

# Cognition (Psychology 305:01)

- **Professor:** Jacob Feldman
- **Time:** Mondays at Wednesdays 2-3:20pm.
- **Place:** Pharmacy 115, Busch
- **Website:** <https://rutgers.instructure.com/courses/162888>
- **Readings:** Available on Canvas in Modules

# Exams and grading

- (35% of grade) **On-line quizzes:** Canvas quizzes will be given weekly.  
Quizzes are 45 minutes long, and will be available on-line Fridays 7am - 9pm. (See rules below.)
- (25% of grade) **Midterm:** Monday, March 7, during the scheduled class time. Format to be discussed in class.
- (10% of grade) **Written assignment:** Two brief essays (10% of grade) will be assigned at some point during the term.
- (25% of grade) **Final exam:** TBA.
- (5% of grade): Professor's fudge factor.

# Course policies

**Slides and lecture video recording will be posted** after each class. The slides (PDF) can be found in the appropriate Module, and the lecture recordings in Media Gallery. Note that the slides are often incomprehensible if haven't seen the lecture that goes with them. Attending the Zoom lectures is essential to doing well in this course!

**“Graduation insurance.”** If this is your last semester and you need to pass this course in order to graduate on time, email me before the midterm. If you don't ask before the midterm, “graduation insurance” will not be offered.

**Final grades are final.** Once grades are assigned after the final exam, grade changes will not be considered. Don't even ask. If you are having trouble with the material before that, email me or come to office hours.

**If possible, don't use Canvas messaging to contact me.** The messages don't always get through. Use regular email.

**Academic integrity.** Cheating and other violations of academic integrity will not be tolerated in this course. The university's policy on academic integrity can be found at [link]

**COVID slack.** These are trying times. The problems created by the pandemic pose many challenges. Please be patient as we do our best to provide a meaningful educational experience, and we will try to be patient with you as you navigate the difficulties created by the pandemic. **Please don't come to class sick.**

# Frequently asked questions

Q: Which is more important, the lectures or the readings?

A: The lectures are my best attempt to explain the material I think is important. The readings supplements the lectures. **They are both fair game for exams**, but the lectures are better guide to what will be on the exams. But be advised that if you do not do the reading you will not do well in this class.

Q. Do you post the slides?

A. **Yes**. I post the lecture slides after class, but **not before**. However the slides are sometimes very sketchy, and you will not really be able to understand them if you haven't attended class. I also plan to post recordings of the lectures.

Q: Do I have to come to class?

A. You are an adult; **make your own choices**. There will be no graded exercises in class, so in theory watching the recordings is similar to being present in real time—if you really pay attention to them. Students in very different time zones may have no better option. But if you can't make class because of a work conflict, tread carefully. Students often bite off more than they can chew. It takes a lot of time to do well in a college class, and students often overestimate how many obligations they can take on without letting some slip. I understand the pragmatic pressures many students are under, but be realistic about what you can accomplish.

If you don't attend and don't watch the recordings, you have little chance of doing well in the class.

Q. Do I have to do the readings?

A. You are an adult; **make your own choices**. But if you don't do the reading, you will not do well in this class.

# Frequently asked questions (cont.)

Q: Will X be on the exam?

A. **Maybe.** I try to test ideas I think are important. Most questions on exams are about “big ideas.” But naturally the questions range in importance from broad concepts to narrower facts and terms. Everything taught in the course is fair game. But the more important it is, the more likely it is to be on the exams. The lectures are my best attempt to explain what I think is important.

Q: Is the final exam cumulative?

A. **Yes.** The midterm will cover everything from the beginning of the course until the midterm. The final exam will cover everything from the beginning of the course until the end of the course, drawing heavily from material from the second half of the course. .

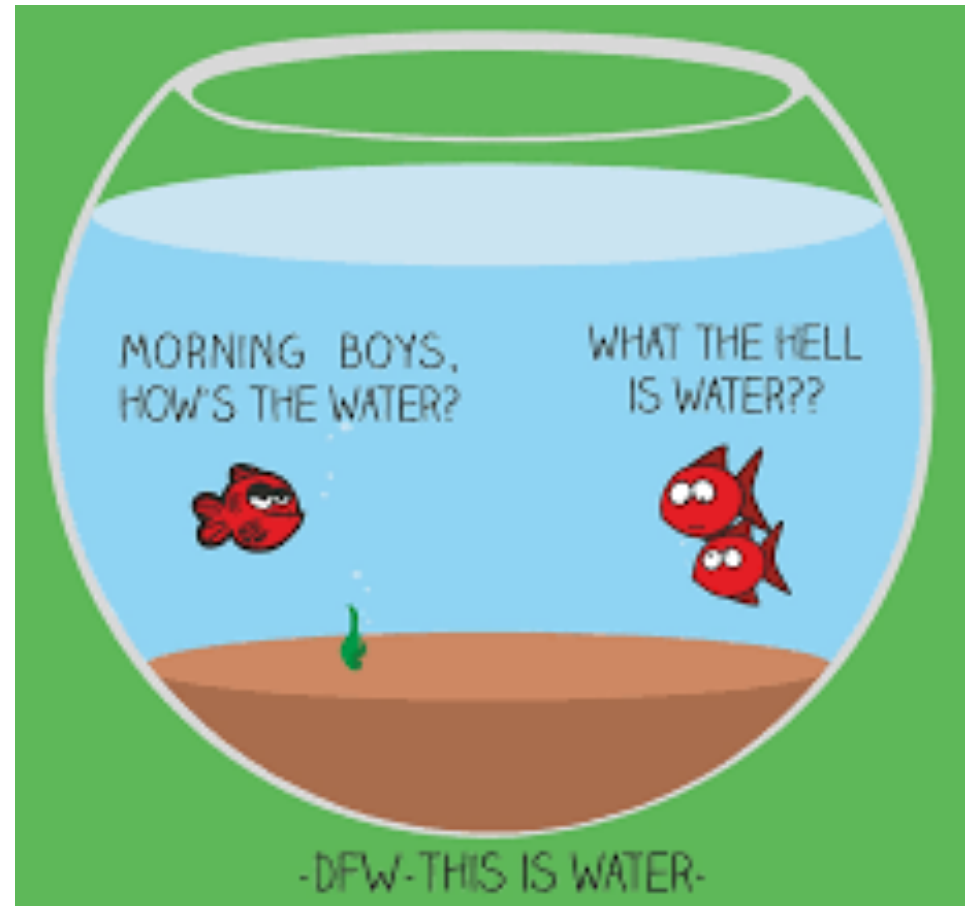
Q: Is the final exam cumulative?

A. You just asked me that. Also, I discussed it on the first day of class.

# This is water

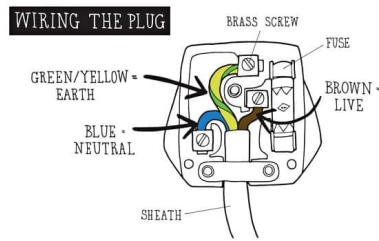
There are these two young fish swimming along and they happen to meet an older fish swimming the other way, who nods at them and says “Morning, boys. How’s the water?” And the two young fish swim on and for a bit, and then eventually one of them looks over at the other and goes “What the hell is water?”

- David Foster Wallace, 2005



# Levels of education

## Training



*How to make a widget*

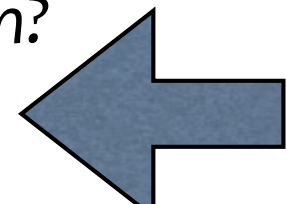
## Education



*How the machine the widget is part of works*

## Higher education

- **Why** do we have machines like this?
- **What** other kinds of machines could we have, and why don't we have them?
- **How** did it come to be this way?



You are  
here

# Cognition in real life

## Elements of cognition

*Perception*: how does she recognize the bread, the jam, etc.?

*Motor control*: how does her brain control her hands, feet, etc.?

*Language*: how does she understand the sounds she hears as an instruction to make a sandwich?

*Memory*: how did she learn how to make a sandwich?

*Decision making*: how does she decide whether or not to make sandwich?

“Make me a sandwich!”



## Non-cognitive aspects

*Neuroscience*: What is physically happening in her brain when she does all the above?

*Social relations*: Why is he asking HER to make a sandwich? How do she feel about this demand?

*Clinical psychology*: Is there something wrong with that guy?