

**Syllabus**  
The Science of Behaviour Change (PSYD19)  
Dr. Michael Inzlicht  
Winter 2023  
Thursdays 12:00-2:00 AC334

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Zoom Office Hours: Mondays 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. Students will learn core knowledge of the field of behaviour change from psychology and behavioural economics. Students will read primary sources and learn how to critically evaluate research and scientific claims. Critically, students will not only learn theory but will be instructed on how to apply what they learn in class to their everyday lives 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.

<b><u>Evaluation:</u></b>	<b><u>Weight</u></b>
<b>Class Participation</b>	20%
<b>Reaction Papers</b>	15%
<b>Discussion Leading</b>	25%
<b>Flash Talk</b>	10%
<b>Final Paper (Due April 6)</b>	30%

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## **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**

This course uses the University's learning management system, Quercus, to post information about the course. This includes posting readings and other materials required to complete class activities and course assignments, as well as sharing important announcements and updates. The site is dynamic and new information and resources will be posted regularly as we move through the term, so please make it a habit to log in to the site on a regular, even daily, basis. To access the course website, go to the U of T Quercus log-in page at <https://q.utoronto.ca>. Once you have logged in to Quercus using your UTORid and password, you should see the link or "card" for [PSYD19—Science of Behaviour Change]. You may need to scroll through other cards to find this. Click on the PSYD19—Science of Behaviour Change] link to open our course area, view the latest announcements and access your course resources. There are Quercus help guides for students that you can access by clicking on the "?" icon in the left side column. Please also note that any grades posted are for your information only, so you can view and track your progress through the course. No grades are considered official, including any posted in Quercus at any point in the term, until they have been formally approved and posted on ACORN at the end of the course. Please contact me as soon as possible if you think there is an error in any grade posted on Quercus.

## **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 or twice 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. 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 or twice per 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 in 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 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.

Normally, students will be required to submit their course essays to the University's plagiarism detection tool 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 tool's reference database, where they will be used solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism. The terms that apply to the University's use of this tool are described on the Centre for Teaching Support & Innovation website (<https://uoft.me/pdt-faq>).

### **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 2023**

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

Note:

- 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.
- Instructors cannot accept term work any later than five business days after the last day of class. Beyond this date, accommodations are only possible via the Registrar's Office [petition process](#).

The email address to submit missed term work accommodation requests in **PSYD19** is:  
[michael.inzlicht@utoronto.ca](mailto:michael.inzlicht@utoronto.ca)

### **ILLNESS OR EMERGENCY accommodations:**

For missed work due to ILLNESS OR EMERGENCY, complete the following process:

1. Complete the [Request for Missed Term Work Accommodations Form](#).
2. Declare your absence on [ACORN](#) (Profile & Settings > Absence Declaration)
3. Email **both** of the following items to the course email **within 2 business days** of the missed work:
  - a. the [Request for Missed Term Work Accommodations Form](#)
  - \*AND\***
  - b. a screenshot of your Self-Declared Absence on ACORN

*Note:*

- *If you are unable to submit your request within 2 business days, you must still email your instructor within the 2 business day window to explain the nature of the delay. Exceptions to the 2 business day deadline will only be made under exceptional circumstances.*
- *If your absence is declared on ACORN, we do not require any additional supporting documentation (e.g. medical notes) to support your missed term work accommodation request.*

### **ACADEMIC CONFLICT accommodations:**

For missed term work due to an ACADEMIC CONFLICT (e.g. two midterms at the same time):

1. Complete the [Request for Missed Term Work Accommodations Form](#).
2. Take screenshots of your course Quercus pages that demonstrate the conflict.
3. Email the form and screenshots to the course email **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. Requests sent after the activity deadline may not be accommodated.

*Note:*

- *Multiple assignments due on the same day are not considered conflicts. Students are expected to manage their time effectively to meet assignment deadlines.*
- *Back-to-back tests/quizzes are not considered conflicts. Only overlapping activities are conflicts.*
- *Students are responsible for keeping their course timetables conflict-free. Students who register in two courses with overlapping lecture/tutorial/lab schedules will not be accommodated.*

### **RELIGIOUS CONFLICT accommodations:**

For missed term work due to a RELIGIOUS CONFLICT:

1. Complete the [Request for Missed Term Work Accommodations Form](#).
2. Email the form to the course **email 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. Requests sent after the activity deadline may not be accommodated.

### **ACCESSABILITY SERVICES accommodations:**

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

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

### **Accommodation Procedure:**

After submitting your documentation, you will receive a response from your instructor or 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. **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 the instructor’s response to resume work on your assignment**. Extensions may be as short as one business day, depending on the nature of the illness/emergency. Complete your assignment as soon as you’re able, and email it to your instructor.

For an **anticipated absence** (e.g. a scheduled surgery or an illness with a prolonged recovery period), if you would like to request accommodations in advance, submit a [Verification of Illness Form](#) completed by your doctor AND the [Request for Missed Term Work Accommodations Form](#) to the course email. Absences can be declared up to 14 days into the future on ACORN.

### **Missed Accommodations**

If an accommodation is granted but a continued illness/emergency prevents you from meeting its requirements, 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**. E.g. If you are given an extension but are still sick and need more time, or if you miss a make-up term test, you must submit *another* [Request for 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 necessarily be provided.

### **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.

### **AccessAbility Services**

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 (<http://www.utsc.utoronto.ca/ability/>) as soon as possible.

AccessAbility Services staff (located in Rm AA142, Arts and Administration Building) are available by appointment to assess specific needs, provide referrals and arrange appropriate accommodations. Please contact 416-287-7560 (tel/TTY) or email [ability.utsc@utoronto.ca](mailto:ability.utsc@utoronto.ca) for more information. The sooner you let us know your needs the quicker we can assist you in achieving your learning goals in this course.

### **Equity, Diversity, Inclusion**

The University of Toronto is committed to equity, human rights and respect for diversity. All members of the learning environment in this course should strive to create an atmosphere of mutual respect where all members of our community can express themselves, engage with each other, and respect one another's differences. U of T does not condone discrimination or harassment against any persons or communities.

## Course Schedule

DATE	TOPIC	READINGS
Class 1 Jan 12	Introduction & Ice Breakers	Milkman: Introduction Clear: Introduction
Class 2: Jan 19	Starting to Change	Milkman: Chapters 1 & 2 Clear: Chapter 1, 2, & 3
Class 3: Jan 26	Commitment & Reminders	Milkman: Chapters 3 & 4 Clear: Chapters 4, 5, 6, & 7
Class 4: Feb 2	Basics of Self-Regulation***	Reader: Inzlicht et al., 2021 Reader: Duckworth et al., 2016 Reader: Rogers et al., 2015
Class 5: Feb 9	Planning & Habits***	Reader : Sheeran & Webb, 2016 Reader : Wood & Neal, 2016 Reader : Galla & Duckworth, 2015
Class 6: Feb 16	Final Paper Discussion <b>NO REACTION PAPERS</b>	Clear: Chapters 8, 9, & 10
Feb 23	<b>READING WEEK</b>	<b>NO CLASS</b>
Class 7 March 2	Effort & Efficacy	Milkman: Chapters 5 & 6 Clear: Chapters 11, 12, 13, & 14
Class 8: March 9	Motivation***	Reader: Markland et al., 2005 Reader: Milyavskaya et al., 2015 Reader: Yeager et al., 2019
Class 9: March 16	Nudges	Clear: Chapters 15, 16, & 17 Special guest: <b>Katy Milkman!</b>
Class 10: March 23	Precommitment & Defaults***	Reader: Schwartz et al., 2014 Reader: McKenzie et al., 2006 Reader: Benartzi et al., 2017
Class 11: March 30	Long term change	Milkman: Chapters 7 & 8 Clear: Chapters 18, 19, 20 & Conclusions
Class 12: April 6	Habit Fest!	Flash Talks ( <b>Final paper due at 11:59pm</b> )

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

Sheeran, P., & Webb, T.L. (2016). The intention-behavior gap. *Social and Personality Psychology Compass*, 10/9, 503-518.

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.

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

Benartzi, S., Beshears, J., Milkman, K.L., Sunstein, C.R., Thaler, R.H., Shankar, M., Tucker-Ray, W., Congdon, W.J., & Galing, S. (2017). Should governments invest more in nudging? *Psychological Science*, 28, 1041-1055.