

Psychology 1: Introduction to Psychological Science

Mondays, Wednesdays, & Fridays 9:00-10:15am
Science Center A

<https://canvas.harvard.edu/courses/98444>

The success of *Homo sapiens* clearly results from the amazing things the human brain can do, and yet our brains are almost completely isolated from the outside world. How does the human brain give rise to the thoughts and behaviors that enable everyday life? How is the brain organized? Why is it “programmed” the way it is? Where does consciousness come from? What happens when our brain malfunctions? This course tries to answer these kinds of questions through an overview of foundational concepts from psychological and related mind sciences including neuroscience, evolutionary biology, philosophy, linguistics, and behavioral economics. It explores specific topics such as perception, learning and memory, language, social relationships, emotions, decision-making, well-being, and mental health. We will look at how these aspects of the mind develop in children, how they differ across people, how they are wired-up in the brain, and how they break down due to illness and injury.

INSTRUCTOR

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PRECEPTOR

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If you cannot meet during my office hour, sign up for a Zoom appointment at <https://drnoll.youcanbook.me/>

HEAD TEACHING FELLOW

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TEACHING FELLOWS (a full calendar of TF office hours is available on the course website)

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READINGS

- *Psychology* (2020, 5th edition) by Schacter, Gilbert, Nock & Wegner. Worth Publishers. ISBN 9781319190804. This is the main textbook and is available at [The Coop](#) and [online](#). Copies are on reserve at Lamont. You may also use any earlier edition; it should be easy enough to figure out the page numbers that correspond (chapters are numbered the same way across editions).

- You may want to consider renting the textbook, which is available from several on-line sources (e.g., chegg.com; textbooks.com; campusbookrentals.com). If acquiring the textbook represents a financial burden, I have several personal copies that I can loan.
- A number of shorter readings will be distributed electronically.
- You will better understand the lectures if you come to class having already read the material assigned for that week. For example, before class on January 28th, you should read Chapter 3 in the textbook.

ELECTRONICA

- Course website: <https://canvas.harvard.edu/courses/98444>
- Laptops and other electronic devices are strongly discouraged. Many studies have now shown that students who take notes on laptops learn less than students who take notes in more traditional ways (e.g., in a notebook). We have repeatedly observed the same pattern in this course, as reflected in exam grades. You will both learn more and do better on the exams if you take hand-written notes. Studies have also shown that devices not only affect the user's learning, but the learning of surrounding others. That is, your colleagues sitting behind you or next to you will also learn less if you use your device during class.
- If you insist on using a laptop in class, you are required to sit in the back three rows of the lecture hall.
- Video/audio recordings of the lectures will *not* generally be available, except in cases of students who have received accommodations from the Accessible Education Office or miss class due to illness. Email the Preceptor and Head TF to request recording access.
- You may *not* record lectures or any other class activities unless you have received such an accommodation from the Accessible Education Office. Per Harvard College policy, any student who digitally records any aspect of the class—whether in video or audio format—will be referred to the Honor Council for violation of the College's honor code.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

1. Discussion Sections

- This course includes discussion sections that meet once per week for 60 minutes. The main goal of discussion section is to discuss course material in greater depth, and to give you first-hand experience with some of the interesting phenomena in psychology. For example, this term we plan to handle real human brains; test whether you are a supertaster and consider what that means for perception; and discuss the implications of human memory for the law.
- In general, discussion section meetings will have readings that are in addition to the textbook readings. These were selected to be some of the most interesting and thought-provoking pieces in the field. Care has been taken to ensure a consistent total amount of reading from week-to-week. On weeks for which there is a large amount of section reading, there will generally be correspondingly less reading from the textbook. *You are expected to come to section having carefully read the assigned material.*

- Attendance in discussion section is mandatory. You will receive a *section* grade based on your attendance and engagement. If there is a week when you absolutely cannot attend your discussion section, you must arrange with your teaching fellow and the Head TF to find a suitable alternate discussion section to attend.
- The exams will include questions about the readings, activities, and discussions associated with discussion sections.
- Sectioning will take place after the course registration deadline. Discussion sections will begin meeting during the week of January 31st.

2. Exams

- There will be three exams in this course. Each exam will specifically cover the course material from the weeks immediately preceding the exam (e.g., Exam #2 will specifically cover material introduced after the first exam). However, terms and concepts that were introduced during earlier parts of the course may appear on later exams.
- The dates of the exams are: February 23rd, March 30th, and April 27th. Exams will take place at the same time and in the same location as lectures. Students who have accommodations from the AEO will be informed of any alternative location for the exam.
- An absence from an exam will *not* be excused unless...
 - ... you are unable to appear because the regularly scheduled exam falls on a religious holiday. Please look at the calendar *now*. If you will be unable to appear for a regularly scheduled exam because it falls on a religious holiday, **you must notify the Preceptor (noll@wjh.harvard.edu) by February 4th**. If you follow this procedure, the Preceptor will determine the best way to ensure that you are not penalized for your absence.
 - ... you are ill on the day of a regularly scheduled exam *and* you present a signed form from Harvard University Health Services to your Freshman or Resident Dean who then provides a letter of excuse to the Preceptor. If you follow this procedure, the Preceptor will determine the best way to ensure that you are not penalized for your absence.
- No make-up or alternative exam will be available for students traveling on the date of the exam. Please check your travel schedule to ensure that you will be able to take the exams on the scheduled dates. *Exceptions to this policy will not be granted.* If you cannot take one of the exams because of upcoming travel, you should not enroll in this course.

3. Final Project

- For the final project, you will be asked to identify a psychological finding and construct a “translation” of it suitable for non-scientific audiences. This translation will take the form of a *white paper* (10-15 pages) that makes recommendations to policy-makers, such as on how to reform the prison system or on the need for changes to psychiatric care.
- Details of the project requirement are provided under “Guidelines for the Final Project” and will be discussed in section. Examples of successful projects from earlier semesters will be made available.
- The final project will be due on **May 4th at 11:59pm**.

4. Grades

- Grades are based on exam scores + your final project + your section grade + any extra credit points (see below). Your **Total Percentage** will be calculated as the average of your scores on the three exams, final project, and section attendance.
- Your final grade will be determined using the following Total Percentage cut-offs. We may curve grades upwards as appropriate given the distribution of grades.

A	95%
A-	90%
B+	85%
B	80%
B-	75%
C+	70%
C	65%
C-	60%
D+	55%
D	50%

5. Study pool participation for extra credit

- You may earn extra credit towards your Total Percentage by participating in research studies conducted by Harvard University faculty. Qualified studies have been approved by the Harvard University Committee for the Use of Human Subjects, and by the Department of Psychology Study Pool Committee.
- For each hour of study participation, you will receive 0.5 extra point on your Total Percentage. For example, if you participate in 5 hours of research, you will receive 2.5 points on your Total Percentage (e.g., move from 93% to 95.5%). Extra credit points will not affect the distribution of scores—if you participate in the study pool, you will receive a higher final grade regardless of whether or not other students also participate. Conversely, if you opt not to participate in any research, you will receive the same final grade even if everyone else participated. In other words, there is no penalty for choosing not to participate, and only a potential benefit to your final grade if you do.
- You may complete up to five (5) hours of research participation for a maximum of 2.5 extra points (studies that are less than one hour earn 0.25 point). However, *at least two hours of participation must be completed before the beginning of Spring Break (that is, no later than March 11th)*. After this date, no more than three hours of participation will be counted as extra credit. You may complete all five hours before this date, but if you complete more than three hours after this date, only three hours will be counted. The final day for study pool participation is **April 27th**; no extra credit points can be awarded for participation after this date.
- If you plan to participate in research for extra credit, you are strongly advised to complete your hours as soon as possible. Not all experimenters are recruiting all the time, and study pool availability may be limited, especially towards the end of the term. Distributing participation evenly throughout the term is the best strategy for ensuring that you can participate as much as you'd like. If you tell us during the last week of the semester that you cannot find enough remaining credit hours, we will not be able to help. On the other hand, if you are having trouble finding any studies in which to participate, please alert the teaching staff as well as the Study Pool coordinator at studypool@wjh.harvard.edu.

- You can make appointments to participate at the study pool website: <https://husp-credit.sona-systems.com/>. Students enrolled in the course by the deadline for course registration will have an account assigned to their HarvardKey; any student who joins the course after 11:59pm on January 20 is responsible for emailing the Study Pool coordinator to request an account. *Please note that anyone under the age of 18 will need parental permission to participate.* Questions about the study pool can be directed to the Study Pool coordinator, Wendy Erselius, at studypool@wjh.harvard.edu.
- Your rights as a participant in psychological research are paramount and will be fully explained to you when you arrive for a study. One of those rights is the right to decline to participate. If you agree to participate in a study and decide at any time after the study begins that you do not wish to continue participating, you may withdraw. If you either decline to participate or withdraw after agreeing to participate, you will still receive full credit for your participation. However, you must *show up on time* for a study to receive credit.

6. The Relation Among Parts of the Course

The course includes material from *three sources*: (1) lectures, (2) the textbook and other readings, and (3) section readings/activities. These three sources of information are largely independent and non-overlapping. Although sometimes we will cover the same material in different venues, *lectures will typically introduce information that supplements—but does not directly review—the material covered in the readings*. In other words, we will not typically review the readings in lecture, although you are welcome to ask questions during the review sessions about the readings. To succeed in this course, you must complete the reading, attend lecture and discussion sections, take notes, and actively relate new information to what you have already learned in the course.

7. Accessibility

If you need adjustments or accommodations, please present your letter from the Accessible Education Office (AEO) to the Preceptor (cc'ing the Head TF) by February 4th or as soon as possible. All discussions will remain confidential, although the AEO may be consulted to discuss appropriate implementation.

8. Academic Integrity and Collaboration

Plagiarism is any attempt to “present as one’s own an idea or product derived from an existing source” (including another student). Plagiarism is tantamount to academic theft, and with the development of web-based search engines and software for comparing electronic documents, it is now remarkably easy to detect. Plagiarism can be accidental and to avoid it you should read Harvard’s policy on academic integrity in the *Handbook for Students*. Accidental or not, plagiarism is grounds for referral to the Honor Council.

You must work alone on the final project. Although you may discuss general approaches to the project (including with your teaching fellow) and seek assistance with proofreading, written assignments must be entirely your own work. You may, of course, study for exams with other students, but no form of collaboration is permitted when taking the exams.

SCHEDULE

WEEK	DATE	TOPIC	LECTURE READINGS	SECTIONS & PROJECT
Week 1	24 Jan	Introduction	Chapter 1; Chapter 2	NO SECTIONS
	26 Jan	Evolution & the human brain	Lieberman [†]	
	28 Jan	Evolution & the human brain	Chapter 3	
	31 Jan	Evolution & the human brain	"	
Week 2	2 Feb	Modularity & perception	Chapter 5 pp 171-186	Human brain demonstration
	4 Feb	Modularity & perception	Chapter 4	
Week 3	7 Feb	Modularity & perception	"	Perception demonstration
	9 Feb	Learning	Chapter 7	
	11 Feb	Learning	"	
Week 4	14 Feb	Memory	Chapter 6	Memory demonstration
	16 Feb	Memory	Loftus [†] ; Dunlosky [†]	
	18 Feb	In-class review	—	
Week 5	21 Feb	[University holiday: No class]	—	NO SECTIONS
	23 Feb	Exam #1	—	
	25 Feb	[No class]	—	
Week 6	28 Feb	Sleep	Chapter 5 pp 186-197	Paper prep I: Topic choice and search
	2 Mar	Sleep	Walker [†]	
	4 Mar	Language	Chapter 9 pp 350-372; Pinker [†]	
Week 7	7 Mar	Language	"	Paper prep II: How to read a research article
	9 Mar	Intelligence & individual differences	Chapter 10	
	11 Mar	Intelligence & individual differences	Chapter 12	
Week 8	21 Mar	Social cognition	Chapter 13	Paper prep III: Academic integrity
	23 Mar	Groups, persuasion, & influence	"	
	25 Mar	Groups, persuasion, & influence	"	
Week 9	28 Mar	In-class review	—	NO SECTIONS
	30 Mar	Exam #2	—	
	1 Apr	[No class]	—	
Week 10	4 Apr	Developmental psychology	Chapter 11	SECTIONS TBA DRAFT PAPER DUE APR 8
	6 Apr	Emotions	Chapter 8; Damasio [†]	
	8 Apr	Emotions, Decision-making	Chapter 9 pp 372-391	
Week 11	11 Apr	Decision-making	"	Emotions discussion
	13 Apr	Happiness and well-being	TBA	
	15 Apr	Disorders of the Mind	Chapter 15	
Week 12	18 Apr	Disorders of the Mind	Chapter 16	Mental disorders discussion
	20 Apr	Disorders of the Mind	—	
	22 Apr	[no class]	—	
Week 13	25 Apr	In-class review	—	NO SECTIONS
	27 Apr	Exam #3	—	

Readings marked as † will be available for download from the course website.

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: *Why does this class meet three times a week?*

By design, this course includes an unusually large amount of “contact time” between instructor and students—that is, times when we meet together and can interact in real-time. This extra contact time allows us time for discussion and active learning. You are invited to interrupt lecture to ask questions or make connections with other ideas.

Q: *Why does this class meet at 9am?*

I would have preferred meeting later in the day, but this was the time assigned to us by the registrar. I recognize that meeting this early—especially on Fridays—will be unappealing to some students. I will teach this course again in Fall 2022. It will likely still meet three days a week in the Fall, but may be scheduled later in the day.

Q: *Can I take this course Pass/Fail?*

Yes. However, to receive a final passing grade, you must receive passing grades on each of the three components of the course: Exams, Section Attendance, and Final Project. Also, be sure that you will still meet any outside requirements—for example, for your concentration or for Gen Ed—if you take this course Pass/Fail. Students intending to concentrate or earn a secondary in Psychology must take PSY 1 for a letter grade.

Q: *How should I study for the exams?*

- (1) You should take hand-written notes during lecture. Think of note-taking not as passive transcription of the lecture information, but as a form of intentional learning in which you actively think about and organize the lecture material so that you can recover the relation among concepts later. When I was in college, I typically organized my notes hierarchically with different indentation and bullets (e.g., I, II, III... A, B, C... 1, 2, 3... a, b, c...i, ii, iii). In general, the lectures are organized in a similarly hierarchical (nested) fashion.
- (2) The exams will also cover material from the readings—that is, the textbook as well as the additional “stand-alone” readings. Any of the ideas covered in lecture or in the readings may appear on the exams. That said, textbook terms that are highlighted (i.e., bolded or italicized) are especially important concepts and likely to appear on exams. Research has demonstrated that “highlighting” or “underlining” one’s reading is a poor way to learn. A much better technique is to create “flash cards” that comprise one side with the to-be-learned term and an opposite side with the term’s definition, and then to test yourself “both ways.”
- (3) In general, I am more interested in testing for conceptual understanding than nit-picking low-level details, so it is important to make sure you understand the “big picture.” Concepts that are covered in both lecture and reading are especially likely to appear on exams. One powerful way to assess how well one understands a concept is to try explaining it to someone else—you may want to study with someone else in the course.

Q: *There is a lot of reading. Do I have to do all of it?*

No, of course not. You are an adult, and you (should) make your own decisions about how to spend your time and effort; no one has the power to “force” you to do the reading. If the question actually means “is it necessary to do all the reading to get a ‘good’ grade?,” then my only answer is that the question misses the whole point of being at college. The readings will explore ideas that I think will be interesting and relevant to your life. If that appeals to you, then reading the material will have value independent of any potential grade. If instead your primary motivation for reading is to avoid getting a ‘bad’ grade, then you should take a different class that covers material you do find intrinsically interesting—that is, material you would enjoy learning *even if no grades or gold stars or entries on your resumé were available for doing so*. I hope you will find the ideas in this class to be interesting in their own right, but if not, there are (literally) thousands of other courses offered at Harvard College.