COGNITIVE SCIENCE COURSE REVIEWS 2015-2016

MATH 222 – Multivariable Calculus (Xu, Fall 2014)

Multivariable calculus is interesting if you're into mathematics, and will likely go well if you enjoyed (or did well in) previous calculus classes. For the cognitive science program, it is a prerequisite only for COMP 558. Overall, if you enjoy mathematics or are interested in areas of computer science that require it, go for it. The course has several written and WebWork assignments as well as one midterm and a final exam. Dr. Xu generally follows the textbook, and I would strongly recommend investing in it to get a better understanding of the content.

PSYC 204 – Introduction to Psychological Statistics (Amsel, Fall 2014)

I had about as good of an experience with an intro stats class as I possibly could have with PSYC 204. Amsel is an engaging prof, and lectures with lots of enthusiasm. There were a few relatively easy assignments that you can continue to correct and receive higher marks on, plus a midterm and a cumulative final exam. We covered all of the stats basics, the course moved at moderate pace, and there were plenty of practice problems provided!

PSYC 211 – Introduction to Behavioral Neuroscience (Chudasama, Winter 2015)

PSYC 211 covers many different aspects of the study of behavior and the brain. The first few lectures were dedicated to learning basic neural anatomy and methods for conducting behavioral research (which required a lot of memorization but wound up being super helpful for a few of my other psychology courses as well). The rest of the lectures were devoted to a myriad of interesting topics in neuroscience, from learning and memory to emotion and addiction. There were two equally-weighted midterms and a final exam, all multiple choice. Chudasama is a great lecturer and a fair examiner, and this class is a great intro-level neuro course.

PSYC 212 – Perception (Balaban, Fall 2013)

This course is an excellent course in the study of how our sensory inputs functions, how they become the representation of our surroundings, and how we are receptive to our environment. PSYC 212 materials may need some heavy memorization on the meticulous, information; however, the course is fair and fascinating. As all the information is on a more macroscopic level and it makes you appreciate more to learn something that you experience every second. Professor Balaban organize the course amazingly and he synchronizes his material nicely with the textbook, so it is helpful to follow along with the textbook reading. The course is lecture based, has one midterm (30%), and one final (70%), where both are multiple choices.

PSYC 213 – Cognition (Levitin, Winter 2015)

This course is an excellent introduction to various areas of cognitive psychology, and touches on all of the cognitive science streams, but generally from a psychological and occasionally philosophical perspective. There are two open-book midterms and an open-book final covering the (non-recorded) lectures and the readings, which cover similar (but not always identical) content. When taught by Dr. Levitin, guest speakers gave the majority of the lectures, often on a subfield they specialized in. While this did make keeping track of testable content difficult, it did give a good introduction to the topics.

PSYC 341 – The Psychology of Bilingualism (Irina Pivneva, Winter 2015)

This class was given as a 6pm 3 hour lecture once per week. The book given with the course was quite short and interesting, with some side readings (mostly experiments). Pivneva sticks to the format of the book and the readings, so everything is explained. The midterm itself was quite difficult due to the multitude of different terms as well as the fact that the multiple questions themselves had a lot of writing (all multiple choice but each option was 1-2 sentences long). However, Pivneva took our feedback and reduced that for the final which was much easier. The topics covered in class however are interesting- especially for a bilingual person!

COMP 250 – Intro to Computer Science (Precup, Winter 2014)

This course is a great introductory course to computer algorithms: from the basic data structure, algorithms analysis, to programs testings. It does require some familiarity in basic computer science and mathematics; however, the professor is really approachable to talk about the suitability of the courses with the students. The material for this course may be a bit overwhelming because a lot of new concepts are introduced. But it lays a good foundations for those interested in computer science. The assignments for the courses is a bit challenging, but it is worth 45%, written based midterm is 15%, small MC quiz 5%, and a written based final of 35%.

LING 201 – Introduction to Linguistics (Milne/Shimoyama, Fall 2014)

This course was a great introduction to linguistics and its sub-disciplines. The course was broken up into six units, one per subfield (phonetics, phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics, and pragmatics), and each prof taught for three units. We had one graded assignment per unit (six total), a midterm in the middle of the six units, and a cumulative final exam. I thought that the structure of LING 201 was great: each unit was only a few weeks long, so the professors really focused on providing an overview of the most interesting topics within each subfield of linguistics. The marking was really fair, and the short assignments accounted for a large percentage of the final grade.

LING 330 – Phonetics (Milne, Winter 2015)

LING 330 is a fabulous arts course for the more science-minded Cog Sci student. The content was super interesting: we talked about mechanisms of speech production, speech processing, inter-language variations (such as click languages versus English), and intra-language variations (such as American English versus Canadian English). We also learned to use Praat, a software for speech analysis, to complete assignments. The prof was excellent and super passionate, and a very fair marker. We had about eight fun assignments that made up most of the final grade, plus a midterm and a cumulative final exam.

LING 371 – Syntax I (Travis, Winter 2015)

This course focuses on the structures of different languages and the rules that underlie all of them. Since a lot of those rules are still up for debate, this course is really interesting in that the course material can change from year to year. This course is definitely one of the more challenging linguistics courses at McGill, just because there's a big learning curve associated with drawing the tree diagrams that are needed to analyze sentences in any given language. Most of the assignments involve tree-drawing and can be challenging, but are definitely doable and count towards a large percentage of the final grade. There is also a midterm and a cumulative final exam.

COGS 401 – Research Cognitive Science 1 (research professor)

COGS 401 depends on your research supervisor and what project you are undertaking. I truly enjoyed this research course since I was able to undertake my own project within a lab. At the end of the course you are required to write a 10-20 page paper on your research that is graded by your supervisor. Although this may seem intimidating, taking this course in a particular field that you are interested in will make the paper much easier to write- and can feel rewarding once finished.