ABOUT THIS COURSE

This course is not a traditional survey of topics and issues in cognitive neuropsychology as one might find in a textbook. The goal is to develop an understanding of human brain function not through a brain-centric lens of neural systems that process information in support of basic behavioral tasks as textbooks typically have it, but rather, from a body-centric perspective of a physically mobile organism adapted to navigate its way through environmental space over time.

COURSE OVERVIEW

Content-wise, the course is broken down into two equal parts. Part 1 addresses the overall theoretical perspective for the course, asking: Why the body? What validates it as a way to frame a neuropsychological understanding of the human brain and its function? To answer this question, we will take an in-depth look at how the body and its adaptations to the physical environment have shaped the human brain over the course of our evolutionary advent, as well as over the course of our individual lifespans. Building on this foundation, in Part 2 of the course we will then ask the more practical or pressing question of: Why physical mobility? What does it help us understand about human cognitive neuropsychological function? In answering this question, we will explore mobility-related issues spanning from the vital role cognition plays in our walking to the functional basis for human neurocognitive uniqueness.

WARNING: NO COMPUTERS/PHONES/TABLETS IN CLASS

A growing body of research is showing that not only do computers and phones disrupt students ability to learn through distractions posed to both users and those around them, but they also inhibit active listening. As such, laptops, tablets, phones, and other forms of attention-distracting technology are not to be used in class. For insight into the science on this issue, please see the folder "Why no laptops in class" under "Course Content" on the course CANVAS site. That said, it is okay to audio record class by leaving a phone on the front podium.
READINGS

There is no textbook for this course. Instead, we will be reading one assigned research article per week, beginning with Week 1 (or Lecture 2). All of the assigned readings can be found in pdf format on the course CANVAS site, under the ASSIGNED READINGS module. There you will find one file per week, labeled both with the week # and author/year of the paper (e.g., Week 1: Chiel (1997)). On the ASSIGNED READINGS module you will also see a short document that has a set of strategies for reading each paper that will hopefully help maximize what you learn while minimizing anguish and stress.

QUIZES

On each Tuesday we meet, there will be a very short quiz at the start of class. The purpose is to incentivize (1) prompt attendance, (2) reading the paper assigned for that week, and (3) thinking about how ideas/concepts/issues in the paper link back to what has been covered/discussed in previous weeks. As such, each quiz will ask 1 or 2 short questions concerning major themes/concepts/ideas from the assigned paper for that week (i.e., things that a student in a fourth-year class at UBC should be able to glean on her/his own upon initial reading of a research paper). These will be worth 5 points each, for a total of 60 possible points.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS/ISSUES

On each of the Thursdays we meet, you will need to come to class with a question or issue from that week's paper or Tuesday class to discuss/raise in a small group setting. I will provide a sheet at the beginning of class on which you can write out your question/issue; it is to be handed in at the end of class. These will be marked based on quality of thought/effort behind the question/issue. These will be worth 2 points each, for a total of 24 possible points.

DISCUSSION PARTICIPATION

The quality of the course is raised by active in-class discussion. To incentivize a greater breadth of engagement across those enrolled in class, each student will be given a lecture participation mark scaled to the magnitude/quality of her/his contributions over the term. 40 possible points.

TERM PAPER

In lieu of a final exam, a two-page term paper will be due on the day of our assigned final exam, at the time it is scheduled to start. You will need to turn in two hard copies of your paper at that time; electronic versions sent by email or other means will not be accepted. The paper needs to be printed in 12-point Times New Roman font, single-spaced with margins of 1" on each side; a third page can be included for listing any references used. The actual topic of the paper will be given during the last week of scheduled class meetings, but it will focus on integrating material from the class with observations of your own everyday experiences. To be clear, APA format will not be required. Grading will be based on two dimensions: (1) the general comprehensibility and quality of the writing itself, as marked by the TA, and (2) the rigor/demonstrated ability of applying concepts and ideas from the class, as marked by the professor. 40 possible points.
OVERALL COURSE MARKS

Course marks will be based on a sum total of quiz points (5 points x 12 quizzes = 60 points), discussion questions/issues (2 points x 12 assignments = 24 points), general discussion participation points (10 points) and the term paper (40 points), for a total of 134 possible points.

DEPARTMENT SCALING POLICY

In order to reduce grade inflation and maintain equity across multiple course sections, all psychology courses are required to comply with departmental norms regarding grade distributions for final course marks. Final course marks may be scaled up or down as necessary by the professor or department in order to comply with these norms. For official UBC policy on grade scaling, please see: http://students.ubc.ca/calendar/index.cfm?tree=3,42,96,0

CONTACTING THE INSTRUCTOR

After Class: On most days I am available for brief questions immediately following each meeting.

Office Visits: Because many students' schedules inevitably conflict with a set weekly office hour, all office meetings for this course will be by appointment only. Scheduling must be done in advance via email.

Email: To avoid having your emails automatically deleted as spam, the subject header must read "Psych 409." The answers to questions regarding lecture/reading content may often be useful for the entire class to hear. As a consequence, questions may be answered in class rather than via email. Please also note that while I try to be responsive to student emails, there are limits that must be put in place. Unfortunately, I can not respond to students who generate excessive/frequent emails or who generate long lists of questions, as in the name of fairness it would be impossible for me to provide this level of service to all students. Finally, in order to promote good problem solving skills, I will deduct 1 point from a student's final course mark for each email question that can be answered by consulting this syllabus, the course CANVAS site, the Department of Psychology web page, and/or the UBC web page.
COURSE SCHEDULE

January 4: Course Introduction

PART 1: Why The Body? What Validates it as a Framework for Studying the Brain?

Week 1: January 9 and 11
Chiel (1997): Adaptive Behaviour and Brain-Body-Environment Interactions

Week 2: January 16 and 18

Week 3: January 23 and 25
Raichlen (2012): Body-Brain Co-Evolution

Week 4: January 30 and February 1
Webber (2010): Brain-Body-Environment Co-Adaptation in Space

Week 5: February 6 and 8

Week 6: February 13 and 15
Shoval (2011): Tracking Brain-Body-Environment Co-Adaptation in Space-Time

PART 2: Why Physical Mobility? What Does it Help Us Understand About the Brain?

Week 7: February 27 and March 1

Week 8: March 6 and 8
Chen (2017): Phone-Distracted Pedestrians

Week 9: March 13 and 15
Jekel (2016): Changes in Cognitive Health

Week 10: March 20 and 22
Faurholt-Jepsen (2016): Mental Health Status and Engagement with "Social Space"

Week 11: March 27 and 29
Baltes (2001): Brain-Culture Co-Construction Across the Lifespan

Week 12: April 3 and 5