Psychology 221: Sensation and Perception  
Fall, 2018

Instructor: Karen Dobkins  
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Class Meetings: Friday, 9:00 am – 11:50 am  
Glass Conference Room, 5th floor, McGill Hall

Office Hours: By appointment

Text: “Levine and Shefner’s Sensation & Perception”, 3rd edition  
Available from K Dobkins as a PDF

Other Required Reading: 19 Journal Articles (~15 of which will be presented by students)

Other recommended books:
- For more introductory text:  
- For more advanced text to clarify difficult points or enhance your understanding:  
- For text that focuses more on the underlying neurophysiological mechanisms:  
  - L. Spillman & J.S. Werner (eds.): Visual Perception: The Neurophysiological Foundations,  
    Academic Press (1990)

Aims and Scopes:  
The goal of this course is to understand sensory perception in terms of underlying mechanisms, using  
both psychophysical and neural evidence. In some cases, the neural basis for a particular perceptual  
phenomenon is well understood. In other cases, only hypothetical or conceptual mechanisms are addressed.  
The majority of this course will concentrate on visual perception, however, we will also cover auditory  
perception as well as discussing the ways in which visual and auditory signals work in unison. The particular  
journal articles for this course were chosen to span a wide range of topics and techniques, so that students can  
receive a well-rounded introduction to Sensation and Perception.

Format:
1) My Lecture: Each week, I will give a lecture on that week’s topic. The lecture will take between 1.5  
   – 2 hours. The format of this lecture is meant to be somewhat interactive, thus students are encouraged to ask  
   questions. I send you the lecture notes as an attachment each week, sometimes on the morning of the lecture.
2) Journal Article Presentation: At the end of my lecture, one or two students will present the journal  
   article(s) of the week (30-40 minute presentation). If the article is too extensive and complicated for a 30-40  
   minute presentation, present the sections that you best understand, and emphasize and expand upon those  
   ideas. If the article is not substantial enough, research the topic and expand your discussion of the topic. In  
   either case, you are encouraged to read other material (e.g., from one of the recommended books) in order to  
   increase your background knowledge of the subject. The final product should be a 30–40 minute presentation  
   (expecting interruptions and group discussion), where everyone walks away understanding the main goal,  
   results and conclusions of the journal article.
3) Essay Exams Each Week. On Friday of each week, I will email you a take-home essay exam, which  
   contains 2 questions that cover that week’s topic (you pick which one to answer). Turn in the exam (as a  
   WORD document sent as an attachment) by the following Monday at 5 pm. (More info below).

Grading:  
Essay Questions: 65%  
Journal Article Presentation: 20%  
Discussion: 15%
Syllabus
Psychology 221, Fall 2018
Instructor: Karen Dobkins

Week 1 (Sept 28): Introduction, Neural Signals and Psychophysics
Readings:
   Book Chapter 1: Introduction
   Book Chapter 2: Psychophysics

Journal Article:
   NONE, but read handout on Neurophysiology called: “week 1-physio handout”

Week 2 (Oct 5): Light and Eye
Readings:
   Book Chapter 3: Light and the Eye
   Book Chapter 4: The Retina
   Book Chapter 5: Retinal Ganglion Cells and Lateral Antagonism

Journal Article:
   Williams, 1985: Aliasing in human foveal vision

Week 3 (Oct 12): Primary Visual Areas/ Functional Architecture
Readings:
   Book Chapter 7: The Primary Visual Areas of the Brain
   Book Chapter 8: Architecture of Vision in the Cortex

Journal Article:
   #1: Fregnac et al., 1988: A cellular analogue of visual cortical plasticity.
   #2: Ferster at al., 1996: Orientation selectivity of thalamic input to simple cells of cat visual cortex

Week 4 (Oct 19): Notions of Modularity & Spatial Frequency Processing
Readings:
   Book Chapter 9: Spatial Frequency Representation

Journal Article:

Week 5 (Oct 26): Form & Depth
Readings:
   Book Chapter 10: Form Perception
   Book Chapter 11: Depth Perception

Journal Article:
   O’Shea, Blackburn & Ono (1993): Contrast as a Depth Cue”

Week 6 (Nov 2): Color
Readings:
   Book Chapter 14: Color Vision

Journal Article:
   #1: Jacobs et al, 2007: Emergence of novel color vision in mice engineered to express a human cone.
   #2: Winderickx et al., 1992: Polymorphism in red photopigment underlies variation in colour matching.
**Week 7 (Nov 9): Motion**

*Readings:*

- Book Chapter 13: The Perception of Movement
  Albright, 1993: Cortical processing of visual motion.

*Journal Article:*

- #1: Lu & Sperling, 1995: Attention-generated apparent motion.
- #2: Newsome et al., 1989: Neural correlates of a perceptual decision.

**Weeks 8 and 9 (Nov 16 and 30): Hearing and Sound Localization**

*Readings:*

- Book Chapter 15: The Structure of the Auditory System
- Book Chapter 16: Frequency Coding in the Auditory System *(read only “The Basilar Membrane as a Frequency Analyzer”)*
- Book Chapter 17: Perception of Loudness and Space *(read only “Auditory Space Perception”)*
- Konishi et al., 1988: Neurophysiological and anatomical substrates of sound localization in the owl.
  *(focus on auditory maps and mechanisms, as opposed to names and connections between auditory areas).*

*Journal Article:*

- #1: Knudsen et al., 1984: Monaural occlusion alters sound localization during a sensitive period in the barn owl.
- #2: Knudsen, 1983: Early auditory experience aligns the auditory map of space in the optic tectum of the barn owl.

**Week 10 (Dec 7) Sound and Vision**

*Readings:*


*Journal Article:*

Information about Take-Home Essay Exams

**Purpose:** The ability to convey ideas clearly through writing is a very important skill, one for which most undergraduates do not receive training. The goal is to improve your writing skills throughout the course. I will give you feedback on each exam (typed directly inside the word file).

Every week, I will circulate the essay with the highest grade (anonymously) so you can see what I think is an example of good writing and the feedback that I gave (although I will not include the grade they got). This should help you in the following essays for the course.

**Open-Book:** These essay exams are completely open-book. You may look at the text book (or any other book) or your notes.

**The Honor System:** When you get the exam, and until everyone has handed theirs in to me, do not discuss any part of the exam or course material with anyone!! I want to see how you can think and write on your own.

**Format:** Each exam will have 2 questions (a or b). Pick and answer one. Type in the week number (1, 2, etc,) and the question you are answering ‘a’ or ‘b’ (e.g., “Question 3b”) at the top of the document. You do not need to write out the question. Please type your name at the top too.

**Answer Limit:** Each answer should be limited to:

- Number of pages: 1
- Spacing: 1.5 lines
- Margins: 0.7 inch (all sides)
- Font: Times 12

These limits were chosen to maximize the total number of words fitting on one page. You can, however, go under the limit by using larger spacing (e.g., double-spaced), larger margins (e.g., 1 inch), larger font (e.g., Helvetica), or by writing less than one page.

Send the exam to me as an attachment labeled like this “Karen.1a” i.e., your name followed by the week number and the question (a or b) that you answered.

**Some Tips:**

1) **Answer Format:** I prefer that your answers be in essay form, although there may be places where you find it more appropriate to use an outline form. I will leave that to your discretion. Note: If you choose to present part of your answer in outline form, you can use single spacing for that part.

2) **Diagrams:** You may use diagrams to enhance your answers. (Sometimes it is required). The diagrams are not part of the 1 page limit, and can be put onto a separate page!

3) **Details or Broad Understanding?** Of course, it is great to include both your knowledge of the details as well as your basic understanding of the topic. Most importantly, get your points across as concisely and clearly as possible. I want to see that you can present details while understanding the broader issues as well. It is best if you can draw right into the WORD file.

4) **Vague Questions:** Some of the questions are intentionally vague, to allow you to create your own thought-out and cohesive picture on a topic.

5) **Finding Answers:** When answering a question, do not just use your notes from a single week. Sometimes answers to the questions are spread out across the different weeks/topics. Also, don’t forget to use your book as a resource, as well as examples from the journal articles.

6) **What Level to Pitch it?** Answers should be written as though the reader were very smart but fairly ignorant of that topic. Don’t write the answer expecting that I, the professor, will “know what you’re talking about”. But don’t define every term as though the reader were totally ignorant, e.g., if you are writing something about how the image of an object is projected onto the “retina”, you don’t need to write “The retina, the neural tissue in the back of the eye that contains the neurons for capturing light”.

7) **Grading:** I will be grading you on both your basic and detailed knowledge of the topic (about 70% of the grade) as well as on your ability to convey clearly what you know in one page or less (about 30% of the grade).