

BCS 208: Laboratory in Perception and Cognition

Syllabus: Spring 2026

Time and Location:

Tuesday 3:25 – 6:05 PM
Meliora Hall 269 (Kresge Room)

Cross-listed:

PSY 208, CVS 208

Credit Hour Policy:

This course follows the College credit hour policy for four-credit courses. This course meets once per week for three academic hours per week. The course also includes independent out-of-class assignments (data collection, statistical analyses and reading papers) for an average of one academic hour per week.

Instructor Information:

Course Instructor: Dr. Kevin Davis, Dept. of Brain and Cognitive Sciences

Email: Kevin_Davis@urmc.rochester.edu

Office: Meliora Hall 303E

Office hours: By appointment

What is this Course About?

This course considers how to ask and answer questions about sensory perception and cognition using the scientific method (experiments in which observations are made under controlled conditions). In addition, the course provides practice and guidance in writing technical reports. The principles of experimentation and writing skills that are learned in this course apply in any domain. Specific skills that apply to experiments on sensory perception and cognition will also be covered. Thus, students learn how to do experiments and how to evaluate those of others, and they get first-hand experience with examples of sensory and cognitive phenomena.

Required Materials:

Textbook: Exploring Research Methods in Psychology (Using PsychMate)

Experiments: PsychMate Student Guide

Course Format:

The class is roughly divided into two parts. During the first half of the course, classic experiments in perception and cognition are discussed/demonstrated in class, and then you write reports on these experiments. These reports are to be written in a format (described in class) following roughly the guidelines of the American Psychological Association. During the second half of the course, you will design your own original experiment, collect and analyze data, and present the results in both written and oral forms.

Course Requirements:

Class attendance, participation and readings are mandatory.

Four laboratory reports will be written on summary data (provided) from classic experiments in perception and cognition. Papers are due 1 week after assignment.

One midterm exam (consisting of multiple choice and short-answer questions) is to be completed. Class lectures and readings will form the bases of this exam.

One final project is to be completed. It consists of: an experiment designed and conducted by the student (with instructor consultation); a written report of the background, design, results and conclusions; a revision of the written report based on instructor comments; and a brief oral presentation of the results.

How Will I Be Graded?

You will complete four laboratory reports (worth a total of 39 points), one in-class exam (15 points), and one final project (involving a written report and an oral presentation; 46 points). To allow time to develop familiarity with the desired journal-style writing format, the laboratory reports will increase in point value as follows: 6, 9, 12, and 12. The final project will have point values assigned at different mileposts: idea, 1; introduction, 5; complete document, 25; revised document, 5; oral presentation, 5; and CITI training, 5.

Written (and oral) reports are graded on both form and content. Form refers to adherence to the rules of style and grammar; content refers to the description of what was done and what was observed, the validity of the conclusions and the quality of the discussion of the experiment and its implications. The results obtained (per se) do not affect the grade, only the way in which they are acquired, interpreted and discussed. **To earn a high grade, a student must show originality and independence of thought. AI programs are not to be used in any way to write lab reports or the final project report.** The reports will be graded on the following percentage scale:

90-100%	Concise and well presented in both form and content; clear evidence of originality and independence of thought; demonstrates clear understanding of methodology and data analysis
80-90%	Well written; some evidence of originality and independence of thought; demonstrates some understanding of methodology, data analysis
70-80%	Adequate presentation; little evidence of originality or independence of thought; little understanding of methodology, data analysis
60-70%	Poorly presented; no evidence of originality or independence of thought; no evidence that methodology or data analysis is understood

The exam will consist of multiple-choice and short-answer type questions, and cover material in the lectures and assigned readings.

Points for individual assignments (percent x point value) will be posted on Blackboard. Final letter grades will be posted via the Registrar and assigned as follows based on total points: A, 93-100; A-, 90-92; B+, 87-89; B, 83-86; B-, 80-82; C+, 77-79; C, 73-76; C-, 70-72; etc.

If you believe that you have a conflict that would prevent you from attending a class period, such as a school-sanctioned event, or you have missed a class due to an extraordinary personal situation or illness, then please email Dr. Davis as soon as possible.

Where Do I Look for Course Information?

Lecture slides and assigned readings, summary data from in-class experiments, as well as announcements and grade updates are available on Blackboard
<http://learn.rochester.edu>.

How Do I Get Help with the Course?

In addition to Dr. Davis, one Teaching Assistant (TA) will be assigned to the course. To contact the TA for questions, or to arrange individual meetings:
Jose Reynoso: jreynoso@ur.rochester.edu

Expectations

As a student, you should expect that your instructors provide a respectful learning environment and provide appropriate feedback and guidance. Similarly, we expect you to show this same respect to your instructors, and fellow students by attending, and participating in, lectures and experiments. It is also expected that you will adhere to the policies regarding academic honesty outlined at <https://www.rochester.edu/college/honesty/>. Violations of Academic Integrity, such as cheating and plagiarism, are taken seriously, and will be dealt with accordingly.

I look forward to working with you this term, and hope you enjoy the Laboratory in Perception and Cognition.