EXERSCI 711

Exercise and Performance Psychology
(15 Points)

(Semester 2, Newmarket Campus)

Who should take this course?

This course is designed for postgraduate students (BSc Honours, PGDip, MSc and PhD students) who are interested in exercise motivation, behaviour change, and – in particular – how psychological states can affect human motor control and performance.

Regular exercise positively influences mental health and well-being. At the same time, however, adverse psychophysiological states may negatively influence exercise motivation and alter our ability to adequately control movement. In sports, athletes push themselves to the limits. In exercise rehabilitation, patients work hard to regain functionality. Regardless of the setting, pressure to perform well can induce psychophysiological responses (e.g., stress, anxiety, fatigue) that impair cognitive functioning and limit effective control of movement. In EXERSCI 711, you will learn to understand these processes and – based on critical evaluation of the literature – consider evidence-based interventions that help people improve their behaviour and performance in those situations where it counts the most.

In the course you will (i) be introduced to principles of exercise motivation and behavior change; (ii) review contemporary research investigating the impact of psychological factors on perceptual-motor performance (and vice versa); (iii) engage in critical discussion of contemporary research; and (iv) learn to express your own ideas and opinions in the form of review reports and a commentary article.

Learning outcomes

Upon successful completion of the course you will:

1. Be able to illustrate and explain basic principles of exercise motivation and behaviour change
2. Be able to explain how psychophysiological states (e.g., stress, fatigue, sleep) (i) may be brought about in specific performance situations (e.g., work, sport, rehabilitation); and (ii) may impact exercise behaviour and the cognitive control of movement.
3. Be able to critically evaluate interventions that aim to increase exercise behaviour and improve performance in high-pressure contexts
4. Have developed demonstrable competency in critically assessing empirical evidence (as published in journal articles) and expressing your own ideas and opinions in writing (i.e., article reviews, commentary article) and in class discussion.

**Contact hours**

One 3-hour seminar per week.

The seminars consist of: i) in-depth lectures covering theory and empirical research on exercise, sport and performance psychology; ii) class discussions; and iii) tutorials to support working on course assignments (i.e., article reviewing and paper writing)

**Teaching Staff**

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**Assessment**

- Assignment 1 (Report) 20%
- Assignment 2 (Commentary Article) 40%
- Final Exam 40%

**Literature**

A reading list with selected journal articles will be placed in Canvas. Please expect between 2-3 hours of reading time for each weekly seminar.

**Note.** To successfully complete the course, existing understanding of basic concepts in Exercise, Sport and Performance Psychology (e.g., motivation, anxiety, attention, psychological skills), Movement Neuroscience (e.g., basic anatomy of the human brain, perceptual-motor control) and Research Methods (e.g., research design and statistics) is helpful. Students without prior coursework in these areas are very welcome to take this course but should realize that additional study may be required.