

**BCSC111: Foundations of Cognitive Science**  
**University of Rochester**  
**Martina Poletti**  
**Spring 2026**

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**PLEASE NOTE:**

Much of official communication related to BCSC111 will take place through Blackboard. Please join Blackboard workspace ASAP before the first day of classes to ensure you remain abreast with the rapid developments in the course and to communicate quickly with the professor, TA, and fellow students.

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**Instructor**

Martina Poletti

Email: [martina\\_poletti@urmc.rochester.edu](mailto:martina_poletti@urmc.rochester.edu)

Meeting ID (office): 858 825 2893 / in-person office 312 Meliora Hall

Office hours: Fri 11-12pm, Tue 11-12 (*to better organize the time with students during office hours, please let the instructor know beforehand if you are planning to come to office hours*)

**Class meets: Mondays and Wednesdays, 3:25 – 4:40pm in-person Hoyt Auditorium**

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**Graduate Teaching Fellows**

Neverodska Alina

Email: [aneverod@ur.rochester.edu](mailto:aneverod@ur.rochester.edu)

Office hours: Thursdays from 11.30 am to 12.30 pm

Location: Meliora 418

Nagarajan, Krishnaveni

Email: [knagara2@ur.rochester.edu](mailto:knagara2@ur.rochester.edu)

Office hours: Fridays from 12:00 pm to 1:00 pm

Location: 324 Meliora Hall

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**Undergrad Teaching Fellows**

Nathan Cho

Email: [ncho5@u.rochester.edu](mailto:ncho5@u.rochester.edu)

Office hours: Tuesdays 1:30-2:30 pm.

Location: Meliora 401

Review Sessions: Thursdays 5-6 PM  
Location: Meliora Hall 366

Marwaan Maxamuud (in charge of special accommodations for students)

Email: mmaxamuu@u.rochester.edu  
Office hours: Sundays at 4pm  
Location: Izone Project Room B  
Review Sessions: Wednesdays 5:30-6:45pm  
Location: Meliora Hall 366

Benjamin Ellis

Email: bellis8@u.rochester.edu  
Office hours: Mondays 10:25-11:25am  
Location: Meliora 401  
Review Sessions: Wednesdays 10:25-11:25am  
Location: Meliora Hall 366

**Please note that your presence at Review Sessions is NOT required and does not factor in your grade. However, they are highly encouraged because they ensure that course material is thoroughly gone over and talked about.**

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**Course Description**

This course examines the study of thinking behaviors in humans and other higher animals, including perception, categorization, reflection, self-awareness, communication, language, creativity, and other related topics.

**Student Learner Outcomes**

At the end of this course, students will (1) know the history of cognitive psychology, (2) identify and define basic experimental procedures used to examine cognition, (3) describe the various facets of cognition and the research involved in each, and (4) critically analyze topics relating to cognitive psychology.

**Required Text**

Galotti, K. 2017. *Cognitive Psychology In and Out of the Laboratory (6th Edition)*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.

ISBN: 9781506351568

Student Study Site: <http://edge.sagepub.com/galotticogpsych6e>

This book is not available online to libraries.

A number of physical copies of this textbook are available at the UR main library.

Previous editions of the same textbook are also suitable for this class.

**Exams:** Four exams will be administered (each exam will consist of 50 questions, 5 T/F questions and 45 MC questions) in-class on gradescope.

**Exams Policies:** Only students who suffer a documented medical or family emergency will be granted the opportunity to take a make-up exam. NO alternate exams for cases when a student has multiple exams on the same day. Official university events require an advance notice so that an alternative accommodation can be made.

### Grading:

Grade	Score range (percent)
A	$x \geq 90$
A-	$87 \leq x < 90$
B+	$84 \leq x < 87$
B	$80 \leq x < 84$
B-	$76 \leq x < 80$
C+	$74 \leq x < 76$
C	$70 \leq x < 74$
C-	$66 \leq x < 70$
D+	$64 \leq x < 66$
D	$60 \leq x < 64$
D-	$59 \leq x < 60$
E	$x < 59$

Each exam will account for 25% of the final grade. **Students are required to take all exams.**

Grades are rounded to two decimal points ( $89.99 = 89.99$ ;  $89.999 = 90.00$ ). **There is NO “grade bumping”!** Note that **87.00%** is A-, and **86.99** is B+.

**Extra credits** (max 2 points) can be earned by submitting the following assignment (THIS ASSIGNMENT IS NOT REQUIRED): Create a brief set of animated slides (e.g. PowerPoint, Google Slides, Keynote) or a short movie ([Videoscribe](#), [Animaker](#), or [Powtoon](#), Canva, simple screen recording, any other basic tool you are comfortable with. Some may cost you money, but you could find a free version too) that illustrates **one key concept** covered in this class (e.g., a mechanism, process, illusion, model, or experimental idea). Min duration 1 min, max duration 5 mins. The focus should be on **clarity and understanding**, not technical sophistication. The first slide in your video/animation should include the title of the concept you will explain and your name.

Style guidelines: keep it **simple and focused**, one concept only, no background music required, accuracy and clarity matter more than aesthetics. If a classmate can understand the concept after watching your animation **without additional explanation**, you've done it right. You can find some useful example videos here: <https://kinderlab.digitalscholar.rochester.edu/talkingscience/>

Submission: Export as **MP4** or **AVI** *before the last day of class*. Submit your video in Blackboard [here](#)

(<https://rochester.hosted.panopto.com/Panopto/Pages/Sessions/List.aspx?folderID=5d58a978-9063-4f5e-b9ba-b3cf014eb966>), as LastName\_Name\_URID.

**Attendance:** Strongly encouraged

**Academic misconduct:** All assignments and activities associated with this course must be performed in accordance with the University of Rochester's Academic Honesty Policy. Please get in touch with your instructor or TAs if you have any questions regarding what constitutes as academic dishonesty especially as it relates to exams and the final paper. You can find the University's policy on Academic Honesty at <https://www.rochester.edu/college/honesty/policy/index.html>.

**Special accommodation:** If you need special accommodation, please let the course instructor know. We will do our best to suit your needs.

**Mobile devices:** Please silent your mobile devices. No cellphone/smartphone or any other entertainment devices are allowed while class is in session.

## **Lectures**

Slides will be posted on Slack in advance of each class.

## **Participation and questions**

Students can ask questions in class or post their questions on the dedicated slack channel #Questions. All students are required to sign up to the channel and use it to communicate with TAs and to stay up to date with class announcements.

### **Review Sessions**

Review Sessions (and office hours) will start in week 2. .

### **Out-of-class help**

There are 9 scheduled weekly opportunities to get help outside of class. This includes 3 review sessions and 6 scheduled office hours. Office hours will be conducted in person or Zoom if convenient.

### **Expectations**

By taking this course, you can expect to learn about the topics we discuss in class. In turn, I expect that you will respect the learning environment and be courteous to your instructor and classmates by:

1. using the highest standards of academic honesty and integrity (see [Honesty Policy](#).)
2. asking for help during office hours or via email if you don't understand something in the lectures or the readings
3. asking questions in class (if they require a lengthy answer, they may be deferred until after class)

### **Diversity Statement**

All people have the right to be addressed and referred to in accordance with their personal identity. In this class, we will have the chance to indicate the name that we prefer to be called and, if we choose, to identify pronouns with which we would like to be addressed. I will do my best to address and refer to all students accordingly and support classmates in doing so as well.

It is my intent that students from all diverse backgrounds and perspectives be well served by this course, that students' learning needs be addressed both in and out of class, and that the diversity that students bring to this class be viewed as a resource, strength and benefit. It is my intent to present materials and activities that are respectful of diversity: gender, sexuality, disability, age, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, race, and culture. Your suggestions are encouraged and appreciated. Please let me know ways to improve the effectiveness of the course for you personally or for other students or student groups. In addition, if any of our class meetings conflict with your religious events, please let me know so that we can make arrangements for you.

### Course Schedule

Date	Topics	Required Readings
Jan 21	Course requirements; Introduction	
Jan 23 ("Rochester Monday" – all students attend Monday classes")	Cognitive Psychology: History, Methods, and Paradigms	Ch 1
Jan 26	Cognitive Psychology: History, Methods, and Paradigms	Ch 1
Jan 28	Cognitive Psychology: History, Methods, and Paradigms	Ch 1
Feb 2	The Brain	Ch 2
Feb 4	The Brain	Ch 2
Feb 9	Exam 1	
Feb 11	Perception: Recognizing Patterns and Objects	Ch 3
Feb 16 (M)	Hands-on experiments	
Feb 18 (M)	Hands-on experiments	
Feb 23	Perception: Recognizing Patterns and Objects	Ch 3
Feb 25	Perception: Recognizing Patterns and Objects	Ch 3
Mar 2	Perception: Recognizing Patterns and Objects	Ch 3
Mar 4	Exam 2	
Mar 9	Spring Break	
Mar 11	Spring Break	
Mar 16	Attention: Deploying Cognitive Resources	Ch 4
Mar 18	Attention: Deploying Cognitive Resources	Ch 4
Mar 23	Attention: Deploying Cognitive Resources	Ch 4
Mar 25	Attention: Deploying Cognitive Resources	Ch 4
Mar 30	Working Memory: Forming and Using New Memory Traces	Ch 5

Apr 1	[Exam preparation]-- Working Memory: Forming and Using New Memory Traces	Ch 5
Apr 6	Exam 3	
Apr 8	Working Memory: Forming and Using New Memory Traces	Ch 5
Apr 13	Retrieving Memories: From Long-Term Storage	Ch 6
Apr 15	The Reconstructive Nature of Memory	Ch 7
Apr 20	The Reconstructive Nature of Memory	Ch 7
Apr 22	Visual Imagery and Spatial Cognition	Ch 9
Apr 27	Visual Imagery and Spatial Cognition	Ch 9
Apr 29	Exam 4	

**Note:** LAST DAY OF CLASS IS DEADLINE FOR SUBMITTING THE EXTRA-CREDIT ASSIGNMENT (NOTE: the extra-credit assignment is not required!)