

Academic Boredom

Prof. Dr. Thomas Götz

University of Vienna, Austria

Faculty of Psychology

Department of Developmental and Educational Psychology

Abstract

Academic boredom has been the subject of intensive research in educational psychology for approximately 15 years. One reason for this is the growing body of empirical evidence on its numerous negative effects, for instance on well-being, motivation, self-regulated learning, and performance outcomes.

The talk begins by defining academic boredom and clearly distinguishing it from related constructs such as leisure (“Muße”) and relaxation. It will also be shown that boredom is not simply the “opposite” of interest.

The talk then addresses the central causes and effects of academic boredom. A brief excursus will show that these underlying mechanisms also operate beyond the academic context, for example in museums and in spiritual contexts. With respect to the academic context, the most recent findings from a meta-analysis will be presented, along with a context that has only recently been studied: boredom during exams (i.e., test boredom).

Finally, the talk addresses possibilities for reducing academic boredom. To this end, models and findings from boredom research as well as from the broader emotion regulation literature—most of which are applicable to boredom—will be presented. These approaches to reducing boredom could serve as a foundation for corresponding interventions. As an example, a possible intervention based on Mental Contrasting with Implementation Intentions (MCII) will be presented.

Presenter:

Dr. Thomas Götz is an educational psychologist and full professor at the University of Vienna, specializing in the study of emotions in educational contexts. His research focuses on the phenomenology, antecedents, and effects of emotions in education, with a particular emphasis on boredom. Previously, he was a professor at the University of Konstanz (Germany) and the Thurgau University of Teacher Education (Switzerland), where he headed the Binational School of Education, a joint institution connecting the two institutions in the area of teacher education. In a recent international ranking, Thomas Götz was listed among the top 10 researchers in educational psychology, both for the period 2015–2024 and across his career to date. In another international ranking, he is listed among the 50 most productive scientists worldwide in the field of educational psychology (2017–2022). Thomas Götz is also highly active in third-mission activities, such as knowledge transfer and public engagement—for example, through an ARTE documentary on boredom.