

Higher Cognitive Functions, 7.5 Credits

Course description

The course will present central theoretical and empirical issues related to higher cognitive functions with a specific focus on cognitive control functions. These control functions, often referred to as executive functions, are assumed to mediate goal-directed behavior and involve planning, coordination and updating of complex intentions. Executive control functions are also central to most higher mental activities, including abstract thinking and problem solving, autobiographic memory, self-image, and social interactions. A variety of neuropsychiatric disorders are associated with impairments and deficits in these functions. Another aim of the course is to examine different forms of higher cognitive functions by focusing on the relation among executive functioning, attention, memory and metacognition. The course will deal with individual and developmental differences in executive control functions. The course also aims at elucidating the interplay between emotional and cognitive control and their underlying neural mechanisms.

Course Objectives

After completing the course, students should be better able to analyse and critically reflect on central issues of higher cognitive functions. Students are also expected to gain deeper understanding of: executive functions and their relation to other higher cognitive functions, construct validity and measurement problems within the research area, emotional control and their relation to higher cognitive functions, and developmental trends in executive control function.

Course Requirements:

The course consists of lectures, seminars and exercises. To reach the course objectives, students need to attend and participate in all seminars as follows:

- (a) *Contribution to seminars.* In addition to active participation, students are expected to generate 3-5 questions prior to each seminar. The purpose of these questions is to ensure that you have actually read the papers that have been assigned, and to help raise issues for the discussion. You should submit (upload) your questions to the course web by noon the day before the seminar. Your questions should be turned in whether or not you will be able to attend the seminar.
- (b) *Leading the discussion.* At each seminar, 1-2 students have the role of Discussants by organizing and leading the group discussion. Discussants will primarily summarize the key points to be extracted from the seminar articles and chair the session by presenting central issues raised by the members of the group. Note that Discussants will lead the seminar, but everyone in the group is responsible for contributing to the seminar. Discussants do not need to submit questions for their seminars.

Examination

The examination is based on each student's contribution during the seminars, with max 2 points/seminar (2 = good, 1 = pass, and 0 = fail/missed seminar (i.e., 6 seminar x max 2p = 12p). In addition to the seminars, students may earn a higher grade (than the max 12 p) by completing a final examination. This written examination is not mandatory, but participation should be registered before the deadline. The examination will be based on the contents of all seminars, including the supplementary articles (see below). The maximum score of the written exam is 8 p, and the max score for the whole course is 20 p as summarized below:

Seminars	6 x	0-2p (=max)	12
Written exam		max	8
		Totalt max	20
Final grade	A	>18	
	B	≥18	
	C	≥16	
	D	≥14	
	E	≥ 12	
	F	< 12	

Literature

Readings (in pdf) and other course materials are available at Athena. The articles marked with asterisks (*) are supplementary for the seminars, but included in the written examination.

HCF 1: Perspectives on HCF

Evans & Stanovich (2013). Dual-process theories of higher cognition: Advancing the Debate. *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, 8, 223-241.

Kruglanski (2013). Only One? The Default interventionist perspective as a unimodel—Commentary on Keren, K. (2013). A Tale of Two Systems: A Scientific advance or a theoretical stone soup? Commentary on Evans & Stanovich. *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, 8, 257-262.

Melnikoff, D. E., & Bargh, J. A. (2018). The mythical number two. *Trends in Cognitive Sciences*, 22(4), 280-293.

*Evans, (2008). Dual-processing accounts of reasoning, judgment, and social cognition. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 59, 255-278.

HCF 2: Executive functioning

Miyake, A., & Friedman, N. P. (2012). The nature and organization of individual differences in executive functions. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 21, 8-14.

Miyake et al. (2000). The unity and diversity of executive functions and their contributions to complex “frontal lobe” tasks: A latent variable analysis. *Cognitive Psychology*, 41, 49–10.

Benedek, M., Jauk, E., Sommer, M., Arendasy, M., & Neubauer, A. C. (2014). Intelligence, creativity, and cognitive control: The common and differential involvement of executive functions in intelligence and creativity. *Intelligence*, 46, 73-83.

Shipstead, Harrison, & Engle (2016). Working memory capacity and fluid intelligence: Maintenance and disengagement. *Perspectives on Psychological Science* 2016, 11, 771–799.

*Diamond, A. (2013). Executive functions. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 64, 135-68.

HCF 3: Frontal lobe functions

Badre, D. (2013). Hierarchical cognitive control and the functional organization of the frontal cortex. *The Oxford Handbook of Cognitive Neuroscience: Vol 2: The Cutting Edges*.*

D'Esposito, M. (2007). From cognitive to neural models of working memory. *Phil. Trans. R. Soc. B* 362, 761-772.

Nee, D., E, Brown J. W., Askren M. K., Berman M. G., Demiralp, E., Krawitz A., & Jonides. J. A. (2012). Meta-analysis of executive components of working memory. *Cereb Cortex*. [Epub ahead of print] (19 pp).

*O'Reilly RC. (2010) The what and how of prefrontal cortical organization. *Trends in Neuroscience*, 33, 355-61.

HCF 4: Emotional control

- Dolcos, F., & Denkova, E. (2014). Current emotion research in cognitive neuroscience: Linking enhancing and impairing effects of emotion on cognition. *Emotion Review*, *6*, 362-375.
- Gross, J. J. (2015). Emotion regulation: Current status and future prospects. *Psychological Inquiry*, *26*, 1-26.
- Inzlicht, M., Bartholow, B. D., & Hirsh, J. B. (2015). Emotional foundations of cognitive control. *Trends in Cognitive Sciences*, *19*, 126-132.
- *Lerner, J. S., Li, Y., Valdesolo, P., & Kassam, K. S. (2015). Emotion and decision making. *Annual Review of Psychology*, *66*, 799-823.

HCF 5: Developmental perspectives

- Bernier, A., Beauchamp, M.H., Carlson, S.M., & Lalonde, G. (2015). A secure base from which to regulate: Attachment security in toddlerhood as a predictor of executive functioning at school entry. *Developmental Psychology*, *51*, 1177-89. doi: 10.1037/dev0000032.
- Bugg, J. M. (2014). Evidence for the sparing of reactive cognitive control with age. *Psychology and Aging*, *29*, 115-127
- Hasher, L., Lustig, C., & Zacks, R. T. (2007). Inhibitory mechanisms and the control of attention. In A. Conway, C. Jarrold, M. Kane, A. Miyake, A., & J. Towse (Eds.), *Variation in working memory*. Pp. 227-249. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Salthouse, T. A. (2004). What and when of cognitive aging. *Current directions in Psychological Science*, *13*, 140-144.
- Zelazo, P. D., & Carlson, S. M. (2012). Hot and cool executive function in childhood and adolescence: Development and plasticity. *Child Development Perspectives*, *6*, 354-360. doi: 10.1111/j.1750-8606.2012.00246.x
- *Best, J.R., & Miller, P.H. (2010). A developmental perspective on executive function. *Child Development*, *81*, 1641-1660.

HCF 6: Metacognition

- Koriat, A. (1997). Monitoring one's own knowledge during study: A cue-utilization approach to judgments of learning. *Journal of Experimental Psychology: General*, *126*(4), 349-370.
- *Koriat, A., & Levy-Sadot, R. (1999). Processes underlying metacognitive judgments: Information-based and experience-based monitoring of one's own knowledge. In S. Chaiken & Y. Trope (Eds.), *Dual process theories in social psychology* (pp. 483-502). New York :Guilford Publications
- Koriat, A., Bjork, R. A., Sheffer, L., & Bar, S. K. (2004). Predicting One's Own Forgetting: The Role of Experience-Based and Theory-Based Processes. *Journal of Experimental Psychology: General*, *133*(4), 643-656.
- Kornell, N., & Bjork, R. A. (2009). A stability bias in human memory: Overestimating remembering and underestimating learning. *Journal of Experimental Psychology: General*, *138*(4), 449-468.