

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>GRAND VALLEY STATE UNIVERSITY</b> <b>PSY 361-1 PERCEPTION FALL 2019</b> <b>MONDAYS 6:00-8:50 PM ASH 2302</b></p>
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## SYLLABUS

**Instructor:** Leon Lou, Ph.D.  
**Office:** 2313 Au Sable Hall  
**Office Phone:** 331-2916

**Office Hours:** MW 12:00-1:30pm, or by  
appointment  
**E-mail:** [loul@gvsu.edu](mailto:loul@gvsu.edu)

### Textbook

Steven Yantis & Richard Abram (2014). Sensation and Perception, 1<sup>st</sup> Edition, Worth

### Course description

This course is an introduction to scientific studies on how perception connects to the physical world.

Experiences and knowledge come, at least partly, from perception. Yet perception is not always reliable. Illusions are ubiquitous. Could we then say that the world is just a grand illusion of the mind? This is the kind of questions generations of thinkers across cultures have grappled with. From the classic scientific perspective, there is a clear divide between the physical world, studied by natural scientists such as physicists and biologists, and the mental world, arguably the main concern for psychologists. The question from the scientific perspective becomes: How does the mental world connect to the physical world? That was the question asked by pioneering psychologists of late 19<sup>th</sup> century and early 20<sup>th</sup> century, and remains central for anyone concerned with the foundation of modern scientific psychology.

Two approaches to scientific studies of the mind-world connection will be introduced in this course---the *biological/neuroscience* approach that aims at understanding the working of sensory organs (eyes, ears, nose, tongue, skin) and the brain that receives and processes information from the sensory organs, and the psychophysical approach, which is about understanding how perception, illusory or not, changes as physical world changes. The psychophysical approach is indispensable because even a complete understanding of how sensory organs and the brain interact with the physical world does not in itself lead to an understanding of how experience relates to the physical world. Partly owing to the psychophysical approach, the scientific study of sensation and perception is considered an area of psychology rather than biology or physiology.

Why should a college student like you care about scientific understandings about how the mind connects to the physical world? Among many good reasons, the first and foremost reason is that an understanding of the connection offers food for self-reflection, a skill vital to educated men and women living in modern civilized societies.

Whereas the primary objective of the course is to offer a scientific foundation for understanding human being's shared perceptual competencies, students will also be provided with guidance to think scientifically where and how differences in perception across individuals and cultures come from. The course, however, barely touches on topics of social perception, such as how the same social event can be perceived in opposite ways by people of different persuasions and values ----topics that are central in

social psychology and sociology, but only lurking in the fringe of perceptual and sensory psychology. Instead, we will be focusing on perceptions of things that most people take for granted and consider to be simply “out there”. By the end of class, I hope you will truly understand that every aspect of your experience is constructed in the mind and in the brain, and there is no contradiction for believing its being real.

### **Objectives (as in GVSU official catalog)**

Upon successful completion of this course students will be able to:

- 1) describe basic issues of perception, including the scope and limitation of perception, the philosophical issues underpinning modern scientific studies on perception, the psychological and biological facts crucial for understanding perception, and the different approaches to a scientific understanding of perception.
- 2) explain the problems about perception that are unresolved by research and are still being investigated by scientists.
- 3) inform their world views with what is scientifically known or knowable about perception.

### **Prerequisite: Psychology 101**

### **How to succeed in this course**

It is very important to come to the class and read the textbook. Content material in addition to what can be found in the text will be presented in the lecture, and some topics in the textbook are much more emphasized than others. To succeed in the course, I recommend that you skim the chapter of the week before to coming to the class (see Schedule). Doing so will give you a sense of what to expect in the next class and can help you get the most out of the lecture. Use your class time wisely by taking notes of the main ideas in a few sentences as well as the concepts that are unfamiliar or difficult and do not try to record every line in my power point lecture presentation. After the class, please read the chapter, especially the sections covered in the lecture again. Please complete the homework assignment associated with the chapter. The quality of your answers to the homework questions will reveal how well you comprehend the key concepts/issues.

I will make an outline of my lecture available on the Blackboard prior to each lecture. You will see that they are indeed outlines and not a substitute for taking your own notes. I provide the outline aiming to facilitate your note-taking. I have regular office hours and am also available by appointment to answer any questions that you might have about the class and your learning.

### **Assessment**

Your final grade will be based on the total points that accrue in following categories:

#### **Exams:**

There will be three examinations---two mid-term exams (50 points each) and one final exam (80 points). The two mid-term exams will be non-cumulative, covering the material since the beginning of the class and since the first mid-term exam, respectively. The final exam will be partially cumulative, with about 5/8 new material and 3/8 old material. All three exams will consist of mostly multiple-choice questions that cover materials from

**the lectures, the textbook, in-class and homework assignments, and the videos shown in class.**

### ***Homework Assignments:***

There will be about 10 of them. Each assignment is worth 8 points and takes about 30 minutes to one hour to complete, assuming you have read the relevant sections of the textbook and understood most of what is covered in my lectures. Many, though not all of the homework questions are those in the boxes titled "Check Your Understanding" in the textbook.

All homework assignment must be typed and turned in electronically through Blackboard Assignment, which has a built-in plagiarizing detector. **E-mail attachments will NOT be accepted.** Late work will be marked down 20% per delayed day and will not be accepted one week after its due date. No excuses whatsoever will be accepted.

### ***In-class assignment:***

These will be given during the regular class time throughout the semester. They are worth 3-6 points each and add up to 60 points. The in-class assignments are designed to assist your understanding of the material most recently covered in my lectures. The assignments include definition questions, problem-solving questions, as well as drawing, graphing and in-class activities. You will have to be in class for completing an in-class assignment.

### **Make-up Exams**

No make-up exams will be given except in extreme circumstances (for example, jury duty, serious sickness, and death of an immediate family member). You have to present valid documentation to support your request for a make-up exam, which should be made before the exam, if it is at all possible. The make-up exam may consist mostly of essay questions. Make-ups will not be scheduled after one week in any cases.

### **Grading Scale**

Exam 1	50
Exam 2	50
Final Exam	80
Homework assignments	80
In-class assignment	60
<b>Total</b>	<b>320</b>

Your score out of the 308 maximal points will be converted to percentage score, and your final letter grade will be determined according to the following scale:

A = 93-100	C+ = 76-78
A- = 89-92	C = 72-75
B+ = 86-88	C- = 69-71
B = 82-85	D+ = 65-68
B - = 79-81	D = 60-64
	F = 0-59

## **Withdrawal**

Drop with a "W" deadline: October 25th.

## **Available assistance**

All students are encouraged to make use of my office hours. Stop by my office or talk to me after class if you have any questions or concerns about this course. If your schedule conflicts with my office hours, let me know and we can schedule an alternative time to meet. Students who have difficulty with the course should contact me as soon as possible. If you need special disability-related accommodation, please inform me and contact the Disability Support Resources ([dsrgvsu@gvsu.edu](mailto:dsrgvsu@gvsu.edu), 331-2490).

### Schedule

<b>Week</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Reading</b>
Week 1	8/26	Overview and Introduction to perception	Ch. 1
Week 2	9/2	<b>Labor-day recess, no class</b>	
Week 3	9/9	Introduction to perception	Ch. 1
Week 4	9/16	Light and the eyes	Ch. 2
Week 5	9/23	The visual brain	Ch. 3
Week 6	9/30	Perceiving objects	Ch. 4
Week 7	10/7	<b>Review Exam One</b>	
Week 8	10/14	Perceiving color	Ch. 5
Week 9	10/21	<b>Fall break, no class</b>	
Week 10	10/28	Perceiving depth, size, and motion	Ch. 6, Ch. 7
Week 11	11/4	Perception for action, Attention and awareness	Ch. 7, Ch. 8
Week 12	11/11	<b>Review Exam Two</b>	
Week 13	11/18	Sound, Ears, and auditory brain	Ch. 9, Ch.10
Week 14	11/25	The body senses	Ch. 12
Week 15	12/2	The chemical senses: Perceiving odors and tastes <b>Review</b>	Ch. 13
<b>12/9, Monday 6:00-8:50pm Same Classroom: Final Exam</b>			

This course is subject to the GVSU policies listed at <http://www.gvsu.edu/coursepolicies/>