



Psych 323: Drugs and Behavior

Professor: Jennifer McGee, PhD

Email: jmjuerg@emory.edu

Office: Seney 311

Office hours: M/W/F 2-3pm

Meeting time: Tu/Th 3:30-5:10

Meeting place: Language Hall 202



About this course: Behavioral pharmacology is the study of the interaction between behavior and drugs that act on the nervous system. The study of psychopharmaceuticals spans many disciplines and can be conducted along any of several levels of analysis, ranging from changes in minute elements of the cell membrane to global issues like the sociology of substance abuse. In behavioral pharmacology and psychopharmacology, we emphasize the actions of drugs on the behaving individual (human or nonhuman), and how the particulars of ongoing behavior can actually influence these actions. In order to understand the behavior of an individual we will draw from the study of neural function, behavioral determinants of action, as well as social influences. In this course we examine behaviorally active drugs, their actions on the nervous system, experimental approaches to characterizing drug/behavior interactions, and some possible clinical applications. In addition, will be considering trends in drug use over time and questioning what about the social environment influenced a drugs popularity.

Recommended Text:

Drugs and Behavior: *An Introduction to Behavioral Pharmacology (7th edition)*, McKim & Hancock

Required Text:

Chasing the Scream: The First and Last Days of the War on Drugs, Johann Hari

Selected journal articles will be made available in course reserves.

Learning outcomes: By the end of the semester, my goal is that each student will be proficient in each of the following learning outcomes.

1. Ability to converse in the unique language of behavioral psychopharmacology.
2. Develop an understanding of the cellular mechanisms of many psychoactive drugs.
3. Know the history of drug development, regulation, and use.
4. Be able to use the above learning outcomes to think critically about current legislation, social distortions, and treatment regarding drug use.

Important to know: This course moves at a fast pace and includes topics on neural anatomy, biology, and some chemistry. It is an introductory course and we will discuss all the pertinent information, but it is strongly recommended that you will have taken a college level course in a related discipline (psych 110, biology, chemistry).

Your responsibilities:

Participation and Preparation: Attendance, while required, is not sufficient for participation and preparation. I expect you to be prepared by completing the assigned reading before class and to fully participate when in class discussions or small teams. You are afforded two absences this semester, each additional absence will result in a loss of 1 point from the writing/discussion portion of your grade. Late arrivals of more than 15 minutes will be marked absent. Lack of preparation or participation can also result in the loss of points from your total.

Exams: There will be three exams worth 100 points each. Each exam is cumulative. These exams are designed to test your knowledge of the social history of each drug as well as the mechanism of action. The questions will primarily be in essay/short answer format.

Writing/Discussion days: Throughout the semester we will be confronting any preconceived notions related to drug use and abuse and learning how to ask the right questions in terms of public policy.

What is addiction? Who uses recreational drugs? What influence does the pharmaceutical industry have over our notion of mental illness? How can we help those who need pharmaceutical interventions and those who are suffering from addictions?

As we confront these questions and ask new ones, I will assign brief writing assignments either in class or at home. At the end of the semester you will be asked to look over those writings and write a reflection on how your attitude and understanding towards these topics may have changed over the semester.

Controversial Topics: Perhaps not surprisingly, there are a lot of controversies within the field of drug use, drug abuse, and drug policy. You will choose a controversy from a curated list and develop a presentation with a small group. When it is not your turn to present, you will be asked to write a short, reflective, opinion paper before coming to class on the day the presentations are scheduled. More information can be found on Canvas.

Letter to the President: In small groups, you will draft a letter to the incoming president addressing some aspect of national drug policy. More information on this can be found on Canvas.

Grading:

The exams are worth 60%

Controversial Topic assignments are worth 20%

Letter to the President is worth 15%

Writings/Discussions are worth 5%

Honor code: Each student is expected to follow the Emory Honor Code. You may refresh your memory of this code by going to this website: http://catalog.college.emory.edu/academic/policy/honor_code.html Below I've highlighted a few items from the code that you should be very familiar with, with my personal interpretations for this class in italics. Academic misconduct includes, but is not limited to, the following:

(a) Seeking, acquiring, receiving, or giving information about the conduct of an examination, knowing that the release of such information has not been authorized; *(e.g. do not ask others what was on the exam. Do not seek out previous copies of the exam.)*

(b) Plagiarizing; *(e.g. cite your sources, always. Do not extensively quote from sources on assignments, paraphrase instead. Do not memorize large swaths of content from another source and use it on an exam or assignment without citing it. You may, however, use Dr. Jennifer McGee's words on examinations and assignments without citations.)*

(c) Seeking, using, giving, or obtaining unauthorized assistance or information in any academic assignment or examination; *(e.g. do not use the internet, a textbook, your notes, another person, or any other source during exams or assignments unless explicitly given permission by the instructor)*

(d) Intentionally giving false information to professors or instructors for the purpose of gaining academic advantage; *(Don't lie to me.)*

Disability Accommodations: If you are registered with ADSR, please submit a documentation letter to me during the first week of the semester

Student work: Occasionally I will photocopy assignments that you turn in for inclusion in my teaching portfolio or to examine current course activities. Furthermore, student work submitted as part of this course may be reviewed by Oxford College and Emory College faculty and staff for the purposes of improving instruction and enhancing Emory education.