

PSYCHOLOGY 100

Introduction to Psychology
Fall 2011

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Office hours: Mondays from 3PM to 4PM; Wednesdays from 11 to noon
I am also sometimes available Wednesday & Friday afternoons by appointment.

This course provides an introduction to the nature of psychological inquiry into the origins of, variability in, and change to human behavior. Topics reflect the breadth and richness of contemporary psychological science.

Structure of the course

The course comprises two lectures and one discussion per week. I will provide an outline at each lecture; it is your responsibility to make sure you are there and get one. This will be your study guide for the quizzes and final exam, which will cover material from the lectures only. I hope it goes without saying that you should attend all classes; missing classes will have both direct and indirect negative effect on your grade.

Course materials

The core readings and audiovisual materials for this course can be found on the course management system (CMS). You should read them **prior** to the class session they are listed under.

For each discussion, you should write a short, thoughtful response to the readings (300 to 500 words) and post it as a PDF on the CMS dropbox. Additionally, *choose your best point, summarize it no more than 2-3 sentences, and post your summary on the CMS site that is specific to your discussion section.* To receive credit, post these at least 24 hours before your discussion begins; you should use the remaining time to familiarize yourself with your classmates' responses.

Additionally, I strongly recommend that you buy and read a recent textbook. Doing so will be extremely helpful in helping you consolidate and expand your understanding of the lecture material. Several textbook suggestions are listed on the first session outline; copies of most of these are also available on reserve at Keefe library this semester. Please feel free to ask me about the suitability of other texts.

Summary of assignments

Unit 1 Quiz - October 7 th	10%
Unit 1 Paper due October 10 th (details to follow)	10%
Unit 2 Quiz - November 11 th	10%
Unit 2 Paper due November 14 th (details to follow)	10%
Unit 3 Paper due December 15 th (details to follow)	10%
Final exam (date TBD) – integrative, but focus on Unit 3	20%
Research participation requirement (see attached guide)	Ungraded but mandatory
Preparation (reading and posting responses) for discussion	15%
Active, thoughtful, useful participation in discussion	15%

All due dates are listed above. Given this advance warning, I expect that you will be able to complete these assignments on time: if you anticipate any conflicts (e.g., athletic events, jobs or workload in other classes, job interviews, etc.), feel free to turn assignments in as early as you would like to avoid such conflicts. **No extensions for any reason will be given without permission from your class dean. Please do not approach me about extensions. You should approach your class dean and s/he can talk to me.**

Honor Code

I expect that each student will engage in honest academic work during this class. Students should neither give nor receive assistance to others during the exams, and should complete each writing assignment independently. I take cheating very seriously, and will take steps to prevent it and determine whether it has occurred. I will report all suspected cheating to the Dean's office immediately.

Guide to Participating in Psychological Research

As a component of your Introduction to Psychology course, you will be required to participate in THREE psychology studies as a way of gaining first-hand experience with the research process. Each will last one hour at most. (*Alternatively, you may prepare written critiques of three published studies. If you would prefer to do this option, you should indicate this preference to me **no later than October 6, 2011.***)

This guide has been prepared to give you all the information you need to fulfill the research requirement by participation in studies.

SIGNING UP

At the beginning of the semester, we will add you to the research participation system, which can be found at <http://amherst.sona-systems.com>. We will use your Amherst College email and provide you with a random password that you may change once you are logged into the system. You will be able to sign up for studies, using your user ID and your password, as they become available on the Sona website throughout the semester. The website lists each study that is available by its name. It also gives the name of the researcher, any restrictions on who can participate, and a brief description of the study. A few things to keep in mind:

1. CHOOSE A STUDY THAT FITS YOUR SCHEDULE. Make sure that you are free to attend the slot you sign up for before you sign up. After you sign up, you will receive an email confirmation of your appointment through your Amherst email address, with the study's name and information about when and where it will take place.
2. PRINT AND SAVE YOUR CONFIRMATION NOTICE! Be sure you note the following four things about the experiment:

WHAT? -- name of the study
WHERE? -- location of the study (building, floor, room)
WHEN? -- date and time of the study
WHO? -- all researcher contact info (e.g., phone number)

Keeping this information is very important! Only you, the researcher, and the website know WHEN and WHERE your study will take place. Because other studies may also be going on nearby, you will need to know the study's name and the researcher's contact information.

THE STUDY

Make sure to go to your study, and please be on time! Most studies have to start on time, because many students are scheduled around the same time. If you are late, you may miss the study. Give yourself enough time to find the right place.

Researchers' time is valuable, and they often take a lot of trouble to be ready for you! Please do not sign up for a study unless you are sure that you will be able to come. If you become sick or have some kind of emergency come up at the last minute, **you can cancel your appointment on the website as late as 8 hours before the study.** If there are fewer than 8 hours before the study, call and/or email the researcher as soon as you can so that you can be rescheduled and another student may take your vacated time slot. **If you fail to show up to your time slot without properly canceling through the system or researcher, you will be penalized and the required course credits will be increased by one for each study that you miss.**

GETTING CREDIT

After each study, the person running the study will give you credit for participation on the website. Make sure that this person knows your name at the study, so she or he can give you proper credit. It may take a day or two for credit to show up on the website. You can check the website any time to see how many credits you have.

UNIT 1

Background reading: textbook chapters that introduce the field and its methods; chapters on personality, intelligence, psychological disorders and treatments for them, and the brain, stress, and health.

Wednesday 9/7 – Introduction & historical overview

Friday 9/9 – Empiricism: how psychologists think

Koerner, B.I. (July 2010). Secret of AA: After 75 years, we still don't know how it works. *Wired*. *As you read, think about the levels of explanation that have been suggested as mechanisms.*

Monday 9/12 – Discussion

How should we evaluate evidence for seemingly “pseudoscientific” phenomena?

Read this first: Jordan, C., & Zanna, M. (1999). How to read a journal article in social psychology. In R.F. Baumeister (Ed.), *The self in social psychology* (pp. 461-470).

Bem, D.J. (2011). Feeling the future: Experimental evidence of anomalous retroactive influences on cognition and affect. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 100, 407-425. *Additional links to coverage & commentary are available on the CMS; you should select some of these to read as well.*

Wednesday 9/14 – Nature/nurture debate I

Friday 9/16 – Nature/nurture debate II

Listen to *This American Life*, Episode 291, Act 2

Monday 9/19 – Discussion: Heritability

Hoffman, M., Gneezy, U., & List, J.A. (in press). Nurture affects gender differences in spatial abilities. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*.

Block, N. (1995). How heritability misleads about race. *Cognition*, 56, 99-128. *Focus on first three sections – the remainder is optional reading.*

~~France, D. (June 17, 2007). The science of gaydar. *New York Magazine*.~~
REPLACED BY: Jamison, K.R. (1995), “the troubled helix”

Wednesday 9/21 – Psychopathology

Friday 9/23 – Treatment of psychopathology

Monday 9/26 – Discussion

Depression, self-injury, and suicide prevention are topics of interest to nearly everyone. We will consider some implications of the recent explosion of psychopharmacological treatment of these phenomena.

Harris, G. (2011, March 5). Talk doesn't pay, so psychiatry turns instead to drug therapy. *New York Times*.

Kramer, P.D. (1993). *Listening to Prozac* (Introduction). New York: Penguin Books.

Solomon, A. (1998, Jan. 12). Personal History: Anatomy of Melancholy. *The New Yorker*, 46-61.

Wednesday 9/28 – Psychophysiology I

Friday 9/30 – Psychophysiology II

Listen to *This American Life*, Episode 411, Prologue

Monday 10/3 – Discussion

In contrast to our intuitions, our phenomenological experience is not merely a reflection of external, objective, physical reality, but is actively constructed by the brain. We will consider some examples of this process.

Gray, K., & Wegner, D.M. (2008). The sting of intentional pain. *Psychological Science*, 19, 1260-1262.

Sapolsky, R. (1994). Why zebras don't get ulcers (Chapter 9: pp.159-171). New York: W.H. Freeman.

Colapinto, J. (2009, May 11). Brain games: The Marco Polo of neuroscience. *The New Yorker*, 76-87.

Wednesday 10/5 – Stress, coping, health, emotions
Bring in questions you may have for the quiz

Friday 10/7 - Quiz for Unit 1

Monday 10/10 - No class; Unit 1 Paper due

UNIT 2

Background reading: textbook chapters on consciousness; sensation and perception; learning and memory; language and thought; and cognitive development.

Wednesday 10/12 – Perception

Friday 10/14 - Consciousness

Listen to *This American Life*, Episode 384, Act 2

Monday 10/17 – Discussion

As Freud is well known for arguing, our insight into ourselves is deeply flawed (if not necessary in the precise ways that he thought). We will evaluate relevant evidence.

Valdesolo, P., & DeSteno, D. (1997). Moral hypocrisy: Social groups and the flexibility of virtue. *Psychological Science*, 18, 689-690.

Dunning, D., Johnson, K., Ehrlinger, J., & Kruger, J. (2003). Why people fail to recognize their own incompetence. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 12, 83-87.

Surowiecki, J. (2010, October 11). Later: What does procrastination tell us about ourselves? *The New Yorker*.

Wednesday 10/19 – automaticity

Friday 10/21 – motivation, learning

Monday 10/24 – Discussion

Experimental psychology has provided several challenges to the idea that we have complete free will. We will consider some of those challenges and their implications.

Rigoni, D., et al. (2011). Inducing disbelief in free will alters brain correlates of preconscious motor preparation: The brain minds whether we believe in free will or not. *Psychological Science*, 22, 613-618.

Thaler, R.H., & Sunstein, C.R. (2008). *Nudge: Improving decisions about health, wealth, and happiness* (introduction: pp 1-14). New York: Penguin Books.

Wegner, D.M. (2003) The mind's best trick: How we experience conscious will. *Trends in Cognitive Sciences*, 7, 65-69.

Wednesday 10/26 – memory, thinking/processing

Friday 10/28 – memory in the courtroom

Monday 10/31 – Discussion

We will discuss psychology's contribution to (including critiques of) our legal system.

Eberhardt, J.L., et al (2006). Looking deathworthy: perceived stereotypicality of defendants predicts capital-sentencing outcomes. *Psychological Science, 17*, 383-386.

Gladwell, M. (2002, August 5). The naked face. *The New Yorker*, 38-49.

Read the *New York Times* debate “How can courts trust eyewitnesses?” (link on CMS) and look up more about the Cotton case (one resource: innocenceproject.org)

Wednesday 11/2 – Cognitive & moral development and language

Listen to the *Radiolab* episode “Innate Numbers?”

Friday 11/4 –Higher-level cognition

Monday 11/7 – Discussion

How does our moral reasoning work, and to what extent does it rely on emotion?

Haidt, J. (2001). “The emotional dog and its rational tail: A social intuitionist approach to moral judgment. *Psychological Review, 108*, 813-834.

Bartels, D.M., & Pizarro, D.A. (2011). The mismeasure of morals: Antisocial personality traits predict utilitarian responses to moral dilemmas. *Cognition, 121*, 154-161.

Wednesday 11/9 – Social cognition

Bring in questions you may have for the quiz

Friday 11/11 – Quiz for Unit 2

Monday 11/14 – No class; Unit 2 paper due.

We will make this one up via a review session for the final exam.

UNIT 3

Background reading: Textbook chapters on social psychology; Cialdini, "Influence"

Wednesday 11/16 – Social development

Listen to *This American Life*, Episode 317, Prologue.

Friday 11/18 – Close relationships

Week of 11/21 - *Happy Thanksgiving!*

Monday 11/28 – Discussion

This session will be devoted to understanding and critiquing evolutionary explanations for gender differences. We will evaluate research evidence put forward either to support or to challenge the evolutionary view.

Clark, R.D., & Hatfield, E. (1989). Gender differences in receptivity to sexual offers. *Journal of Psychology and Human Sexuality*, 2, 39-55 (you can skip pp 40-46).

Baron-Cohen, S. (2003). *The essential difference: The truth about the male and female brain* (pp. 1-12). New York: Basic Books.

Wednesday 11/30 – Conformity & obedience

Friday 12/2 – Situationism & social roles

Monday 12/5 – Discussion

A longstanding philosophical debate concerns the nature of human nature: as a species, are we fundamentally good or fundamentally bad? We will use the Stanford Prison Experiment and the BBC Prison study as lenses onto psychology's empirical contributions to this question.

Zimbardo, P. (2007). *The Lucifer Effect* (Chapter 1: pp. 3-22). New York: Random House.

Watch DVD "The BBC prison study," which I will make available to stream on the CMS. You should watch this *after* reading the Zimbardo chapter.

Listen to "The Big Ideas podcast: The Banality of Evil" - *The Guardian* – [link on CMS](#).

Wednesday 12/7 – Intergroup relations I

Friday 12/9 – Intergroup relations II

Monday 12/12 – Discussion

As we have already discussed this semester, claims about group differences are often socially and politically fraught. In this session, we will talk about what makes such claims more or less controversial and how people respond to those claims as a function of their own group memberships.

Norton, M.I., Sommers, S.R., Apfelbaum, E.P., Pura, N., & Ariely, D. (2006). Color blindness and interracial interaction: Playing the political correctness game. *Psychological Science, 17*, 949-953.

Steele, C.M. (2010). Whistling Vivaldi (Chapter 1: pp.1-15). New York: Norton.

Chua, A. (Jan. 8, 2011). Why Chinese mothers are superior. *Wall Street Journal*. *Read both this short piece and some of the nearly 9,000 comments it got, and look for follow-up pieces. Your goal is to think about how claims about difference are met.*

Wednesday 12/14 – Reflecting on psychology's success as a discipline

Lehrer, J. (2010, December 13). The truth wears off. *The New Yorker*.

Unit 3 Paper Due Thursday 12/15

Review session for final exam – Date TBD

This session is not optional because it makes up for the missed class on 11/14.