

PSY 330: Thinking

Winter Term, 2013

Time/Place: 12-1:20pm, Tuesdays and Thursdays in Straub 142

Instructor: Jason Isbell (isbell@uoregon.edu)

Office Hours: Tues. and Thurs. after class, LISB 232

Text: I will be providing PDFs of supplemental readings from various sources on Blackboard.

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 focuses on 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.

I encourage discussion in class. I urge you to ask questions in class, send me emails, and/or visit my office hours if you have any questions or require any clarification of the material. I am very much dedicated to assisting you in whatever way I can. It is important to me that you understand the material.

Attendance is absolutely critical.

The topic of thinking is quite broad and potentially meandering. It is therefore nearly impossible to find a “perfect” textbook for this course. Luckily that means you are not required to purchase an expensive textbook, as I will be providing the readings free of charge. However, all evaluation will be done based on information provided in the lectures. The readings are there to supplement the lecture material. Therefore, you need to attend class. I am happy to go over/review various topics as much as you may require. As you can imagine, however, 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. If you anticipate an upcoming excusable absence then please contact me prior to it and I will try to work with you. But... You really need to attend class.

Tentative Class Schedule:

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

Week 2: Continue/finish Cognition

Week 3: Developmental Cognition, Exam 1

Week 4: Start/finish System 1 and System 2 (Kahneman stuff)

Week 5: Start Heuristics and Biases

Week 6: Finish Heuristics and Biases, Exam 2

Week 7: Start/finish Formal Logic

Week 8: Start/finish Science

Week 9: Exam 3, MOVIE FOR PAPER: *Surviving Progress*

Week 10: Fallacies, Exam 4

Your paper is due the week of finals (TBD)

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: There will be 4 exams total. 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. The final one will be somewhat comprehensive (i.e., about 30% of the exam will be made up of questions on previous topics). Other than that, 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 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 certain you cannot make it to class regularly, particularly on the days the exams are given, then you may want to consider dropping this course.

Paper: There will be one paper due during finals week (TBD). There will be *no extensions for any reasons*. It is to be no shorter than 3 pages and no longer than 5 (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 expected. The paper will comprise the remaining 10% of your grade. The paper will be based on the movie watched in class. This means it would be a good idea to be present when we watch it.

Topic of paper: Using the tools you have acquired in class, evaluate the content of the movie. That is, do you think it is presenting legitimate concerns that need to be addressed? If so, provide your reasoning, any examples, arguments, etc. in support of your position. Conversely, if you do not agree with the contents of the movie then please provide your reasoning,

examples, and arguments in support of your position. Basically, using your critical thinking skills and (hopefully) some of the concepts learned in class, make an argument in favor or against the material presented in the documentary.

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 that 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 certainly 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, tel. 346-3211, TTY 346-1083) send a letter verifying your disability.

For 3 points extra credit, sign on the line below and return only this sheet to Jason no later than the end of Week 2.

“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.”

Print here

Sign here

Date