Course Overview

Lesson 1: Introduction
module 01

Cognitive Psychology

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Introduction.01.

What is this all about?

- Cognitive Psychology
  - Cognitive psychology is the study of how people perceive, learn, remember, communicate and think
  - Integral part of the broader cognitive sciences
  - Cognitive psychology usually takes the perspective of the individual trying to make sense of the available information around it
  - Cognitive psychology is the basis for many other disciplines in psychology - e.g., clinical psychology, modern educational psychology, social psychology, ...
  - In this course you will learn the basic questions that cognitive psychologists are trying to answer, some of the methods they employ, and how this knowledge can be applied to common tasks

Cognitive Psychology can be lots of fun!

- How can you make it fun?
  - Everything you see, think, plan, do is an expression of your own cognitive system at work
  - Be fascinated: This course will question some of the things that you take for granted. Isn’t it interesting to figure out that half of what you see is actually not even there? That just by opening your eyes you are smarter than the best super-computer? That your memory fools you constantly ...
  - As with any class, the more effort you put into it, the more you will get out of it ...
  - ... and a good grade will usually follow as well, but then that is not the most important part of learning...
Who is this course for?

- Intended user groups ...
  - Anyone interested in cognitive functioning and questions surrounding the topic “how the mind works”
  - Students who have academic interests in psychology, neuroscience, artificial intelligence, linguistics
  - Psychology students who, besides taking an upper division course, can learn the basic foundation of many other fields
  - Designers, architects, and engineers: Understanding the user’s or customer’s cognitive strengths and limitations might lead to better design
  - Education and human development majors can get insights into the people they are trying to teach

Who is this instructor?

- Steffen Werner
  - Associate professor at the U of Idaho (Psychology)
  - I studied experimental psychology, with an emphasis in cognitive psychology, at the University of Göttingen in Germany (Ph.D. in ’94)
  - My family and I moved to Idaho in 2000. My wife is a professor at Washington State University in the Human Development department
  - My main interests lie in the area of spatial cognition, high-level visual perception, architecture and design, and applications of experimental psychology (e.g., driving research, maps, spatial displays, navigational aids - human factors research)

Exams, quizzes, discussions, deadlines

- Three exams
  - Mixture of multiple choice and essay questions
  - We throw out the score for the worst of your first two exams

- Quizzes
  - Every lesson will have at least 1 quiz associated with it. In some cases a lesson will extend to two weeks. In this case the last quiz may cover all of the material
  - Quizzes are multiple choice and there will be at least a one-week time window to take them
  - We will count only the best 10 (out of 13) quiz scores

- Discussions
  - There are 6 discussion topics that you are expected to contribute to (through WebCT). We will score your best 5.

- Deadlines
  - Deadlines for quizzes, journal entries and exams are set within web-CT and are strictly enforced
Main writing assignment
- You will have to write one paper about a book or three research articles during the semester
- The emphasis of your paper has to be on cognitive psychology. Please choose a book from the available booklist
- The paper should be between 1200 to 1600 words
- Since this is the only large writing assignment, make sure that it is high-quality

You will be asked to submit
- a justification for your choice / proposal of topic
- a first version of the paper
- the final (revised) paper at the end of the semester

Online demos
- Unlike previous semesters, we are not requiring you to have access to any specialized demo software (previously we required COGLAB that came bundled with the textbook)
- I will instead post links to online demos in web-ct for you to do. For each demo you will usually require you to write a short answer to a specific question (nothing elaborate) about the demo

Additional activities
- In addition to these online demos I will also ask you to work on small assignments here or there - these will usually only take a few minutes. They will be posted in web-ct, similarly to the online demos

Each lesson will have a page devoted to further information about the topics discussed in class
- Oftentimes I will include links to other researcher’s web sites or sites presenting interesting demos of relevant phenomena
- If you notice that any links are outdated or if you come across other materials that should be listed, please let me know via email
- Finally, suggestions or ideas on how to better demonstrate or explain concepts are highly encouraged!
- Have a great Fall semester!!!