

Introduction to Psychological Science

PSY 141b Spring 2023 Syllabus

Justin Dainer-Best

Course Number	Time	Location	Office Hours
PSY 141b	W/F, 10:10-11:30	RKC 103	Th, 12-13:30

[Make an appointment to come to my office hours.](#)

This course (or its equivalent) fulfills prerequisites for most 200-level psychology courses at Bard, and is required for the major.

Wherever possible, I hope to work to make this course accessible and approachable for all students. For more information on accessibility for this course, please view [the section on that subject](#) below.

Overview

The goal of this course is for you to learn to think like a psychological scientist. We will discuss how experiences and genes shape the brain, and how the brain shapes our behaviors, thoughts, and emotions. You will learn to use the scientific methodologies (observational, experimental, survey, etc.) psychologists use to study brain and behavior, and how to critically evaluate sources and communicate effectively about the study of psychology. This course will introduce you to cognitive, biological, cultural, social, developmental, and clinical psychology. We will also discuss the history of psychology, methods used for psychological research, and some controversies in the field. Additionally, the course will consider how behavior differs among people, and across situations.

In the spirit of truth and equity, it is with gratitude and humility that we acknowledge that this class will take place on the sacred homelands of the Munsee and Muhheaconneok people, who are the original stewards of this land. Today, due to forced removal, the community resides in Northeast Wisconsin and is known as the [Stockbridge-Munsee Community](#). We honor and pay respect to their ancestors past and present, as well as to future generations and we recognize

their continuing presence in their homelands. We understand that our acknowledgment requires those of us who are settlers to recognize our own place in and responsibilities towards addressing inequity, and that this ongoing and challenging work requires that we commit to real engagement with the Munsee and Mohican communities to build an inclusive and equitable space for all.

Objectives

By the end of the semester you should be able to . . .

- explain the principles of psychological science
- understand communication of psychological science: how to do it and how to evaluate it
- analyze a scientific argument
- explain major findings of psychology and why they matter

Instructor

The instructor for this course is Assistant Professor of Psychology Justin Dainer-Best (he/him).

Interteaching

This class will be based in part on interteaching, which prioritizes student engagement with the material. What that means for you is that before each interteaching class, you will complete a [preparatory guide](#) by answering questions about the assigned reading. You'll then discuss these prompts with your classmates to clarify your understanding of the material. At the end of each such class, you'll indicate areas of confusion, and I'll prepare a short lecture on the most-requested topics, with which we'll begin the *following* class.

Interteaching requires participation from everyone—and with your involvement, it has the opportunity to both improve your understanding and that of your classmates.

Materials

Primary text

Schacter D. L., Gilbert D. T., Nock M. K., & Wegner D. M. (2020). *Psychology* (5th ed.). Worth Publishers. ISBN 9781319240134 / [9781319190804](#).

This course uses the textbook *Psychology*. You can purchase this textbook from the bookstore, or online. Please use a recent version—the fifth will most closely align with what we cover,

but you should be able to get by with the fourth. (You do not need the sixth, which has just been released.) You should not feel required to purchase additional electronic materials for this textbook, although they are available.

Any student enrolled in this class who needs financial support for class materials can request assistance for obtaining course materials. If you need assistance in obtaining the material, fill out [this form](#); the division's administrative assistant will work with you to buy or rent the material you need or loan you a copy of the textbook that the department has on hand. Additionally, you may find resources through [The Scale Project](#), find their document of support options [here](#), and [request support here](#).

Many supplementary readings will be posted on Brightspace. All readings uploaded to Brightspace should work with a screen reader; if you find a reading that is not processed correctly, please let me know and I will convert it or work with you to find an alternative. You should complete each reading *in preparation for class*, as listed below on the [schedule](#).

Class Policies

Attendance

We will move at a rapid pace; material that is missed due to absence will not be repeated in class or office hours. Our classes are designed as interactive, and your absence will impact both your own understanding and the class or your group. Missing multiple days of group work may impact your grade.

However, this is a college class and you are an adult; your attendance is your decision. Late arrivals can be disruptive to the class. Consistent patterns of lateness are unfair to other students. Please be on time.

If you are not feeling well, please do not come to class.

Masks

For the first week of class, I ask that we all come to class masked and remain masked throughout the class. We will discuss masking as a class and come to an agreement on whether we will continue masked as a class throughout the semester, with the understanding that the safety of the community requires all of us to prioritize one another, and disabled individuals may need others to mask for their safety.

If you have recently been ill, please do wear a mask when you attend; masks are effective at reducing spread of many respiratory illnesses. Each of us shares responsibility for the health and safety of all in the classroom.

Accommodations & Accessibility

Bard College is committed to providing equal access to all students. If you anticipate issues related to the format or requirements of this course, please contact me so that we can arrange to discuss. I would like us to discuss ways to ensure your full participation in the course. Together we can plan how best to support your learning and coordinate your accommodations. Students who have already been approved to receive academic accommodations through disability services should share their accommodation letter with me and make arrangements to meet as soon as possible.

If you have a learning difference or disability that may relate to your ability to fully participate in this class, but have not yet met with the Disability Support Coordinator at Bard, you can contact their office through <https://www.bard.edu/accessibility/students/>; the Coordinator will confidentially discuss the process to establish reasonable accommodations. Please note that accommodations are not retroactive, and thus you should begin this process as soon as possible if you believe you will need them.

Additionally, as my office in Preston Hall may be physically difficult to access, you may always request to meet with me in another location. I am available for meetings online as well as those in person.

Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion

It is important to me that this course provides an open and supportive learning environment for all students. I invite you to speak with me if you have concerns or questions regarding issues of belonging, safety, or equity in the classroom. I want our discussions to be respectful of all students. If I am not helping the classroom to feel like an inclusive environment, I invite you to provide me with [anonymous] feedback. Different forms of knowledge can be valuable in a psychology classroom. While we will primarily engage with the topic of psychological science from a scientific or observational perspective, respect for experiential and other viewpoints is extremely important.

Plagiarism and Academic Integrity

I expect you to be familiar with what plagiarism is and is not. You may not present someone else's work as your own without proper citation. Using AI-generated text is not a replacement for your own writing. You may not copy someone else's work. You may not simply reword text from another source without giving credit. Please cite others' work where relevant, and use your own writing. If you are not sure about the definition of plagiarism, or whether something constitutes plagiarism, please consult with me or with someone at Bard's [Learning Commons](#). Students caught plagiarizing will be reported to the Academic Judiciary Board, will get no credit for the assignment, and may fail the course.

I operate from the standpoint that you are interested in learning this material, and are doing your best to operate with integrity.

Cell phones and laptops

Before class, you should silence your cell phone, and you should not be on your phone during class unless you are asked to be (e.g., to respond to a poll). I do not recommend taking notes on your phone as a rule. I recommend taking notes on paper wherever possible. If you text or access materials unrelated to class during our class time, you are mentally absent from class.

When using a laptop, I encourage you to turn off notifications / turn on Do Not Disturb whenever possible. Browsing unrelated materials is distracting to you and also to your classmates.

Late Assignments

Some assignments can be turned in **within two days** of their due dates without penalty. For example, if an assignment is due before class on a Wednesday, it may be turned in by Friday at midnight without penalty. However, please note that many assignments are intended to develop into conversations; even if you have not turned in a final document to me, you should be prepared to discuss your work in class.

[Prep guides](#) should be completed before class—the initial draft must be completed beforehand and cannot be turned in late. Final drafts are due two days after class, on Brightspace. Final drafts of prep guides cannot be turned in after exams. (Thus all prep guides that cover material tested on an exam must be turned in by the date of that exam at the latest. You should email me confirming that you have turned in any prep guides turned in after their late dates.)

All other assignments may still be turned in after their late date. However, such assignments are considered “missing” (see section “[Grading](#)” below). If your work is consistently turned in late, this also may impact your grade unless you discuss this lateness with me. All assignments are due by the last day of the semester.

Assignments

Prep guides

Your initial prep guides are graded on effort/completion—you won’t need to have perfect answers, but you should respond to each question and elaborate on your thoughts.

Following the class discussion, you’ll revise the prep guide and submit the completed guide on Brightspace. I’ll grade one question from everyone’s prep guide each class. As a result, your grade from interteaching will depend on

- a. thoroughly completing the prep guides before class (with effort and thoughtfulness most important),
- b. having productive and curious conversations with your peers in class, and
- c. turning in completed (and accurate) responses to the questions in the final guide.

Your final guides are due by the beginning of class-time two days after the class they are assigned—i.e., by Friday at 10:10 for a Wednesday interteaching class, or by Sunday at 10:10 for the Friday class.

Two prep guides will be dropped from your grade. If you miss multiple classes, you should plan to complete the prep guides on your own.

Exams

There will be three open-book exams delivered via Brightspace. You will be responsible for doing these during our class time. Exams may include multiple choice, short answer, and/or brief essay questions; we'll discuss in class beforehand. Exams will be scored for accuracy. You must complete exams alone.

Experiment Design

After learning about the research methods used to conduct psychological science, you will be given the opportunity to design your own research study. At least two scientific articles should be cited in APA style. (You may also cite the textbook.) This paper will be limited to 3–4 pages. You will be given several possible topics on which to develop your experiment. You will receive feedback from your peers and have the opportunity to revise.

You should view this paper as writing the Methods section of a scientific article. Your task is to answer questions like:

- What is your specific research question and hypothesis?
- What is being measured? What would the researchers be doing and why?
- What are some possible limitations to this design?

You'll think about the components of good research design we have discussed, and work to build a study that cleverly assesses your topic of interest. You should be sure to be explicit about your independent and dependent variables, possible confounds, the kind of experiment you propose, who your sample will be, and so forth. How will you ensure that your experiment is valid? Based on your results, what kind of conclusions could you reach?

You will peer review one another's papers in class. (Refer to the [schedule](#).) A written response to your classmate's review should precede your final paper. This written response should be framed as a letter written to your classmate and editor, in which you detail how you addressed their concerns. You should not feel obligated to make every change suggested during peer

review, but should respond to all points. You will gain more from this peer review by having a near-to-final draft of your paper.

Your paper will be graded on organization and clear writing, accurate use of research design principles, and the originality of your experiment design. Your response to peer review will also be factored into your grade.

Further information, including the topic, will be provided in class and on Brightspace.

Translation writing assignment

In a 2-page (single-spaced) paper, you will work to “translate” a psychological topic into language that anyone could understand. Your paper should cite sources in APA style, even if your only source is the textbook and the article itself. For a successful translation, you must have a clear understanding of the complex topic.

For this assignment, you should write two pages explaining the topic without using jargon. You can think of this *either* as writing for a town newspaper *or* as writing to explain the research paper for a patient who wants to understand their options. **The paper will be posted to Brightspace.**

You will read an assigned journal article and then write persuasively to make an argument of your choice relating to the topic. You may answer questions about the research paper itself, or you may instead use it as the basis for an argument you make. (You may also cite other research.)

The translation paper will be graded based on your ability to concisely and clearly explain the concept, make an argument, and write persuasively.

Research Experience Requirement

Part of learning about psychological science is participating in psychological experiments—this also allows you to learn a bit about the studies being conducted at Bard. You thus should plan to participate in 1.5 hours’ worth of experiments during the semester. You should register on Sona, by going to the [Bard Sona](#) website. You should be able to log in through your Bard SSO account by clicking “Bard Account Log In”.

Once logged in, you will see the list of experiments currently available alongside time-slots. After participating, you should write a brief paragraph summarizing your experience, and **turn it in on Brightspace**: Describe your experience and what you understood the goals of the experiment to be. Please begin looking for experiments early; waiting until the end of the semester may result in no remaining time-slots.

If you do not wish to participate in any experiments, or are under the age of 18, you may instead write a summary of a research paper that I will provide you—please email me to request the details of that assignment.

If you participate in **more** than 1.5 credits of studies, which may be possible this semester, you can receive extra credit, at the rate of 1 point (see below) per 1 Sona credit, up to 2 extra credit points. (For example, completing 2.5 Sona credits would fulfill the requirement and earn an additional point towards your grade.)

Grades

Assignment	Points
Prep guides	25
Exams	35
Translation	10
Experiment design	25
Research experience	5
Total	100

Grade	Range
A-range	90-100
B-range	80-89
C-range	70-79
D-range	60-69
F	below 60

Your grades in this course will come from the assignments described above: **prep guides**, three **exams**, the **translation**, and the **experiment design**. You'll also get 5 points for completing the **research experience**. The translation, several prep guides, and one exam will be completed in advance of midterm criteria sheets.

Almost all assignments may be turned in **up to two days late without penalty**. Assignments turned in later than that will not receive full points—at maximum a point off for each day late. “Missing” assignments are those which are not turned in by the late deadline, and which you have not contacted me about. You are best served by being in touch with me sooner than later about anything that will be turned in late.

Schedule

The schedule may change over the course of the semester. Changes to assignment dates will be announced via email and also changed on the course website / Brightspace. You are responsible for keeping up with the readings, showing up to class prepared, and turning in assignments on-time.

Readings are listed by author last name; **PDFs can be found on Brightspace**.

Day	Date	Topic	Reading	Due
Wed	Feb 1	An introduction to psychological science	Syllabus	
Fri	Feb 3	History of psychological science	Schacter et al. (2020), Ch. 1	History prep
Wed	Feb 8	Research methods	Schacter et al. (2020), Ch. 2, Sections: Empiricism, Observation	Research methods prep
Fri	Feb 10	Research methods	Schacter et al. (2020), Ch. 2, Sections: Explanation; Thinking Critically about Evidence; Ethics	Research methods II prep
Wed	Feb 15	Reading scientific articles; Replication	Engber (2018); Plötner et al. (2015)	
Fri	Feb 17	Neurological basis of behavior	Schacter et al. (2020), Ch. 3, Sections: Neurons, Electrochemical Actions of Neurons, Organization of the Nervous System	Neuro prep
Wed	Feb 22	Biopsychology	Schacter et al. (2020), Ch. 3, Sections: Structure of the Brain, Genes/Evolution	Biopsych prep
Fri	Feb 24	Sensation and perception	Schacter et al. (2020), Ch. 4, Sections: Sensation and Perception Are Distinct Activities, Visual Pathways	S&P prep; Translation
Wed	Mar 1	Vision, Hearing, Body	Schacter et al. (2020), Ch. 4, Sections: Visual Perception, Hearing, Body Senses	S&P II prep
Fri	Mar 3	Study/Review		
Wed	Mar 8	Exam		Exam
Fri	Mar 10	No class		
Wed	Mar 15	Cognitive neuroscience	Schacter et al. (2020), Ch. 3: Investigating the Brain	
Fri	Mar 17	Consciousness	Schacter et al. (2020), Ch. 5, Sections: Mysteries; Nature; and Unconscious	Consciousness prep
Wed	Mar 22	No class / spring break		
Fri	Mar 24	No class / spring break		
Wed	Mar 29	Memory	Schacter et al. (2020), Ch. 6, Sections: What is memory?; Encoding; Storage; Retrieval	Memory prep
Fri	Mar 31	Memory	Schacter et al. (2020), Ch. 6, Sections: Long-Term Memory; Memory Failures	Memory II prep

Day	Date	Topic	Reading	Due
Wed	Apr 5	Learning	Schacter et al. (2020), Ch. 7, Sections: What is Learning?; Classical conditioning; Operant conditioning	Learning prep
Fri	Apr 7	Learning	Schacter et al. (2020), Ch. 7, Sections: Observation; Implicit; Classroom	Learning II prep
Wed	Apr 12	Study/Review		
Fri	Apr 14	Exam		Exam
Wed	Apr 19	Emotions	Schacter et al. (2020), Ch. 8, Sections on Emotion only	Emotions prep
Fri	Apr 21	Peer review		Draft of experiment design
Wed	Apr 26	Social psychology	Shariatmadari (2018); Schacter et al. (2020), Ch. 13	Social psych prep
Fri	Apr 28	Social/Personality psychology	Schacter et al. (2020), Ch. 12	Personality prep; Experiment design
Wed	May 3	Psychological disorders	Schacter et al. (2020), Ch. 15, Sections: Defining, Anxiety, OCD, PTSD	Disorders prep
Fri	May 5	Psychological disorders	Schacter et al. (2020), Ch. 15, Sections: Depression, Schizophrenia, Childhood/Adolescence, Personality, Self-harm	Disorders II prep
Wed	May 10	No class / psychology board week		
Fri	May 12	No class / psychology board week		
Wed	May 17	Exam		Exam
Fri	May 19	No class		

Remember: any PDFs can be found on Brightspace.

References

Engber, D. (2018). Does the trolley problem have a problem? *Slate*. <https://slate.com/technology/2018/06/psychologys-trolley-problem-might-have-a-problem.html> (cit. on p. 9).

- Plötner, M., Over, H., Carpenter, M., & Tomasello, M. (2015). Young children show the bystander effect in helping situations. *Psychological Science*, *26*(4), 499–506. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0956797615569579> (cit. on p. 9).
- Schacter, D. L., Gilbert, D. T., Nock, M. K., & Wegner, D. M. (2020). *Psychology* (5th). Worth Publishers. (Cit. on pp. 9, 10).
- Shariatmadari, D. (2018). A real-life Lord of the Flies: The troubling legacy of the Robbers Cave experiment. *The Guardian*. <https://www.theguardian.com/science/2018/apr/16/a-real-life-lord-of-the-flies-the-troubling-legacy-of-the-robbers-cave-experiment> (cit. on p. 10).