

PSY 101: INTRODUCTION TO • PSYCHOLOGICAL • SCIENCE

INITIATION IN THE KNOWLEDGE OF • THE NATURE, FUNCTIONING, AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE HUMAN MIND THROUGH • THE SYSTEMATIC APPLICATION OF PRINCIPLES RATHER THAN RELYING ON TRADITIONAL RULES, INTUITION, AND ACQUIRED SKILL
(NEW SHORTER OXFORD ENGLISH DICTIONARY, SECOND EDITION)

FALL 2018 • TUESDAYS & THURSDAYS • 2:15 – 3:35 • LSP 138

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Anonymous feedback: geoffholtzman.com/contact; list my e-mail address instead of yours

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Psychology, like all sciences, is founded on a set of *factual assumptions*, nested within a set of *theoretic frameworks*, and facilitated through the use of numerous *social and professional conventions*. These presuppositions are typically hidden from the public's view, limiting their understanding of psychological research and findings. The purpose of this course is to increase your sophistication, discernment, and appreciation in regards to the study of the mind. Like coffee, music, and sports, psychology can be enjoyed at a highly superficial level, appreciated at a deeply penetrating level, or taken in anywhere in between. You should take this course only if you wish to take the first steps toward becoming a discerning connoisseur of popular psychology. You should not take this course if you prefer only to learn about a few dozen psychological facts or phenomena, nor if you want black-and-white declarations of human universals, correct theories, or best practices.

This course is designed to prepare students to become critical consumers of psychology *outside* of an academic setting. We will explore a number of issues from multiple perspectives, but this depth comes at the expense of the breadth that would be necessary to prepare you for formal psychological study *in* the classroom. PSY 101 does not count as a prerequisite for upper-level psychology courses at F&M, nor does it fulfill the major requirement satisfied by PSY 100. Should you have questions or concerns, or if you are interested in pursuing the psychology major, the SPM major, or upper-level courses in either major, please reach out to me outside of class.

GROWTH OBJECTIVES

- Learn some of the *fundamental principles and techniques* necessary for conducting sound psychological research, and to learn how to identify their presence or absence.
- Increase your ability to *identify and articulate* intellectual insights, puzzles, and questions.
- Improve your ability to ask *probing questions* while maintaining a *civil dialogue* about intellectual and value-judgment disagreements.
- Become more *open-minded* to others' opinions, yet at the same time more *critical* of putative facts.

CLASSROOM & ONLINE DISCUSSION

You will be expected to participate in class, and class participation will count toward your final grade. Likewise, you will be expected to foster an atmosphere in which others can and do participate in class. The ultimate responsibility for fostering such an atmosphere depends on the instructor, so I will set a number of ground rules on this syllabus. These will be supplemented by ground rules we as a group decide on during the first day of class. A similar set of expectations and ground rules applies to your online class discussions on Canvas.

Language

Restriction of speech to those modes typically associated with institutions of higher learning has the potential to make individuals—and large swaths of entire sociocultural classes—feel intimidated or out of place. Such a climate is not conducive to learning nor to participation in the classroom. As such, the use of profanity is acceptable in this class. However, in light of the expectation of fostering an atmosphere of open and honest civil debate, it is not acceptable for you to curse *at* people. Nor should you curse in the context of denigrating what others have said—because while you should feel free to voice disagreement, you should not be disparaging or denigrating toward others.

Triggers

There is a great deal of debate about the value and appropriateness of trigger warnings in the classroom. Rather than wade into or take sides in this debate, I've made a purely pragmatic, practical decision not to issue trigger warnings in this class (other than the present blanket trigger warning). There are two reasons for this. First, in discussion-centered classes such as this one, it is infeasible for me to issue trigger warnings without thereby censoring students. Second, readings for this course will incidentally touch on potentially fraught issues including 9/11, air combat, deliberate electrocution, impulsive eating, and psychopathic violence. However, if there are specific issues that you would like to avoid confronting in the classroom, you should feel free to communicate them to me either directly or in the form of anonymous feedback via my website as soon as you can.

GRADING

Half of your grade will be based on your engagement with the reading material and in the classroom, and half will be based on your deeper reflection upon the material and classes. To be more specific:

Engagement

Online discussion: 15%
Reading responses: 15%
Class participation: 20%

Reflection

Paper 1 – 20%
Presentation: 10%
Paper 2 – 20%

Grading will be based on engagement with and reflection on *both* assigned readings *and* subject matter covered in class but not covered by the readings. In particular, you will be expected to master a number of concepts and know a number of definitions that will not be discussed explicitly in any text. If you want to do well in the course without attending, you had better have a loyal friend in the class who is a diligent note-taker and patient explainer. If you fail to do the reading, I will be very impressed if you somehow manage to pass and to remain well-liked by your co-discussant peers.

Online discussion grades will reflect the contribution of at least one substantive comment per week over the 15-week duration of the course.

Reading responses will be assigned at the start of at least five class periods. Each reading response is worth up to 3 points, and only your highest five grades will count toward your final grade.

Class participation grades will be updated periodically on Canvas so students can access information on how they are doing and can schedule office hours to discuss how to raise those grades if they wish.

Paper 1 will be assigned by 10/4 due by 10/11.

Presentations will be assigned by 11/20 and completed on 11/27 and 11/29.

Paper 2 will be assigned by 12/7 and will be due by 12/14.

POLICIES

All papers must be submitted both online and as hard copies by the start of the class period at which they are due. Papers submitted any time between the start of class and the end of the next day will be considered a day late. Late papers will be penalized a fraction of a letter grade for every day they are late. An 'A' paper handed in one day late becomes an 'A-'; after two days, it becomes a 'B+'; etc.

Plagiarism

Papers will be checked for plagiarism with the assistance of online tools. If any part of an assignment is not the student's own work, I reserve the right to give the entire assignment an F. However, I recognize that cryptomnesia, ignorance of the criteria for plagiarism, and the fuzziness of those criteria may lead to inadvertent copying of others' work without proper acknowledgement. I further recognize that individual differences in educational experiences may influence awareness of the nature and pitfalls of plagiarism. For these reasons, if a reasonable case can be made that plagiarism was not deliberate nor facilitated by deliberate ignorance, I may allow students to make up plagiarized assignments. Please note that this policy is more lenient than that of the College, whose official view is that "Ignorance of the standards is not an excuse and intent is not a factor in determining responsibility for misconduct" (<https://www.fandm.edu/catalog/academic-honesty>).

Electronics

The use of cell phones, tablets, and laptops in this class will count against your participation grade unless I have provided specific guidance otherwise. If you have a pressing reason that you will need to pull out your cell phone during class, you should express this to me via e-mail ahead of class and I may allow its use without penalty. If you feel that you need electronic devices to keep notes, you may speak to me privately about this, or have documentation sent to me by the Office of Disability Services. No audio or video recording is permitted in this class.

Disability & Health Accommodations

Students with mental or physical disabilities, or with chronic or acute health issues that may impact their ability to excel in class, should feel free to contact me and/or the Office of Disability Services to arrange accommodations. Through the Office of Disability Services or the Student Wellness Center, students may arrange accommodations without disclosure of their condition to me.

READINGS

The text around which this course is structured, and the only required book, is "How to Think Straight About Psychology" (Eleventh Edition) by Keith E. Stanovich. Most readings for the course take the form of individual articles posted on Canvas. Several assignments involve listening to podcasts or watching videos, so you should make arrangements to complete these assignments well ahead of time if you do not have the technology needed to easily listen to or watch these media.

COURSE STRUCTURE

Unlike traditional psychology courses, this class is not structured on the basis of *topical content*. Instead, it is structured around *methodological issues* and the *critical thinking skills* needed to develop informed opinions about psychological research. Before and after each reading in the main text by Stanovich, you will be assigned journal articles, book chapters, podcasts, and other media that illustrate the issues and skills covered in the Stanovich book. In the last six sessions of the course, we will cover vital issues that extend beyond those covered in the Stanovich book—namely, issues pertaining to the development of a psychology that recognizes and takes into account human diversity. Since the purpose of this course is to develop a specific skillset, not to cover a set number of topics, our pace proceeding through the material may result in the addition or removal of some reading assignments. **There may be changes to the reading schedule as the class unfolds.**

- 8/30 No reading
- 9/4 Kuhn (1962), "The Structure of Scientific Revolutions," pp. 1-22 & 43-51
- 9/6 Haidt (2001), "The Righteous Mind," pp. 27-51
- 9/11 Revisionist History (podcast), "Free Brian Williams"
- Talarico & Rubin (2003), "Confidence, Not Consistency, Characterizes Flashbulb Memories"
- 9/13 Stanovich Ch. 1, "Psychology Is Alive and Well"
- 9/18 Wikipedia, "Milgram experiment"
- Milgram (1963), "Behavioral Study of Obedience"
- 9/20 Stanovich Ch. 3, "Operationism and Essentialism"
- 9/25 Watson (1913), "Psychology as the Behaviorist Views It"
- "Robert Supolsky – The failure of behaviorism" (YouTube video)
- 9/27 Bloom (2004), "Descartes' Baby," pp. 3-36
- 10/2 Radiolab (podcast), "Mischel's Marshmallows"
- Mischel et al. (1989), "Delay of Gratification in Children"
- 10/4 Stanovich Ch. 5, "Correlation and Causation"
- Calarco (2018), "Why Rich Kids Are So Good at the Marshmallow Test." In *The Atlantic*.
- 10/9 **FALL BREAK**
- 10/11 Danziger et al. (2011), "Extraneous Factors in Judicial Decisions"
- Tierney (2011), "Do You Suffer from Decision Fatigue?" In *The New York Times (NYT)*
- 10/16 Glockner (2016), "The Irrational Hungry Judge Effect Revisited"
- Lakens (2017), "Impossibly Hungry Judges"
- 10/18 Stanovich Ch. 6, "Getting Things Under Control"
- Frontline (TV series), "Prisoners of Silence" OR "The Strange Case of Anna Stubblefield," *NYT*
- 10/25 Stanovich Ch. 8, "The Importance of Converging Evidence"
- Engber, 2016, "Everything is Crumbling." In *Slate*
- 10/27 Stanovich Ch. 9, "The Issue of Multiple Causation"
- National Geographic Explorer (TV series) "Born to Rage: Inside the Warrior Gene"
- 10/30 Tabery (2009), "From a Genetic Predisposition to an Interactive Predisposition"
- Jon Ronson, "Strange Answers to the Psychopath Test" (TED Radio Hour)
- 11/1 Stanovich Ch. 10, "Probabilistic Reasoning"
- 11/6 Kahneman & Tversky (1983), "Choices, Values, and Frames"
- "10 Questions for Nobel Laureate Daniel Kahneman" (YouTube video)
- 11/8 Tversky & Kahneman (1974), "Judgment Under Uncertainty: Heuristics and Biases"
- 11/13 Gigerenzer (2001), "The Adaptive Toolbox"
- 11/15 Henrich et al. (2010), "The Weirdest People in the World?" sections 1-3 pp. 61-69
- 11/20 Henrich et al. (2010), "The Weirdest People in the World?" sections 4-8 pp. 69-82
- 11/22 **THANKSGIVING BREAK**
- 11/27 Presentations on "The Weirdest People in the World?" Open Peer Commentaries
- 11/29 Presentations on "The Weirdest People in the World?" Open Peer Commentaries
- 12/4 Moss-Racusin et al. (2012), "Science Faculty's Subtle Gender Biases Favor Male Students"
- Adams et al. (1996), "Is Homophobia Associated with Homosexual Arousal?"
- 12/6 Steele & Aronson (1995), "Stereotype Threat and the Intellectual Test Performance of African-Americans"
- Radiolab (podcast), "Stereothreat"