Psychology
UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO
SCARBOROUGH

PSYD66: Current Topics in Human Brain and Behaviour
Understanding human behaviour using animal models

Fall 2023 Syllabus

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Instructor Information

Debra Bercovici (she/her)

Email: d.bercovici@utoronto.ca
- Please put course code (PSYD66) in the subject line for prioritized responding
- Replies within ~24 business day hours.

Office Hours:
- One-on-one
- By appointment
- Book via my Calendly page
- Access my Zoom office

I'm available to discuss course content, address concerns about the course or your UTSC experience, talk about grad school and non-academic career paths, and find ways to connect you with resources to better support you as a student.

Course Description

As behavioural neuroscientists, one of our aims is to understand how our biology and physiology guide our behaviour. Due to the limits in how we can study brains in humans, many of us focus our attention on studying animal brain and behaviour as a proxy for human brain and behaviour. However, what happens when the bridge between animal and human brain and behaviour is unclear? Throughout this course, we will explore how to consider the design, analysis, and interpretation of findings from research in animal models looking to explain human behaviour. We will also reflect on how this research impacts the "real world."

If this is your first D-level course, you'll notice that it is less lecture-based and more like a seminar or journal club. We'll discuss brain and behaviour concepts based on the theme of translational research through reading and discussing primary literature. Instead of exams, you'll demonstrate what you learn through alternate forms of evaluations. There is also more flexibility to apply the overarching theme of this course to avenues that resonate most with you.

Learning Objectives

This semester I hope that you're able to:
1. Understand the basics of using animal models to study human behaviour.
2. Increase your comfort in navigating and applying animal research concepts as a means to understanding human behaviour.
3. Develop a critical lens for evaluating translational research.
4. Gain experience in activities common within the research community, including participating in seminars, writing a proposal, and contributing to peer review.
5. Explore the gap between academic research and "real world" psychological topics.
6. Create a final project that evaluates the translation of brain and behaviour.

Course Logistics

Class Meetings

You are invited to attend and contribute to classes on Tuesdays in **AC 332 from 5-7pm**. If you cannot attend in person (e.g., you are sick), a Zoom option is available. You can access the weekly Zoom classroom by going to the [Zoom Tab](#) on Quercus.

To enhance your learning experience and increase classroom accessibility, you are invited to respond to or ask discussions questions during class using the Zoom chat or by posting on the weekly [Jamboard](#) (link found in each [weekly module](#)) in addition to raising your hand during class. Since Jamboard posts are anonymous, ***please attach your name to your posts*** if you want it to be included in your class participation grade. You are always welcome to post anonymously but note that I am unable to include any anonymous posts in your participation marks. The Jamboard for each week is available prior to lecture and you can post on it ahead of class time. Once the class is over, the weekly Jamboard can be viewed but you will no longer be able to contribute to it.

Since I will be recording our lectures on Zoom, your classroom participation will also be recorded and will be available to students in the course for viewing remotely. Course videos and materials belong to your instructor/University and are protected by copyright. You are permitted to download lecture recordings and materials for your own *academic* use, but you are not permitted to copy, share, or use them for any other purpose without the explicit permission of the instructor.

[Quercus Modules](#)

You can find each weekly module on Quercus. At the top, there is a Student Resource tab with links to various campus supports available. Subsequent weekly modules contain the learning objectives, checklists, and readings for each week. I recommend taking a look at the checklist at the beginning of the week so that you are aware of any upcoming deadlines, administrative updates, or helpful links.

The module page is also where you will find the base of the weekly lecture content. This replaces the use of lecture slides. The uploaded content is already fairly comprehensive. My intention is that this will be a sufficient replacement for students who benefit from having note-taking accommodations.

All weekly content is available *at least* one week prior to each class.

Course Schedule

(Schedule subject to change following project proposal submissions)

Week	Date	Topic	Submissions
1	Sept 5	Course Introduction and Translation Basics	
2	Sept 12	Animals vs Humans vs Real World Impacts	Journal Club Sign Up
3	Sept 19	Designing Experiments to Measure Cognition	Project Proposal
4	Sept 26	Modeling Psychiatric Conditions	Peer Review
5	Oct 3	Accounting for Individual Differences	Article Reflection #1
	Oct 9-15	**Reading Week**	
6	Oct 17	Journal Club I	
7	Oct 24	Journal Club II	Article Reflection #2
8	Oct 31	Journal Club III	
9	Nov 7	Journal Club IV	Article Reflection #3
10	Nov 14	TBD (dependent on final projects)	
11	Nov 21	TBD (dependent on final projects)	
12	Nov 28	TBD (dependent on final projects)	Final Project

Evaluation Scheme

For a detailed description of each graded component, please click on an individual item to go to the associated page on Quercus.

Participation—10%

Assignments—45%

- Article Reflections (3 x 10%)
- Journal Club Presentations (2 x 15%)
- Lecture Reflections (3 x 5%)

You only need to complete 45% worth of assignments. However, there are 75% worth of opportunities available to you. You can choose to only complete 45% worth, or you can complete more knowing that I will drop your lowest scoring item(s). This also means that if you miss an assignment opportunity for any reason, you will have the chance to make up the points elsewhere. ***Note that this evaluation scheme eliminates absence declarations or academic accommodations for missed assignments.***

- Example 1: Complete 35% worth, max grade is 35/45 (78%)
- Example 2: Complete 45% worth, max grade is 45/45 (100%)
- Example 3: Complete 70% worth, lowest score(s) dropped, max grade is 45/45 (100%)

If you wish for a low scoring item to be dropped, ensure that you have replaced the total percentage with other assignment grades. E.g., if you want your 15% *presentation to be dropped, you need to complete an extra article reflection* (10%) *and 1 lecture reflections* (5%).

Translation Project—45%

- [Project Proposal](#) (10%)
- [Peer Review](#) (10%)
- [Final Project](#) (25%)

Grades will be posted directly to your [gradebook](#) on Quercus. Once grades are released, you will be able to access any associated rubrics, individual feedback, and grading keys directly from each individual item's Quercus page. Please contact me as soon as possible if you think there is an error in any grade posted on Quercus.

Please also note that final grades posted on Quercus are not considered official until they have been formally approved and posted on ACORN at the end of the course.

<u>Submitting Written Work</u>

All submissions (excluding presentations) are to be completed on Quercus. You can access the assignment pages directly from the [assignment tab](#), from the [modules](#) (during the week assignment week), or from the [Course Schedule](#). **Submissions close at 11:59pm ET on Fridays.**

Deadlines have been input into Quercus and should automatically appear in your Quercus calendars. In addition, you can keep track of due dates by referencing the [Course Schedule](#) and by reading the checklist for each week (refer to the [Quercus Modules section of the syllabus](#) for more info on checklists).

If we do not have an arrangement, late work will not be accepted and will receive a score of 0%. Please see the [Accessibility](#) section of this syllabus for more information.

<u>Departmental Position on Grade Norms</u>

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%. You can expect that the *final class average* for this course will fall within this range.

Our Classroom Community

Inclusivity and Safe Classrooms

(Inspired by the Safe Classroom statement from Dr Lily May's 2021 syllabi at UBC)

Our classroom is a community where students should feel included and are treated equitably. This refers to identities including, but not limited to, gender identity, gender expression, sex, race, ethnicity, socioeconomic background, sexual orientation, political and religious affiliation, disability, health, and age. When we encounter controversial and/or sensitive issues, discussion is

encouraged. However, students should feel safe to explore ideas without fear of being judged. If a statement or behaviour is likely to offend/alienate/discriminate against others, it should not be shared with the class. Instead, please share it with me after class or during office hours. Any behaviour that compromises the safety of our environment will not be tolerated and you will be asked to leave the space (Zoom or in-person). If at any point during the semester you feel offended, threatened, or alienated by anything that happens during our class (including by me), please feel welcome to let me know.

One thing to keep in mind is that we are bound to make mistakes in this space, as does anyone when approaching complex topics. Strive to see your mistakes and others' as valuable elements of the learning process. I am also constantly learning from my mistakes.

A note on masking: I view masking as an example of accessibility, inclusivity, and classroom safety. While it is not a requirement, I encourage wearing a mask in class.

Accessibility

If you have accessibility needs, you are welcome in our classroom community. Here are some ways I am committed to increasing classroom accessibility:

- Offering online and asynchronous ways of engaging with the course.
- Encouraging mask-wearing.
- Accommodating flexibility around missed assignments.
- Upholding classroom safety.
- Creating unambiguous instructions/expectations and grading rubrics.
- Providing weekly checklists.
- Sharing classroom content ahead of lectures.
- Honouring accommodations for all students, regardless of diagnosis, disability status, or affiliation with AccessAbility Services.
- Virtual one-on-one office hours available on most days of the week with flexible online booking system.

*Seeking accommodations for your needs shouldn't be burdensome. Accessibility and flexibility are directly built into the course and are available when needs arise. **However, please email me as soon as you require an accommodation that is not automatically available to work out a suitable arrangement** (e.g., illness preventing the submission of a component of the Translation Project)*

If there is a specific accommodation you need and it is not listed, please reach out to me so that we can make the course work for you. **You can reach out to me at the start of the semester and as needs arise/change, expected or unexpected**. There is no expectation to divulge personal health information. I will advocate for you if there is a need that isn't being met.

Additionally, if there is anything else you can think of that would make this course more accessible to you and your peers, please let me know!

Academic Integrity

Academic integrity is what all members of the UTSC community, from first-year undergraduates to publishing professors, aspire to when they do research. Having academic integrity means taking responsibility for and having pride in your work, especially when it connects through practices such as crediting the work of others.

Having strong academic integrity is a qualifying behaviour that welcomes you as a scholar to the academic community.

Academic Integrity is about being loyal and respectful to those who have created content and about encouraging you to create work independently that you can feel proud of. Working with academic integrity means:

- **Doing your own work:** everything you submit should be completed by you.
- **Avoiding collusion:** this involves working too closely with your peers without authorization.
- **Not sharing materials** provided to you in this course. Please respect the copyright surrounding the work I've put in to offer you this course. If you'd like to share the content I've created, please speak with me first.
- **Engaging** with the ideas of others, both past and present, in a variety of scholarly platforms such as research journals, books by academics, lectures, etc. But also…
- **Explicitly acknowledging** the sources of your knowledge, especially through accurate citation practices

As members of our learning community, I want to invite you to spend some time thinking about what academic integrity means to you. What behaviours can you and your classmates engage in to make sure you are achieving your learning objectives and that your work is something you can be proud to represent.

If you are at risk of breaching academic integrity due to external and extenuating circumstances or a lack of accessibility, please come talk to me about how we can make the classroom a place where these coping mechanisms aren't necessary.

University Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters

If there is a breach in academic integrity, you may face consequences as per the university policy. The Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters outlines what constitute academic dishonesty and the processes U of T takes for addressing academic offences.

My Teaching Values

Transparency

Being transparent is important to me and my goal is never to conceal my motives. If something is unclear, that's my bad. Please point it out and I'll clarify!

<u>Non-hierarchical learning</u>

I don't like to pretend that I am the expert. I may know more about certain topics than you, but I am confident that in other domains, you hold more knowledge and experience than I do. I invite you to share when I've said something wrong or when you have a better idea than me.

<u>Student/Community-driven learning</u>

If something I'm doing isn't conducive to your learning, I'm open to altering course. You are the ones paying for this education, and you deserve to learn in a way that is best for you.

Acknowledgement of Traditional Land

The University of Toronto is located on land belonging to the Huron-Wendat, the Seneca, and the Mississaugas of the Credit. The Scarborough campus is also located on land belonging to the Anichnabeg, the Chippewa, and the Haudenosaunee peoples. In addition to settling on stolen traditional and ancestral land, we are occupying it for the purpose of participating in an educational system that was built on and continues to uphold colonial frameworks.

Many non-Indigenous folks, me included, have settled on this land for comfort, safety, and opportunity. It is important to me that I reflect on how being here offers more opportunities for myself, like being a member of a world-renowned university, but comes at the expense of the Indigenous communities we perpetually displace and exclude. I invite you to reflect on your own positionality and what it means for you to be on this land.

To learn more about the land which we are occupying, as well as about land acknowledgements, visit *Native Land.ca*

If you have ideas on how we can incorporate Indigenous ways of knowing into our classroom, I would be eager to learn.