

PSYD20: Current Topics in Developmental Psychology The Effects of Media on Human Development

0.5 credits

University of Toronto, Scarborough
Fall Term, 2019
Fridays, 9:10AM-11:00AM
AC332

Instructor: Dr. Kyle Danielson
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Office Hours: Fridays, 11:15AM-12:30PM

Dr. Kyle Danielson is an Assistant Professor (Teaching Stream) in the Department of Psychology at the University of Toronto, Scarborough. He completed his PhD at the University of British Columbia in Vancouver, researching language development among 6- to 12-month-old infants. He is interested in linguistic and cognitive development among typically and atypically developing children. At UTSC, he teaches courses in introductory psychology, lifespan development, and the psychology thesis course.



I. Course Description, Prerequisites, and Learning Goals

PSYD20 is a “current topics” course in developmental psychology, meaning that the topic changes from term to term and typically addresses a current question in the field. This term, the main question that we will be exploring is: “What are the effects of media on human development?” Although researchers in many areas of scientific enquiry (e.g., sociology, media studies, education) may be interested in such a question, we will be exploring it predominantly from the perspective of psychological science. Various domains of human development will be studied: behavioural, emotional, social, cognitive, intellectual, and psychopathological. Each week, we will devote the class to a different form of media and a different area of human development, relying on empirical studies within the field that speak to the interaction between the two.

By the end of this course, you should...

- ...be able to proficiently discuss the various possible interactions between modern media and psychological change across the lifespan, drawing on empirical evidence from the field
- ...have a nuanced understanding of the challenges in conducting sound empirical research on naturally occurring phenomena such as media exposure
- ...be very familiar with the major self-report, behavioural, physiological, and neurological methods used in conducting such empirical studies with developing populations
- ...be proficient in finding, reading, analyzing, and critiquing empirical journal articles and incorporating their findings into your own work
- ...be comfortable expressing your own ideas, designs, and critiques both verbally and in writing
- ...be experienced in proposing a major research design to explore the effects of media on human development

Prerequisites: [PSYB01 or PSYB04 or PSYB70] and [PSYB07 or STAB22 or STAB23] and PSYB20 and 0.5 additional credits at the C-level in Psychology. Enrolment in a Specialist or Major program in Mental Health Studies, Psychology, or Neuroscience.

Exclusions: PSY410H

II. Course Readings

There is no textbook for this course. Instead, the course readings will be comprised of **articles from scientific journals** and **chapters of scientific books**. Most readings can be found online using the University of Toronto library system. If a reading is unavailable through the Library, it will be posted on Quercus at least two weeks in advance of its due date.

Please note: as described above, one of the learning objectives for this course is to **find** scientific journal articles. Instead of finding prepared links to the articles on Quercus, you will need to use the Library's system to find the article. If you require assistance in learning how to conduct a search for literature in the Library's system, please consult a member of the Library staff for assistance.

III. Course website

All information for the course, including this syllabus, updates to the course schedule, assignment submission, and assignment marks will be posted on Quercus (q.utoronto.ca). **It is your responsibility to check Quercus frequently, at least once a week, for important announcements and to monitor your U of T official email address for any correspondence.** It is good practice to review your Quercus notification settings at the beginning of each term to ensure that the system forwards announcements and other updates to your email address.

IV. Course requirements (marks)

There are **4 assignments** that comprise your mark in this course. **You will choose the weight of the marks—within a range—using a survey that will be due by 11:59pm on Friday, September 13. You may not change the weighting of your marks after you complete the survey.** If you do not complete the survey by that time, mark weighting will default to pre-specified values. The survey will be deployed on Quercus.

1. **Two journal article reflections (worth between 8 and 12% each, for a total of 16-24%)**

- You will compose a short, 700-word maximum reflection on two journal articles of your choice from the course reading list
 - These reflections will be due the **Tuesday before the journal article will be discussed in class, by 5:00pm Eastern time, on Quercus**
 - These reflections **will be shared with the presenters** responsible for each class so that they can incorporate your thoughts into their class preparation
 - There is no specific format requirement for these reflections. However, each should **briefly** summarize the journal article (1-2 sentences), raise additional questions that you have about the topic of the article, and—if possible—critique the article on one or more components.
 - Each reading reflection should cite **at least one** additional journal article or scholarly book chapter. Generally reflections will need to cite more than one additional source to earn a score of 3 (see below).
 - You may choose any of the journal articles that you wish, with the following exceptions:
 - You may only write one reflection per week
 - You may **not** choose to reflect on an article that you are presenting yourself in class
 - You must complete **at least one of your two reflections** by the **5:00pm deadline on October 8**. You may complete the other one by this date, too, or complete it in the second half of the term before the **November 5, 5:00pm deadline**.
 - The journal article reflections will be marked on a 3-point scale:
 - 0: incomplete or does not adhere to the requirements described here; exceeds one page (score = 0%)
 - 1: minimal effort exerted, missing one or more of the major components of the assignment (summary, questions, critique) (score = 50%)
 - 2: good effort exerted, includes all of the major components of the assignment, may have some organizational errors or lack of clarity (score = 75%)
 - 3: excellent, graduate level work with all of the major components addressed and few to no errors (score = 80-100%, depending on quality)

2. **Lead a discussion topic (in pairs or groups of 3) (worth between 18 and 25%)**

- **With a partner or two people of your choice**, you will lead the discussion for **half** of one class, focusing on **one** of the assigned readings for that week
- These presentations will start during the third week of classes (September 20)
- The presentations are **not formal**. You should not use Powerpoint as a primary vehicle for your presentation, but you may use slides to conduct in-class exercises, present brief summaries or findings, present multimedia, etc. **You should not stand in front of the room and lecture.**
- You should work with your partner(s) in advance of your chosen date to:

- **Develop a set of questions and topics** to be discussed during the class, based on your reading
 - **Summarize** the questions set out by your classmates in their journal discussions
 - **Supplement** the assigned reading with information from **at least one other scholarly source**. You must decide on this source by the preceding Tuesday at 5:00pm Eastern, in time for your classmates to take a look at it before class meets. If you are unsure whether a particular reading is appropriate, you should consult with Kyle in advance of the deadline.
 - Develop a **supplemental activity** for the class to participate in that relates to the week's topic. Ideas include (but are not limited to!) a video, a game, a writing assignment, or a hands-on activity. Multimedia is encouraged.
 - **Be prepared** for lulls in the conversation with additional questions and ideas for discussion. Note that you will partially be marked on your ability to continue the classroom conversation, so you should be prepared to engage your classmates accordingly.
- Further expectations for this presentation will be discussed in class. Kyle will use a detailed rubric to mark these presentations, which will be provided in advance of the first presentation on Quercus. They will be assigned numeric grades consistent with UTSC's letter grade scheme.
3. **Write a short research proposal (choose percentages below)** on a topic of your choosing **within the context of the course theme**, focusing *heavily* on the **existing holes in the literature, the research question, your hypotheses, and the method** that you think will best answer your question, and **present** your proposal in a formal, in-class presentation at the end of the term
- **Independently**, propose a research question that you would like to explore and have that question approved by Kyle by the middle of the term (**due on Quercus at 11:59pm on Friday, 18 October**). The research question need only be a sentence or two long.
 - The research question itself is not marked, but rather simply approved. However, you must turn this question in on time or your mark on the **whole** research proposal will be reduced by 5% per day (or partial day) late.
 - **Write a proposal** to answer your research question, in three sections:
 - **Introduction and Background** (worth between 10 and 20%, first draft due in class for workshoping on Friday, 1 November [bring two hard copies to class]; second, marked draft **due on Quercus by 11:59pm on Friday, 8 November**)
 - What is the hole in the scientific literature that you are attempting to fill?
 - What previous work has been done on this topic?
 - What is your research question?
 - What are your hypotheses?
 - This portion of the assignment should be 750-1000 words in length.

- You must use **at least four** scholarly sources from journal articles or scientific books in this section. If in doubt about the legitimacy of an article, check with Kyle!
- Your citations and reference list must be in APA style
- **Methods** (worth between 10 and 20%, first draft due in class for workshopping on Monday, 15 November [bring two hard copies to class]; second, marked draft **due on Quercus by 11:59pm on Friday, 22 November**)
 - What method(s) do you propose to use to answer your research question?
 - What population will you sample from? What will your sample size and sample characteristics be?
 - What is the independent variable that you will manipulate?
 - What is/are the dependent variable(s) that you will measure?
 - What other variables will you have to control to ensure that your manipulation is successful?
 - Why is this method the most appropriate? What are its strengths? What potential weaknesses does it have? Why is it the best method to use anyway?
 - This section should be 500-750 words in length
- **Application and conclusion** (worth between 8 and 11%, due on Quercus by 11:59pm on Friday, 29 November)
 - Why is this one an important research question to ask?
 - If the findings are in your hypothesized direction, what will the implications be?
 - How will our understanding of human development deepen? What will the effects on specific populations be?
 - What are the potential weaknesses of your proposal? What other options might there be to control these weaknesses, and why did you not choose them?
 - This section should be 350-750 words in length
- **Present your research question, hypotheses, methods, and application in a 6- to 7-minute PowerPoint presentation in class** (worth between 14 and 20%, these individual presentations will be on November 22 and 29 in class)
 - Summarize your research question, methods, and application sections
 - Try to use **as many graphics** as possible and **as few words** as possible in your slides
 - Field questions from classmates and be prepared to answer them
- Each component of the research proposal will be marked using a detailed rubric, available in advance, using numeric grades consistent with UTSC's letter grade scale.

4. **Class participation (worth between 6 and 9%)**

- Participation in class is essential for you to meet the learning objectives for this course. It also makes class time pass more quickly and is more fun for everyone involved. Throughout the term, you are encouraged to speak up often and whenever you have something valuable to contribute. There are no silly contributions!

- To help you along, your participation mark will be structured as follows:
 - You **should** participate **daily** during your classmates' topic presentations throughout the term
 - You **may** also participate by sending discussion questions for each group by email, which Kyle will forward to the presenters to help them facilitate their discussion. These **must be sent by Tuesday at 5:00pm at the latest to be included**. These are separate from any questions you may raise in your journal article reflections.
 - You **must** contribute to your classmates' final research proposal presentations by asking questions in class. More frequent and thoughtful participation will be rewarded.
 - You **must** evaluate each peer's final presentation by filling out peer evaluations for **every** presenter. It is thus essential that you attend class on both presentation days, and no exceptions can be made.
- After fall Reading Week, Kyle will write a brief email to **each student** to give some feedback on your participation in the course so far. This will help you figure out what to change in order to boost your participation mark.

V. Course schedule and reading list

Meeting Date	Topic and Readings	Agenda items for this week
6 September	Introduction, Syllabus	-Find partner(s) for class discussion
13 September	“Screen time” and development: a primer	- Marking survey due by 11:59pm -Lottery for class discussion topics: come prepared with a list of preferences Readings: Anderson & Pempek (2005) Sweetser et al. (2012) Lauricella, Wartella, & Rideout (2015)
20 September	Television/film and academic achievement	Readings: Anderson et al. (2001) – see note Mares & Pan (2013)
27 September	Video games and cognitive-behavioural development	Readings: Boot et al. (2008) Gentile et al. (2004)
4 October	Smartphones and social development	Readings: Kushlev & Dunn (2019) George & Odgers (2015)
11 October	The news cycle and moral/emotional development	- At least one of two reflections due October 8 by 5:00pm Readings: Riddle et al. (2012) Kleemans, Schlindwein, & Dohmen (2017)
18 October	NO CLASS (Reading Week)	- Proposal topic due at 11:59pm
25 October	Social media and social development	Khalis & Mikami (2018) Ahn (2011) Uhls, Ellison, & Subrahmanyam (2017)
1 November	Social media and psychological health and illness (1)	- Introduction draft (two hard copies) due in class Kross et al. (2013) Valenzuela, Park, & Kee (2009)
8 November	Social media and psychological health and illness (2)	- Second of two reflections due November 5 by 5:00pm - Final draft of introduction due by 11:59pm Hoge, Bickham, & Cantor (2017) Lin et al. (2016) Guntuku et al. (2017)
15 November	The year 2030: What’s next?	- Methods draft (two hard copies) due in class Readings: Parsons et al. (2017) Parrish et al. (2016)
22 November	Presentations	- Final draft of methods section due by 11:59pm No readings

29 November	Presentations	-Final draft of application section due by 11:59pm No readings
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Bibliography (in order of assignment):

Anderson, D. R. & Pempek, T. A. (2005). Television and very young children. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 48(5), 505-522.

Sweetser, P., Johnson, D., Ozdowska, A., & Wyeth, P. (2012). Active versus passive screen time for young children. *Australasian Journal of Early Childhood*, 37(4), 94-98.

Lauricella, A. R., Wartella, E., & Rideout, V. J. (2015). Young children's screen time: The complex role of parent and child factors. *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology*, 36, 11-17.

Anderson, D. R., Huston, A. C., Schmitt, K. L., Linebarger, D. L., & Wright, J. C. (2001). Early childhood television viewing and adolescent behavior: The recontact study [Chapters 2, 3, and 4]. *Monographs of the Society for Research in Child Development*, 66(1), 10-66. **Note: Assignment is only chapters 2, 3, and 4 of this monograph, and you should focus especially on Ch. 4.**

Mares, M.-L. & Pan, Z. (2013). Effects of Sesame Street: A meta-analysis of children's learning in 15 countries. *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology*, 34, 140-151.

Boot, W. R., Kramer, A. F., Simons, D. J., Fabiani, M., & Gratton, G. (2008). The effects of video game playing on attention, memory, and executive control. *Acta Psychologica*, 129, 387-398.

Gentile, D. A., Lynch, P. J., Ruh Linder, J., & Walsh, D. A. (2004). The effects of violent video game habits on adolescent hostility, aggressive behaviors, and school performance. *Journal of Adolescence*, 27, 5-22.

Kushlev, K. & Dunn, E. W. (2019). Smartphones distract parents from cultivating feelings of connection when spending time with their children. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 36(6), 1619-1639.

George, M. J. & Odgers, C. L. (2015). Seven fears and the science of how mobile technologies may be influencing adolescents in the digital age. *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, 10(6), 832-851.

Riddle, K., Cantor, J., Byrne, S. & Moyer-Gusé, E. (2012). "People killing people on the news": Young children's descriptions of frightening television news content. *Communication Quarterly*, 60(2), 278-294.

Kleemans, M., Schlindwein, L. F., & Dohmen, R. (2017). Preadolescents' emotional and prosocial responses to negative TV news: Investigating the beneficial effects of constructive reporting and peer discussion. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 46(9), 2060-2072.

Khalis, A. & Mikami, A. Y. (2018). Talking face-to-Facebook: Associations between online social interactions and offline relationships. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 89, 88-97.

Ahn, J. (2011). The effect of social network sites on adolescents' social and academic development: Current theories and controversies. *Advances in Information Science*, 62(8), 1435-1445.

Uhls, Y. T., Ellison, N. B., & Subrahmanyam, K. (2017). Benefits and costs of social media in adolescence. *Pediatrics*, 140(S2), S67-S70.

Kross, E., Verduyn, P., Demiralp, E., Park, J., Lee, D. S., Lin, N., Shablack, H., Jonides, J., & Ybarra, O. (2013). Facebook use predicts declines in subjective well-being in young adults. *PLoS One*, 8(8), e69841.

Valenzuela, S., Park, N., & Kee, K. F. (2009). Is there social capital in a social network site?: Facebook use and college students' life satisfaction, trust, and participation. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 14, 875-901.

Hoge, E., Bickham, D., & Cantor, J. (2017). Digital media, anxiety, and depression in children. *Pediatrics*, 140(S2), S76-S80.

Lin, L. Y., Sidani, J. E., Shensa, A., ... & Primack, B. A. (2016). Association between social media use and depression among U.S. young adults. *Depression and Anxiety*, 33(4), 323-331.

Guntuku, S. C., Yaden, D. B., Kern, M. L., Ungar, L. H., & Eichstaedt, J. C. (2017). Detecting depression and mental illness on social media: An integrative review. *Current Opinion in Behavioral Sciences*, 18, 43-49.

Parsons, T. D., Riva, G., Parsons, S., Mantovani, F., Newbutt, N., Lin, L., Venturini, E., & Hall, T. (2017). Virtual reality in pediatric psychology. *Pediatrics*, 140(S2), S86-S91.

Parrish, D. E., Oxhandler, H. K., Duron, J. F., Swank, P., & Bordnick, P. (2016). Feasibility of virtual reality environments for adolescent social anxiety disorder. *Research on Social Work Practice*, 26(7), 825-835.

Course policies

1. **On respect in the classroom**

It is expected that we all treat each other respectfully and courteously throughout this term. It can be challenging to feel comfortable speaking in front of a large group, and we should all work hard to make each other feel comfortable doing so. As part of that respect, it is expected that we all will use appropriate, professional language in our interactions with one another, that we will participate fully and genuinely in classroom discussions, and that we will arrive to class on time so as to not interrupt the presenters.

2. **On communication and email**

The best way to reach Kyle is via his U of T email address. Please compose emails as follows:

- Include PSYD20 in the subject line of the email
- Include your full name and student ID number in your email
- Check the syllabus before sending an email to make sure that your question isn't already answered there
- Use professional language and adhere to our guidelines on respect in the classroom when composing emails

Kyle will respond to all emails within 2 business days, not including weekends or statutory holidays. For example, if you email on Friday at 12:00pm and Monday is not a holiday, you can expect a response by Tuesday at 12:00pm. Please avoid sending last-minute emails immediately before assignments are due, as these may not be answered in time.

3. **On changes to the course schedule or marking scheme**

If there are changes to the course schedule, these will be posted on the Quercus. If there are required changes to the marking scheme or assignment due dates, these will be discussed in class and agreed upon by a majority vote.

4. **On tardiness**

Please try to be on time to every class. If you do happen to be late, please try to enter the classroom quietly without disturbing whomever is speaking. Failure to attend classes or to arrive on time consistently will negatively affect your participation mark, and may indirectly negatively affect your marks on other course components.

5. **On late work**

Late work is not accepted in PSYD20. Any work submitted after the due date and time will receive a score of 0%. For work missed due to extenuating circumstances, please see the following section: "On missed term work".

6. **On missed term work**

Everything described above is considered a required part of the class. Evaluation is most fair when all students complete all components with no special consideration being applied. However, in the case of **some** extenuating circumstances, you may apply to the Department or to the University for an exception to this missed work policy, using the procedures below. **Note that Top Hat exercises are not eligible for Missed Term Work exceptions. Note also the clause regarding term work due at the end of the semester: because the final paper is due on the last day of classes, only extensions of 5 days or**

fewer can be administered by the Psychology Department. Longer extensions must be petitioned through the Registrar's Office.

Missed Term Work due to Medical Illness or Other Emergency:

All students citing a documented reason for missed term work must submit their request for accommodations **within three (3) business days** of the deadline for the missed work.

Students must submit **BOTH** of the following:

- (1.) A completed **Request for Missed Term Work Accommodations form** (<http://uoft.me/PSY-MTW>), and
- (2.) **Appropriate documentation** to verify your illness or emergency, as described below.

Appropriate documentation:

*For missed **ASSIGNMENTS** due to **ILLNESS**:*

- Submit the Request for Missed Term Work Accommodations form (<http://uoft.me/PSY-MTW>), along with a **hardcopy** of the Self-Declaration of Student Illness Form (uoft.me/PSY-self-declare-form).

*For missed **ASSIGNMENTS** due to **ACCESSABILITY REASONS**:*

- If your desired accommodation is **within the scope** of your Accommodation Letter (ex. your letter includes “extensions of up to 7 days” and you need 3 days), submit the Request for Missed Term Work Accommodations form (<http://uoft.me/PSY-MTW>) and attach a copy of your letter. **Specify how many days extension you are requesting** on the request form.
- If your desired accommodation is **outside the scope** of your Accommodation Letter (ex. your letter includes “extensions of up to 7 days” but you need more time than that) you will need to meet with your **AccessAbility consultant** and have them email Keely (keely.hicks@utoronto.ca) detailing the accommodations required.

*For missed assignments in **OTHER CIRCUMSTANCES**:*

- Submit the Request for Missed Term Work Accommodations form (<http://uoft.me/PSY-MTW>), along with:
 - In the case of a **death of a family member or friend**, please provide a copy of a death certificate.
 - For U of T varsity-level or professional **athletic commitments**, an email from your coach or varsity administrator should be sent directly to Keely Hicks (keely.hicks@utoronto.ca) **well in advance** of the missed work, detailing the dates and nature of the commitment.
 - For **religious accommodations**, please email (keely.hicks@utoronto.ca) **well in advance** of the missed work.
 - For circumstances **outside of these guidelines**, please email Keely (keely.hicks@utoronto.ca) on or before the date of the test / assignment deadline to describe your circumstances and ask what documentation would be appropriate

Documents covering the following situations are NOT acceptable: medical prescriptions, personal travel, weddings/personal/work commitments.

Procedure:

Submit your (1.) [request form](#) and (2.) [medical/self-declaration](#)/other documents in person **WITHIN 3 BUSINESS DAYS** of the missed term test or assignment.

Submit to: Keely Hicks, Room SW420B, Monday – Friday, 9 AM – 4 PM. (Slide forms under door if out of office.)

After submitting your documentation, within approximately one to five business days, you will receive a response from your instructor detailing the accommodations to be made (if any).

You are responsible for checking your official U of T email and Quercus course announcements daily, as accommodations may be time-critical.

You should continue to work on your assignments to the best of your ability, as extension accommodations may be as short as one business day, depending on the nature of the illness/emergency.

If an accommodation has been granted but you are unable to meet the conditions of the accommodation (ex. you need a longer extension, or you missed a make-up test), you will need to repeat the missed term work procedure and submit additional forms to request further accommodation. Note that in the case of a missed make-up test, an opportunity to write a second make-up test may not be provided.

Completion of this form does NOT guarantee that accommodations will be made. The course instructor reserves the right to decide what accommodations (if any) will be made. Failure to adhere to any aspect of this policy may result in a denial of your request for accommodation.

Missed Accommodations

If an accommodation is granted but a continued illness/emergency prevents you from meeting the requirements of your accommodation, you must repeat the missed term work procedure to request additional accommodations.

(E.g.) If you miss a make-up midterm, you would need to submit another Request for Missed Term Work Accommodations form. If your original medical note / documentation included the date of the make-up midterm, then only the Request form is required. If the date of the make-up midterm fell outside of the dates indicated on your original medical note/other documentation, then a new medical note/other appropriate documentation must also be submitted.

Importance of Three Business Day window:

If you are unable to submit your documents in-person within the three business day window, **you must email Keely (keely.hicks@utoronto.ca) within the three business day window** to explain when you will be able to bring your documents in person. Exceptions to the documentation deadline will only be made under **exceptional circumstances**. Attach scans of your documentation, and be prepared to bring your documents to Keely in-person as soon as you are well. Late documents may not be accepted.

NOTE: Assignments due at end of term

Instructors cannot accept term work any later than five business days after the last day of class. Beyond this date, you would need to file a petition with the Registrar's Office (<https://www.utoronto.ca/registrar/term-work>).

7. On group work

Group work is a valuable exercise in learning to cooperate and share ideas with others. It is an essential part of this course. It is expected that group members will contribute equally to the topical presentation. If you have concerns about your partner's level of commitment to your presentation, please contact Kyle as soon as possible. Otherwise, it is expected that groupmates will each earn the same marks on their in-class presentations.

8. On academic integrity

The University treats cases of cheating and plagiarism very seriously. The University of

Toronto's Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters (<http://www.governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/policies/behaveac.htm>) outlines the behaviours that constitute academic dishonesty and the processes for addressing academic offences.

Potential offences in papers and assignments include using someone else's ideas or words without appropriate acknowledgement, submitting your own work in more than one course without the permission of the instructor, making up sources or facts, obtaining or providing unauthorized assistance on any assignment.

On tests and exams cheating includes using or possessing unauthorized aids, looking at someone else's answers during an exam or test, misrepresenting your identity, or falsifying or altering any documentation required by the University, including (but not limited to) doctor's notes.

9. On diverse learning styles and needs

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 as soon as possible. AccessAbility Services staff (located in Rm SW302, Science Wing) are available by appointment to assess specific needs, provide referrals and arrange appropriate accommodations 416-287-7560 or email 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.

10. On grade changes

Under **no circumstances** will the instructor of this course change a grade for an assignment or for the course mark. There is **no circumstance** (not a health issue, or death in the family, or impending graduation prevented by failing this course) that is compelling enough for the instructor to do so. Every semester Kyle has to tell students "no", even when they present compelling and often heart-wrenching excuses. Please do not put Kyle in the awkward position of telling you "no" when you ask for a grade change. It will absolutely, under no circumstances, happen. You may, as always, petition the Registrar's Office if you believe that your mark has been calculated incorrectly.

11. On grade norms in Psychology

The Department of Psychology at UTSC is committed to providing fair, consistent, and uniform delivery of its courses from year to year. As part of this commitment, the Department mandates that all D-level courses' final course averages are around 75-78%. That ensures that D-levels are marked consistently across instructors and terms. **Typically**, the average for Kyle's D-level courses fall below 75-78%, and he then **adds** points to everyone's mark. However, the opposite is also theoretically possible, where the course average falls above 75-78%, and points have to be subtracted. This has never happened before, but the course instructor reserves the right to modify marks across the board (for all students) to conform to these averages. Note that assignment scores may fall well below 75-78%, but that the **average course mark** will be raised at the end of the term if so.

12. On religious accommodation

The University has a commitment concerning accommodation for religious observances. I will make every reasonable effort to avoid scheduling tests, examinations, or other compulsory activities on religious holy days not captured by statutory holidays. According to University Policy, if you anticipate being absent from class or missing a major course

activity (like an in-class assignment) due to a religious observance, please let me know as early in the course as possible, and with sufficient notice (at least two to three weeks), so that we can work together to make alternate arrangements.