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COURSE SYLLABUS - Introductory Psychology (Civic Engagement Emphasis)

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COURSE SYLLABUS

Introductory Psychology (Civic Engagement Emphasis)

Meeting Time and Location:

Instructor:

Contact Info:

Phone:

Email:

Office Hours:

What Are Office Hours?

These are the hours that I have set aside to help students outside of class. I encourage you to drop by during these times to ask questions, seek guidance, or just to chat.

Course Description and Goals

Why do we behave the way we do, make the choices we make, feel the way we feel? How do our genes and our experiences interact to shape our minds? This course is an introduction to the science of human behavior, thinking, and emotion. You'll gain introduction to the broad field of psychological science, covering biological foundations (neuroscience, sensation, consciousness), cognitive factors (thinking, memory, perception), developmental processes (learning, psychological changes across the lifespan), social and cultural influences (gender, personality, social psychology), and mental and physical health (psychological disorders, therapies, and ways to improve overall well-being).

This Introductory Psychology class has a Civic Engagement Emphasis. Throughout the course, the instruction, readings, activities, and assignments will emphasize the connection between psychology and civic engagement. Civic engagement includes processes such as democratic values, community involvement, and social advocacy.

Course Learning Outcomes

The learning objectives listed below are adopted from the "Introductory Psychology Initiative" (2024) of the American Psychological Association. [Learn more about the initiative here.](#)

By the end of this course, students should be able to:

1. Define and explain basic psychological concepts.
2. Interpret research findings related to psychological concepts.
3. Apply psychological principles to personal growth and other aspects of everyday life.
4. Describe the advantages and limitations of research strategies.
5. Evaluate, design, or conduct psychological research.
6. Draw logical and objective conclusions about behavior and mental processes from empirical evidence.
7. Examine how psychological science can be used to counter unsubstantiated statements, opinions, or beliefs.

Course Themes

Beyond learning objectives, the Introductory Psychology Initiative of the American Psychological Association recommends that the course adopt themes as a framework for the course. Two of their suggested themes will be the framework for our course, each connected closely to our civic engagement goals.

1. Applying psychological principles can change our lives, organizations, and communities in positive ways.
2. Psychology values diversity, promotes equity, and fosters inclusion in pursuit of a more just society.

Textbook and Course Materials

This an Open Resource course, meaning that the textbook and all other materials are free of cost.

Class Textbook: Spielman, R. M., Jenkins, W. J., and Lovett, M. D. 2020. *Psychology*, 2nd Edition. Openstax. <https://openstax.org/details/books/psychology-2e>.

Additional readings may be assigned during the semester. These materials will either be provided, or you will be instructed how to obtain them.

Course Requirements and Assessments

REGULAR EXAMS

There will be three exams—none of them cumulative. Each exam is worth 150 points. Exams will consist of mostly multiple-choice questions but may also include open-ended questions.

While there will be three regular exams, the **lowest of these three exam grades will be dropped**. For example, if you scored 100, 120, and 130 on the regular exams, the 100 score would be dropped and would not affect your course grade. If you miss one of the regular exams—resulting in a zero score—that exam score will be dropped.

FINAL EXAM

The final exam is a cumulative exam that takes place during finals week. Because this exam is cumulative, it is worth 200 points.

ACTIVITIES

You will be participating in at least 18 class activities throughout the semester, some of which take place during class, some take place outside of class, and some are in-class with out-of-class components. A wide range of class functions could count as activities, consisting of (but not limited to): group discussions, in-class demonstrations, short reaction papers, or reading assessments. Given the civic engagement emphasis of this class, you can anticipate many of our activities to make exciting connections to democracy, community, and advocacy. Class activities make up 16% (16 × 10 points) of your final grade.

Your lowest **two activity grades will be dropped**. At least 18 activities will take place throughout the semester, but only 16 will count toward your final grade, so you can miss two activities without penalty.

DEMOCRATIC DISCOURSE: POLICY LETTER TO YOUR REPRESENTATIVE

This project will give you an opportunity to develop and apply your knowledge of psychological theories and concepts as you present a position on a public policy affecting your community. You will choose a public policy, identify a representative to write to, critique the policy, and argue your position on the policy using your knowledge of psychological theories and concepts. This assignment is worth 10% of your final grade. Additional details will be discussed further in class.

WHAT'S UP WITH DEMOCRACY: A QUALITATIVE RESEARCH EXPLORATION

In this assignment, you and your classmates will explore a topic related to democracy using qualitative research. Along with your classmates, you will develop a research question and design a qualitative assessment. You will then collect data, share results, and reflect upon psychological research through this experience. This assignment is worth 10% of your final grade. Additional details will be discussed in class.

READING

You are expected to read the assigned readings before coming to class. Most assigned readings entail reading the textbook chapters before they are covered in class. Completing your reading before attending class will allow us to maximize our time focusing on clarifications, applications, and discussions. You will be required to complete a reading quiz for each required set of reading before that material is covered in class. There will be 14 reading quizzes throughout the semester, worth 14% of your class grade.

Points Breakdown

Three Regular Exams (lowest score dropped)	300
Final Exam	200
In-Class Work/Activities (lowest two dropped)	160
Reading Quizzes	140
Democratic Discourse: Policy Letter to Your Representative	100
What's Up with Democracy: A Qualitative Research Exploration	100
Total points	1000

A	93-100%	B	83-86.9%	C	73-76.9%	D	63-66.9%
A-	90-92.9%	B-	80-82.9%	C-	70-72.9%	D-	60-62.9%
B+	87-89.9%	C+	77-79.9%	D+	67-69.9%	F	<60.0%

Tentative Course Schedule

Date	Topic	Assignments Due*	Reading
	Introduction to Psychology	Reading Quiz 1	Chapter 1
	Psychological Research	Reading Quiz 2 Activity: Critically Evaluating the US Census	Chapter 2
	Biopsychology	Reading Quiz 3	Chapter 3
	Exam 1		Chapters 1, 2, 3
	Sensation & Perception	Reading Quiz 4 Assignment: What's Up with Democracy: A Qualitative Research Exploration	Chapter 5 Pasek et al. 2022
	Learning	Reading Quiz 5	Chapter 6
	Thinking & Intelligence	Reading Quiz 6	Chapter 7
	Exam 2		Chapters 5, 6, 7
	Memory	Reading Quiz 7	Chapter 8
	Lifespan Development	Reading Quiz 8	Chapter 9
	Emotion and Motivation	Reading Quiz 9	Chapter 10
	Personality	Reading Quiz 10 Activity: You and Your Community: Considering Personality When Getting Involved	Chapter 11 TedTalk: Kimberle Crenshaw
	Exam 3		Chapters 8, 9, 10, 11
	Social Psychology	Reading Quiz 11 Activity: Using Social Psychology to Get Out the Gen Z Vote	Chapter 12

Date	Topic	Assignments Due*	Reading
	Stress, Lifestyle, and Health	Reading Quiz 12	Chapter 14
	Psychological Disorders	Reading Quiz 13	Chapter 15
	Therapy and Treatment	Reading Quiz 14 Assignment: Democratic Discourse: Policy Letter to Your Representative	Chapter 16
	Final Exam		All Content

*This list of assignment due dates is not exhaustive. There will be outside-of-class activities due periodically throughout the term. These, along with their due dates, will be announced in class. This schedule is tentative, so dates may change. Any changes will be announced in class.

KEYWORDS

syllabus, online, in-person, introductory course, psychology, civic engagement