Instructor: Marci Mitchell, PhD  
Email: mrmitchell@wesleyan.edu  
Office Hours: By appointment only  
Course Schedule: 1-2:30pm Monday & Wednesday

Course Overview:

This course is designed to provide students with a better understanding of motivation and reward from a behavioral neuroscience perspective. Some of the broader topics covered in this class include: the theories behind motivation, reward and reinforcement, and how they apply to feeding, drinking, sex, aggression and drugs of abuse. The first few classes are designed to provide students with the fundamental knowledge and tools necessary to understand some of the principle behaviors executed by our brain and nervous system, and will highlight the importance of neurotransmitters and synaptic transmission. For each of the subsequent topics, a brief overview of the main concepts and the fundamental knowledge needed to go further in the given field/area will be provided. A brief history and the major findings in the domain will be covered and some of the most recent discoveries or theories will be presented.

The course is organized around lectures but will include some in class discussion of the assigned readings. Lectures will often contain material that is not thoroughly covered in the readings.

Readings:
The reading list will be provided. All of the assigned readings can be found on the Moodle 2 website. Readings for the assigned lecture should be done before coming to class.
Evaluation:
Assessment will consist of the following:

Minute Papers (10% combined):
Minute papers will provide the opportunity to reflect on the class briefly. The purpose is to provide feedback on favorite or interesting topics and also those that need more explanation and clarity. Minute papers will be in-class assignments.

Midterm Exams (25% each):
The two midterms will each count for 25% of the final grade. They will each consist of multiple-choice questions and short answer questions. Questions will be drawn from both what was covered in class and the assigned readings.

Final Exam (40%):
The final exam will consist of multiple-choice questions and short answer questions.

Short answer questions will require students to briefly describe in their own words a concept or function covered in the course or to apply knowledge from the course to solve a situation or apply reasoning.

If a student misses one of the midterms with a justifiable reason, the final will count for 70% of their grade.
If a student misses the final exam with a justifiable reason, a supplementary exam will be offered worth 100%.
Missing any exam without a justifiable reason will mean a 0 for that particular exam.
Attendance and participation:
Students are expected to attend all classes and class participation is greatly encouraged. Your participation (and presence) in class is imperative to the structure of the class, so I encourage you to not skip class unless you are extremely sick or have an adequate excuse. Attendance will not be taken, but you will be responsible for all material covered, for any announcements made, and will miss out on any in-class assignments given.

It is very important that we respect each other in this class (and all courses where sensitive topics are discussed). Please be courteous to your peers and refrain from off-topic comments with your neighbor, using your cell phones (unless it is an emergency), or checking your email/Facebook/Twitter while you are in class. If you cannot refrain from these activities, I may ask you to leave class.

Students with Disabilities:
It is the policy of Wesleyan University to provide reasonable accommodations to students with documented disabilities. Students, however, are responsible for registering with Disabilities Services, in addition to making requests known to me in a timely manner. If you require accommodations in this class, please make an appointment with me as soon as possible, so that appropriate arrangements can be made. The procedures for registering with Disabilities Services can be found at http://www.wesleyan.edu/deans/disability-students.html

Academic Honesty:
You are expected to adhere to Wesleyan’s Honor Code as stated in the Student Handbook (http://www.wesleyan.edu/studentaffairs/studenthandbook/standardsregulations/studentconduct.html) when it comes to cheating and plagiarism. Academic dishonesty is an inexcusable act and none of these will be tolerated in this class. The sanctions provided in this policy will be used to deal with any violations. If I begin to suspect plagiarism, I will have you attach a signed version of the honor code to submitted assignments.