THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND
Te Whare Wānanga o Tāmaki Makaurau
NEW ZEALAND

SCIENCE
DEPARTMENT OF EXERCISE SCIENCES

EXERSCI 713

Psychology of Active Living

(15 Points)

(Semester 2, Newmarket Campus)

Who should take this course?

This course is designed for postgraduate students (BSc Honours, MSc and PhD students) who are interested in how psychological states affect human motor control and performance. In particular, the course will examine how high-pressure circumstances affect the perception, selection and execution of goal-directed action.

In sports, athletes push themselves to the limits to reach the top. At work, people struggle to meet demanding deadlines. High levels of performance pressure can induce psychophysiologal responses (e.g., stress, anxiety) that impair cognitive functioning and alter the deliberate control of movement. Whether it is in sport or at work, learning to improve performance under high-pressure circumstances, starts with understanding the pressure-performance relationship.

In this research-oriented course you will: (i) be introduced to both classic and contemporary theories explaining the pressure-performance relationship; (ii) engage in critical discussion of recent empirical work, and (iii) learn to express your own scientific opinion in a response paper.

Learning aims

1. To gain awareness of how specific elements of a performance situation can induce high pressure.
2. To gain understanding of how motor performance may be influenced by psychological states associated with high-pressure.
3. To familiarize with and distinguish between different theories explaining the influence of high-pressure on performance
4. To develop competency in critically assessing empirical evidence (as published in journal articles) and to express one's scientific opinion in a response paper.

Learning and Teaching

One three-hour seminar per week.

The seminars consist of: i) in-depth lectures covering theory and empirical research on the pressure-performance relationship; ii) tutorials about article reviewing and writing a scientific response paper; and iii) weekly discussions of recently published journal articles.

Note. A broader understanding of concepts covered in EXERSCI 304 (Sport Psychology) and EXERSCI 305 (Movement Neuroscience) will prove helpful. For students who haven't taken EXERSCI 304 / 305, additional study may be required.

Teaching Staff

Dr. Arne Nieuwenhuys
Department of Exercise Sciences
+64 9 923 7974 (office)
a.nieuwenhuys@auckland.ac.nz

Assessment

Seminar Participation	20%
Response Paper*	40%
Final Exam	40%

*The response paper assignment will ask you to write a critical response to a recently published journal article (self-selected) within the scope of the course topic.

Literature

Selected journal articles will be placed in Canvas.

Student Feedback

Feedback for the last year has been positive.