

PsyA01 - Introduction to Psychology, Part I

Syllabus for the Summer of 2012

Contact Information



Instructor:

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E-mail:

please see the [Ask a Question](#) link

Office Hours:

Mondays, 10:30 - 11:30 am, Tuesdays 3:30 - 4:30 pm

Room Number:

S560

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 position 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 WebOption approach. The WebOption 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 Summer term (L60) thereby allowing us to offer this course two terms 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 Summer term.

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 Summer term, only the web-based approach is available.

The only real difference between the traditional and web-based sections of this course is with respect to the lecture itself. Whereas the traditional approach requires you to be in class 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.

The Course Textbook



The textbook we will be using for this course is called *Psychology: The Science of Behaviour* (4th Canadian Edition), and is authored by Carlson, Buskist, Heth & Schmatlz.

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 sometimes comes bundled with a CDrom and/or a plagiarism guide. Only the textbook is necessary for this course. 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. And, of course, it is often possible to sell the text used at the end of the course.

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

Your mark in this course will come from a midterm, a final, one peerScholar written assignments and experimental bonus marks you accumulate. Specifically, here is the breakdown followed by more complete descriptions:

- 39% of your grade will come from the midterm exam covering Chapters 1 through 4,
- 49% of your grade will come from the final exam covering Chapters 5 through 9,
- 9% of your grade will come from the peerScholar assignment which is described a little below, but will be described in more detail in a class around the time of the midterm.
- 3% comes from experimental participation, the closest thing we have to a lab in the course
- And you can get up to 3% bonus marks via voluntary Wikipedia editing!

The exams will not be cumulative but, rather, each will focus on the chapters indicated. Each exam consists of around 50 five-alternative multiple choice exams (i.e., a question followed by five alternatives, one of which is most correct). I do not yet know when the midterm or final will be because their dates are set by the registrar's office, but I will post the information via announcements as soon as I do.

The peerScholar assignment is a short written assignment in which you will be first asked to construct a short (4 to 6 paragraph) "argument". You will then be required to rate and comment on six compositions submitted by a randomly selected (and anonymously presented) subset of your peers in the class, and six peers will rate and comment on your piece at the same time. You will then be allowed to revise your composition in light of the feedback you received, with TAs ultimately grading you on the final

composition, and also on your involvement in this peer-assessment process that has been shown to help develop critical thinking skills. All of this is done via the internet. Again, a much more detailed description will be presented in class sometime around early to mid-October. Until then, don't worry about it too much.

Note that despite the availability of online lectures and online written assignments, you do have to physically be present for both the midterm and final exam. Please understand that I do not just set dates for these exams but, rather, I specify a range of reasonable dates to the registrar's office and they then set the exact day and time for the exams based on issues such as exams in other classes that my students are in (i.e., they attempt to avoid conflicts). As soon as I have specific dates I will post them in my announcements, and it is your responsibility to keep an eye on those announcements for that sort of information.

With respect to experimental participation, many senior undergraduates, graduate students and faculty conduct research aimed at better understanding psychological processes. You will read about such research throughout the course, but to make what you read more concrete another component of the class involves you serving as a participant in ongoing research. Being a participant will give you the chance to interact directly with a researcher in the context of some specific experiment, and our hope is that you will come to a better understanding of psychological research through this experience. In a sense, this is the lab component of this course. You earn 0.5% for every 30 minutes of participation up to a maximum of 3%. You use a system called TAPS to find and schedule experiments, and I will explain that system to you in around the second or third week or classes.

An alternative assignment has also been created for those who prefer not to participate in research studies. The due date for the alternative assignment will be the same as the last day to participate in research (this is typically during the final exam period). An announcement will be made on the course Blackboard page once this date has been set. Please follow the [The Academic Pool Scheduler \(TAPS\)](#) link on the course Blackboard page to find out more about the structure of TAPS and how to participate. Please address any questions you have about TAPS to the [psya01 address](#).

As suggested above, it is also possible to receive an addition 3% worth of bonus marks through voluntary Wikipedia assignments.

As a student in this class you have become part of the larger psychological community. Several organizations represent the psychological community including the American Psychological Society (APS). APS has recently put forth a challenge to the psychology community. They argue that when people want to know about anything these days, including learning about psychological phenomena or theories, they go to Wikipedia. But it turns out that the Psychology content on Wikipedia is extremely poor. So the challenge is for us, the community, to do something about this. If you're interested in being a part of this citizenship effort ... via a process that I think will teach you a lot of great skills ... then I will tell you how to do it, and how you can earn bonus marks in the process! You'll hear about that when we are near the end of Chapter 2!

Academic Integrity: The University highly values scholarship and academic achievement and takes very seriously any suspected or known cases of cheating and plagiarism. Students are highly encouraged to read the guide on [How Not To Plagiarize](#) and to take advantage of [writing resources](#) on campus. "Normally, students will be required to submit their course essays to Turnitin.com for a review of textual similarity and detection of possible plagiarism. In doing so, students will allow their essays to be included as source documents in the Turnitin.com reference database, where they will be used solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism. The terms that apply to the University's use of the Turnitin.com service are described on the Turnitin.com web site". Please note that students are permitted, under our conditions of use, to opt-out of using Turnitin and will not be penalized for doing so.

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!!

Finally, let me emphasize that students with diverse learning styles and needs are welcome in this course. In particular, if you have a disability/health consideration that may require accommodations, please feel free to approach me and/or the AccessAbility Services Office as soon as possible. The UTSC AccessAbility Services staff (located in S302) are available by appointment to assess specific needs, provide referrals and arrange appropriate accommodations (416) 287-7560 or ability@utsc.utoronto.ca. The sooner you let us know your needs the quicker we can assist you in achieving your learning goals in this course.
