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Cognition

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Module: Cognition

Overview and Rationale:

This module will explore various aspects of cognition, including such processes as memory, learning, attention, perception and problem-solving. Students will use topical readings and Sesame Street video clips to learn about the processes by which children acquire, integrate, and understand information about the world around them.

Potential Classes: Intro Psych, Developmental Psychology, Cognitive Psychology, Learning, Perception, Education classes (e.g. Language, Literacy, and Cognition)

Potential Format and Modality: Lecture or seminar class; in-person, online, hybrid

Topical Readings:

- Bonus, J. A., & Mares, M. L. (2019). Learned and remembered but rejected: Preschoolers' reality judgments and transfer from Sesame Street. *Communication Research*, 46(3), 375-400. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0093650215609980>
- Broadbent, H. J., White, H., Mareschal, D., & Kirkham, N. Z. (2018). Incidental learning in a multisensory environment across childhood. *Developmental Science*, 21(2), e12554. <https://doi.org/10.1111/desc.12554>
- Kian, T., Parmar, P. K., Fabiano, G. F., & Pathman, T. (2021). Tell me about your visit with the lions: Eliciting event narratives to examine children's memory and learning during summer camp at a local zoo. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 12, 657454. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.657454>
- Masuda, T., Ellsworth, P. C., Mesquita, B., Leu, J., Tanida, S., & Van de Veerdonk, E. (2008). Placing the face in context: Cultural differences in the perception of facial emotion. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 94(3), 365-381. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.94.3.365>
- Olson, M. A., & Fazio, R. H. (2001). Implicit attitude formation through classical conditioning. *Psychological Science*, 12(5), 413-417. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9280.00376>
- Pezdek, K., & Stevens, E. (1984). Children's memory for auditory and visual information on television. *Developmental Psychology*, 20(2), 212-218. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0012-1649.20.2.212>
- Whittaker, J. V., & McMullen, M. B. (2014). Preschool: Good thinking! Fostering children's reasoning and problem solving. *YC Young Children*, 69(3), 80-89. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/ycyoungchildren.69.3.80>

Video Clips:

Attention

- [Whole Body Listening](#) (1:30)
 - Summary: Elmo has school online, but is having trouble paying attention. When his teacher and classmates notice his lack of focus, they help guide him through the steps needed to calm his body and concentrate.

Sensation and Perception

- [Sesame Street: Ernie Explores His Senses](#) (2:35)
 - Summary: Ernie explores his five senses while Bert unsuccessfully tries to read a book.
- [Learn Through the Senses](#) (1:27)
 - Summary: Multiple parents help facilitate their child's learning about the world around them through exploration of the five senses.

Memory

- [Sesame Street: The Remembering Game with Cookie Monster](#) (4:57)
 - Summary: Guy Smiley hosts The Remembering Game with special guest Cookie Monster. Cookie Monster and other contestants have to remember the placement of matching pictures in order to win the game.
- [Sesame Street: I Can Remember](#) (1:51 total, stop at 1:06)
 - Summary: A mother sends her daughter to the grocery store. The young girl tries to remember her mom's shopping list as she speaks with the store's cashier.

Learning

- [Just Ask a Question!](#) (1:52)
 - Summary: Abby and friends sing a song about the importance of asking questions when learning new things.
- [How Children Learn with Chris and Abby](#) (1:48)
 - Summary: Chris and Abby play together and explain that, as they do so, they are practicing skills crucial for brain development.

Activities:

General Cognition

- Before class, have students read the Kian et al. (2021) and Bonus & Mares (2019) articles on learning and memory. Divide students into pairs or small groups to consider the relationship between learning and memory and discuss factors that affect both of these domains.
 - *Notes: appropriate for both lecture and seminar-based classes. Could be adapted for synchronous or asynchronous online formats using breakout rooms/discussion forums*
- Assign Broadbent et al. (2018) for students to read before class. During class, show [Learn Through the Senses](#). Have students work in groups to create a lesson plan that uses multisensory information to teach children academic concepts. Each group could be assigned a specific age group (e.g. preschool, kindergarten) or educational domain (e.g. math, language arts) to center their activity around. This could be the start of an extended

group project where students create lesson plans that align with research on learning in a multisensory environment.

- *Notes: appropriate for a lecture-based class and could be adapted for synchronous and asynchronous online classes using breakout rooms or discussion boards. Could be spread out over multiple class periods (e.g. groups brainstorm during one class period, outline and synthesize materials during the next)*
- Assign the Whittaker & McMullen (2014) article on problem solving, decision-making, and reasoning for students to read before class. Put students into small groups to develop sample lesson plans similar to Sink or Float (see pg. 85 of Whittaker & McMullen, 2014).

Learning

- Assign articles on learning (e.g. Bonus & Mares, 2019; Olson & Fazio, 2001) for students to read before class. During class, show [How Children Learn](#). Have students complete a jigsaw activity, initially discussing the types of skills that children can learn through play. Divide the class into four initial expert groups, with each group focusing on a specific skill domain - social skills (e.g. communication), physical skills (e.g. coordination), cognitive skills (e.g. sustained attention), and emotional skills (e.g. empathy). Give each group a few minutes to discuss, then have 1-2 students (depending on class size) from each expert group form new jigsaw groups to consider how learning through play could continue beyond elementary school (e.g. high school and college classes).
 - *Notes: appropriate for both lecture and seminar-based classes. Could be adapted for a synchronous online class using breakout rooms.*
- In class, show [Just Ask a Question!](#) Split students into small groups or pairs to identify aspects of the video that facilitate and foster learning. Have students consider how information is presented, and how different types of cues (e.g. verbal, visual) are used in this clip.

Memory

- In class, show [I Can Remember](#). Split students into pairs or small groups to discuss the memory techniques used in this clip. Have students think about the different memory techniques they use for studying, including the pros and cons of each technique.
 - *Notes: appropriate for both lecture and seminar-based classes. Could be adapted for synchronous and asynchronous online formats using breakout rooms/discussion boards.*
- Assign articles on memory (e.g. Bonus & Mares, 2019; Kian et al., 2021) for students to read before class. During class, have students watch [The Remembering Game](#). Split students into small groups or pairs to discuss the types of memory (e.g. sensory, short-term, long-term) displayed in the video clip. Have students consider how the clip could be modified to reflect a different type of memory.
 - *Notes: appropriate for both lecture and seminar-based classes. Could be adapted for synchronous or asynchronous online formats using breakout rooms/discussion forums.*

Attention

- Show students [Whole Body Listening](#) during class and ask them to consider the influence of the learning environment on attention. Have students discuss their own experiences

with virtual versus in-person modalities, and ask them to think about how this experience might differ between age groups.

- *Notes: appropriate for both lecture and seminar-based classes. Could be adapted for synchronous or asynchronous online formats using breakout rooms/discussion forums*

Sensation and Perception

- During class, show [Ernie Explores His Senses](#). Have students work in small groups to design a handout for a sensory scavenger hunt that helps parents teach their children about the five senses. Scavenger hunts should contain a few items that appeal to each sense (e.g. “something tall” for sight, “something loud” for hearing).
 - *Notes: appropriate for seminar-based classes. Could be adapted for synchronous online formats using breakout rooms.*

Supplemental Materials and Resources:

- Sesame Street in Communities web pages containing a number of resources regarding learning in different contexts. All include articles, workshops, videos, stories, and printables:
 - [Learning Through Routines](#)
 - [Learning Through Play](#)
 - [Learning and Working at Home](#)

Related Modules

- [Executive Function](#)
- [Theory of Mind](#)
- [Academic Readiness](#)
- [School Readiness Behavior](#)
- [Fine and Gross Motor \(Physical Domain\)](#)
- [Social-Emotional Development](#)
- [Language Development](#)