

Psychology 110A: Introduction to Psychology

Fall Semester, 2021
Mondays, Wednesdays & Fridays, 10:00 a.m. – 10:50 a.m.
209 Maxey Hall

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Course Materials

Required Text: Gray, P. & Bjorklund, D.F. (2018). Psychology (8th ed.). New York: Worth Publishers.

Additional readings

The following will be available on Canvas, and on the class web page:
<http://www.whitman.edu/~herbrawt/classes/110/psych110.html>

Bruce, C. (2001). Three cases of relative honor. In *Conned Again, Watson: Cautionary Tales of Logic, Math, and Probability*. Cambridge MA: Perseus Publishing.

Hofstadter, D.R. (1981). Prelude...Ant fugue. In D.R. Hofstadter & D.C. Dennett (Eds.), *The Mind's I: Fantasies and Reflections on the Self and Soul* (pp. 149-201). New York: Bantam Books. (Reprinted from D.R. Hofstadter, (1979). *Gödel, Escher, Bach: An Eternal Golden Braid*. New York: Basic Books.)

McGowan, K. (2014, April). The second coming of Sigmund Freud. *Discover*, 35(3), 54-61.

Neisser, U. (1981). John Dean's memory: A case study. In Honeck, R.P. *Introductory Readings for Cognitive Psychology* (2nd ed.). Guilford, CT: Guilford Publishing. (Reprinted from Cognition, 1981, 9.)

Nolan, J. (2001, March). Memento mori. *Esquire*, 135(3).

Perkins, D.N. (1981). Witness to invention. In *The Mind's best work*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Pinker, S. (1997). Family Values (excerpt). In *How the Mind Works*. New York: W.W.

Norton. p. 483-487.

Sacks, O. (1970a). The man who mistook his wife for a hat. In *The Man Who Mistook His Wife for a Hat (and Other Clinical Tales)*. New York: Harper and Row.

Sagan, C (1995). The Dragon in My Garage. In *The Demon-Haunted World*. New York: Random House.

Siegel, J. (2003, November). Why we sleep. *Scientific American*, 5, 92-97.

Skinner, B.F. (1971). A technology of behavior. In *Beyond Freedom and Dignity*. New York: Bantam Books.

Stangor, C. (2011). Initial Attraction. In *Principles of Social Psychology*. Flat World Knowledge.

Course Overview: This course is intended to provide students with an overview of the modern field of Psychology. As you will come to realize over the semester, Psychology encompasses a strikingly broad range of topics. This is good in the sense that it should allow you to find something that you'll consider appealing and/or thought provoking. However, this same breadth can also be a hindrance because providing an appropriate amount of breadth involves sacrificing a corresponding level of depth. As a result, many topics will only be touched on, and students should be aware that this is just the proverbial tip of the iceberg. It is my hope that Psychology 110 will help students discover areas of Psychology that interest them, so that they can pursue these topics further in higher level courses.

Some other notes of relevance that might not be obvious at this point should be acknowledged. This class section is organized to portray psychology as a scientific approach to the study of behavior and mental life. This emphasis on science reflects in part my own areas of interest, which are primarily cognition and neuroscience, and their relationships with observable behavior. Not coincidentally, it also corresponds with my primary areas of expertise. This does not mean that the class will only cover these areas. Psychology 110 is an overview course, so we will cover as much of the entire field as possible. I mention this primarily to help you anticipate what class will be like, and to inform you about my own biases and preoccupations. If you find a topic particularly interesting, and want to know more, feel free to stop by my office any time and talk about it. And if the topic isn't one that I know much about, be aware that there are other psychology faculty that probably do, so introduce yourself – they're quite nice people.

Finally, a word about the organization of the course. It starts with what some might call "reductionistic" approaches, specifically neuroscience and behavior analysis. I do this partly because they tend to break psychology down into low-level, overtly observable phenomena that can then be built up into more complex behaviors. Another reason for this is more pedagogical, in that it nicely sets up some important tensions between competing schools of thought within Psychology to which we will refer throughout the course. Next, we will tackle the "inner world"

in which we all reside, involving perception, thought, cognition, language, and the like. After that, our focus broadens to include interactions with others. This will include topics like communication, social interaction, and development, which are difficult to conceive of without acknowledging the existence of other individuals. And finally, the course ends with some of the more complex and interesting (and not coincidentally, controversial) topics within psychology, including personality, intelligence, and psychopathology. These are especially appropriate topics for the end of the course because by the time we get there, you should have built up a familiarity with several different theories of, and approaches to psychology. These complex topics will provide some valuable context in which to compare, contrast, and inter-relate the preceding material. Clearly, this is too exciting for words to describe.

Learning Goals: After completion of Psyc 110, a student should:

1. Be familiar with the range of topics and theories included in modern scientific psychology.
2. Understand how psychologists use the scientific method to study behavior and mental life.
3. Be able to critique psychological claims and research findings.
4. Understand some of the ethical concerns within psychology, and recognize how psychologists approach them.

Class Web Page: <http://www.whitman.edu/~herbawt/classes/110/psych110.html>

I've constructed a thoroughly unimpressive course web page that I'm hoping will remain up-to-date over the semester, and with some luck, perhaps even expand into something less unimpressive. As a means of achieving this goal, I encourage you to send me relevant links should you stumble across anything that connects with course material. I'll also post announcements relating to the class and to Psychology in general (for instance, locations and titles of invited speakers and reminders about upcoming assignments). I'll also try to post handouts and assignments (in adobe acrobat format) for students to download. Thus, if you miss class, the web page might be a good first place to check in.

Grading and Assignments

Your grade in Psychology 110 will be based on the following assignments:

4 Exams – 80% total (20% each)

7 Thought papers – 20% total

Exams. There will be four exams during the semester. These exams are incredibly hard and will consist of several short answer and one or two essay items. Most short answer questions can be answered well in a medium size paragraph (about 1/3 of a page, given average handwriting). Answers to essay items will be about a page in length. Exams will be closed-book and to be completed during the class period. I'll distribute a list of practice questions before exams to help you prepare. Exams will primarily cover material since the previous exam (they are “non-cumulative”). However, this does not indicate that it is wise to forget material immediately after

it is tested. *Exception: The final exam will consist mostly of non-cumulative items, but may include some global, integrative questions that draw on recurring themes from throughout the semester.* Makeup exams are available for legitimate, documented conflicts. Please see me about such conflicts in advance.

Introspective thought papers. Thought papers should be about 2 pages (typed and double-spaced) and may be turned at the beginning of class (maximum of one per week). For full credit, you will need to write 7 thought papers. Note that this means that you do not need to complete one *every* week. However, be aware that I will only accept one paper per student per week, so you won't want to make a habit of skipping. Thought papers will not be accepted during finals week. Topics for these papers are open, but they should relate to recent course material (lectures or readings). These are not "research papers". In fact, you probably won't have to set foot in the library or do any outside reading to complete any of them. They should do two things: a) demonstrate an understanding of some complex idea covered in class or an assigned reading; and b) make a novel, meaningful connection to something outside of any class session or assigned reading. If you liked a topic, explore it further and explain why or how you found it useful. If you thought an idea was confusing or unsatisfying, use these as a tool to explore why or how it failed to work for you. I encourage you to refer to current events, other classes you might also be taking, or examples from real life. My only requirements are that they reflect an accurate understanding of a psychological concept and show some genuine and original thought. The logic here is not simply to make you write (no, it's much more diabolical than that). It is to get you thinking about psychology outside of class, in your daily life.

Thought papers will be graded on a scale of 0-5:

- 5: A meaningful, interesting and concise paper. The topic is relevant, and the conclusion is sound, reflecting creative and original thought about a relevant topic.
- 4: An interesting, relevant topic and a conclusion that shows evidence of effort and serious thought, but not as well crafted, or containing some annoying linguistic errors.
- 3: A good paper, but one which communicates less original thought, or indicates only a superficial articulation of the relevant psychological concepts; A kernel of a great topic that needs more work to blossom into a solid paper.
- 2: A paper which reflects little genuine thought; may be based on a hollow cliché, or unmodified regurgitation of classroom discussions or readings.
- 1: Unacceptable work. Barely comprehensible, self-contradictory or irrelevant, and/or loaded with grammatical or linguistic errors.
- 0: A blank sheet of paper, or a rambling tirade filled with disparaging, potentially obscene remarks about specific Whitman faculty.

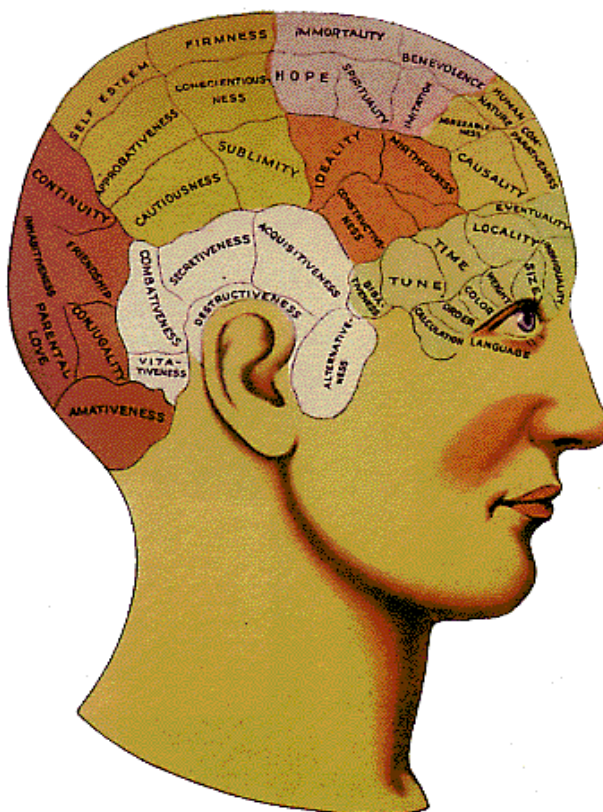
To help you generate ideas, I've tried to select some interesting readings that might provoke thoughts. I think you'll find that ideas will be easy to come up with. If you're really stuck, drop by my office and we'll chat and see if we can come up with something.

Research Participation: One component of all PSYC 110 courses is participation in departmental

research. Professors and thesis students often need human subjects to participate in their research, and doing so will help you better understand psychological research. You must participate in 4 hours of departmental research to fulfill this requirement. See the Instructions for Students Participating in the Subject Pool for further instructions.

Grading scale: Grades will be assigned based on the percentage of all possible points earned (see above for the relative contributions of each assignment). Below are the overall performance ranges that result in various letter grades.

A	93 - 100%	B	83 - 86%	C	73 - 76%	D	63 - 66%
A-	90 - 92%	B-	80 - 82%	C-	70 - 72%	D-	60 - 62%
B+	87 - 89%	C+	77 - 79%	D+	67 - 69%	F	0 - 59%



Some important class policies you'll want to know about:

Late Assignments:

I like to think I'm a reasonable fellow, so I'm not against granting deadline extensions from time to time. Here are my guidelines:

1. Extension requests made 1 week (or more) before the due date are almost certain to be granted, without penalty, provided that
 - a) the conflict is a reasonable and legitimate one, and
 - b) you haven't requested an extension for every assignment all semester long. After all, Wally didn't just fall off the turnip wagon yesterday. (No, the turnip incident was *years* ago). In short, make your requests as early as possible, and don't abuse my generosity.

2. Within one week (7 calendar days) of the deadline, extensions may still be granted, subject to the following (no exceptions).
 - a) If supported by the Dean of Students, there will be no late penalty.
 - b) If not, there will be a penalty of 5% per calendar day (e.g., a score of 96% would become a 91%, then an 86% and so on for each day late).

In other words, plan your semester early. Identify your busy weeks early on and get the "free" version of the extension, rather than losing 5% or more. If you're unexpectedly abducted by howler monkeys, the Dean and I will understand. If you simply forgot you had 3 other assignments due tomorrow, we're less forgiving.

Attendance:

If you must miss class because of some commitment that can't be rescheduled, that's fine. I reckon you're a grown-up and can manage your own affairs. Check with me to make sure you didn't miss any important announcements and collect any handouts. Re-read the assigned chapters and ask about any questions you might have. I also recommend borrowing class notes from that attractive classmate you've been dying to meet. Here's your opener: "Herbranson doesn't give out his lecture notes (I know, right?). Can I borrow yours?". From there you're on your own. Good luck. Make eye contact (but not too much), modulate your voice, and remember to smile.

Tentative schedule of topics and assignments (with credit and apologies to Yogi Berra)

All readings are from Gray's textbook unless otherwise noted.

W, 9-1	Welcome	
F, 9-3	The methods of scientific psychology <i>"Be careful if you don't know where you are going, because you might get there"</i>	Chapter 2
M, 9-6	The short, appropriately crazy history of psychology <i>"We're lost, but we're making good time"</i>	Chapter 1
W, 9-8	Secrets of the Psychics (film)	Sagan
F, 9-10	Neurons and how they communicate <i>"Ninety percent of the game is half mental"</i>	Chapter 4
M, 9-13	Brain structure and function <i>"Good news boys - the doctors X-rayed my head and didn't find anything"</i>	
W, 9-15	Building a smart brain from dumb neurons <i>"I can't concentrate when I'm thinking"</i>	Hofstadter
F, 9-17	Classical conditioning <i>"He's learning me his experience"</i>	Chapter 8
M, 9-20	Operant conditioning <i>"If fans don't come to the park, you can't stop them"</i>	Skinner
W, 9-22	Slack / Mystery fun day	
F, 9-24	Exam 1	
M, 9-27	Sleep and dreaming <i>"I usually take a two-hour nap from 1 to 4"</i>	Siegel
W, 9-29	Sensation <i>"You can observe a lot just by watching"</i>	Chapter 6
F, 10-1	Perception <i>"Nothing is like it seems, but everything is like it is"</i>	Chapter 7
M, 10-4	Agnosia and other disorders of perception <i>"It's not too far - it just seems like it is"</i>	Sacks
W, 10-6	The Island of the Colorblind (film)	
F, 10-8	No Class – October Break	
M, 10-11	The Structure of memory <i>"It's deja vu all over again"</i>	Chapter 9
W, 10-13	Applications for memory research <i>"We made too many wrong mistakes"</i>	Neisser
F, 10-15	Neuropsychology of memory <i>"Half the lies they tell about me aren't true"</i>	Nolan

M, 10-18	Slack / Mystery fun day	
W, 10-20	Exam 2	
F, 10-22	Genie, the Wild Child (film)	
M, 10-25	Language and communication	Chapter 11
	<i>"I couldn't get a conversation going - everybody was talking too much"</i>	
W, 10-27	Development	Chapter 12
	<i>"All pitchers are liars or crybabies"</i>	
F, 10-29	No class meeting today	
M, 11-1	Evolutionary Psychology	Chapter 3
	<i>"I looked like this when I was young, and I still do"</i>	
W, 11-3	Behavioral Genetics	
	<i>"Little League baseball is a very good thing because it keeps the parents off the streets"</i>	
F, 11-5	Problem-solving and decision-making	Chapter 10
	<i>"When you come to a fork in the road, take it"</i>	
M, 11-8	Improving problem-solving: Creativity & expertise	Perkins
	<i>"If you ask me something I don't know, I'm not going to answer"</i>	
W, 11-10	Slack / Mystery fun day	
F, 11-12	Exam 3	
M, 11-15	Game theory	Bruce
	<i>"Always go to other peoples funerals; otherwise they won't come to yours"</i>	
W, 11-17	Interpersonal attraction	Stangor
	<i>"So I'm ugly. But I never saw anyone hit with his face"</i>	
F, 11-19	Social Interactions (film)	

November 22-26: Turkey-Centered Gluttony Break. Gobble Gobble.

M, 11-29	Conformity and obedience	Chapter 13
	<i>"If you can't imitate him, don't copy him"</i>	
W, 12-1	Personality	Chapter 14
	<i>"Never answer an anonymous letter"</i>	
F, 12-3	Freud and Psychoanalysis	McGowan
	<i>"We have deep depth"</i>	
M, 12-6	Diagnosis of mental disorders	Chapter 15
	<i>"It's tough to make predictions. Especially about the future"</i>	
W, 12-8	Treating psychopathology	Chapter 16
	<i>"If the world were perfect, it wouldn't be"</i>	
F, 12-10	Slack / Mystery fun day	

Wednesday, 12-15 **"Semi-noncumulative" final exam. 2:00 pm**

Some not so commonly asked questions...

Q: I hate this! How do I withdraw?

A: Students may drop without record until October 13th. If you plan to drop this class, please do so as quickly as possible so that others may register. After that date you may withdraw until April 10th, and doing so will leave a nifty “W” on your transcript. I think it’s for “Wally”, to help you remember me.

Q: Is attendance required?

A: No, but it is highly recommended. My official policy is that you are the one paying for the class, so you may attend whenever you deem necessary. Keep in mind though, that you are responsible for any material presented in class. If you do miss a class, it’s a good idea to borrow notes from somebody, in case I happened to reveal the meaning of life or something else important. See the attendance policy elsewhere in the syllabus.

Q: I think I’m going to have smallpox on several critical dates this semester. Can I schedule makeups?

A: Notify me as soon as you realize there will be a serious conflict. Makeups can be arranged for *legitimate* and *properly documented* excuses (i.e., serious illnesses, natural disasters and the like, with a corresponding doctor’s note, CNN footage, subpoena, etc.) Note: The big wedding on Days of our Lives is not a serious conflict. If it’s that important I’ll help you track down a recording. Also see the late assignment policy elsewhere in the syllabus.

Q: Dude, I bombed that first exam... What can I do?

A: I don’t offer extra credit, but keep in mind that the remaining assignments (over 80% of your grade) should provide a good opportunity to correct a rough start.

Q: I have no idea what you were talking about last week...

A: Please feel free to ask questions during class sessions and let me know if I’m moving too quickly or am not explaining something clearly - It’s difficult for me to know what you’re experiencing in class. I’m also glad to take some time at the beginning of class to clarify points from previous lectures or from the text.