

Syllabus

The Psychology of Self-Control (PSYC19H3)
Dr. Michael Inzlicht
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Course Description

According to prominent scholars, self-control is central to success across life domains, from school to work to relationships. Quite simply, self-control—also colloquially known as willpower—is thought to lead to the good life. In this lecture course, we will do a deep dive on self-control, examining how organisms exercise control, bringing thoughts, emotions and behaviours into line with preferred standards. This course will expose students to a number of classic and contemporary theories and empirical findings in the area of self-control. The topics covered in this course represent a broad selection of major themes in the field and each topic will provide students with the opportunity to develop their understanding of the field as well as learn how social, personality, and cognitive psychologists think about this topic. The topics covered in class include ego depletion, executive function, the neural bases of self-control, personality, motivation, goal setting, goal pursuit, and decision-making. Importantly, given recent controversies in the field of psychology, we will also spend a considerable time discussing the replication crisis, including what it means for our understanding of the psychology of self-control.

Required Text

- Baumeister, R.F., & Tierney, J. *Willpower: Rediscovering the greatest human strength*. Penguin Books
- Course Readings. The course reader will contain **required** course readings that consist of journal articles, but also magazine articles and blog posts. Available online through Blackboard (under Course Documents)

<u>Evaluation:</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Weight</u>
Midterm	TBD	35%
Term Paper	April 5, 11:59pm	25%
Final (non-cumulative)	TBD	40%

Blackboard

I will use Blackboard to communicate with you (i.e. to make announcements) and so that you can each communicate with one another. Anything I hand-out in class will also be posted on the Blackboard; so the syllabus, class notes, class schedule, and reading list are all there. Blackboard is also the place you go to log-on to and participate in the discussion board. I recommend getting quickly acquainted with Blackboard and checking it on a regular basis throughout the semester for announcements and messages. Also, please make sure to update your Blackboard account so that your correct email address is noted. You do not need to apply for Blackboard access. If you are registered, you will automatically see this class when you log-on to the intranet. To access Blackboard, log onto <http://www.utoronto.ca/>, scroll to the bottom of the screen and click on the "Portal Login," on this next page, again, click on to the "Portal Login," and here enter your UTORid and password, and voila you have access!

Discussion Forum

To help foster communication between each of you, I've created a discussion forum on Blackboard. The forum should also be the first place you go when you have questions about course material. Please feel free to use this space as our virtual classroom. So, post clarification questions! These posts are valuable because they may echo many people's concerns. Remember, however, to respond to questions as well as this will enhance the classroom experience and create a self-sustaining internet community.

Some important points to consider when posting:

- Discussions of prejudice can generate strong feelings and I ask that you to always be respectful of others even when you disagree with them. This holds both for those who may express views that may appear prejudicial, and to those who react to them.
- Excellent posts go beyond the information in the book or readings by relating what is learned in this class to other classes, to authoritative sources found in other books or the internet.
- Many folks will post clarification questions. Although these posts are valuable because they may echo many people's concerns, having someone from the class respond to the question is even more valuable and creates a self-sustaining internet community.

Lectures

The lecture slides will be posted on the web site along with each class. The amount of overlap between lectures and required readings will vary across topics. What this means is that sometimes the lecture will be very different from the assigned readings for that week. Because exams will cover both lecture (50%) and readings (50%), you will need to both read and attend/watch the lectures.

Weboption

The Weboption offers flexibility and control in the learning process. Lectures will be digitized and uploaded to the Web where you can access them by streaming video. PowerPoint slides shown in class are presented side-by-side with the video of the lecture. You can access the lectures at <https://lecturecast.uts.utoronto.ca/login.php>

Course Readings

The number of readings will vary per week and will sometimes include assigned chapters in our text plus additional articles that you can find on Blackboard under “e-Reserves” or “Library Course Reserves”. You can find the list of readings at the end of this syllabus, and find library links for the papers themselves on your Blackboard MY PAGE.

Exams

Both midterm and final will consist of multiple-choice questions (50% lectures, 50% readings). The mid-term is worth 35% of your grade and the final, 40%. Both midterm and final will take place on a date and location to be determined.

The midterm will cover lectures 1, 2, 3, 4, & 5. It will also cover all readings (from the Baumeister & Tierney and supplemental readings) assigned for lectures 1, 2, 3, 4, & 5

The final will be **non-cumulative** and will cover lectures 6, 7, 8, 9, & 10. It will also cover all readings (from the Baumeister & Tierney and supplemental readings) assigned for lectures 6, 7, 8, 9, & 10

Term Paper (Op–Ed project)

Each person will submit a 4-6 pages (1000-1500 words), typed, double-spaced term paper that takes the form of a newspaper Op-ed. Op-eds are not reportage or literature reviews, but are opinion articles in which the author takes a position on (makes an argument for) a social, political, educational, or cultural issue that relates to self-control. Details of the assignment will be specified later in the semester. **The paper is due on April 5th by 11:59pm.** Hard copies of papers will not be accepted—you will need to send a digital version of the paper to turnitin.com and Blackboard). Late papers will be docked 5% for each day that they are late (starting at 12:00am March 24th).

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

Email Policy

My policy is to respond to emails within 2 *working* days of receipt. I am available to all my students and encourage you all to visit me during office hours (Mondays 12:00-1:00) even if it's to have a casual chat. However, given the size of the class and my already overflowing inbox, I am less encouraging of email. If you have questions or concerns, always check the course syllabus and Blackboard site first. If you don't find your answer there, consult the FAQ on Blackboard. You could also try posting a question in the discussion forum. If that doesn't work, contact your TA. If issues remain, come to my office hours.

FAQ

Please note there is a lengthy FAQ document on Blackboard. This contains a collection of common questions I am asked by students. **If you have a question that appears on the FAQ, I will not answer it by email.** It is your responsibility to try to get your question answered by the documents I have made available, including the lengthy FAQ.

Course Schedule

DATE	TOPIC	READINGS
Lecture 1 Jan 11	Introduction & brief history	B&T: Introduction
Lecture 2: Jan 18	Replication crisis; importance of self-control	Moffitt et al., 2011; Yong, 2015; Inzlicht, 2016
Lecture 3: Jan 25	Ego depletion	B&T: chapters 1, 2, & 4; Inzlicht & Berkman, 2015; Engber, 2016
Lecture 4: Feb 1	Cognitive and neural foundations of self-control	Hofmann et al., 2012
Lecture 5 Feb 8	Personality & Development	B&T: chapter 9; Roberts et al., 2014
Feb 15	Discussion of Term Paper; Midterm Week Date TBD	
Feb 22	READING WEEK	NO CLASS
Lecture 6 March 1	Goals & Motivation	B&T: chapters 3 & 5; Deci & Ryan, 2008
Lecture 7: March 8	Food, God, & People	B&T: chapters 8 & 10; Fain, 2015
March 15	NO CLASS	
Lecture 8: March 22	Addiction	B&T: chapter 8; McMillen, 2013
Lecture 9: March 29	Rethinking self-control	B&T: chapters 7 & conclusion; Fujita, 2011
Lecture 10: April 5	Improving self-control	B&T: chapter 6; Inzlicht, Legault, & Teper, 2014

Note: B&T = Baumeister & Tierney book

Course Reader

Lecture 2

Inzlicht, M. (2016, March 25). *The replication crisis is my crisis*. Retrieved from <https://undark.org/article/the-replication-crisis-is-my-crisis/>

Moffitt, T. E., et al., (2011). A gradient of childhood self-control predicts health, wealth, and public safety. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 108, 2693-2698.

Yong, E. (2015, August 27). *How reliable are psychology studies?* Retrieved from <https://www.theatlantic.com/science/archive/2015/08/psychology-studies-reliability-reproducibility-nosek/402466/>

Lecture 3

Engber, D. (2016, March 6). *Everything is crumbling*. Retrieved from http://www.slate.com/articles/health_and_science/cover_story/2016/03/ego_depletion_an_influent_theory_in_psychology_may_have_just_been_debunked.html

Inzlicht, M., & Berkman, E. (2015). Six questions for the resource model of control (and some answers). *Social and Personality Psychology Compass*, 9/10, 511-524.

Lecture 4

Hofmann, W., Schmeichel, B. J., & Baddeley, A. D. (2012). Executive functions and self-regulation. *Trends in Cognitive Sciences*, 16, 174–80.

Lecture 5

Roberts, B.W., Lejuez, C., Krueger, R.F., Richards, J.M., & Hill, P.L. (2014). What is conscientiousness and how can it be assessed? *Developmental Psychology*, 50, 1315-1330. **[Note, although I recommend you read the entire article, you are only required to read pp. 1315-1321, stopping at the section titled “Methods of assessing Conscientiousness”]**

Lecture 6

Deci, E.L., & Ryan, R.M. (2008). Self-determination theory: A macrotheory of human motivation, development, and health. *Canadian Psychology*, 49, 182-185.

Lecture 7

Fain, J. (2015, June 1). *In “Eating Lab,” a psychologist spills secrets on why diets fail*. Retrieved from <https://www.npr.org/sections/thesalt/2015/06/01/411217634/in-eating-lab-psychologist-spills-secrets-on-why-diets-fail>

Lecture 8

McMillen, S. (2013). *Rat Park*. Retrieved from <http://www.stuartmcmillen.com/comic/rat-park/#page-1>

Lecture 9

Fujita, K. (2011). On conceptualizing self-control as more than effortful inhibition of impulses. *Personality and Social Psychology Review, 15*, 352-366.

Lecture 10

Inzlicht, M., Legault, L., & Teper, R. (2014). Exploring the mechanisms of self-control improvement. *Current Directions in Psychological Science, 23*, 302-307.