

## PSYCHOLOGY 100-001: BASIC CONCEPTS IN PSYCHOLOGY Fall 2012

Instructor: Keith Renshaw  
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Meeting Times: Mon/Wed 10:30-11:45

Room: Lecture Hall I

Required Materials: *Psychology: An Exploration, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition* (Ciccarelli & White)

Optional Materials: *MyPsychLab* supplement for *Psychology: An Exploration*

### Course Overview

This course will provide a general overview of the field of psychology, which at its core, focuses on explaining people's thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. Psychology covers all kinds of human experience: how the brain works, why we dream, psychological disorders and how to treat them, why we forget some things (like a birthday or anniversary) but remember others (the name of our 2<sup>nd</sup> grade teacher), why we get into (and out of) relationships... All of this information deals with how and why people think, feel, and act the way they do. The class will not just be about learning this information – it will also be about beginning to learn how to *think critically* about the material and apply it in your own life (do so with a bit of caution, though – friends don't always enjoy being analyzed with the newest information you've learned).

Psychology is very broad; therefore, this course will cover a great deal of information. It will be impossible to go over all of the information during class, so keeping up with readings will be important. It will be to your benefit to have the readings finished before you come to class, so you will have the necessary background for what is being discussed that day. Lecture will be used primarily to illustrate and explain the important concepts and themes of psychology, which will be done through lectures, demonstrations, and examples. *Because you are responsible for information covered in lectures and in the textbook, and because this information will not always overlap, it is important to keep up with the readings and to attend class and recitation sections regularly.*

### Course Goals

1. Students will understand the focus of each of the primary areas within the field of psychology (e.g., developmental psychology, clinical psychology), and the similarities and differences among them.
2. Students will know and understand fundamental concepts within each area of psychology, and be able to apply these concepts to basic novel situations.
3. Students will understand why empirical research is an essential part of every area of psychology.
4. Students will know and understand fundamental concepts of research in the behavioral sciences, and be able to apply these concepts to basic novel situations.
5. Students will be aware of basic informational resources within the field of psychology (e.g., PsycInfo).

### Technology Usage

- Official Communications via GMU E-mail: Mason uses electronic mail to provide official information to students. Examples include communications from course instructors, notices from the library, notices about academic standing, financial aid information, class materials, assignments, questions, and instructor feedback. Students are responsible for the content of university communication sent to their mason e-mail account, and are required to activate that account and check it regularly.
- The course Blackboard site will be used for posting basic copies of slides used during lecture (note that these slide ARE NOT COMPLETE). Practice assignments and discussion questions will also be posted on Blackboard. Finally, grades will be posted on Blackboard. Blackboard is accessed via the mymasonportal.gmu.edu. After logging in, click on the Courses tab, and choose PSYC-100-001.
- The Sona Systems website is used for signing up for research experiments/alternatives (see Research Requirement).

## Requirements and Grading

### Exams

There are 3 NON-cumulative exams during the semester. In addition, there will be a final exam, which IS cumulative. All exams are multiple choice. Your grade for the lecture portion of the class will be calculated based on the average of the **BEST THREE OF THE FOUR** exams. If you are satisfied with your average after the 3 exams during the semester, you are not required to take the final. Because people often work better with certain types of information, your overall lecture exam grade is calculated as follows:

$$\text{Best exam (36\%)} + \text{Second best exam (33\%)} + \text{Third best exam (31\%)} + \text{Worst exam (0\%)}$$

**If you need to miss an exam for some reason, PLEASE CONTACT ME AHEAD OF TIME. If you do not contact me before the exam, I cannot guarantee that a make-up will be able to be arranged. In such cases, the exam you miss will simply be counted as your "worst exam" (i.e., 0% of your average), and your final grade will be determined by your performance on the other 3 exams.**

### Research Requirement

The psychology department believes that participation in psychological research can enhance your learning about the field. Thus, for 7% of the grade, all students are required to serve for 7 hours as participants in psychological research. For students who choose not to participate, attendance at alternative lectures also meets this requirement. A separate handout will be posted on Blackboard explaining how to register and sign up for research studies or alternative lectures, and this information will also be covered in class during the first two weeks of the semester. The main website for signing up for studies or alternative lectures is: <http://gmu.sona-systems.com/>.

### Optional Assignments

Throughout the semester, up to 5 optional assignments will be posted on Blackboard to provide you the opportunity to assess your knowledge of the materials and to practice applying certain concepts. THESE ARE NOT REQUIRED, BUT MAY HELP YOU LEARN THE MATERIAL AND BETTER PREPARE FOR THE EXAM. For students who choose to complete these assignments, credit is assigned based on effort, not performance. Full credit is received if you answer at least 50% of the questions correctly the first time you submit the assignment, and at least 75% of the questions correctly on your 'best attempt' (your 'first attempt' can also count as your 'best attempt' if you get at least a 75% on your first attempt). Attempts must be complete BEFORE THE START OF THE EXAM ON THAT MATERIAL. Each optional assignment you complete will replace 2% of your exam grade (see below for more information on how these assignments will affect your grade – note that they do NOT simply add points to your final grade).

### Final Grade

The final grade for this class is calculated as follows (based on the number of optional assignments you complete, if any):

	<i>Number of Optional Assignments Completed</i>					
	0	1	2	3	4	5
Lecture Exam Average (as described above)	93%	91%	89%	87%	85%	83%
Research Requirement	7%	7%	7%	7%	7%	7%
Optional Assignments	0%	2%	4%	6%	8%	10%

Final letter grades are assigned based on the standard format (scores ending in .5 or higher are rounded up; scores ending in anything less than .5 are rounded down):

A+	97%-100%	B+	87%-89%	C+	77%-79%	D+	67%-69%
A	93%-96%	B	83%-86%	C	73%-76%	D	60%-66%
A-	90%-92%	B-	80%-82%	C-	70%-72%	F	< 60%

**NOTE: Your lowest exam grade is dropped, your exam average is weighted (i.e., your best score counts most), and optional assignments can improve your grade. Because of all of these opportunities to maximize your overall grade in the course, there are no other opportunities for extra credit beyond the optional assignments.**

## Honor Code

George Mason University has an honor code that states the following:

*To promote a stronger sense of mutual responsibility, respect, trust, and fairness among all members of the George Mason University community and with the desire for greater academic and personal achievement, we, the student members of the University Community have set forth this:*

Student members of the George Mason University community pledge not to cheat, plagiarize, steal, or lie in matters related to academic work.

I encourage you to learn the material taught in this course in any and all ways that best fit your learning style (e.g., studying in groups, recording lectures, discussing material with me, your recitation instructor, or each other). However, your performance on exams, discussion postings, optional assignments, and in the research requirement **MUST BE YOUR OWN, INDEPENDENT WORK**. For example, there is to be no communication (verbal, texting, reading, etc.) during exams, and you should never have someone else perform a required task in this course (e.g., posting on the Discussion Board, taking an exam for you). Any violations such as these will be reported to the Honor Code Committee, and the instructor for this course reserves the right to enter a failing grade to any student found guilty of an honor code violation.

In addition, misrepresenting yourself in a research study (e.g., completing an online study that is for women when you are male, saying that you are in a relationship when you are not) can be considered fraud. Please respect the process of research by not misrepresenting yourself.

## Disabilities

If you are a student with disability and you need academic accommodations, please see me and contact the Disability Resource Center (DRC) at 703-993-2474. All academic accommodations must be arranged through that office. Please note that accommodations **MUST BE MADE BEFORE** assignments are due or exams are given. I cannot adjust your grade after the fact.

## Other Useful Campus Resources

Writing Center: A114 Robinson Hall; (703) 993-1200; <http://writingcenter.gmu.edu>

University Libraries "Ask a Librarian": <http://library.gmu.edu/mudge/IM/IMRef.html>

Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS): (703) 993-2380; <http://caps.gmu.edu>

## Important Dates

### Important Administrative Dates:

9/4	Last day to add classes
9/4	Last day to drop without penalty
9/28	Last day to drop
10/1-10/26	Selective withdrawal period
10/9	Class meets on Tue
11/21	No class (Thanksgiving holiday)

### Exam/Grading Dates:

9/26	EXAM #1
10/19	Midterm Evaluation Grades due
10/29	EXAM #2
11/28	EXAM #3
12/12	FINAL EXAM

### Course Schedule

<b>Date</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Reading</b>	<b>Optional Assignment</b>
M 8/27	Overview How to Succeed in This Class		
W 8/29	History of Psychology Research Methods Sona Systems	Chapter 1 Blackboard Handouts (2)	
W 9/5	Research Methods	Chapter 1	
M 9/10	Research Methods Biological Bases of Behavior	Chapter 2	<i>Research Methods</i>
W 9/12	Biological Bases of Behavior	Chapter 2	
M 9/17	Sensation & Perception	Chapter 3	
W 9/19	Sensation & Perception Consciousness	Chapter 3	<i>Exam Practice</i>
M 9/24	Consciousness	Chapter 4	
<b>W 9/26</b>	<b>Exam #1</b> <i>(Note: if this conflicts with Rosh Hashanah plans, please see me ahead of time for an alternate date/time.)</i>		
M 10/1	Human Development	Chapter 8	
W 10/3	Human Development	Chapter 8	<i>Devel. Stages</i>
<b>T 10/9</b>	Intelligence	Chapter 7	
W 10/10	Intelligence Language & Thought	Chapter 7	
M 10/15	Memory	Chapter 6	
W 10/17	Memory Motivation	Chapter 6 Chapter 9	
M 10/22	Learning	Chapter 5	
W 10/24	Learning	Chapter 5	<i>Learning</i>
<b>M 10/29</b>	<b>Exam #2</b>		
W 10/31	Personality	Chapter 13	
M 11/5	Personality Emotion	Chapter 13 Chapter 9	<i>Personality</i>
W 11/7	Psychological Disorders & Therapies	Chapter 14	
M 11/12	Psychological Disorders & Therapies	Chapter 14	
W 11/14	Psychological Disorders & Therapies	Chapter 15	
M 11/19	Social Psychology	Chapter 12	
<b>W 11/21</b>	<b>THANKSGIVING BREAK</b>		
M 11/26	Social Psychology	Chapter 12	
<b>W 11/28</b>	<b>Exam #3</b>		
M 12/3	Stress, Coping, & Health	Chapter 11	
W 12/5	Careers in Psychology	Appendix B	
<b>W 12/12</b>	<b>FINAL EXAM</b> <b>10:30a - 12:30p</b>		

**\* Please note: Any substantive changes to the syllabus will be announced in class, posted on Blackboard, and distributed via gmu.edu email addresses.**