*

*(An Essay on Man, by Alexander Pope)*

**To teach this course**, there are a number of topics which I hope to cover this term. I emphasize the word "hope" since one can never predict the future. What we do cover depends entirely on the time it takes to cover certain topics, the pace of the lectures and the interest of the students. Also, I am very open to discussing something at the spur of the moment and with Sex, there is always an interesting conversation to have. Covering all of these topics would be great, but may not happen. Thus, the description of the course presented below could change. The best thing is to simply come to class, and pay attention to the announcements in the Blackboard component of class. **The exam dates will not change.** Therefore, the exams will only concern what material we have covered in class since the last exam. Detailed subject outlines will be handed out at the start of a new topic, which will help you follow along with the lecture and keep track of details such as definitions.

**Therefore, Attendance is Critical!!!**

**Course Website:** (accessed via <http://blackboard.uoregon.edu>) All handouts, homework announcements, grades, copies of lecture power points, and other materials, will be posted in Blackboard. Nothing will be handed out in class (on paper) except the exams.

**Readings and Lecture Schedule:** Presented below is the lecture and readings schedule. Please be aware that there could be additional readings as handed out by me via Blackboard or other assigned material. These additional readings will be announced in class and via Blackboard.

<u>Subject Matter</u>	<u>Book Chapter</u>
<b>Week 1 (Jan. 9-14)</b> Introduction: What is Thinking? How does it fit within our Mental Processes  Knowledge ~ Schemas, Scripts, Concepts and Cognitive Frameworks	Chapter 1      Chapter 8 (Parkin Text)
<b>Week 2 (Jan. 15-21) No Class on Monday (MLK Day)</b> Knowledge Continued  “Everyday Thinking” and Problem Solving (This topic with Reasoning will be covered over the next two weeks)	   Chapter 2
<b>Week 3 (Jan. 22-28)</b> Reasoning (Problem Solving and Reasoning continued)	Chapter 4
<b>Week 4 (Jan. 29-February 4) Exam 1 Monday (Jan. 30)</b> Failures in thinking: Bias’s, Short cuts, and Framing	Chapter 5
<b>Week 5 (Feb. 5-11)</b> Failures continued	
<b>Week 6 (Feb. 12-18)</b> Intelligence, Expertise, Wisdom	Chapter 6
<b>Week 7 (Feb. 19-25): Exam 2 Wednesday (Feb. 22)</b> Creativity and play Curiosity	Chapter 3
<b>Week 8 (Feb. 26 – March 3): Extra day in there!</b> The mechanics of thought Language and Thought Whorf Hypothesis Working memory	Chapter 13 (Parkin Text)    TBA
<b>Week 9 (March 4-10)</b> Day Dreaming and Imagination  Emotions and Thought Intuition Happiness: it is all about how you think about it	TBA  TBA  TBA
<b>Week 10 (March 11-17)</b> Inhibition: Delay of Gratification and the strength of the “Will” The idea of thought and motivations having an antagonistic relationship. Anything else which remains: Thinking in Groups, Meditation, Effects of Brain Damage.... Anyone... Anyone?	TBA      TBA

## **Week 11 (March 19-23) Final Exam Week!!**

**Our exam is scheduled for Thursday, March 22 at 3:15pm. Make note of the different time!!!!**

During this time, we will take our 3<sup>rd</sup> exam. Each exam, including this last exam, covers only the material covered since the previous exam (or start of the course). Thus this exam is NOT an all comprehensive exam, but simply a third exam.

## **Evaluation**

**Homework:** At this point there are not assignments designated, but it is likely that some will be announced during the term. In most cases, they will involve writing a reflection essay (1 page) or answering specified questions (still, one page). These assignments will mostly be graded on effort: the more effort/thoughtfulness you put into your essay, the more likely you will earn full credit. These assignments will be posted on blackboard and announced in class at various times throughout the term and will be worth between 5-10 points each.

### **Papers:**

There will be **ONE** essay/paper due for this class. The purpose of these is to get you to think a little bit more about the material discussed in class by applying it to your own life experiences. As with the other assignments, a detailed description will be posted on blackboard and announced in class, but generally speaking, the paper will be structured as such:

Part 1: Sit alone and choose a topic to think about. This could be an assignment from another class, a topic in a class that you wish to think more about, or a personal or social problem; anything which requires extended, effortful, thoughtfulness. In your paper, explain (generally) the topic you wish to think about, and the goal you hope to attain. Then, as you engage in the process of thinking, try to become aware of the process: What are you conscious of or not conscious of? How does information or ideas “spring to mind”? What parts of this process are you in control or not in control of? Essentially, I want you to gain a subjective appreciation for the thought processes.

Part 2: Pick **TWO** position pieces, opinions or arguments from the media. This could be an editorial from a newspaper, a segment from a TV “news” show (e.g. Bill O’Reilly or Rachel Maddow; choose a single segment, not the entire show), a blog; any professional grade position or argument (not the ranting of a 15 year old stoner about the benefits of pot on YouTube). Analyze the logic of the argument and point out the assumptions and errors of thinking (e.g. availability bias) for each.

This paper should be at least 6 pages (**PLEASE STAPLE!!**) and is worth 50 points. **This paper is due Feb. 22 in class.**

***All homework and papers needs to be typed and turned in during class (i.e. A Hardcopy). Submission via email is not desired, but possible with a dire circumstance ( it needs to be in DOC or RFT formats).***

*Any assignment that has excessive spelling errors or very poor grammar will automatically be deducted points. Use your spell and grammar check. I am not perfect myself in this respect, but frankly the work of some of my past students work has become that bad. Take pride in your work, even for the simple reflective essays.*

**Exams:** There will be 3 exams this term. All three will be worth 100 pts each and will only cover the material presented since the last exam. I will try my best to make the exams at least partially multiple choice, but it very well could be that one or all are full essay only exams. In this case, the exam will consist of 3-4 essay questions. Again, I hope to make the tests partially multiple choice; in this cases you could expect 30-40 MC questions and 3-4 short answer questions. In all cases, the exam will start promptly at the start of class, **and take one hour**. The remaining time will be consist of lecture, so do not forget to bring your notebook.

In lecture, we will not have time to cover all of the material in the readings, but I expect you to know the material. The material tested will come MOSTLY from my lectures, though, with items not covered only in your assigned readings being less likely to be tested, but some questions will cover that material. The point is that the book is there to help

you and guide you, but come to the classes!!!! Those that come to class will do well, and those that do not, will not do well.

***As we get closer to an exam, I will be able to tell you exactly what topics will be on the exam.***

**Final grade:** The final grade will be determined by assessing the number of points that you get from the homework assignments and exams out of the total number of points possible (possibly 350-400 points total?). It is very likely that the exams will constitute 70% of your grade and the other assignments will make up the rest. Letter grades will be applied as follows:

93-100%= A (4.0)	77-79.99%= C+ (2.3-2.5)	60-62.99%= D- (0.7-0.9)
90-92.99%= A- (3.6-3.9)	73-76.99%= C (2.0-2.2)	59.99%-below= F (0.0-0.6)
87-89.99%= B+ (3.3-3.5)	70-72.99%= C- (1.7-1.9)	
83-86.99%= B (3.0-3.2)	67-69.99%= D+ (1.3-1.6)	
80-82.99%= B- (2.6-2.9)	63-66.99%= D (1.0-1.2)	

A grade less than a 60% will be a failing grade. Do not fail this class. I will try to explain the material to the best that I can, but it is up to you to read the text book and to come to me if there is something that doesn't make sense or that you need help with. I can't help you if I don't know there is a problem. The homework assignments are a good assessment. If you do not recognize or understand the homework, come and see me as soon as possible!!!!

### **Summary of Important dates**

**It is important to understand that there are many Academic deadlines this term. Be aware of them! While I tend to be pretty flexible is someone wants to withdrawal or change from decimal grading to Pass-No Pass, there are deadlines for such actions. [Click here to see the Academic Schedule.](#)**

### **Final points:**

**How to study:** Let me give some pointers on how to study for this course. The biggest issue for most students is that they do not understand how much effort it takes to do well. I expect my students to not only understand, but to remember the facts, terms, and concepts presented in this course. My tests are fair, but challenging. It takes a lot of effort to do well in this course. Studying a few hours the night before the exam will not work out so well for you. The main reason for this is simply that we will be covering a lot of information; it is not difficult to understand, but it is a lot. Start studying a week in advance! Organize your notes, compare them with the handouts and the book. Re-write them, it really helps. Outline the chapter, don't just read it. Then when you have stumbled on something which you don't understand, you can ask me and I will explain it to you. I am here solely to help you learn the material. If you start studying ahead of time, you will be able to take advantage of me. This really, REALLY helps. Clearly this advice is very brief. I have created an extended in-depth description of techniques that can be used and have posted in on my website. Please look it over. If you are not doing well, come and talk with me as soon as you can. Take responsibility for your efforts and do not expect the same strategy to lead to a better grade on the next exam. If you are not doing well, change your strategy!!!!

**Late Work/Make up Policy:** Homework and other assignments are due at the beginning of class on the due date. If the work is late, a point will automatically be docked for every day late. In the end, missing an assignment will be devastating to your grade, so turn them in! Because of the essay part of the exam, there will be little flexibility in terms of changing your exam date. You will need to have a fantastic excuse to make up an exam or to postpone an exam. I will be even more resistant to letting people take exams early.

**Attendance Policy:** Come to class! Your attendance will not affect your final grade directly, but I cannot over emphasize the fact that those who miss class WILL NOT do well. If you miss class, do not simply ask what we covered (and to give an impromptu lecture). I am an absent-minded professor and will not remember exactly what we did. Your job is to get the notes from a classmate, and if you need to, bring them to me and I can explain/go over them with you. You should get to know someone in class and get their phone number in case you miss a class.

**Cheating and Plagiarism:** Do not do these things. Cheating and Plagiarism are serious offenses and will be dealt with severely! This could mean failing the test or assignment, failing the class or being excused from this college. I have little to no patience with cheating and will deal with the issue with the most severe action at my disposal. It is always

better to simply work hard and learn the material. If you are having a problem learning the material, come see me. I have plenty of time to help you. Do not resort to cheating!

**Students with Disabilities:** If you have a documented disability and anticipate needing accommodations in this course, please make arrangements to meet with the instructor 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.

**Finally:** It is important that you do well and learn the material. So feel free to email me anytime with questions. I understand that many questions will come when you are studying at night. Get on the email or phone and leave a message, I will respond. Also, feel free to catch me after class or before class and ask me anything. I am there to help you learn and understand the material as much as I can. So use me!

**Finally, Finally:** If you are not doing well on the exams (D or less), you **MUST** come and see me so that we can talk about changing things so that you do better.