

Introduction to Psychology (PSY 2301)

Fall Semester 2013

3 credits

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Course description: The purpose of this course is to introduce students to the field of psychology and to give a general understanding of the basic principles of psychology. Since it is intended to cover a variety of topics within psychology, it provides an overview of the field necessary for later courses.

Textbook: Davis, S.F., Palladino, J.J., and Christopherson K.M. (2013). Psychology (Seventh Edition). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education Inc. ISBN: 978-0-205-84684-9.

Additional handouts may be distributed in class, emailed out, and articles may be placed on reserve in the library.

Grading: Course grades will be based on the total number of points received on the examinations, projects and class participation.

Examinations: Examinations will be composed of multiple-choice questions and students will provide their own scantron sheets (long form, either green or brown, 50 items each side) for each examination if taken in class. Students must take the exams during the scheduled class time unless they have an excused absence as described in the Student Handbook and/or have made other arrangements with me in advance. Each exam will be worth 150 points. **NO MAKE-UP EXAMS WILL BE GIVEN!!!!!!!!!!!!!!** I mean this. Exams may be rescheduled, without penalty, only when arrangements have been made in advance of the testing date. I expect people to come to me within the first week of class if they have conflicts with the exam dates. Make-ups will only be given in the case of **verifiable** medical or legal emergencies. Verifiable means that written documentation is provided (e.g., signed doctors' notes, court appearance tickets, newspaper obituaries). The final decision concerning make-up exams rests with the instructor. If no valid excuse (in the opinion of the professor) is presented your exam grade is a zero. No cell phones are allowed on desks during exam day. In addition, calls may not be received – if you answer the phone your exam will be forfeited (unless arrangements are made with me ahead of time). There will be a total of five (5) exams, four tests during the semester and one comprehensive exam during the final exam week. However, your lowest test grade will be dropped.

Projects:

#1 Common Myth Paper: In this course, students will be required to prepare a two-page paper that addresses some preconceived idea concerning human psychology that the student believes upon entering the class. In this paper, the student will discuss the evidence, which will consist primarily of empirical studies, that either supports or refutes this idea. As part of this discussion, students should address the principles addressed in the empirical data, the ways that these principles were tested, and how the results apply to the established (or preconceived) principle. In addition, the students will discuss the relevance of this knowledge to general society and how such knowledge might be used for bettering the social (or human) condition. In preparing this paper, students will be expected to follow proper principals of grammar and syntactic structure so as to demonstrate appropriate communication skills.

#2 Social Norm & Others: This paper will explore your experience with violating a social norm. More details on these will be provided in separate handouts.

#3 Myth Busting Poster Project: The second project will ask you to investigate one of the psychological myths, that I will give a list of to the class. More details on these will be provided in separate handouts.

Class participation: I consider class participation to be one of the most important, yet underrated elements of a student's education. There are numerous elements that go into class participation: (1) Good attendance (according to University rules, students may be dropped from the class for excessive unexcused absences); (2) Arriving to class on time and **not packing up early**; (3) Somewhat frequent, and preferably intelligent, contributions to class discussion; (4) **Polite and civil** interactions with all members of the class ["All students enrolled at the University shall follow the tenets of common decency and acceptable behavior conducive to a positive learning environment." (See Student's Guide Handbook, Policies and Procedures, Conduct)]. Some elements of participation grades are difficult to objectively assign. Thus, approximately once a week in-class assignments will be completed (the day will not be announced ahead of time). These assignments may include quizzes, group projects, surveys, and problem solving sessions. Successful completion of the assignment (I am the final judge of what is successful) is worth 1 point toward your final average. In general, these assignments are designed to augment your comprehension of the material. For obvious reasons, there are absolutely no make-ups for these in-class assignments (however, I suggest that you still ask about the assignment to see if it would help you better understand the material).

Research Participation: A goal of this class is to help you familiarize yourself with research methods. One manner to obtain this goal is to have you participate in research studies. Participating in research studies contributes to students and faculty at TAMUC, your understanding of how research is conducted, and human knowledge in general. All students in this class will be required to participate in the psychology department's participant pool or complete alternative assignments (see me for more information on alternative assignments).

Students must complete a total of 6 experiment credits. However, if students complete their first 4 experiment credits without any "no-shows" you will receive 2 free punctual participant credits.

In other words, if you show up to your experiments on time you will only need to complete 4 experiment credits. When you first sign into the experiment system (SONA) you will be asked to take a prescreen. The prescreen takes about 20 minutes to complete. If you complete the prescreen in the first two weeks of the semester you will receive ½ free experiment credit. You are only allowed to complete 2 experiment credits with online studies, the remaining experiment credits will need to be obtained by participating in laboratory studies.

If you fail to complete this portion of the class your grade will be lowered by one full grade. In effect, if you have an ‘A’ in the class but fail to complete your research participation (either through participating in research studies, alternative assignments, or a mixture of both) your final grade in the class will be a ‘B.’

Evaluation:

Exams (4 worth 150 pts. each)	=	600 points
Poster Project (worth 100 pts.)	=	100 points
Common Myth Paper(worth 100 pts.)	=	100 points
Research Participation (worth 100 pts.)	=	100 points
Social Norm Paper(worth 50 pts.)	=	50 points
In Class Participation(worth 50 pts.)	=	<u>50 points</u>
Total points possible	=	1000 points

+ Research Participation

Grades	A	=	900-1000
	B	=	800-899
	C	=	700-799
	D	=	600-699
	F	=	< 600

Student Conduct and Absences: “All students enrolled at the University shall follow the tenets of common decency and acceptable behavior conducive to a positive learning environment.” Students are expected to follow the code of conduct in class described in the Student Handbook (Policies and Procedures, Code of Student Conduct). Violation of the code will lead to an initiation of the disciplinary processes described in the Handbook. Proper student conduct also includes maintaining a standard of academic honesty. This means that neither cheating nor plagiarism will be tolerated and students who engage in either will be subject to the disciplinary processes described in the Code of Student Conduct). Plagiarism essentially means that you cannot use the words and ideas of another person without giving them credit. Therefore, “quotation marks should be used to indicate the exact words of another. Each time you paraphrase another author you will need to credit the source in the text” (APA, 2001, p. 249). If you have any questions about what constitutes cheating or plagiarism please see me. *Students who plagiarize any material or engage in cheating will earn a grade of F for the course.*

Students are expected to attend all classes unless they have excused absences as described in the Student’s Handbook (Policies and Procedures, Academics). When students are absent from class

they are responsible for making up the work covered in class and speaking with me about these arrangements. More than 3 absences during the semester is considered excessive. "It is the prerogative of the faculty to drop students from courses in which they have obtained excessive absences as defined in the course syllabus. In such cases, faculty recommend through the department head to the appropriate college dean that a student be dropped from a class. The faculty member will make a reasonable effort to communicate with the student prior to recommending a drop. If approved, the college dean will forward the recommendation to the Records Office (Systems Policy 13.2)." If you miss more five (5) classes you will receive a drop in letter grade no matter what your average may be; after the first five absences, every five absences after will result in an addition drop in letter grade.

Students will be assigned seating by the instructor. If students are not in their assigned seat during a given class period they will be marked absent. The instructor reserves the right to change the seating arrangement at any time during the semester. Students who are tardy to class are required to sit in the designated area so their attendance may be verified at the end of class. Anyone more than 15 minutes late to class is considered absent for the day.

Students are responsible for following University procedures to drop a class. If you stop attending the class for any reason, you must initiate the process of dropping, or you will receive a failing grade. Plan to take care of this several days ahead of time, so that you will have the time required to get the forms signed, submitted, etc.

Cell Phones/Laptops/Other forms of Technology. Cell phones must be turned off or placed on silent during class. If you have an emergency and may need to take a call during class, please see me prior to the beginning of class and leave your cell phone on top of the desk. Otherwise, I should see no cell phones during the course of the class. Students using cell phones during class without permission may be asked to leave and will be counted absent. Other forms of technology are treated as above.

Accommodations: The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please contact:

Office of Student Disability Resources and Services
Texas A&M University-Commerce
Gee Library, Room 132
Phone (903) 886-5150 or (903) 886-5835
Fax (903) 468-8148

Finally, I can not stress enough the importance of contacting me immediately if you find that you are having trouble with the course material. Come to my office hours, use my email, ask me questions before, during, and after class. If we catch a problem early, it can be cured. I can do nothing for you when approached after the semester has been completed.