

Psychology 110: Introduction to Psychology
Summer Session B, 2025
Tuesday/Thursday 7:30 – 9:00 pm

Teaching Team:

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The psychologist finds himself in the midst of a rich and vast land full of strange happenings: there are men killing themselves; a child playing; a child forming his lips trying to say his first word; a person who, having fallen in love and being caught in an unhappy situation, is not willing or not able to find a way out; there is the mystical state called hypnosis, where the will of one person seems to govern another person; there is the reaching out for higher and more difficult goals; loyalty to a group; dreaming; planning; exploring the world; and so on without end. It is an immense continent full of fascination and power and full of stretches of land where no one ever has set foot.

Psychology is out to conquer this continent, to find out where its treasures are hidden, to investigate its danger spots, to master its vast forces, and to utilize its energies.

How can one reach this goal? ¹

¹ Kurt Lewin, 1969

Course Overview

The human mind is one of the most fascinating and complex subjects of modern science. How can we possibly hope to understand it? This course will use the tools of psychological science to offer some answers.

Course Goals:

The first goal of this course is to provide a general review of the scientific discipline of psychology. At the end of this course students should have a basic understanding of the methods that are used in the empirical study of human behavior, mental processes, and their neural and evolutionary underpinnings. Students will become familiar with many of the field's most important findings.

The second goal is to use psychology as a mirror: illuminating the workings of our minds and helping us to understand ourselves. Humans are smart and humans are dumb. Vast are our accomplishments; deep are our quirks and foibles. Psychology, more than any other discipline, explores this duality. We hope taking part in that exploration will change the way you see yourself and others.

The third goal is to help students become critical consumers of information. The mass media is full of "pop" psychology often based on poor or poorly understood science. Upon completion of this course, students should have the tools necessary to critically evaluate psychological claims, and recognize pseudo-science when they come across it. Indeed, students should be able to recognize flaws in experiments across a variety of domains outside of psychology; the class will emphasize general wisdom for consuming scientific information in the media.

Class Website

Log in to Canvas with your netID, and if you are enrolled you should be able to access the website directly. On the site you can find a current copy of the syllabus, the lecture videos, copies of all handouts and additional readings, and PDFs of slides corresponding to the course lectures.

Course Expectations

In addition to regular class attendance, students will complete several additional assignments including short written assignments, a midterm, and one comprehensive final exam. Watching the videos is essential, as they are largely distinct from the content in the other readings. Further, the lecture slides *do not contain enough text* to recreate the lecture if you have missed it. It is almost impossible to do well in this course without watching all the videos. Consider yourself warned!

Grading and Assignments

Your course grade will be based on your performance on each of the four course areas described below. Approximate weighting of different course components is as follows:

Class Participation:	20%
Midterm-level challenge questions assigned week 2-4:	20%
Normal-level response questions assigned week 1-5:	30%
Final Exam:	30%

IMPORTANT: Class participation is an essential part of this course. *If you miss more than two classes, you will automatically fail the course, regardless of how well you do otherwise. Please note that this is a Yale Summer Session rule and is outside the discretion of course staff.*

The **final exam** will be held in class during normal class times and will be "closed book," i.e., you will not be allowed to draw on any materials. It will consist of a written component and a multiple-choice component. **Please ensure you will be able to take the exam during this time!**

The **midterm questions** will be a total of 6 “challenge questions”. One of these questions will be assigned each class (i.e., twice a week) for the middle three weeks (Week 2, 3, and 4). These questions will be open book and similar format to the normal questions assigned each week.

The **response questions** will be 2-3 content questions assigned Weeks 1-5. They will be open book. These will be due at 7:30 PM on Monday and Wednesday evenings during Weeks 1, 2, 3, and 4, and on Monday at 7:30 PM evening on Week 5. More detail will be provided during the first class, but in general you should be aware that you will be turning in writing assignments twice per week and that these will represent approximately 50% of the course grade in total. The first of these assignments, due Monday before the first class, will not contribute to your grade but you will be provided with feedback to give you a better sense of our expectations.

All question responses should be submitted through Assignments in Canvas so that your TF can grade them and give comments.

It is essential that you use the Canvas ‘Modules’ page to look up the assignments in a timely manner.

Format and requirements

This course lasts five weeks. For each week, students will watch a series of lectures that were taped in 2017 as part of a standard lecture-based version of this course. There will also be other supplementary on-line lectures and readings. Each week, there are two meetings for online discussion, during the periods of Tuesday and Thursday, 7:30 – 9 PM EST. One meeting per week is with the professor; the other is with the TF, but attendance is required at both.

Please note that all times are Eastern Standard Time.

Although this is an online summer course, **the expected workload is equivalent to a typical semester-long university class**. You will watch a semester’s worth of lectures, do a similar amount of readings, do about as much writing, and have roughly the same amount of contact with the instructor and the teaching fellow (actually, this course will have much more one-on-one contact with the instructor than a lecture would!) Thus, given that an entire semester is compressed into five weeks, you should expect to devote significantly more time to this class than you would to a class during the semester.

Required Reading

There will be weekly reading assignments from several sources, including popular press articles about psychology, and empirical research articles (the “primary sources” of the discipline). There will also occasionally be videos to watch before class in addition to the lecture videos. None of them cost money; there is nothing you need to buy for this course. The schedule, below, tells you what to read and when—you should always read the listed material *before* the class that meets that day. We also provide links to a free online textbook designed for introductory psychology students, [The Noba Project](#). These readings are meant to be more general background and are, all else equal, less essential but they may be useful if you desire a broader perspective.

Academic Honesty

The exams are closed-book. Obviously, use of any written materials, or any form of collaboration is forbidden. For the written assignments, *any* use of words or ideas from other sources—including *online sources such as Wikipedia*—has to be explicitly and clearly acknowledged. For a useful discussion, see: <http://ctl.yale.edu/writing/using-sources/understanding-and-avoiding-plagiarism>

Any case of suspected cheating will be referred to the Executive Committee of Yale College. The consequences can be severe, including suspension and expulsion. Many episodes of cheating are due to stress and panic. If you find yourself in a difficult situation, *there are always better options than cheating*. If you are having problems in the course, you should always feel comfortable talking to me or your TF.

The Good News

Psychology is the most exciting topic around. Who *isn't* interested in sex, food, dreams, amnesia, multiple personalities, and the nature of evil? Who isn't interested in a class that can serve as a mirror held up in front of them, illuminating their own hopes, fears, and desires? In this course we will discuss scientific research that will astonish you. Understanding this research will require a lot of reading and a lot of thinking—but the intellectual rewards will be considerable¹.

Schedule

Note: Please see the Canvas page for the specific lecture videos to watch before each class. When a link is not provided you can expect to find the reading on Canvas under Resources/Readings/.

Week 1.

Class 1 (Tuesday, July 1st): Introduction to psychology and its evolutionary roots

Articles:

Gregory, T. R. (2009). Understanding Natural Selection: Essential Concepts and Common Misconceptions. *Evolution: Education and Outreach*, 2(2), 156–175

TED Talks:

Robert Sapolsky on the uniqueness of humans <https://goo.gl/8DkEBC>

Activity:

The evolution of trust (on-line simulation, play it! 20 minutes long). <http://ncase.me/trust/>

Background Text from Noba: *History of Psychology; Evolutionary Theories in Psychology*

Class 2 (Thursday, July 3rd): Mind vs. Brain and Sensations vs. Perceptions

Articles:

The strange brain of the world's greatest solo climber, in *Nautilus*

<http://nautil.us/issue/39/sport/the-strange-brain-of-the-worlds-greatest-solo-climber>

Once blind and now they see, in *Scientific American*

¹ Portions of this syllabus were borrowed from Dr. Paul Bloom's PSYC110 and Moralities of Everyday Life Summer Syllabus.

<http://www.grochbiology.org/VisionBrain.pdf>

Background Text from Noba: *The Brain; Attention; Vision*

Week 2.

Class 3 (Tuesday, July 8th): Unconscious; Clinical psychology; Methods pt. 1

Articles:

Simmons, J. P., Nelson, L. D., & Simonsohn, U. (2011). False-Positive Psychology: Undisclosed Flexibility in Data Collection and Analysis Allows Presenting Anything as Significant. *Psychological Science*, 22(11), 1359–1366.

Surviving anxiety, in *The Atlantic*

https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2014/01/surviving_anxiety/355741/

Background Text from Noba: *Thinking Like a Psychological Scientist; Research Design; Schizophrenia Spectrum Disorders; Mood disorders; Anxiety and related disorders; Dissociate Disorders; Personality Disorders; Therapeutic Orientations*

Class 4 (Thursday, July 10th): Learning; Thinking; Methods pt. 2

Articles:

Tversky, A., & Kahneman, D. (1974). Judgment under uncertainty: Heuristics and biases. *Science*, 185, 1124-31.

Can behavioral science help in Flint? In *New Yorker*

<https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2017/01/23/can-behavioral-science-help-in-flint>

Background Text from Noba: *Conditioning and Learning; Judgment and Decision Making*

Week 3.

Class 5 (Tuesday, July 15th): How to Remember and How to Forget

Article:

The abyss

<https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2007/09/24/the-abyss>

Background Text from Noba: *Memory (Encoding, Storage, and Retrieval); Forgetting and amnesia; Eyewitness Testimony and Memory Biases*

Class 6 (Thursday, July 17th): Development

Articles:

The Baby Lab, in *New Yorker*

<http://archives.newyorker.com/?i=2006-09-04#folio=090>

Alternative link:

<https://www.proquest.com/docview/233134258?accountid=15172&parentSessionId=xA9LQIQMv0ezvpeVcAeme9JGVUhhhj%2FTR140k7bIGBk%3D&pq-origsite=summon>

Bumping into Mr. Ravioli, in *New Yorker*

<https://goo.gl/nfqyZ4>

Background Text from Noba: *Research methods in developmental psychology*

Week 4.

Class 7 (Tuesday, July 22nd): Language and Personality

Articles:

Science of Success, in *The Atlantic*

<https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2009/12/the-science-of-success/307761/>

The man who couldn't speak

<https://blogs.scientificamerican.com/literally-psyched/the-man-who-couldnt-speakand-how-he-revolutionized-psychology/>

Background Text from Noba: *Language and Language Use; Personality Traits; Personality Assessment; Intelligence; The Nature-Nurture Question*

Class 8 (Thursday, July 24th): Emotion and Sleep

Article:

The moral instinct, in *New York Times*

<http://www.nytimes.com/2008/01/13/magazine/13Psychology-t.html>

The moral life of babies, in *New York Times Magazine*

<http://www.nytimes.com/2010/05/09/magazine/09babies-t.html?pagewanted=all#>

Ted Talk:

Dan Gilbert on why we're happy <https://goo.gl/QfNM3x>

Background Text from Noba: *Functions of Emotions; Culture and Emotion; Affective neuroscience*

Week 5.

Class 9 (Tuesday, July 29th): The Mind in Social Context

Articles:

Rosenhan, D.L. (1973). On being sane in insane places. *Science*, 179, 250-258.

The root of all cruelty? In *New Yorker*

<https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2017/11/27/the-root-of-all-cruelty>

Hellhole, in *New Yorker*

<https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2009/03/30/hellhole>

Background Text from Noba: *An introduction to Social Psychology; The Psychology of Groups; Prejudice, Discrimination, and Stereotyping*

Class 10 (Thursday, July 31st): Final exam