

Seminar in Perception

PSYC 256

Fall 2025 Section 01 In Person 3 Unit(s) 08/20/2025 to 12/08/2025 Modified 08/18/2025

Contact Information

Instructor:	Dr. Christina Tzeng
Office Location:	Dudley Moorhead Hall (DMH) 319
Email:	christina.tzeng@sjsu.edu
Office Hours:	TuTh 10:30 AM – 11:30 AM, or by appointment
Class Days/Time:	TuTh 1:30 PM - 2:45 PM
Classroom:	Hugh Gillis Hall, Room 120
Prerequisite(s):	Graduate standing, PSYC 158 – Perception (or equivalent)

Course Description and Requisites

Selected issues in visual sensation and perception. Topics include the perception of color, form, depth and motion. Emphasis on the relationship of perception to sensory physiology.

Prerequisite: PSYC 158 (or equivalent).

Letter Graded

Classroom Protocols

Course Format

This is an **in-person** course with weekly in-person meetings. Each week on **Tuesdays and Thursdays from 1:30 PM – 2:45 PM PST**.

As this is a graduate seminar course, our class sessions will be heavily discussion- based. Prior to attending classes each week, students will engage in course content which will include reading assigned readings, completing activities that illustrate concepts in perception, and writing response papers.

Canvas

All course content, such as the syllabus, readings, assignments, grades etc. will be on the Canvas Learning Management System [course website](http://sjsu.instructure.com) at <http://sjsu.instructure.com>. You are responsible for regularly checking Canvas for course announcements and updates.

Program Information

Program learning outcomes (PLOs) are skills and knowledge that students will have achieved upon completion of the MA in Research and Experimental Psychology degree. Each course in our curriculum contributes to one or more of these PLOs. The PLOs for the degree are:

1. Advanced Knowledge Base in Research and Experimental Psychology. Students completing the Research and Experimental Psychology MA program will be able to demonstrate advanced knowledge of the major theoretical perspectives and research methods across areas of experimental psychology (e.g., Developmental, Social, Cognitive, and Physiological).
2. Research Skills and Scholarship. Graduates of our program will possess an advanced level of competence in research methods, statistical techniques, and technical writing skills. Students completing the Research and Experimental Psychology MA program are required to complete a thesis. The thesis will demonstrate:
 - 2.1 creative problem-solving in the design and implementation of empirical research.
 - 2.2 project management skills in the implementation of empirical research.
 - 2.3 advanced competency in the statistical analysis and interpretation of empirical research findings.
 - 2.4 communication (oral and written) of research findings at a professional level.
3. Career Enhancement. Students completing the Research and Experimental Psychology MA program will achieve career enhancement through placement in a doctoral program or acceptance of a position requiring a master's in psychology in the public or private sector.

Course Learning Outcomes (CLOs)

Upon successful completion of this course, students will achieve the following CLOs:

- **CLO1.** Demonstrate knowledge of the different components of perception and their underlying cognitive mechanisms
- **CLO2.** Describe different research methods used in perception research and apply them to novel research questions
- **CLO3.** Infer appropriate conclusions from perception research

- **CL04.** Synthesize evidence in favor of arguments pertaining to debates in perception research
- **CL05.** Evaluate and criticize arguments pertaining to issues in perception
- **CL06.** Present and discuss findings and implications from perception research
- **CL07.** Articulate how concepts in perception apply to their everyday lives
- **CL08.** Respect the relative nature of empirical evidence
- **CL09.** Recognize the value of intellectual curiosity and skepticism

Course Materials

There is no required textbook for this course. All readings will be theoretical and empirical journal articles or book chapters that will be made available on our Canvas course site.

Course Requirements and Assignments

Readings

Students must complete assigned readings and activities **before** the start of each class session. Readings will include both theoretical and empirical articles. You may also be required to view short lectures, listen to podcasts, or watch demonstrations of relevant course concepts.

Critical Commentaries

You will prepare critical commentaries prior to every class session. The goals of these critical commentaries are to (1) encourage you to critically evaluate the assigned readings, (2) to help you organize your thoughts in preparation for class discussion, and (3) to provide me with a means of gauging your comprehension of specific topics. Commentaries should be 200 - 300 words each.

Critical commentaries are **due by noon every Monday and Wednesday**. Further details about these commentaries will be shared in class.

Discussion Facilitation

Two or three students together will facilitate a class discussion centered on the assigned readings. Facilitators are required to (1) prepare brief presentations summarizing the take-home messages of the papers, (2) pose critical thinking questions, and (3) fuel and mediate class discussion.

The objectives of this exercise are to provide you with the opportunity to (1) practice engaging in productive discussions grounded in theoretical and empirical literature, (2) practice synthesizing key points in scientific literature, and (3) practice conveying those to a scholarly audience.

Facilitators are required to meet with me virtually prior to their assigned discussion date to share their plans for this assignment. Students do not need to submit critical commentaries for the class sessions that they are facilitating discussion.

Final Paper

Students will be asked to write a 5- to 7-page synthesis paper on a relevant topic of interest that incorporates at least three of the course readings and a personal experience related to these readings. The paper will begin with a brief literature review of the topic at hand and end in a research proposal for how to address a specific empirical question on your topic.

The objective of this assignment is to give you the opportunity to (1) critically evaluate empirical findings, (2) relate them to each other and to broader course themes, (3) identify research questions relevant to the target issues, and (4) propose ways to address them. You must meet with me to have your topic approved prior to when you begin writing.

Participation in In-Class Discussions

Seminar sessions are heavily discussion-based and thus require full participation from everyone in the class. Participation will be evaluated on the extent to which contributions fulfill the CLOs mentioned above.

A note on attending class sessions:

Attending the weekly class session is strongly encouraged. While you are not graded on attendance, a seminar course necessitates regular contributions during class sessions to yield fruitful discussion.

Class attendance has also been found to be a better predictor of college grades than any other known predictor of academic performance, including high school GPA and standardized test scores (Credé, Roch & Kieszczynka, 2010). Data gathered from SJSU students suggests that attending class sessions:

- (1) helps students feel more accountable for their studies
- (2) helps them stay on track with course material
- (3) makes students feel more engaged with the class and with the instructor
- (4) allows them the opportunity to ask questions and receive an immediate response

All of these are factors that led to a more positive overall class experience.

If you cannot attend class, please email me with **as much advance notice as possible**.

References

Credé, M., Roch, S. G., & Kieszczynka, U. M. (2010). Class attendance in college: A meta-analytic review of the relationship of class attendance with grades and student characteristics. *Review of Educational Research, 80*(2), 272-295.

Grading Information

Assignment/Activity	CLOs Assessed	Percent of Final Grade

Critical Commentaries	1, 3, 4, 5, 7	35%
Discussion Facilitations	3, 4, 5, 6	20%
Final Project	2, 3, 4, 5, 6	20%
Participation in In-Class Discussions	3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9	25%

Final Letter Grade Scale:

A plus: 97.00 to 100.00%	A: 93.00 to 96.99%	A minus: 90.00 to 92.99%
B plus: 87.00 to 89.99%	B: 83.00 to 86.99%	B minus: 80.00 to 82.99%
C plus: 77.00 to 79.99%	C: 73.00 to 76.99%	C minus: 70.00 to 72.99%
D plus: 67.00 to 69.99%	D: 63.00 to 66.99%	D minus: 60.00 to 62.99%
F: ≤ 59%		

Course Policies

1. I will not change grades unless there is a clerical error in the calculation of your grade.
2. If you encounter an **unexpected** emergency outside of your control (e.g., COVID infection, eviction from your home, daycare closure, etc.) and you would like to request an extension on an assignment, please email me with as much notice as possible in advance of the assignment deadline. Although contacting me does not guarantee that your request will be approved, know that I take all requests seriously and will work with you to find appropriate resources and a path forward for completing your coursework.

Please note that my flexibility with respect to deadlines relates to emergencies **beyond your control**, and that this flexibility does not apply to vacation travel, conflicts with your work schedule, or other foreseeable circumstances that are within your control. I expect you to act ethically and honorably.

3. **Late submissions:** All assignments must be submitted by the indicated due date and time unless I have approved an extension (see above). For each 24-hour period that your assignment is late, your score will drop 10% (100% will become 90%). For example, if you submit a critical commentary two hours late, your grade will drop by 10%, and if you submit it 25 hours late, your grade will drop by 20%, and so on.
4. **Office hours:** Please take advantage of office hours to speak with me about anything related to this course, your research or career interests, or anything else that I may be able to help with. The more I know about how my students are doing and what they are thinking, the better I can ensure that the course will be an engaging and interesting experience. Please book an appointment online at <https://christina-tzeng.youcanbook.me> if you want to meet with me. If you cannot make my weekly office hours, please email me to schedule an appointment.
5. **Academic integrity:** Cheating, plagiarism, or any form of academic dishonesty, including submitting A.I.-generated content as your own, will not be tolerated. If I find evidence of academic misconduct(e.g., working with another student on assignments or exams, posting any course material online, plagiarizing, using A.I.-generated content), you will receive a 0% on the assignment(s) in question without an opportunity to repeat the assignment, and I will file a report with the Office of Student Conduct and Ethical Development. Please visit the office's website for more information at <https://www.sjsu.edu/studentconduct/policies/>.
6. **Accommodations:** If you need course adaptations or accommodations because of a disability, or if you need special arrangements in case the building must be evacuated, please make an appointment with me as soon as possible, or see me during office hours. Presidential Directive 97-03 requires that students with disabilities requesting accommodations must [register with AEC](#) at <https://www.sjsu.edu/aec/> to establish a record of their disability. [Academic Senate Policy F06-2](#) at <https://www.sjsu.edu/aec/docs/F06-2.pdf>
7. **Statement of Inclusion and Diversity:** We all have diverse personal experiences, identities, and values that affect how we view the world. I hope that we can embrace this diversity and work together to ensure each student feels like a valued member of the learning community. It is my intent to present materials and activities that are respectful of diversity: gender, sexuality, disability, age, socioeconomic status, immigration status, ethnicity, race, and culture. It is also my intent that students from all backgrounds and perspectives be well-served by this course, that students' learning needs be addressed both in and out of class, and that the diversity that students bring to this class be viewed as an asset.

University Policies

Per [University Policy S16-9 \(PDF\)](#) (<http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S16-9.pdf>), relevant university policy concerning all courses, such as student responsibilities, academic integrity, accommodations, dropping and adding, consent for recording of class, etc. and available student services (e.g. learning assistance,

counseling, and other resources) are listed on the [Syllabus Information](https://www.sjsu.edu/curriculum/courses/syllabus-info.php) (<https://www.sjsu.edu/curriculum/courses/syllabus-info.php>) web page. Make sure to visit this page to review and be aware of these university policies and resources.

Course Schedule

Note: This course schedule is subject to modification (with fair warning) as the instructor deems necessary.

Module	Date (in-person class sessions)	Topics	Assignments Due* (CC = Critical Commentary)
0: Foundations	Th 8/21	Welcome/Orientation	
	Tu 8/26	Basic Concepts in Perception	· Complete Welcome Survey (due by noon on Tu 8/26)

Module	Date (in-person class sessions)	Topics	Assignments Due* (CC = Critical Commentary)
1: Vision	Th 8/28	Vision: Overview	· Complete assigned reading
	Tu 9/2	Object Perception	· Complete assigned reading · Submit CC by noon on M 9/1
	Th 9/4	Object Perception	· Complete assigned reading · Submit CC by noon on W 9/3
	Tu 9/9	Face Perception	· Complete assigned reading · Submit CC by noon on M 9/8
	Th 9/11	Face Perception	· Complete assigned reading · Submit CC by noon on W 9/10
	Tu 9/16	Motion Perception	· Complete assigned reading · Submit CC by noon on M 9/15

Module	Date (in-person class sessions)	Topics	Assignments Due* (CC = Critical Commentary)
	Th 9/18	Motion Perception	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Complete assigned reading · Submit CC by noon on W 9/17
	Tu 9/23	Perception & Action	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Complete assigned reading · Submit CC by noon on M 9/22
	Th 9/25	Perception & Action	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Complete assigned reading · Submit CC by noon on W 9/24

Module	Date (in-person class sessions)	Topics	Assignments Due* (CC = Critical Commentary)
2: Hearing	Tu 9/30	Audition: Overview	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complete assigned reading
	Th 10/2	Audiovisual Speech Perception	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complete assigned reading Submit CC by noon on W 10/1
	Tu 10/7	Perception of Unfamiliar Accented Speech	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complete assigned reading Submit CC by noon on M 10/6
	Th 10/9	Perception of Unfamiliar Accented Speech	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complete assigned reading Submit CC by noon on W 10/8
	Tu 10/14	Tone of Voice Perception	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complete assigned reading Submit CC by noon on M 10/13
	Th 10/16	Tone of Voice Perception	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complete assigned reading Submit CC by noon on W 10/15

Module	Date (in-person class sessions)	Topics	Assignments Due* (CC = Critical Commentary)
	Tu 10/21	Music Perception	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Complete assigned reading · Submit CC by noon on M 10/20
	Th 10/23	Music Perception	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Complete assigned reading · Submit CC by noon on W 10/22

Module	Date (in-person class sessions)	Topics	Assignments Due* (CC = Critical Commentary)
3: Smell, Taste, & Touch	Tu 10/28	Smell, Taste, & Touch Overview	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Complete assigned reading · Submit CC by noon on M 10/27
	Th 10/30	Smell & Memory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Complete assigned reading
	Tu 11/4	Individual Differences in Taste Sensitivity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Complete assigned reading · Submit CC by noon on M 11/3
	Th 11/6	Taste & Eating Behavior	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Complete assigned reading · Submit CC by noon on W 11/5
	Tu 11/11	Pain Perception	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Complete assigned reading · Submit CC by noon on M 11/10

Module	Date (in-person class sessions)	Topics	Assignments Due* (CC = Critical Commentary)
	Th 11/13	Synesthesia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Complete assigned reading · Submit CC by noon on W 11/12

Module	Date (in-person class sessions)	Topics	Assignments Due* (CC = Critical Commentary)
4: Perception in the Modern World	Tu 11/18	Topic TBD: Class will vote on topic	· Complete assigned reading
	Th 11/20	Final Project Meetings	
	Tu 11/25	Final Project Meetings	
	Th 11/27	No Class (Thanksgiving Break)	
	Tu 12/2	Topic TBD: Class will vote on topic	· Complete assigned reading
	Th 12/4	Topic TBD: Class will vote on topic	· Complete assigned reading

Module	Date (in-person class sessions)	Topics	Assignments Due* (CC = Critical Commentary)
	Tu 12/16		Final Project Due by noon on Tu 12/16

*All critical commentaries (CC) are due on Canvas by **noon PST on Mondays and Wednesdays**, the day before our in-person class sessions. A complete list of readings is available on our course Canvas site.