



MACF 491 (STAT 497/MAST 679/MAST 729/MAST 881), Sec. L (Fall 2026)
Topics in Stats & Probability: Reinforcement Learning

Instructor:	Dr. F. Godin
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Office Hours:	Mondays and Wednesdays, 13:15-14:45 (my office: LB Building 9 th floor).
Important:	Students should get the above information from their instructor and from the course Moodle site. The instructor is the person to contact should there be any questions about the course.
Class Schedule:	Mondays and Wednesdays, 11:45-13:00.

Reading Week

Begins on Saturday, October 10 and ends on Friday, October 16, 2026. No classes that week.

Textbook

Reinforcement Learning: An Introduction, by R.S. Sutton and A.G. Barto, 2nd Edition, MIT Press.
Available for free online at <http://incompleteideas.net/book/the-book-2nd.html>

Optional Reference

Grokking Deep Reinforcement Learning, by Miguel Morales, Manning Publications.
Available for free online at
<https://learning-oreilly-com.lib-ezproxy.concordia.ca/library/view/grokking-deep-reinforcement/9781617295454/>

Outline

This course is an introduction to reinforcement learning techniques. It requires extensive programming with the R language. Topics covered include:

- Multi-armed bandit problem
- Markov Decision Problems
- Dynamic Programming
- Tabular Methods (Monte-Carlo, Temporal difference, Multi-period)
- Policy gradient
- Approximation methods
- Deep reinforcement learning

Final Exam

It will be scheduled by the Exams Office.

NOTE: Students are responsible for finding out the date and time of the final exam once the schedule is posted by the Examination Office. Any conflicts or problems with the scheduling of the final exam must be reported directly to the Examination Office, **not** to your instructor. It is the Department's policy and the Examination Office's policy **that students are to be available until the end of the final exam period. Conflicts due to travel plans will not be accommodated.**

Evaluation

The course mark will be determined by a midterm exam (21%), assignments (15% weight), a final exam (49%) and a project (15% weight).

NOTE: It is the Department's policy that tests missed for any reason, **including illness**, cannot be made up. If you miss the midterm test because of illness ([Short-Term Absence form](#) or valid medical note required); the final exam will count for 70% of your final grade, the assignments will count for 15%, and the project will be count for 15%.

If the grading scheme for this course includes graded assignments, a reasonable and representative subset of each assignment may be graded. Students will not be told in advance which subset of the assigned problems will be marked and should therefore attempt all assigned problems.

Student Services

You may wish to access the many services available to you as a Concordia student. An overview of these resources can be found here: <https://www.concordia.ca/students/services.html>

Academic Integrity and the Academic Code of Conduct

This course is governed by Concordia University's policies on Academic Integrity and the Academic Code of Conduct as set forth in the Undergraduate Calendar and the Graduate Calendar. Students are expected to familiarize themselves with these policies and conduct themselves accordingly. "Concordia University has several resources available to students to better understand and uphold academic integrity. Concordia's website on academic integrity can be found at the following address, which also includes links to each Faculty and the School of Graduate Studies: <https://www.concordia.ca/conduct/academic-integrity.html>" [Undergraduate Calendar, Sec 17.10.2]

Behaviour

All individuals participating in courses are expected to be professional and constructive throughout the course, including in their communications.

Concordia students are subject to the [Code of Rights and Responsibilities](#) which applies both when students are physically and virtually engaged in any University activity, including classes, seminars, meetings, etc. Students engaged in university activities must respect this Code when engaging with any members of the Concordia community, including faculty, staff, and students, whether such interactions are verbal or in writing, face to face or online/virtual. Failing to comply with the Code may result in charges and sanctions, as outlined in the Code.

Intellectual Property

Content belonging to instructors shared in online courses, including, but not limited to, online lectures, course notes, and video recordings of classes remain the intellectual property of the faculty member. It may not be distributed, published or broadcast, in whole or in part, without the express permission of the faculty member. Students are also forbidden to use their own means of recording any elements of an online class or lecture without express permission of the instructor. Any unauthorized sharing of course content may constitute a breach of the [Academic Code of Conduct](#) and/or the [Code of Rights and Responsibilities](#). As specified in the [Policy on Intellectual Property](#), the University does not claim any ownership of or interest in any student IP. All university members retain copyright over their work.

Use of Concordia email

Your [Concordia email](#) is the official channel for all university communications, as required by the university's [Policy on Concordia email accounts for students and employees](#). Please use your Concordia email for all communication related to this course and check it regularly so you don't miss important information. [Learn more about how to access your Concordia email](#).

As a student, you are expected to follow the email policy and to use your Concordia email in a respectful and responsible manner. The policy helps ensure that communication across the university is secure, reliable, and consistent.

Extraordinary circumstances

In the event of extraordinary circumstances and pursuant to the [Academic Regulations](#) the University may modify the delivery, content, structure, forum, location and/or evaluation scheme. In the event of such extraordinary circumstances, students will be informed of the change.