PSY475H1F: Attention and Performance
Thursdays 12 – 3 pm
AH 107

Course Delivery

This is an in-person course. Students are expected to attend lectures in-person whenever possible. Lectures will be recorded for later viewing, but you must attend in person to get the participation credit.

If external circumstances change (e.g. public health guidelines, instructor illness/quarantine, etc.), the course may need to move online for one or more lectures.

Contact Information

Course Instructor
Dr. Christine Burton
christine.burton@utoronto.ca

Office hours
Sign-up for office hours required at
https://calendly.com/christine-burton/office-hour-1

All office hours will be individual 15-minute appointments during the following times :

Mondays 2 - 3 pm online or in person (SS4001)
Tuesdays 11 am – 12 pm online only
Thursdays 10 - 11 am online only

Teaching Assistant

Tayler Wells: tayler.wells@mail.utoronto.ca

Tayler will be available to meet with students after the distribution of graded tests and assignments.

Course Description

This course provides an in-depth review of various aspects of attention and their effects on everyday performance. We will discuss theories and empirical evidence, with an emphasis on current experimental findings, and on how they address on-going debates about the nature and function of attention. There will be a particular focus on applying theory to real-world scenarios and connecting research to our own lives.

Prerequisites: PSY201H1/ ECO220Y1/ EEB225H1/ GGR270H1/ IRW220H1/ POL222H1/ SOC202H1/ STA220H1/ STA238H1/ STA248H1/ STA288H1/ ECO220Y5/ PSY201H5/ STA215H5/ STA220H5/ PSYB07H3/ STAB22H3/ STAB23H3/ STAB57H3, *and one of* PSY270H1/ PSY270H5/ PSYB57H3/ COG250Y1 *or* PSY280H1/ PSY280H5/ PSYB51H3
Exclusion: PSYC21H3

It is your responsibility to ensure that you have met all prerequisites listed in the Psychology section of the A&S Calendar for this course. If you lack any prerequisites you WILL BE REMOVED.

Course Objective

My goal for this course is to familiarize you with the leading theories attention research, help you understand how on-going research allows for theories to evolve over time, and make connections between research and real-world experience. To achieve this, you will need to come to class prepared (e.g. do the assigned readings before class) and ready to apply the information in your readings to class material.

By the end of this course, you should be able to:
- Describe the major terms, concepts and theories in the attention literature
- Identify and describe key methods used to explore attention processes in the laboratory
- Describe how early ideas about attention evolved through empirical research into modern theories about attention
- Apply attention theory to explain everyday behaviour
- Think creatively about attention to produce a novel product
- Develop skills needed to write a logically coherent and complete literature review

Reading Material
There is no assigned textbook for this course. All required readings will be posted on Quercus.

Class Schedule

	Date	Topic
Theory component	September 5	Introduction and methods
	September 12	Selective attention
	September 19	Orienting
	September 26	Visual search
	October 3	Inhibition and stopping
	October 10	Divided attention and multitasking
	October 17	**Midterm test** 12 pm – 2 pm in AH 107
Applied component	October 24	**Reading Week – No class**
	October 31	Individual and group differences
	November 7	TBD – student choice
	November 14	TBD – student choice
	November 21	TBD – student choice
	November 28	**Escape room games**

Course Evaluation

Theory component			Applied component		
Midterm test	October 17

120 minutes | 30% | Escape room group component | November 28 | 18% |
Annotated bibliography	October 31	10%	Escape room individual component	November 28	12%
Mind map	November 7	5%	Participation	On-going	5%
Final research paper	November 28	20%			

Assessment Details

Test (worth 30% of final course grade)

The midterm test will assess your knowledge of the material covered in lectures 1 through 6. All readings and lecture content are testable. The tests will consist of multiple choice, short, and long answer questions. Multiple choice questions will target knowledge of detailed information, and short and long answer questions will target depth of understanding and critical reasoning. The test will be held in our classroom (AH 107) from 12:10 – 2:10 pm.

There is no final exam in the course.

Theory assignment: Evolution of attention (worth 35% of final course grade)

For this assignment, you will examine the evolution of a theory of attention from early ideas to our current understanding. The assignment has three components. You will first create an annotated bibliography to provide an overview of the main issues, arguments and research about your topic as research developed over time. The second component is to create a mind map which will serve as the skeleton outline for your final paper. The final component is a research paper where you demonstrate your understanding and critical evaluation of the research on your chosen topic. Assignment details and grading rubrics will be available on Quercus.

Applied assignment: Escape room (worth 30% of final course grade)

For this assignment, you will work in groups to create an "escape room" based on concepts you have learned about attention. This assignment has both group and individual components. We will dedicate some time during each class to working in groups to create puzzles that you will combine to create an escape room game for the final class. During the final class, the groups will get the opportunity to participate in each other's escape rooms. For the individual component of the assignment, each student will provide written summaries about at least two puzzles used in the escape room. These summaries will clearly describe each puzzle, how it can be solved, and explain the connection between the puzzles and the theoretical principles taught in class. Finally, you will write a short reflection/debrief where you can share your experience working with your group and your evaluation of the escape rooms your participated in. Assignment details and grading rubrics will be available on Quercus.

Participation (worth 5% of final course grade)

You are expected to be present in class as much as possible to contribute to your group project. Participation grades will be based on your attendance in class and your weekly contributions to your group.

IMPORTANT COURSE POLICIES   **PLEASE READ**

Course webpage

This Course uses the University's learning management system, Quercus, to post information about the course. This includes posting readings and other materials required to complete class activities and course assignments, as well as sharing important announcements and updates. New information and resources will be posted regularly as we move through the term. To access the course website, go to the U of T Quercus log-in page at https://q.utoronto.ca. SPECIAL NOTE ABOUT GRADES POSTED ONLINE: Please also note that any grades posted are for your information only, so you can view and track your progress through the course. No grades are considered official, including any posted in Quercus at any point in the term, until they have been formally approved and posted on ACORN at the end of the course. Please contact me as soon as possible if you think there is an error in any grade posted on Quercus.

Email

The main source of communication for the course will be email. Please include the course number (PSY475) in the subject line in all your emails about the course. **Please avoid sending me messages directly from Quercus/Canvas.** These messages always end up in my "other" folder so I may not get to them quickly. I will respond to emails as soon as I can in the order I receive them. Please note that I don't regularly respond to emails during evenings and on weekends.

Missed Test Special Consideration Request Process

If you miss a test for reasons beyond your control (illness or accident), please contact me with documentation in support of your specific circumstances within one week of the missed test. This documentation can be an Absence Declaration (via ACORN) or the University's Verification of Student Illness or Injury (VOI) form. The VOI indicates the impact and severity of the illness, while protecting your privacy about the details of the nature of the illness. If you cannot submit a VOI due to limits on terms of use, you can submit a different form (like a letter from a doctor), as long as it is an original document, and it contains the same information as the VOI (including dates, academic impact, practitioner's signature, phone and registration number). For more information on the VOI, please see https://www.registrar.utoronto.ca/policies-and-guidelines/verification-of-illness-or-injury/. For information on Absence Declaration Tool for A&S students, please see https://www.artsci.utoronto.ca/absence. If you get a concussion, break your hand, or suffer some other acute injury, you should register with Accessibility Services as soon as possible.

If your request is approved, you will have the opportunity to write a make-up test.

Requests for Re-grading

All requests to re-grade tests or assignments must be made within 2 weeks of receiving your grade. **Please direct all requests for re-grading directly to the person who marked your work.** If you are dissatisfied after

meeting with the TA you may submit your work to the instructor. Keep in mind that if you submit your work to be re-graded, your grade could go up or down. This policy applies to work submitted to the instructor or the TAs.

<u>**Accommodations for Personal Reasons**</u>

There may be times when you are unable to complete course work on time due to non-medical reasons. If you have concerns, speak to me. Extensions for term work can be arranged on a case-by-case basis. It is also a very good idea to speak with an advisor in your College Registrar's office; they can support you in requesting extensions or accommodations, and importantly, connect you with other resources on campus for help with your situation.

As a student, you may experience challenges that can interfere with learning, such as strained relationships, increased anxiety, substance use, feeling down, difficulty concentrating and/or lack of motivation, financial concerns, family worries and so forth. These factors may affect your academic performance and/or reduce your ability to participate fully in daily activities. Everyone feels stressed now and then – it is a normal part of university life. Some days are better than others, and there is no wrong time to reach out. There are resources for every situation and every level of stress.

There are many helpful resources available through your College Registrar or through Student Life (http://studentlife.utoronto.ca and http://www.studentlife.utoronto.ca/feeling-distressed). An important part of the University experience is learning how and when to ask for help. Please take the time to inform yourself of available resources.

<u>**Penalties for Lateness**</u>

The penalty for lateness is 5% of the total per calendar day.

Students who seek to be granted more time to complete their term work beyond the due date without penalty, owing to circumstances beyond their control (e.g., illness, or an accident), must do so by submitting a request directly to the instructor for the period up to and including the last day of the final assessment period. All requests for extensions must include supporting documentation, which can include an ACORN absence declaration, a VOI form, or an email from a U of T student support office (e.g. College registrar, Accessibility Services, etc).

*Any term work that will be handed in **after** the final assessment period is subject to a petition for extension of term work. This petition should be filed with the student's College Registrar's Office.*

<u>**Plagiarism Detection Tool**</u>

Normally, students will be required to submit their course essays to the University's plagiarism detection tool for a review of textual similarity and detection of possible plagiarism. In doing so, students will allow their essays to be included as source documents in the tool's reference database, where they will be used solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism. The terms that apply to the University's use of this tool are described on the Centre for Teaching Support & Innovation web site (https://uoft.me/pdt-faq).

Students who wish to opt-out of using the University's plagiarism detection tool for the case study assignment must notify the instructor (via Quercus inbox message/email) no later than 5PM on September 20. Upon receipt of notification, the instructor will request that the student provide all rough work (including, but not limited to, call numbers and/or URLs for all cited sources) when submitting their case study assignment.

Academic Integrity and Plagiarism

Academic integrity is essential to the pursuit of learning and scholarship in a university, and to ensuring that a degree from the University of Toronto is a strong signal of each student's individual academic achievement. As a result, the University treats cases of cheating and plagiarism very seriously.

All suspected cases of academic dishonesty will be investigated following procedures outlined in the [Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters (https://governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/secretariat/policies/code-behaviour-academic-matters-july-1-2019)](https://governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/secretariat/policies/code-behaviour-academic-matters-july-1-2019). If you have questions or concerns about what constitutes appropriate academic behaviour or appropriate research and citation methods, please reach out to me. Note that you are expected to seek out additional information on academic integrity from me or from other institutional resources. For example, to learn more about how to cite and use source material appropriately and for other writing support, see the U of T writing support website at http://www.writing.utoronto.ca. Consult the Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters for a complete outline of the University's policy and expectations. For more information, please see [A&S Student Academic Integrity (https://www.artsci.utoronto.ca/current/academic-advising-and-support/student-academic-integrity)](https://www.artsci.utoronto.ca/current/academic-advising-and-support/student-academic-integrity) and the [University of Toronto Website on Academic Integrity (https://www.academicintegrity.utoronto.ca)](https://www.academicintegrity.utoronto.ca).

Use of Generative AI

In this course, you may use generative artificial intelligence (AI) tools, including ChatGPT, Microsoft Copilot, and GitHub Copilot, as learning aids and to help complete assignments. You will not be permitted to use generative AI on the midterm test or final exam. While some generative AI tools are currently available for free in Canada, please be warned that these tools have not been vetted by the University of Toronto and might not meet University guidelines or requirements for privacy, intellectual property, security, accessibility, and records retention. Generative AI may produce content which is incorrect or misleading, or inconsistent with the expectations of this course. These tools may even provide citations to sources that don't exist—and submitting work with false citations is an academic offense. These tools may be subject to service interruptions, software modifications, and pricing changes during the semester.

***Generative AI is not required to complete any aspect of this course**, and we caution you to not rely entirely on these tools to complete your coursework. Instead, we recommend treating generative AI as a supplementary tool only for exploration or drafting content. Ultimately, you (and not any AI tool) are responsible for your own learning in this course, and for all the work you submit for credit. It is your responsibility to critically evaluate the content generated, and to regularly assess your own learning independent of generative AI tools. Overreliance on generative AI may give you a false sense of how much you've actually learned, which can lead to poor performance on the midterm test or final exam, in later courses, or in future work or studies after graduation.*

Privacy and Copyright Disclaimer

Notice of video recording and sharing (Download permissible; re-use prohibited)

This course, including your participation, will be recorded on video and will be available to students in the course for viewing remotely and after each session.

Course videos and materials belong to your instructor, the University, and/or other sources depending on the specific facts of each situation and are protected by copyright. In this course, you are permitted to download session videos and materials for your own academic use, but you should not copy, share, or use them for any other purpose without the explicit permission of the instructor.

For questions about the recording and use of videos in which you appear, please contact your instructor.

Academic Resources

Departmental Guidance for Undergraduate Students in Psychology

The Department of Psychology recognizes that, as a student, you may experience disruptions to your learning that are out of your control, and that there may be circumstances when you need extra support. Accordingly, the department has provided a helpful guide at https://www.psych.utoronto.ca/current-program-students/guidance-undergraduate-students-psychology to clarify your and your instructor's responsibilities when navigating these situations. This guide consolidates Arts & Science Policies for undergraduate students in one place for your convenience. As an instructor in the department, I will frequently consult with these recommendations when providing you with support, and I recommend that you also consult it to learn more about your rights and responsibilities before reaching out to me.

Accessibility Needs

Students with diverse learning styles and needs are welcome in this course. If you have an acute or ongoing disability issue or accommodation need, you should register with Accessibility Services (AS) at the beginning of the academic year by visiting https://studentlife.utoronto.ca/department/accessibility-services/. Without registration, you will not be able to verify your situation with your instructors, and instructors will not be advised about your accommodation needs. AS will assess your situation, develop an accommodation plan with you, and support you in requesting accommodation for your course work. Remember that the process of accommodation is private: AS will not share details of your needs or condition with any instructor, and your instructors will not reveal that you are registered with AS.

Writing

As a student here at the University of Toronto, you are expected to write well. The university provides its students with a number of resources to help them achieve this. For more information on campus writing centres and writing courses, please visit http://www.writing.utoronto.ca/.

English Language Learning

English Language Learning (ELL) supports all U of T undergraduates enrolled in the Faculty of Arts & Science whose first language is not English (multilingual students), as well as native speakers seeking to improve their English language skills. Our mini-courses and other activities are designed and taught by U of T professors, and they free. For more information, please visit https://www.artsci.utoronto.ca/current/academic-advising-and-support/english-language-learning

Academic Success

The Centre for Learning Strategy support helps you identify and achieve your learning goals. You have a lot more going on in your life than just academic responsibilities, and they can help tailor your learning supports to fit you. You will find a number of courses, workshops, and one-on-one appointments to help improve many different skills related to academic achievement. https://studentlife.utoronto.ca/department/academic-success/