BIRKBECK, UNIVERSITY OF LONDON

Module/Occurrence Code: FFPS079H4ACB

Subject Area: Psychology

Module Title: PROBLEM SOLVING AND DECISION MAKING (COGNITIVE PSYCHOLOGY)

Award Designation: Psychology (Certificate of Higher Education) Applied Psychology (Certificate of Higher Education)

Level/credits: Level 4, 15 credits

Class Venue: Central London

First Meeting: Tuesday 27th September 2016, 7-9pm

No of Meetings: 11 meetings

Class Dates: 27/09/16 - 06/12/15

Please note that this syllabus is provisional and subject to change prior to the class start date. Enrolled students will be notified of any changes by e-mail.

ENTRY REQUIREMENTS
No formal qualifications are required. However, all modules are taught at university level and students should be able to read, write and speak English fluently. Students new to psychology will benefit from undertaking some preparatory reading as detailed below.

AIM
To introduce the theory of problem solving and decision making as it has been developed within the field of psychology, exploring practical applications in a range of settings.

OBJECTIVES
- Discuss the development of ideas within problem-solving and decision-making
- Give an overview of research methods used within psychology including a basic evaluation of the advantages and disadvantages of each.
- Discuss the development of expertise.
- Discuss the role of creativity in problem solving.
- Explore individual, social and situational factors that may influence problem-solving and decision-making.
- Highlight current approaches, issues and debates.
- Identify the ethical issues involved when conducting research in psychology (with particular reference to harm) and the issues that arise when trying to generalise results (for example across cultures).
- Discuss applications within the students’ own lives.
- Support and develop students' study skills.
- Support students to take part in the assessment process.
- Build students’ confidence in presenting their own ideas and in critical thinking.
LEARNING OUTCOMES
By the end of this course you will be able to:

- Explain the process by which expertise is developed and apply this to some area of your own life.
- Discuss the range of factors which influence creative problem-solving.
- Explain the social factors and individual differences which influence problem-solving and decision-making.
- Explain factors which may confound problem-solving and decision-making and identify possible strategies for avoiding common sources of bias and error.
- Discuss possible applications of theories of problem-solving, decision-making and expertise.
- Identify current approaches and debates, focusing primarily on information processing models.
- Recognise a range of research methods that might be appropriate to the study of this area of psychology (identifying strengths and weaknesses of core methodologies, including both qualitative as well as quantitative approaches).
- Identify the ethical issues when conducting psychological research (with particular consideration of harm).
- Demonstrate an appropriate awareness of cultural considerations in the evaluation of theory and research.
- Think critically about the subjects covered.
- Present your own ideas about issues addressed on the course.
- Discuss and implement a range of strategies to support your learning.
- Successfully plan and write essays or other assignments which have been set to support your learning on this course.

CONTENT
In this course we will explore the answers to the following questions:

- What is a problem?
- How has problem-solving been studied over the years?
- How do we go about solving problems we are familiar with and problems we have not previously encountered?
- What is an expert and how do we become one?
- What are some of the factors that affect our judgement when we are making decision?
- How have models of decision-making changed over the years, and what models are currently emerging?

It is expected that 75% of the syllabus content will be covered.

TEACHING AND LEARNING METHODS
A range of teaching methods may be used e.g. lectures on the area being studied - students are encouraged to ask questions and discuss points throughout. There may also be small group exercises with feedback to the large group to provide an opportunity for clarification of ideas and discussion. Other methods may include: videos, experiments, student presentations, discussion of published articles, etc. Students will be given help with study skills.

Credit points are used to summarise and describe the amount of learning taking place for a given module. For a 15 credit point module this equates to 150 hours most of which is comprised of independent learning. Normally 22 hours would be delivered in the classroom but it may sometimes be necessary to cover a small part of the learning by other means such as directed independent learning.
As such students should also expect to build on their learning in class by undertaking guided independent study including appropriate reading and research. Further details can be found in the appropriate Course Handbook as detailed below.

METHODS OF ASSESSMENT
The assessment process gives students important opportunities to learn, to check their learning and to discuss their progress with the tutor. Consequently, students will be expected to prepare two pieces of coursework for assessment. One will be written under timed conditions in the classroom. The other may take a variety of forms such as essays, case studies, reports and possibly class presentations. This piece will be 1,500 words in length (or the equivalent). You are encouraged to discuss with your tutor the particular topics and the type of assignment you would like to focus on in your assessments. It may be possible to accommodate your personal interests within the syllabus.

Timed Essay:
w/b 14 November 2016

Regulations regarding assessment are detailed in the appropriate Course Handbook, which will be circulated electronically prior to the course start date. Students are strongly advised to read the Course Handbook prior to commencing their studies.

The module is part of the Psychology (Certificate of Higher Education) and Applied Psychology (Certificate of Higher Education) awards. If the module is completed successfully, 15 credit points will be awarded, which may be transferred to some degree courses.

READING
Preparatory reading
If this is the first course you have taken in psychology it may be useful to read a chapter from an introductory text that outlines the main schools of thought within psychology and the main approaches to research methods. Particularly useful are:


Introductory books of this type cover similar material. It is the detail in each that will vary. Have a look and see which one you find easy to read, interesting and useful.

Recommended texts
You are not expected to read all the books listed below. They are examples of books that you may find interesting or useful. Your tutor will give you further guidance once the course begins.


The course lecturer may also recommend other books for use during the course.

Please note: Psychology books are frequently revised and updated. Any recent edition would be suitable to use.

**STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES**

The My Birkbeck website ([http://www.bbk.ac.uk/mybirkbeck/](http://www.bbk.ac.uk/mybirkbeck/)) is your gateway to accessing all student support services at Birkbeck.

You may find the following links particularly useful:

- Obtaining your library/ID card: [http://www.bbk.ac.uk/mybirkbeck/services/you/cards](http://www.bbk.ac.uk/mybirkbeck/services/you/cards)
- Accessing IT Services: [http://www.bbk.ac.uk/mybirkbeck/services/facilities/computing/username](http://www.bbk.ac.uk/mybirkbeck/services/facilities/computing/username)
- Study skills support: [http://www.bbk.ac.uk/mybirkbeck/services/facilities/support/study-skills](http://www.bbk.ac.uk/mybirkbeck/services/facilities/support/study-skills)

You can visit the My Birkbeck helpdesk on the ground floor of the main Birkbeck building on Malet Street (entry via Torrington Square). For details of opening hours visit: [http://www.bbk.ac.uk/mybirkbeck/services/facilities/helpdesk/](http://www.bbk.ac.uk/mybirkbeck/services/facilities/helpdesk/)

You can also call the helpdesk on 020 7631 6316.

**LIBRARY AND STUDY SKILLS RESOURCES**

Once you have your ID card, you may use the Birkbeck library and associated resources. You may find the following web links helpful:

- For information on how best to access the resources available for psychology students through Birkbeck College Library, students may wish to work through the tutorial available at [http://www.bbk.ac.uk/lib/life/](http://www.bbk.ac.uk/lib/life/)
- For specific guidance for psychologists and psychology students on getting the best out the internet go to: [http://www.vtstutorials.co.uk/](http://www.vtstutorials.co.uk/) - and search for ‘Psychology’
- For specific guidance on how to avoid plagiarism in your course work go to [https://connect.le.ac.uk/p50066682/](https://connect.le.ac.uk/p50066682/) and press the ‘play’ button.
COURSE EVALUATION
During the course students will be asked to complete an evaluation form which gives the opportunity to provide feedback on all aspects of their learning.

WHAT CAN I DO NEXT
It is important you are clear which award the module you are enrolled on counts towards. Our website provides an overview of each Certificate award so you can decide which best suits your needs: http://www.bbk.ac.uk/study/2014/certificates/subject/psychology/

Information is available on core and option modules for each Certificate. Your choice of subsequent modules you take should be informed by this information. Modules can be taken in any order although it is recommended that certain core modules are taken first. Not all core modules have to be taken in the same year. If you need further advice you can contact the department by telephone on 0203 073 8044 or by e-mail: psychologycert@bbk.ac.uk

Revised July 2014