PsyA01 - Introduction to Psychology, Part I
Syllabus for the Fall of 2004

Contact Information

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General Course Information

The study of human behaviour, and the processes and structures giving rise to it, is actually extremely broad. It ranges from issues such as basic brain structure and communication, to issues such as the way the behaviour of those around us affects our own behaviour. In general, the goal of our two Introduction to Psychology courses is to give you an introduction to research and ideas across the entire field of psychology.

This is Part I of that introduction and, in it, we will focus on topics such as a Brief History of Psychological Research, an Introduction to the Scientific Process, A Discussion of Evolution in the Context of Human Behaviour, Brain Structure and Function, Basic Sensory Processes, Perceptual Processes, Memory and Consciousness.

The course is what is often described as a survey course, meaning we will try to give you a general sense of some different approaches to the study of Psychology highlighting some of the most interesting findings within each approach. Subsequent B level courses then focus on some of these approaches in more detail, and the hope is that after taking this Introductory course you will be in a good postion to (a) know which sub-areas of Psychology you find most interesting, and (b) begin your studies of these sub-areas with a good general knowledge of that sub-area and how it related to other approaches within Psychology.

Presentation of Lectures

We present the lectures for this course across the year using what we term the EduFlex approach (created by Dr. John Bassili). The EduFlex approach combines traditional and web-based lectures in an effort to provide students with additional flexibility in how and when they take their courses. Specifically, in the fall of each year PsyA01 is offered both in a traditional classroom setting (L01) and using the web (L60). As the lectures are given in the traditional section they are taped, then presented to the web-based section via streaming video. We then use these streaming videos again in the Winter and Summer terms thereby allowing us to offer this course over every term of the year. Thus, in the Fall term both traditional and web-based approaches are available whereas we offer only the web-based approach in the Winter and Summer terms. **Given this is a summer offering of this course, the lectures can only be obtained online using the "access lectures" link off of the main homepage.**

Note the PsyA02 is a continuation of this course. It uses the same text, and the same approach to teaching with both traditional and web-based sections available. However, in contrast to this course, the traditional section is only available in the Winter for PsyA02. In the Fall and Summer terms, only the web-based approach is available.

The only real difference between these approaches is with respect to the lecture itself. Whereas the traditional approach requires you to be in a certain classroom at a certain time, the web-based approach gives you far more flexibility in where and when you view the lectures. It also allows you to pause lectures (if taking notes, or if you need a washroom break perhaps) and you can also rewind if you missed part of a lecture. Given these features, many students prefer the web-based approach. For more specific information on the approach please follow the Information on Web-Based Lectures link.

The Course Textbook

The textbook we will be using for this course is called Psychology: The Science of Behaviour (2nd Canadian Edition), and is authored by Carlson, Buskist, Enzle and Heth.

In PsyA01 we will cover chapters 1 through 9 of the text in the order in

which they appear.

Note that you can either get this text new from the bookstore, or you may be able to find used copies. When purchased new, the textbook costs slightly more than $100 and comes bundled with a workbook and CDrom. Neither of these bundled bits are critical as the tests are based on the lectures and text online. However, both the CDrom and the workbook offer interactive ways of learning the same material, so they are helpful. If you are purchasing a used copy, you may want to ask if the person also has either the workbook, CDrom or both that they would throw in with it. When thinking about the price of this (yes I know how expensive textbooks are) keep in mind that you can use this text for PsyA02 and well as for this course, at least if you take PsyA02 this year. The text will likely go into a 3rd Edition next year.

In addition, the publishers of the textbook also offer a student support webpage that offers a number of features you might find useful while studying and while assessing your knowledge. Especially popular are the practice tests.

Evaluation

In previous years the only form of evaluation in this course was via two multiple choice exams. However, I have recently added a new assessment tool to the PsyA01 toolbox called the Reading, Thinking and Communicating Portal (RTCP). The goal of this tool is to emphasize that this course is not just about memorization, but is also about thinking and communicating.

Thus, your mark will be based on:

- A midterm exam worth 40% of your final mark (covering Chapters 1 through 4)
- A final exam worth 50% of your final mark (covering Chapters 5 through 9)
- Two RTCP assignments worth 5% each
- Up to 2 additional bonus marks via experimental participation (see below)

The exams will not be cummulative but, rather, each will focus on certain chapters of the text. Each exam consists of 50 five-alternative multiple choice exams (i.e., a question followed by five alternatives, one of which is most correct). The midterm will likely be in mid to late October (the date is not yet fixed) and the final will be during the final exam period (December 9 - 21st).

Note that despite the online lectures, you do have to physically come in for exams. Details about that will be posted as the time approaches. With over 1300 students in the class we will likely be writing in the gymnasium across two sittings. Note that although the exams are scheduled for 2 hour slots, they are actually 1 hour exams. It sometimes takes a little while to get everything and everyone organized prior to the exam so we schedule it into a longer time slot to insure we'll have plenty of time to get the exam in. I will provide clear information about each exam as we get closer to it.

The RTCP assignments are "web-based". Specifically, each assignment has three phases. During the first phase you log onto the system and get access to a couple of short readings, and you are asked to do two very short written assignments relating to them (as in a paragraph each). You have a few days to do the readings and write the paragraphs, and a clear rubric is given to guide you in terms of how you answer them. Once that phase is over, the evaluation phase begins. In the evaluation phase you log on again and, this time, you see and mark the answers others have given to the same question. You are asked to mark five answers for each question, and we give you a few days to do that. Finally, once the evaluation phase is over, you can log on again during the feedback phase to see how you did relative to the class, and to view comments people have provided to you. Given that this will be new to all of you, we will have a practice assignment first to get you used to the system. For further details on these assignments, see the RTCP information page.

As suggested above, it is also possible to recieve an addition 2% worth of bonus marks through experimental participation. To find out more about this follow the Experimental Participation link.

If you have questions about the course that are not answered in this syllabus, please first proceed to the Ask a Question page, and if your question is not answered there you will find appropriate e-mail addresses provided there. Thanks and good luck!!