

# PSYC 51.09: Human Memory

Spring 2021 (MWF 11:45 AM — 12:50 PM)

**Instructor:** Dr. Jeremy R. Manning  
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**Office Hours:** By appointment  
**X-hour:** Tu 12:30 — 1:20 PM

## Course Description

Knowing how our brains organize and spontaneously retrieve memories is at the heart of understanding the basis of the ongoing internal dialog of our conscious thoughts. Put simply, our memories make us *who we are*. The field of human memory also has a practical side. For example, how much should we trust eyewitness testimony? Or, should you cram for tomorrow's exam or get a good night's sleep instead? We will examine a range of classic and cutting-edge experimental results and theories that form the foundation of our current understanding of how we learn and remember.

## Course Goals

First, I want you to leave this course with a solid grounding in our current understanding of how we learn and remember. You will learn to critically evaluate theories that describe how memory works, and you will learn to build your own theories.

Second, I want you to be able to apply what you learn in my course in your everyday life. We'll consider "brain hacks" for improving your memory and learn how (and why) memory can fail (e.g. Alzheimer's disease, amnesia, post-traumatic stress disorder, etc.).

## Pre-Requisites

Some experience with Psychology or Neuroscience (AP Psychology, PSYC 1, and/or PSYC 6) will help to ground the materials covered in this course. If you haven't taken any of the pre-requisite courses, please reach out to me to see if the course is appropriate for you. All other concepts will be covered in the readings and course lectures.

## Course Materials

You will need a copy of the course textbook: *Foundations of Human Memory*, by Michael J. Kahana (Oxford University Press). It is available at the Dartmouth Bookstore or on [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com).

I will also occasionally upload supplemental readings to the course's Canvas site. These readings will be made available as freely downloadable PDFs to all students taking the course.

If obtaining these course materials presents a financial hardship for you, please reach out to me privately and we will figure something out.

## Format

The textbook and supplemental readings will provide most of the background and theoretical grounding for the course. In my lectures I will be developing and expanding on the material from the readings. The lectures are also where you'll learn about real-world examples and useful brain hacks.

Most of my lectures will be slide-based; I will make PDFs of my slides available on the course's Canvas site soon (usually within a day or two) after each slide-based lecture.

## Zoom

All course meetings and office hours will be held via Zoom (the meeting link will be shared via Canvas, and only members of the Dartmouth community are invited to participate in synchronous course meetings). Meetings will be recorded and posted to YouTube (using a private, non-searchable, link) so that all students can access or revisit the lectures. This will enable students in different timezones, or who have specific conflicts, to more easily catch up on the material. If you do not want to appear in the recording, or if you want me to exclude a specific comment or time interval from the recording, please let me know. I'll work with you (confidentially) to find a way for you to feel comfortable participating in class while also enabling other students to participate comfortably in class. This may involve removing, distorting, or obscuring part of the recording before posting it online, and/or changing your camera and/or microphone settings as needed. Recordings of my office hours will not typically be posted online, with the possible exception of snippets that I think may be relevant to the entire class. (Again, reach out to me if you have requests or concerns.)

## GitHub

All course materials (aside from the textbook) will be made available on the course's [GitHub page](#). You can use the GitHub page like any other website; just think of it as a way of organizing all of the course materials (you don't need a GitHub account to access the page). Materials posted to the GitHub page will include:

- Assignments and exams, including copies of assignments from previous years
- Recordings of the course lectures
- PDFs of lecture slides
- Supplemental readings and materials

## Grading

Each assignment will be worth some (maximum) number of points. Your final grade will be based on the proportion of points you earn across all assignments. A letter grade will be assigned as follows (numbers in parentheses denote the proportions of total possible points earned): A (95–100); A- (90–94); B+ (87–89); B (83–86); B- (80–82); C+ (74–79); C (57–73); C- (50–56); D+ (44–49); D (37–43); D- (30–36); or F (0–29). I have tried to design this course so that you will do well if you put in a consistent moderate level of effort throughout the term. Putting in a consistent effort is the best way to learn this material well. (In this course you'll learn why!)

### Problem sets (1 point each)

A total of 7 short take-home problem sets will be distributed over the course of the term (approximately 1 per week, except for the weeks of the midterm exam and final project). These problem sets will help to solidify the concepts we learn about in the lectures and readings. One or more ungraded (optional) questions on each problem set will also ask you to provide your candid thoughts on that week's reading assignment. Each problem set will be graded on a credit/no-credit basis (handing in the complete problem set by the due date will earn you 1 point; failing to turn in the complete problem set by the due date will earn 0 points for that problem set).

**After first attempting each problem, on each problem set, entirely on your own**, you may (and are encouraged to!) work together in small groups on these problem sets. You are also encouraged to post and answer questions on the course's Canvas site. However, you must write up and hand in your own work. Problem sets will usually be posted to Canvas prior to the first class meetings of the given week, and will usually be due at the start of class 1 week from the posted date. **Problem sets should be submitted electronically on Canvas prior to the start of class when they are due. No late problem sets will be accepted.**

### Midterm exam (20 points)

The open-book midterm exam will be designed to test and build on your understanding the fundamental concepts we discuss in class. The exam questions will be similar to those covered in the problem sets, and will cover material learned in all lectures preceding the exam. The best way that you can prepare for the midterm exam is to do the problem sets each week. If you would like additional practice, I encourage you to do problem sets from previous years as well.

### Final exam (25 points)

The open-book final exam will be designed to test and build on your understanding the fundamental concepts we discuss in class. The exam questions will be similar to those covered in the problem sets, and will cover material learned in all lectures throughout the course. The best way that you can prepare for the final exam is to do the problem sets each week, and to make sure that you understood all of the material covered on the midterm exam. If you would like additional practice, I encourage you to do problem sets from previous years as well.

## The Academic Honor Principle

I expect you to abide by Dartmouth's [Academic Honor Principle](#) at all times. For example, while I encourage you to discuss your assignments with your classmates, **any work you hand in should be your own**. In other words, you can work together and ask for help, but you cannot simply copy someone else's answers.

Violations of the Principle will not be tolerated, and if you become aware of any such violations you are honor bound to take action. If you have any questions about the Academic Honor Principle and how it applies to this course, please ask.

## Scheduling Conflicts

This class works best when students are participating synchronously. When you are able, I expect you to attend and be on time for every class meeting. However, I also understand that your personal circumstances (e.g., living in a different timezone, limited internet access, religious observances, other commitments, emergencies, etc.) may limit your ability to participate synchronously.

If you are generally not able to attend the synchronous course meetings, please reach out to me as soon as possible (and before the end of Week 2 at the latest) so that we can figure out a plan that will help you to get as much as you can out of the course.

Importantly, however, **no part of your grade will depend on attendance**. I trust that you will make the best decision for yourself, based on your personal goals and circumstances, about whether or not to attend each class meeting. By the same token, if you do miss a class meeting, it is your responsibility to make up the material.

## Student Needs

I strive to maintain a welcoming and accessible learning environment. I want you to be an active participant and contributor to ongoing discussions and activities, and that means that every student should feel comfortable engaging with the material. If you would like me to be aware of any issues that arise during the term, or any personal needs that may require adjusting how I run my class or how you participate, I encourage you to reach out to me privately. Dartmouth's [Student Accessibility Services Office](#) can also help assist with setting up disability-related accommodations.