

Syllabus

Current Topics in Social Psychology—The Science of Behaviour Change (PSYD15)

Dr. Michael Inzlicht

Winter 2022

Mondays 1:00-3:00 SW403

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Zoom Office Hours: Thursdays 12:00 – 1:00

(Zoom ID: Inzlicht; <https://utoronto.zoom.us/my/inzlicht>)

Course Description

How can we break bad habits? How can we start healthy habits? This course will explore the science of behaviour change, examining how to go from where you are to where you want to be. Topics include goal setting and planning, self-regulation, motivation, temptations, nudges, and habits. While this senior seminar will cover theories of behaviour change, it will also have an applied component where students work on improving their own habits.

Required Text

- Milkman, K. (2021). *How To Change: The Science Of Getting From Where You Are To Where You Want To Be*. New York, NY: Portfolio/Penguin.
- Clear, J. (2018). *Atomic Habits: An Easy & Proven Way To Build Good Habits & Break Bad Ones*. New York, NY: Avery.
- Course Reader. The reader will contain required articles. Available [via this link](#).

Course Structure

This seminar course is designed to not only introduce you to theories and research on behaviour change, but also to leave you with strategies you can use in your everyday life as you set and try to reach your various goals. These strategies are meant to be practical and to be used long after you graduate. I've designed this course to maximize meaningful learning and to minimize the memorize-and-regurgitate kind of style that we all get enough of in undergraduate courses. Lectures will be short. On most days, I will try to limit my own talking to a brief orientation to each day's topic and then to guide student discussions. For half the course, I will provide highlights of our two texts and lead discussion and classroom exercises. For the other half of the course, I will assign different students to lead discussion of articles from our course reader. The success of this seminar depends on everyone's preparation, and everyone's preparation will depend on carefully completing the readings and weekly reaction papers.

<u>Evaluation:</u>	<u>Weight</u>
Class Participation	20%
Reaction Papers	15%
Discussion Leading	25%
Flash Talk	10%
Final Paper (Due April 4)	30%

Note for the Pandemic Semester: Please note that this course was supposed to be taught in person; and it is my hope that eventually we will in fact meet in person every Monday. However, the pandemic is still curtailing many regular activities, and we will thus begin the semester online. Please note that even if online, the course will be delivered synchronously, meaning we will meet over Zoom every Monday from 1:00pm to 3:00pm. **Classes will not be recorded and posted online.** What this means is that you will need to attend our Zoom class at the assigned time.

Zoom To join the “live” class on Zoom (Mondays 1-3), use the following information:

Join Zoom Meeting: <https://utoronto.zoom.us/j/4168202395>

Meeting ID: 416 820 2395

Passcode: 34689447

Readings

The readings for this class are somewhat unusual for an undergraduate seminar. During half the course you will read two mass-market books geared toward a general audience (i.e., not academic books). I have selected these because they offer genuine and practical insight in an easy-to-read format, even if the psychological principles behind these insights are not always spelled out. During the other half of the course, you will read scholarly articles and reports that clarify the various psychological and economic principles behind effective behaviour change strategies. Please remember that these readings are mandatory.

Quercus

I will use Quercus 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 Quercus; so, the syllabus, class schedule, and reading list are all there. Quercus is also the place you go to log-on to and participate in the discussion board. I recommend getting quickly acquainted with Quercus and checking it on a regular basis throughout the semester for announcements and messages. Also, please make sure to update your Quercus account so that your correct email address is noted. You do not need to apply for Quercus access. If you are registered, you will automatically see this class when you log-on to the intranet. To access Quercus, log onto <http://www.utoronto.ca/>, and on the top left of the screen, you'll see a Quercus button which you should press, and then 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 Quercus. The forum should 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. The discussion forum is also the place to participate on-line. If you are shy, and have a hard time speaking up in class, you can also participate virtually by posting commentary, thoughts, and questions on the discussion board. To keep pace with class, however, you need to make sure that you “participate” on-line regularly, at least once per week.

Class Participation

In a seminar-style class, attendance is expected, and participation is essential. Your participation grade will depend on *quality* as well as quantity of participation. I will keep a record of participation throughout the term. Signs of good participation include: attendance, punctuality, eagerness to participate, showing respect to others' contributions, facilitating discussion, paying careful attention to classmates' presentations, and offering constructive feedback, questions, and comments. Note that I do not want class discussions monopolized by the same 3 or 4 people. That means that people should try to talk enough, but not too much. To make sure I (and you) keep track of your class

participation, you should keep a participation log, (i.e., noting what questions you answered or asked, what comments you made, etc.). I might collect these from time to time. As mentioned above, you also have the option of participating on-line on the discussion board. If you are shy and have a hard time speaking up in class, the discussion board is the place for you to get your participation credits. To earn top marks on-line, remember to post regularly, at least once a week. If you think you are participating enough in class, you don't need to participate on-line.

Reaction Papers

To foster thoughtful, exciting, and worthwhile discussion, I will ask that you prepare reaction papers to the weekly readings. This assignment is designed to get you *thinking* about the readings, while ensuring that everyone has something to contribute during class discussion. You have some freedom in deciding how to complete this assignment. Spend some time highlighting the main points of the readings, but most of your paper should do other things: e.g., connect these main points, critique a study or its findings (or the authors' interpretation of the findings), consider/discuss/develop new ideas, and/or propose a new study. Convince me that you really understand the material! I encourage you to bring in *relevant* material from other courses. Papers should be **turned before the start of class on Quercus**. The papers should be between one to two double-spaced pages (500 words max) and follow APA style. They will be graded on a scale ranging from 3 (excellent) to 0 (fail). You are required to turn in **five** reaction papers, though what weeks you chose are up to you. The one exception: you may **not** turn in a paper for weeks that you lead class discussion (see below). Also, you may turn in more than five reaction papers, and only the best five will count toward your grade.

Discussion Leaders

Another way we will cultivate lively discussion is to have different discussion leaders during four classes. On four specified weeks (noted by ** in the schedule), a group of 2 students will lead discussion of an assigned paper. During each "discussion leader" week, 3 pairs of students will each have 30-45 minutes to lead class discussion. Leaders will be responsible for two things in each of these classes: (1) giving oral presentations on the weekly readings and (2) leading discussion on the readings. These two tasks should be broken down so that each group member shows that they were actively involved with their group and can demonstrate mastery of the material. The discussion leaders will come into class prepared to lead and guide the discussion so that the discussion is fluid, lively, and interesting for all the students in the class. I encourage all leaders to be creative by incorporating class activities (e.g., breaking class into small groups to discuss different perspectives of the readings) and multimedia into their discussions. Though not required, familiarity with other relevant readings will help you develop expertise on your topic. **Leaders also should prepare questions to help guide class discussion. Post questions to the class (via the discussion board on Quercus) by no later than midnight the night before class.** This will allow everyone time to mull over the issues your questions raise. Everyone must lead discussion once.

Flash Talk

On the final day of class, we will hold a class symposium/celebration, where each student will present a flash talk of **no longer than 3 minutes**. For this flash talk, you will describe your own semester's long experience of trying to break an old habit or start a new habit. This flash talk will be the oral counterpart to your final paper (see below). There will be a lot of flexibility in how to choose to present your personal journey, so be creative! If you choose, you can use a slide show (e.g., PowerPoint), but you will be allowed only 1 slide.

Final Paper

Each student will submit a 4-6 page (1,000-1,500 words), typed, double-spaced final essay that details your semester's long experience of trying to break an old habit or start a new one. This paper is not your typical research paper. It will be more personal, describing your subjective journey of habit building/breaking. You will start by nominating and justifying a habit to break/start, detailing the strategies you deployed to break/start the habit, the psychological principles upon which your

strategies are based, and your experiences (e.g., your successes, challenges, and failures) thus far. You might also choose to talk about what you would do differently the next time you tried to start/break a habit. Despite this being a record of your personal habit journey, you will still need to do library research to find and read *primary* sources to support your various habit strategies. You are required to cite no fewer than 4 papers using APA format. You will submit your paper via Quercus. Late papers will be docked 5% for each day that they are late. The paper is due April 4th, 11:59pm

Normally, students will be required to submit their final papers (and reaction papers) to *Ouriginal* via Quercus 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 *Ouriginal* 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 *Ouriginal* service are described on the *Ouriginal* 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 virtual office hours even if it's to have a casual chat. However, given my already overflowing inbox, I am less responsive email. If you have questions or concerns, always check the course syllabus and Quercus site first. If you can't find what you need, get to know your neighbour (get their phone number and email) and ask them. You could also try posting a question in the discussion forum. If that doesn't work, come to my office hours or email me.

Lateness Policy

Given that you have a choice of turning in your reaction papers on any of five topic weeks, late reaction papers will not be accepted. For the final paper, late papers will be docked 5% for each day that it is late, starting at 12:00am the day after it is due.

Psychology Department Missed Term Work Policy, Winter 2022

For missed term work (assignments and term tests) due to illness, emergency, or other mitigating circumstances, please follow the procedures outlined below.

- The following reasons are not considered sufficient for missed term work: travel for leisure, weddings, personal commitments, work commitments, human error.
- Missed Final Exams are handled by the Registrar's Office and should be declared on eService: <http://www.utoronto.ca/registrar/missing-examination>
- 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>

Accommodations for Illness or Emergency:

For missed work due to ILLNESS OR EMERGENCY, complete the following **three-step** process:

1. Complete the **Request for Missed Term Work Accommodations Form** (<http://uoft.me/PSY-MTW>)
2. **Declare your absence** on **ACORN** (Profile & Settings > Absence Declaration)
3. **Email both the Request for Missed Term Work Accommodations Form AND a screenshot of your Self-Declared Absence on ACORN to your me WITHIN 2 BUSINESS DAYS** of the missed work.

Note: If you are unable to submit your documents within 2-business days, **you must still email me within the 2-business day window** to explain the nature of the delay, and when you will be able to provide your documents. Exceptions to the documentation deadline will only be made under **exceptional circumstances**.

Note: For this semester, we do not require any additional supporting documentation (e.g. medical notes) to support your missed term work accommodation request.

Accommodations for Academic Conflicts:

For missed term work due to an ACADEMIC CONFLICT (i.e. two midterms scheduled at the same time), please complete the following process:

1. Complete the **Request for Missed Term Work Accommodations Form** (<http://uoft.me/PSY-MTW>), choosing "Other" and explaining the conflict in the space provided.
2. Take screenshots of your course homepages that demonstrate the conflict.
3. Email the form and screenshots to me **at least two weeks (10 business days) before the date of the activity**, or as soon as possible if it was not possible to identify the conflict earlier.

Note: Multiple assignments due on the same day are not considered conflicts. Accommodations may only be possible in the case of quizzes and tests that are both scheduled during the same discrete period. Back-to-back tests/quizzes are not considered conflicts.

Note: Students are responsible for keeping their course timetables conflict-free. Students who choose to register in two synchronous courses with overlapping lecture/tutorial/lab schedules may not necessarily be accommodated.

Accommodations for Religious Conflicts:

For missed term work due to a RELIGIOUS CONFLICT, please complete the following process:

1. Complete the **Request for Missed Term Work Accommodations Form** (<http://uoft.me/PSY-MTW>), choosing "Other" and noting "Religious conflict" in the space provided.
2. Email the form to me **at least two weeks (10 business days) before the date of the activity**, or as soon as possible if it was not possible to identify the conflict earlier.

Accommodations for Time Zone Conflicts:

If you are physically in a different time zone and a quiz or midterm is scheduled outside of 7:00am to midnight in your local time, please complete the following process:

1. Complete the **Time Zone Conflict Form** (<https://uoft.me/PSY-TimeZone>), and
2. Email the form to me **at least two weeks (10 business days) before the date of the activity**, or as soon as possible, if it was not possible to identify the conflict earlier.

Accommodations for Students Registered with AccessAbility Services:

For missed **TERM TESTS** due to ACCESSABILITY REASONS:

- **Contact your AccessAbility consultant** and have them email your instructor detailing accommodations required.

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

- If your desired accommodation is **within the scope** of your Accommodation Letter (e.g. your letter includes “extensions of up to 7 days” and you need 3 days):
 1. Complete the **Request for Missed Term Work Accommodations Form**.
 2. Email the form and your **Accommodation Letter** to me, specifying how many days extension you are requesting.
- If your desired accommodation is **outside the scope** of your Accommodation Letter (e.g. your letter includes “extensions of up to 7 days” but you need more time than that):
 1. **Contact your AccessAbility consultant** and have them email your instructor detailing the accommodations required.

Accommodation Procedure:

After submitting your documentation, you will receive a response from your TA. This form does not guarantee that you will be accommodated. 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. **You are responsible for checking your official U of T email and Quercus course announcements daily**, as accommodations may be time-critical.

For missed assignments, **do not wait for an instructor or TA response to resume work on your assignment**. Extension accommodations may be as short as one business day, depending on the nature of the illness/emergency. You should complete your assignment as soon as you are able and email it to your TA.

For an anticipated event (e.g. scheduled surgery or an illness with a prolonged recovery period), submit a [Verification of Illness Form](#) completed by your doctor, AND this form to me if you would like to request accommodations in advance of the assignment deadline or midterm date. **Declare your future absence on ACORN (absences can be declared up to 14 days in the future).**

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. **Please make it clear in your subject line that you are requesting a second accommodation**. For example, if you are given an extension but are still sick and need more time, or if you miss a make-up midterm, you must submit another request ‘Missed Term Work Accommodations’ form and declare your extended absence on ACORN. ***Note: In the case of a missed make-up test, an opportunity to write a second make-up test may not be provided.

Academic Integrity

The responsibilities of all parties to the integrity of the teaching and learning relationship are defined in the University's Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters (August 1995)

<http://www.governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/policies/behaveac.htm>.

This Code is concerned with the responsibilities of faculty members and students, not as they belong to administrative or professional or social groups, but as they co-operate in all phases of the teaching and learning relationship.

Such co-operation is threatened when teacher or student forsakes respect for the other--and for others involved in learning--in favour of self-interest, when truth becomes a hostage of expediency. On behalf of teacher and student and in fulfillment of its own principles and ideals, the University has a responsibility to ensure that academic achievement is not obscured or undermined by cheating or misrepresentation, that the evaluative process meets the highest standards of fairness and honesty, and that malevolent or even mischievous disruption is not allowed to threaten the educational process. These are areas in which teacher and student necessarily share a common interest as well as common responsibilities.

AccessAbility Services

Students with diverse learning styles and needs are welcome in this course. In particular, if you have a disability or health consideration that may require accommodations, please feel free to approach the instructor and/or the AccessAbility Services Office (in SW-302) as soon as possible. Your instructor will work with you and AccessAbility Services to ensure you can achieve your learning goals in this course. Enquiries are confidential. The UTSC AccessAbility Services staff members are available by appointment to assess specific needs, provide referrals and arrange appropriate accommodations.

Course Schedule

DATE	TOPIC	READINGS
Class 1 Jan 10	Introduction & Ice Breakers	Milkman: Introduction Clear: Introduction
Class 2: Jan 17	Starting to Change	Milkman: Chapters 1 & 2 Clear: Chapter 1, 2, & 3
Class 3: Jan 24	Commitment & Reminders	Milkman: Chapters 3 & 4 Clear: Chapters 4, 5, 6, & 7
Class 4: Jan 31	Basics of Self-Regulation***	Reader: Inzlicht et al., 2021 Reader: Duckworth et al., 2016 Reader: Rogers et al., 2015
Class 5: Feb 7	Planning & Habits***	Reader : Webb & Sheeran, 2008 Reader : Wood & Neal, 2016 Reader : Galla & Duckworth, 2015
Class 6: Feb 14	Final Paper Discussion NO REACTION PAPERS	Clear: Chapters 8, 9, & 10
Feb 21	READING WEEK	NO CLASS
Class 7 Feb 28	Effort & Efficacy	Milkman: Chapters 5 & 6 Clear: Chapters 11, 12, 13, & 14
Class 8: March 7	Motivation***	Reader: Markland et al., 2005 Reader: Milyavskaya et al., 2015 Reader: Yeager et al., 2019
Class 9: March 14	Precommitment & Defaults***	Reader: Schwartz et al., 2014 Reader: Thaler & Benartzi, 2004 Reader: McKenzie et al., 2006
Class 10: March 21	Nudges	Clear: Chapters 15, 16, & 17
Class 11: March 28	Long term change	Milkman: Chapters 7 & 8 Clear: Chapters 18, 19, 20 & Conclusions
Class 12: April 4	Habit Fest!	Flash Talks (Final paper due at 11:59pm)

Note: *** denotes a week where students lead discussion

Course Reader

All Course Readings can [via this link](#)

Class 4

Inzlicht, M., Werner, K.M., Briskin, J.L., & Roberts, B.W. (2021). Integrating models of self-regulation. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 72, 319-345.

Duckworth, A.L., White, R.E., & Gross, J.J. (2016). A stitch in time: Strategic self-control in high school and college students. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 108, 329-341.

Rogers, T., Milkman, K.L., John, L.K., & Norton, M.I. (2015). Beyond good intentions: Prompting People to make plans improves Follow-through on important tasks. *Behavioral Science & Policy*, 1, 33-41

Class 5

Webb, T.L., & Sheeran, P. (2008). Mechanisms of implementation intention effects: The role of goal intentions, self-efficacy, and accessibility of plan components. *British Journal of Social Psychology*, 47, 373-395.

Wood, W., & Neal, D.T. (2016). Healthy through habit: Interventions for initiating & maintaining health behavior change. *Behavioral Science & Policy*, 2, 71-83.

Galla, B.M., & Duckworth, A.L. (2015). More Than Resisting Temptation: Beneficial Habits Mediate the Relationship Between Self-Control and Positive Life Outcomes. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 109, 508-525.

Class 8

Markland, D., Ryan, R.M., Tobin, V.J., Rollnick, S. (2005). Motivational interviewing and self-determination theory. *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology*, 24, 811-831.

Milyavskaya, M., Inzlicht, M., Hope, N., & Koestner, R. (2015). Saying “no” to temptation: want-to motivation improves self-regulation by reducing temptation rather than by increasing self-control. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 109, 67-693.

Yeager, D.S. et al. (2019). A national experiment reveals where a growth mindset improves achievement. *Nature*, 573, 364-378.

Class 9

Schwartz, J., Mochon, D., Wyper, L., Maroba, J., Patel, D., & Ariely, D. (2014). Healthier by precommitment. *Psychological Science*, 25, 538-546.

Thaler, R.H., & Benartzi, S. (2004). Save more tomorrow: Using behavioral economics to increase employee saving. *Journal of Political Economy*, 112, 164-187

McKenzie, C.R.M., Liersch, M.J., Finkelstein, S.R. (2006). Recommendations implicit in policy defaults. *Psychological Science*, 17, 414-420.