

Course Outline for Psych 1A3 (2007)

Course Objectives

As you will soon learn, psychology is a broad discipline, in areas ranging from the neurophysiological bases of visual processing to the motivation for sexual behaviour. The many different areas of psychology have in common the goal of understanding human thought and behaviour using scientific methods. This course is designed to give you a broad survey of key areas and approaches used in psychology today. Over the term, the problem-based group project will allow you to explore more deeply some of the aspects of psychology that you find particularly intriguing - and there are likely to be more than a few of those. Along the way, you will gain skills in applying research methods and experimental design, critical thinking, and evaluation of new information. These are skills that will prepare you for upper year courses in any program you choose to pursue.

Course Staff

In addition to your Tutor, there are several people involved in Psychology 1A3:

1. **Dr. Joe Kim (IntroPsych Instructor):** Dr. Kim's office is in room 106 of the Psychology Building. His email address is kimjoe@mcmaster.ca, and his McMaster phone extension is 21322
2. **Chris McAllister (Computer Media Specialist):** Chris's office is in room 416 of the Psychology Building. His email address is cmcallister@mcmaster.ca and his phone extension 26595. Chris is in charge of technical, media, and computer issues related to the course.
3. **Matt Pachai (Senior Tutor):** Matt's email is pachaim@mcmaster.ca In addition to leading a tutorial group, Matt's responsibilities include Content Manager for the IntroPsych Webpage.
4. **Mrs. Kathy Steele (IntroPsych Secretary):** Mrs. Steele staffs the IntroPsych Office, in room 106 of the Psychology Building. Her email address is steelek@mcmaster.ca, and her McMaster phone extension is 24428.

Course Structure

Psychology is a very broad discipline, covering many areas, so we have divided our first-year survey into two courses: This course (Psychology 1A3) provides an introduction to the science of psychology. Fittingly, we will begin with Research Methods and Experimental Design to lay the foundation for understanding experimental psychology. We will then explore the contributions of physiological, evolutionary, and developmental perspectives to psychology. Next, we will explore the sensory systems (vision, audition, chemical senses and touch) which allow humans to interact with the environment. Finally, we will begin our examination of behaviors critical to survival including pain, motivation for hunger and sexual behavior. The course will conclude with a Special

Topics Lecture that is based on student suggested material highlighting a topical area of psychology that is examined from various levels of analysis. (More detail on this can be found under Group Project). Our second introductory course (Psychology 1AA3) builds on this foundation as we begin to explore psychological research and theory related to higher level processes and interpersonal behavior. We begin with a discussion of basic learning processes that allow us to adapt and react to the environment. We will then explore cognitive processes including memory, language, personality, psychopathology, and social behavior.

Each class section contains about 45 students, and is scheduled to meet three times per week. Two of the meetings are scheduled for discussions, debates, and assignments based on the week's lectures. The third meeting is a designated swing period which will be used by your Tutor as an office hour or a third meeting time in particularly busy weeks. Your Tutor will inform you during your first class which of the three meeting times will be designated the swing period. It is critical that you attend the proper section that you are assigned to. A significant portion of your final grade is determined by tutorial participation (see section on How You Will be Evaluated) so sitting in the wrong tutorial will not be useful to you. The content of tutorials vary, but all will include activities designed to review information from lectures, illustrate or clarify psychological phenomena, discuss and explore important issues in psychology, and of course the "pop" quizzes (see section on How You Will be Evaluated).

Incidentally, if you were not assigned by the Registrar to a section of Psych 1A3 (or if you want to move from one section to another) please make these changes on-line via SOLAR or see Kathy Steele, the Introductory Psychology Secretary, in room 106 of the Psychology Building as soon as possible. She will see that you are assigned to a section of the course, or move you if possible,.

Learning Resources

We try to provide as many ways as possible for you to engage and understand the information in this course, apart from the web-delivered course material. This Handbook, in addition to outlining the course in some detail, also provides a good deal of information about the basic course concepts, introductory notes, and skeleton outlines to guide your own note-taking.

The IntroPsych web site is your one-stop center for all information related to the course and is continually updated with the latest information about course assignments, the midterm and exam. It is your gateway to the week's WebCT service lectures, upcoming events, the latest psychology news, interaction with your fellow students and Tutors, and a few surprises for you to discover.

<http://www.mcmaster.ca/psychology/intropsych>

We are constantly working to upgrade and improve the web site, and hope to offer additional useful and interactive content during the term. Please submit your ideas for

news, features, and events to the Senior Tutor Matt Pachai pachaim@mcmaster.ca

Leaving all these other resources aside, the most valuable learning resource available to you is your Tutor. Your Tutor is an advanced undergraduate who was selected for this prestigious position on the basis of academic achievement and personal enthusiasm for teaching. Your Tutor meets regularly with me and attends teaching workshops designed in collaboration with the Center for Leadership and Learning at McMaster University. Your Tutor should be the first person you approach with any questions or problems related to the course. Since PSYCH 1A3 classes are among the smallest in first year, there should be plenty of opportunity for you to get the information and attention you need from your Tutor. Additionally, one tutorial meeting per week is a dedicated office hour which should give you an opportunity to engage in one-on-one conversation with your Tutor.

What You Will Need

Apart from the required handbook for this course, you will also need Psychology 5th ed, Peter Gray. Although no explicit examination questions will be drawn from the textbook, many of the visuals presented in the lecture can be found here. The textbook is an additional resource for information and supplementary readings will be suggested to accompany lectures that will provide further background to explain course material. This textbook will also carry over into the Term 2 course PSCYH 1AA3.

How You Will Be Evaluated

Your final grade in this course will be determined by your performance in Tutorials (15%), a Group Project assignment (15%), a Midterm Test (25%) and a Final Examination (45%).

The Tutorials

You will meet with your tutorial group as scheduled by the section you are assigned to. You may not switch sections on your own. You must do this officially either on-line via SOLAR or through Kathy Steele, PC-106. During the semester, you will be expected to attend tutorials fully prepared. This means that you have gone over the scheduled web-delivered lecture material and completed required readings. You may also read supplementary material to help your understanding. Your Tutorial grade is determined by Participation (10%) and Quiz Evaluation (5%).

Participation (10%). Tutorial participation grades will consider your participation, interaction with others, discussion and completion of assignments. More details on what is to be expected will be explained to you by your Tutor. To give you an idea of your progress in the course, you will receive an early initial grade. By October 4 (or announced date by your Tutor), you will send an email to your Tutor in which you will evaluate your own performance out of 10. (imagine that this was the end of the course). Your Tutor will then give you written feedback of how your participation mark has been

assessed to date. This will give you a good idea of your strengths and weaknesses before your final score is assigned at the end of the term.

Quiz Evaluation (5%). Throughout the semester, your Tutor will also give you 7 “pop” quizzes. As the name implies, these will be unannounced assignments spread out through the course of the term. You will have 5 minutes to complete a short answer question (maximum of 3 sentences) following the end of a discussion period. These will be graded 0, 0.5, or 1. Only your top 5 scores out of the 7 will be counted towards your final quiz evaluation. Thus, you can conceivably miss two “pop” quizzes and still score a maximum 5 out of a possible 5 score for your final grade.

The Group Project

The Group Project will be completed with a small group of students in your class and are designed to introduce you to process of self-directed exploration and investigation. This is an important part of what psychologists - and indeed, all scientists and scholars - do. The group assignment will be worth 15% of your final grade in the course.

Early in the course, the class will be divided into groups of 5-8 students, and each group will complete the assignment together. Group assignment will be assessed by the tutor and by other students in the class and assigned a single grade which will be given to each of the members of the group. Thus if a group’s assignment receives a grade of 85%, each member of that group will be assigned a mark of 85% for that assignment.

The purpose of the assignment is to analyze, explore, and better understand a topical situation, phenomenon, or problem that is related to psychology. Each group in the class will receive a different written description of the problem, and will spend several weeks exploring it and finding out as much as they can about it.

Exploring the problem will involve deciding on the questions that need to be answered in order for the problem to be better understood, locating the information needed to answer those questions, synthesizing that information into a coherent answer to the question, and presenting that answer to others in written and/or web-based form. Some time will be provided for group members to collaborate on the project inside class. Most groups will wish to collaborate outside class as well, either meeting in person or collaborating via email.

The final product of the assignment will be a project report that summarizes for others what the group learned in exploring the problem. The project report will include a printed document submitted to the tutor as well as a Group Presentation that summarizes its work to the class. More detailed information about the Group Project assignments will be available shortly after the Group Project topics are assigned.

There's one interesting little wrinkle here: I will personally select the top Group Project for the entire course. This project will be used to create the Special Topics in Psychology unit that is scheduled as the last lecture of the term. This group will be

exempt from preparing a Group Presentation for their tutorial. Instead, this group will be invited to work with me to storyboard, record voice-overs, and film video sequences in our studio to be included in the final lecture. Participation is optional though I suspect it will be an interesting experience. Regardless, this **winning Group Project will be assigned a grade of 100%**. More details on this will follow later.

The Midterm Test

The midterm test will count for 25% of your final mark in this course. The midterm will take place approximately halfway through the course. The midterm consists of 40 multiple-choice questions, which you will have 50 minutes to complete. There is no penalty for guessing (a wrong answer is the same as a question left blank), so you should answer all questions, guessing whenever you are not sure.

The midterm test will be written during the first scheduled class meeting of the test week - either Monday, October 22nd, 2007 or Tuesday, October 23rd, 2007, depending on your course section. Information about the midterm test will be announced in class, and posted on the IntroPsych web site.

Normally, the midterm is written in your regular 1A3 classroom. If there is any change to this location, it will be announced by your Tutor and posted on the course web site. It is your responsibility to determine the date, time, and location of the midterm for your section.

The Final Examination

The remaining 45% of your mark in Psych 1A3 will be based on a final examination, covering the work of the entire course. Approximately 50-60% of the final exam will cover the material covered since the Midterm Test and the remaining 40-50% of the exam will cover the material prior to the MidTerm Test.

The final exam will take place during the December examination period, and will consist of 80 multiple-choice questions. You will have two hours to complete the exam. The date, time, and place of the final examination will be announced by the Registrar's Office about the middle of the term, and posted in a number of areas around the campus, as well as on the IntroPsych web site.

The Research Participation Option

If you choose, you may reduce the value of the final exam by participating as a subject in two hours of approved research in the Psychology Department. The two hours of research participation will be counted as 5% of your total mark in the course, and will reduce the value of the final exam from 45% to 40%.

Note that this is not the same as adding 5% to your mark in the course. Instead, it is the equivalent of earning a mark of 100 on 5% of the final exam. For example, for a student

with a grade of 65% on the final exam, the research participation option effectively raises the mark on the final exam to 68%.

Note that you must complete two hours to reduce the value of the final exam from 45% to 40% -- Completing only one hour of participation will gain you an interesting experience but it will not be counted in the calculation of your Psych 1A3 final grade. This is an important point, since near the end of the course, many students will be competing for the research spots necessary to complete their two hours. I strongly advise that if you wish to use the research participation option, you complete your two hours as early in the course as possible. Log onto the IntroPsych website and under the Students tab, select Experimentrix – Experiment System.

What You Need to Know About Research Participation

The research conducted in the Psychology Department by faculty members and their students tries to answer questions about perception, thinking, learning and remembering. If you want to participate in the department's research, either for credit in Psych 1A3 or just for personal interest, you can sign up on the web at <http://experimentrix.com/mac>.

In order to use the Experimentrix on-line sign-up, you will need to register with the Experimentrix system. To register for the system, you will need to provide your Name, McMaster Student ID, and your McMaster (MUGSI) email address. You will receive an Experimentrix login and password at your Mac email address.

This is the only time you have to use your McMaster email address for Experimentrix (you can use another email address for further communication), but the Mac email address is important at the start to help keep the system secure.

Through the Experimentrix system you can sign up for experiments, check the details of experiments you have previously signed up for, or cancel them. You can also check your participation credits.

The number of studies being run varies from week to week and month to month, so you should check Experimentrix frequently if you are interested in participating. Successful completion of the research participation option is given a mark of 100%. You may successfully complete the research option in two ways:

1. You may complete two hours of participation as a subject, providing data in one or more approved experiments. Note that you may withdraw as a data-generating subject at any time during an experiment and can choose to continue as an observer (as described below) without any loss of course credit.
2. If you do not wish to serve as a subject, you may participate as an observer. In this case, the experimenter will take you through all the experiences that an actual subject would have, but you will not actually provide any data in the experiment. If you wish to choose this option for any experiment, you should contact the Subject Pool Coordinator, Ann Hollingshead (room 105) to make the necessary

arrangements. The Subject Pool Coordinator is not a member of the Psych 1A3 course staff, and is completely unconnected with any course evaluation.

Note that In order to participate as an observer, you must meet the same selection criteria as regular subjects. For example, in an experiment requiring female subjects, only females could participate as observers. The time required for observational participation will be approximately the same as that for a regular subject.

After you complete a research participation, the experimenter will give you a debriefing sheet which includes as complete a description of the experiment as is possible. Sometimes certain details of the experiment must be kept confidential until all subjects have participated in order to prevent information from one subject affecting the performance of later subjects in the study. In such cases, the experimenter will tell you how you can get more complete information about the experiment after all subjects have participated.

You will also be given a receipt acknowledging your participation in the experiment. **KEEP THIS RECEIPT IN A SAFE PLACE.** The experimenter will report your participation to the Intro Psych Office (room 106), where we will transfer that information to our computer database. If there should be any questions regarding your participation in the study, it will be very useful to have your receipts.

Be sure to show up at the proper time and place for each experiment you have signed up for. If you find that you can no longer participate in a particular experiment, be sure to cancel your appointment through Experimetrix.

IF YOU FAIL TO SHOW UP FOR TWO EXPERIMENTS, YOU LOSE ANY PREVIOUS EXPERIMENTAL CREDITS, AND YOU WILL BE BANNED FROM FURTHER PARTICIPATION IN THE RESEARCH OPTION.

If you have any questions about research participation, or any concerns about the way a particular experiment was run, please feel free to bring them to the attention of Ann Hollingshead, who manages the research participation option. You can reach Ann by phone at extension 23005, office PC-207 or by email at hollings@mcmaster.ca.

Ann is also the Psychology Department's Undergraduate Advisor, so you might also want to chat with her about programs in Psychology