



PSY 101: Introductory Psychology (Honors)

Fall, 2009 (M/W/F, 1:00-1:50, 9a-112)

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Textbooks:

Psychology: The Pearson Custom Library (2009). This is a customized compilation of works from various authors, made specifically for this class.

Introductory Psychology:

(3 credit hours): An introductory survey of the major concepts in the scientific study of human behavior, human development, motivation, learning, personality, individual differences and social behavior. Dual emphasis is placed upon understanding, integration and application to real life as well as theoretical and methodological issues. (SUNY-SS)

This is the *honors* section of introductory psychology, and expectations regarding student readiness, workload, and participation are increased accordingly. All honors courses qualify as “writing intensive,” and sufficient formal and informal writing assignments are built into the course to satisfy writing intensive requirements; these are described in more detail below.

Psychology is a science; it attempts to *scientifically* figure out how and why we act and think, which means it relies on explanations, predictions, and conclusions emphasizing evidence gathered through methods designed to eliminate erroneous results. Some of the basic questions psychologists try to answer are things like: How does a person know what's going on around him? Why do we see what we think we see? How do we remember and forget things? Why do we act at all? How do we learn new tricks? What mental abilities do babies have? How do mental abilities change as we get old? Why do we behave differently when other people are around? How do we know who to like and to love? What happens when things go wrong – how does a person qualify as having a behavioral disorder? How are behavioral and mental problems dealt with?

To answer questions like these we have to learn the language and the methods of psychology – that is, the ways psychologists describe things, and the ways they get at answers. The language of psychology makes it possible to avoid problems commonly created by unclear manners of speech or writing. We learn psychology's concepts to gain precision when describing behavior and mental processes. And the methods of psychology – scientific methods – allow us to escape the constraints and unguarded errors of uncritical beliefs and opinions and peer pressure and gut feelings. Using scientific methods, we search for realities beyond our desires and insights – answers that withstand the tests of skeptical scientific scrutiny. As with any important field of inquiry, this course raises as many questions as it answers.

Some problems with psychology: Students often think psychology is going to examine problem cases: the insane, distressed, incontinent, otherwise disordered, and so forth, along with some pop themes like learning styles, actualizing self-potential, detoxifying relationships, and maintaining some type of balance in the brain (like “chemical” or “right and left”). In reality, however, most of what psychologists study is focused on *normal* people and the attempts to explain how a normal person functions mentally and behaviorally, and that in detail. We don't worry about “what makes some people so arrogant” as much as we worry about things like “how is it possible to see in color?” Interest in insanities, mental illnesses, etc. is a part of psychology, but it's only a small part. Additionally, students often think psychology is going to be easy; after all, it sounds fun. But if it were easy we'd know more about psychology than we know about physics. (I'm not the first to say that.) In other words, explaining atomic energy or predicting the trajectory of a rocket as it passes Jupiter is easy; explaining happiness or predicting a person's behavior as he enters a situation is tough. But both use the same principles – those of science. Students

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are often surprised about how scientific, or methodical their psychology courses are. Finally, almost everyone comes to their first psychology class with assumptions and beliefs about how people function, what's good for people, where personality comes from, etc. We often cling to these assumptions and beliefs because they've gotten us through years of life and they may have been acquired from persons we respect highly (parents, friends, teachers, clergy, oneself, Dr. Phil...). In other words, we just *know* they can't be wrong. But in psychology we look at the human creature from a rather sober, scientific viewpoint, and what we see often challenges many of our thoughts – even those we're most certain of. What this means for you, the student, is that you have to come to class prepared to be exposed to explanations of mind and behavior that may seem counterintuitive, and you also should be prepared to confront scientific evidence that contradicts, and probably shatters, some of your beliefs. This may seem simple in print, but heed the warning: without an open mind, willing to learn what *psychologists* have discovered about behavior and mental processes, you probably won't do as well in class.

General purpose and objectives:

*The broad objectives of this course are twofold: one, to introduce you to the work of psychologists, and two, to contribute to the larger puzzle that is your general education. It's expected that you will understand each of the sections described in the outline of lectures and assignments (page 4 of this syllabus) well enough to explain and in some cases apply or analyze them in writing. Within each section there are many concepts, findings, and theories that you are expected to recognize and comprehend, though they are too numerous to list here. You should also be able to comprehend and evaluate, with a *skeptical* eye, the various discussions going on around us – in the media and in private – that have to do with reasons and tendencies of human behaviors and the functioning of the human mind. Successful completion of this course will prepare you for further study in psychology.

The departmental course learning outcomes for PSY 101 state that successful students should:

- demonstrate familiarity with basic theories and concepts across a broad range of psychological topics;
- recognize examples and applications of the concepts of psychology;
- identify the terminology used within psychology to describe human behavior and mental processes;
- recognize scientifically established explanations for human behavior and mental processes; and
- distinguish psychology as a scientific study of the mind and behavior from its clinical and therapeutic applications.

*A secondary objective, as always, is to contribute to your general education: developing the attitudes and behaviors (especially those expressed through written communication) that are necessary to survive and thrive in college and beyond, and to become successful college-educated people.

Grades:

There will be five short-essay styled tests and your combined test grade is worth **40%** of the final course grade (in other words, each test is worth 8% of the total course grade). We'll have two formal term papers each worth **15%** of the total course grade, and a variety of pass-fail homework assignments worth **25% total** (combined). Attendance *and active involvement* in class is worth **5%** of your total grade. There is no final exam. You'll need a total score of "90" for an A– (which is usually difficult to achieve), "80" for a B–, "70" for a C–, and so on when all is completed.

(Anyone using documented testing accommodations must inform me one week before the test.)

The term papers and written homework assignments will be detailed in class. You'll have numerous options to choose from for the term papers, and the homework will usually consist of informal writing and reporting on a variety of assignments (such as critical analyses, informal research, reaction papers, journals, etc., conducted alone or in some cases as group work).

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The following guidelines apply to all assignments. (Also see the last page of this syllabus for some tips on writing.)

The term papers should each be 1000 – 1500 words in length. Term papers will be graded for thought content, clarity, and English (grammar, syntax, spelling, organization, etc.). *All assignments (including homework) should be typed or submitted electronically.* Computers are available for your use at the MCC Electronic Learning Center. Papers should be double-spaced, neatly ordered, and stapled together. See the tips for writing at the end of this syllabus. If you're not in class you may submit assignments by E-mail as attached documents (in Word, RTF, PDF, or Open Office formats); see my E-mail address on page one.

Homework assignments will generally be graded for content and clarity only, and on a pass-fail basis, though I use two levels of passing (high: symbolized by P+, equivalent to an A; and regular: symbolized by P, equivalent to a C+). English writing errors will be treated leniently on homework assignments, but your work must be neat and must successfully communicate your thoughts. I might refer you to the Writing Center based on your writing skills, and I expect you to go there for tutoring if I do.

In-class tests will be graded for content and clarity only, and will receive a letter grade. English writing errors will not count on in-class tests; however, errors that interfere with clarity communicating your understanding (such as syntax errors that change the meaning of your thoughts) often result in lower grades.

Quirks about the way I grade: A checkmark (✓) is a good sign. It means “yes,” or “right,” or “good.” If I actually write “good,” I really mean it; I use superlatives (“great paper,” “excellent”) as rarely as I use my cell phone (which I usually can't even find). On the whole, when I grade your written work, I point out weaknesses and errors in the optimistic hope that you'll learn to correct them in the future. It also expresses my assumption that your self-esteem is not so important, or so fragile that it'll crush under the weight of a short series of corrections from a college teacher.

If you're not satisfied with the grade on a term paper or homework assignment, you may rewrite it and hand in an improved version. The rewritten work is eligible for a maximum one letter grade improvement (i.e., a change in grade is not guaranteed, and the maximum improvement will be one full letter, such as from B- to A-, or on homework, one full step, such as from P to P+), however, I will not provide comments or justifications for the rewritten work. This option does not apply to tests or assignments turned in late. Rewrites are due within one week after you get your graded assignment back.

Assignments turned in late will be devalued one-third of a grade (e.g., from B to B-) for each class period, and are ineligible for rewriting (for a grade change). However, due-date extensions can be given for consecutive *legitimate excused* absences, such as jury duty, military deployment, MCC sport team travel, or hospitalization. It is always better to hand in an assignment late rather than not at all.

In-class tests will *sample* your knowledge and understanding of the material studied in the sections covered by each test (e.g., test 4 will only cover material subsequent to test 3, but will have only a few questions rather than a thorough quizzing of all topics; anything studied or assigned is “fair game” for a test, though I might decide, in class, to eliminate some material from tests).

Michael S. Ofsowitz:

Born and raised here in the Rochester area. Studied psychology and sociology at The University of North Carolina-Charlotte, before going to Tulane University (New Orleans) for graduate study in social psychology. I joined Monroe Community College in the Fall, 2002, and spent 13 of the preceding years teaching to (mostly) Americans in Europe (in military environments) with the University of Maryland. I teach psychology (intro, social psych, behavior mod, superstitions, development) and have taught sociology (intro, social problems, social psych, self, American society). I'm recently widowed, have one child (a son), enjoy French food, forests, and comedy. I'm an assistant professor here at MCC. Feel free to call me anything polite (Mike, Michael, Mr. Ofsowitz, professor, or “teach”; ... just about anything but “sir”). I have a web site at <http://web.monroecc.edu/mofsowitz>.

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OUTLINE OF LECTURES AND ASSIGNMENTS:

*(The dates below represent the start of each week only. You should read all material **prior** to the class scheduled so that you'll be prepared to participate in class discussions. We won't discuss everything from the readings in class, but you'll be held responsible for it all. By reading beforehand you'll also be able to ask about confusing material during class. You should re-read the assignments after class, taking notes while you do, so that it'll really sink in. Note that some chapters are traditional survey textbook chapters while others are shorter and limited in focus.)*

- Week 1 (9/8):** Introduction to psychology as a science (**chapter 1**).
- Week 2 (9/14):** Psychology as science, pseudoscience, and common sense (**chapters 2 & 3**).
- Week 3 (9/21):** **TEST 1.**
Biologically-based predispositions: Evolution, adaptations, genes, and their influence on behavior (**chapters 4 through 7**).
- Week 4 (9/28):** What is personality? Can we measure it? Does it constrain us? (**chapters 8 through 10**).
- Week 5 (10/5):** Back to biology: neurons and the brain (**chapter 11**). **TEST 2.**
- Week 6 (10/12):** The principles of learning and conditioning (**chapters 12 through 14**).
- Week 7 (10/19):** Abnormal behavior and therapies (**chapters 15 through 17**).
- Week 8 (10/26):** Back to science: research methods in psychology (**chapters 18 through 20**).
TEST 3.
- Week 9 (11/2):** How the world outside gets inside: sensory systems and perception (**chapters 21 & 22**).
- Week 10 (11/9):** Perception, continued.
- Week 11 (11/16):** Social psychology I: (**chapters 23 & 25**)
- Week 12 (11/23):** Social psychology II: (**chapters 24 & 26**). **TEST 4. THANKSGIVING**
- Week 13 (11/30):** Cognition: memory, memory errors, and heuristics (**chapters 27 through 29**).
- Week 14 (12/7):** Developmental psychology (**chapters 30 through 31**).
- Week 15 (12/14):** Finishing up. **TEST 5.**

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The fine print

A note on absences, make-ups, and the attendance grade:

Your attendance grade will be calculated as a percentage of classes attended, with two absences allowed without penalty, and my assessment of your readiness and willingness to participate in class discussions. I take attendance at the *start* of each class. If you miss class, you should find out from other students what went on in the class you missed. Ask them for copies of notes, detailed explanations of the material, or, if available, tape recordings. Be willing to help your fellow students, too. I'm available to clarify any problems you might have understanding course material or assignments whether or not you were absent, but I won't provide reviews for missed classes. Due to the nature of the course, any absence may lead to lower grades (e.g., on tests). If you miss class on a test/quiz day you *must* have a valid excuse and contact me ASAP. Make-up tests must be completed within one week from the original test date, unless valid excuses (medical emergency, jury duty, military deployment) keep you from returning to the classroom. (Such absences require documentation.) I'm not good about returning calls, but you may leave messages, or try to contact me "live" at 292-3223; I do reply to E-mail. If you miss the last test and fail to contact me by the weekend immediately following it, expect a grade of zero on that test; an incomplete is not a default.

Incomplete (grade of I):

The grade of I, or incomplete, is available for special cases where a student is unable to finish the course by the scheduled end of the term. To receive an I, students who are having problems finishing the course as scheduled must fulfill the following requirements: 1) 60% of the graded assignments must be completed at the time of the request; 2) 60% of the class sessions must have been attended by the end of the course; 3) the student must provide evidence of a valid reason for not finishing the graded assignments by the end of the course; 4) the student must request an incomplete in writing, prior to the last day of the course, and this request must include the reason for the extension and a date by which the work for the course will be completed (which should not exceed one week from the expiration of the reason for the I). Granting the grade of I, and setting a date for its completion remain at the total discretion of the instructor. For students who are unable to finish the course as scheduled, alternatives to the grade of I include the W (withdrawal, see below) and the F (failure).

Plagiarism and cheating:

Plagiarism is academic dishonesty. In other words, it's a big word for cheating. If you're caught plagiarizing, or cheating in some other form, you may wind up failing the assignment and being reported to the college. The Psychology Department's policy on plagiarism, available in the "courses" folder of the M-drive, describes the conditions that define plagiarism for this course. The most common form of plagiarism is using someone else's work as if it were your own. That is, by copying the *work* of another person and presenting that work as if *you* wrote it, you are plagiarizing. To avoid plagiarism you should learn how to paraphrase and how to use *quotation marks*. If you put someone else's *ideas* into *your own words* (and not just a rearrangement of the original words) you don't need the quotation marks but you still need to cite your source. Citing your source is necessary, but often not sufficient to avoid plagiarism.

Under no circumstances should you ever use the work of a fellow student in any of your written work. You must write your own product. Anything else is down-right cheating.

I highly recommend that you get an English manual of some sort to help you avoid some of the common mistakes that result in accusations of plagiarism. *Diana Hacker's Pocket Style Manual* is one such guidebook. I also have a web page at <http://web.monroecc.edu/manila/webfiles/mofsowitz/plag.html> that will be of help.

Respect:

- **Don't make unnecessary noise in the classroom, or use a phone during class. Really. Nothing bugs me more than to see you playing with your cell phone while I'm teaching, and nothing bugs your classmates more than you making noise while they're trying to listen to something else.**
- Try to be patient with fellow students and assume they have good intentions. They're not all as bright as you, obviously ☺. And listen to what they're saying.
- Don't dominate discussions: allow time for others, who might be shier than you, to respond.
- We're playing with ideas in class, so don't assume people believe what they're talking about.
- Take a joke, but don't insult anyone (or at least insult everyone equally and in good taste).
- Treat the classroom as a confidential situation, and don't gossip about it.
- Speak in the first person; recognize that your opinions are your own and that you don't speak for others.
- Be nice (respect others), try to learn something (respect college), and take responsibility for your future (respect yourself). If need be, at least fake it, and consider it a professional responsibility.

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Withdrawals:

To withdraw from this course, pick up a withdrawal form at the Registration Office. After completing the form, come discuss the withdrawal with me and get my signature. Return the withdrawal form to the Registration Office, the Counseling Center at Brighton, or the Student Center at Damon. You will then receive a grade of “W” for the course.

You should not assume that failing to attend class will result in an automatic withdrawal from a course. Your non-attendance may result in a grade of F and thus jeopardize your average. However, I might withdraw you from the class if you stop coming, which might jeopardize your full-time status at MCC. The withdrawal *deadline* (your last chance to withdraw) is published in the MCC academic calendar – it is usually a few weeks prior to the end of the semester.

Learning Centers:

Monroe Community College has a number of Learning Centers at Brighton (for example, Accounting, Math, Nursing, Psychology, Writing, the Electronic Learning Center, etc.) and at Damon (for example, the Integrated Learning Center, Electronic Learning Center, etc.). Learning Centers are staffed with instructional personnel and may be equipped with computers and software to assist students.

It is recommended that you use these Learning Centers to get additional assistance with concepts learned in the classroom and with their homework. Please complete part A of the Learning Center Referral form attached to this Course Information Sheet and return the form to your instructor.

The Writing Center at Brighton is located in 11-208; it accepts walk-in and appointment sessions. If your writing is at all weak, I *highly* recommend that you make use of the tutoring services at the Writing Center. It’s there to help you. Watch the feedback I give you on homework assignments: I might refer you to the Writing Center, and I expect you to go there for tutoring if I do. If you have broader reading, study habit, or language problems, I recommend the Interdisciplinary Learning Center in 11-211. The Electronic Learning Center is located in room 11-106.

Emergency closings:

If the College is **closed** due to inclement weather or some other emergency, all Rochester area radio and television stations will be notified no later than 5:30 a.m. In addition, the homepage on the MCC website (www.monroecc.edu) will display a message indicating the College is closed. Please do not call the College to avoid overloading the telephone lines.

Class cancellation information is available daily on the web or through the telephone. Simply go to the MCC website (www.monroecc.edu) and under the “Quick Links” window on the homepage click on “Class Cancellations.” Additionally, class cancellation information is available by dialing 292-2066, press “1” for the Brighton campus or “2” for the Damon campus. If possible, please use the web as there could be delays in the voice recordings based on the number of cancellations.

SOME TIPS FOR WRITING ESSAY ASSIGNMENTS

1. Always *think* before writing. Don't write a paper without thinking first. Jot down your ideas, then sort through them; discard those of little value, and arrange the others in some logical order, using an outline for organization.
2. Avoid *plagiarism* at all costs. When you copy words, an idea, or other information from another source, you *must* give credit to the original source. Failure to give credit for ideas, information, or words is called plagiarism, and may lead to failure on the assignment, or if intentional and repeated, failure in the course. (When you use the exact same words as you find in another source, such as a textbook, use quotation marks ["..."] in your paper around the copied selection when the selection is three successive words or more. If you alter the exact wording only a little, you can be in big trouble, so either copy exactly and quote, or paraphrase cleanly.) See tip five, below, for sources showing you how to give credit where credit is due, and also the "PLAGIARISM" link on my web site.
3. Begin your essay with a clear introduction. Your introduction should do two things: 1) it should introduce *the reader* to the topic, clarifying whatever concepts you introduce; and 2) it should show *the reader* what your intentions are for the remainder of the paper. End the essay with a conclusion that summarizes the paper, and draws it to a natural, clean close.
4. Be clear about what you are writing. Clarity demands that you understand what you are talking about and that you communicate it to a reader who is not reading your mind, but is reading your writing. A terse style, or one using terminology carelessly, does not make for clear writing. Also, try avoiding wordy phrases. If necessary, work on your use of punctuation, past and present tense problems, the active voice, and other aspects of the English essay (see point 5).
5. Use an English handbook to learn what you need to learn about basic writing mechanics. In addition to the rules, they show plenty of examples. Diana Hacker's *A Pocket Style Manual* is a good source, as are the *Harbrace College Handbook*, Strunk and White's *Elements of Style*, the *American Psychological Association (APA) Publication Manual*, the *Chicago Manual of Style* and other such sources (including <http://www.refdesk.com/factgram.html>). Use a dictionary *and* spell-check for spelling and a thesaurus to improve your vocabulary. Visit the Writing Learning Center for tutoring.
6. Avoid sexist or biased language. Find substitutes for "he or she," s/he, he/she, his/her, etc. (For example, pick one *or* the other.) Use unbiased phrases when referring to different types of people (no "damn Commies" when you should use "Russians"). Be polite to groups of people.
7. *Proofread* what you've written. Once you're down to your final draft (which should not be your first or even second draft, but maybe your *third* or *tenth*), give it a final, careful proof. Make corrections on the final draft in pencil before you turn it in. If you find too many errors, rewrite once more.
8. Double-space everything. This means using a 2-line spacing. (And use an 11 or 12-point font; nothing *too small* or *too large*. An 11-point Times New Roman is usually a good choice.) Do *not* add empty spaces between paragraphs as in a business letter. *Indent* the start of each *paragraph* half an inch. Leave margins around the entire text of the paper (about 1" – 1.5"). Do *not* align the text to the right margin of the paper (don't "right-justify" or "full justify").
9. Number all the pages in the upper-right corner, flush with the right margin. Follow the APA style of providing a condensed title to your pages, just to the left of the page number in the upper-right corner. The condensed title is a short version of your paper's title.
10. In my classes only: you don't need a cover sheet or title page. Make sure your name appears somewhere on your paper. Staple the pages together yourself (don't ask me to do it for you; I'm not your secretary). No plastic folders! Paper (e.g., manila) folders are acceptable.
11. **Follow the guidelines above!**