EXERSCI 711

Exercise and Performance Psychology
(15 Points)

(Semester 2, Newmarket Campus)

Who should take this course?

This course is designed for postgraduate students (doctoral and subdoctoral) who are interested in how psychological states can affect human motor control and performance. In particular, the course will examine how high stress can affect the perception, selection, and execution of goal-directed action.

In sports, athletes push themselves to the limits. At work, people struggle to meet demanding deadlines. 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) that impair cognitive functioning and alter the deliberate control of movement. Developing effective interventions and helping people improve their performance under such circumstances, starts with a proper understanding of the pressure-performance relationship.

In this course you will (i) be introduced to both classic and contemporary research investigating/theorizing the impact of stress on perceptual-motor performance; (ii) engage in critical discussion of recent empirical work; and (iii) learn to express your own ideas and opinions in a practical implication paper or scientific response article.

Learning aims

1. To understand how specific elements of a performance situation (e.g., in sports, at work, in exercise rehabilitation) can induce high pressure.
2. To understand how motor performance may be influenced by psychological states associated with high-pressure.
3. To recognize and distinguish between theories explaining the pressure-performance relationship
4. To develop competency in critically assessing empirical evidence (as published in journal articles) and to express one’s own ideas and opinions in a practical implication paper or scientific response article.
Learning and Teaching

One three-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)

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.

Teaching Staff

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Assessment

Assignment 1: Article Reviews 20%
Assignment 2: Practical Implication Paper / Response Article 40%
Final Exam: 40%

• Assignment 1 asks you to critically assess selected journal articles and to express your scientific opinion about these articles in a brief review report.
• Assignment 2 asks you to write (a) a practical implication paper (supporting application of a recent empirical finding); OR (b) a critical response article about a recently published journal article of your own choice.
• The Final Exam consists of 8-10 short answer questions and covers the content of all course lectures.

Literature

A reading list with selected journal articles will be placed in Canvas.

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