PSYC 2301—General Psychology
Syllabus & Course Guide • Spring 2018

Course Description & Prerequisites
In this course students will be introduced to fields of study such as cognitive psychology, developmental psychology, abnormal psychology and clinical psychology. This course will also discuss the basic principles of learning, memory and motivation, as well as the classic theories that psychology is rooted upon.

Prerequisite: none.
Course Delivery Method: Classroom lecture, Web-enhanced

Course materials
Optional: Psychology by OpenStax. Open textbook available as free PDF, or paid iBook or print.
https://openstax.org/details/psychology

How To Contact Me and Your Teaching Assistant
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Office Hours: MW 3–4:30pm; TR 4–5pm — or by appointment
Email: dleighton@tamut.edu Skype: danaleighton

Teaching Assistant: Jon Cool
Office Location: UC 330-J
Office Hours: Tuesday 6–7pm
Email: genpsy@tamut.edu

I am pleased to be available to help you succeed in my class during office hours, and occasionally at other times. Stop by if you need help with your studies, or to chat about problems that are standing in your way toward being successful. I’m a real friendly guy, and always glad to see my students.

Please contact your teaching assistant (TA) for routine class-related questions. Although I’m happy to meet with you, your TA should be your first resource. If you have questions about exams, preparing for class, attendance, or other issues, please see your TA.

The best time to see me is during office hours. I am always available in my office at that time, so just stop by. If office hours aren’t convenient, then call or email me to make an appointment.

A few words about email. I do not check my email constantly during the day. If I am busy with research or class preparation, I may have to ignore email for a whole day (sometimes more). Please be patient if I do not respond immediately. Also, craft your email messages carefully, and write with more attention to wording and details than you normally would. Email is notorious for miscommunication of motivations, intentions, and emotions.

Also, the only way I have of communicating with my classes as a group is through your TAMUT email account and the university’s Blackboard system. Please check your TAMUT email account daily.
and make sure it has not exceeded its quota. I also use Blackboard for posting class notices, materials, and recording your grades; log on there regularly.

Please don’t phone me at home (despite appearances, I actually do have a life!). A message at my office phone or a brief email will suffice for any immediate communication needs. I am often working on research or class work on weekends, and I usually check my email a few times.

Course Overview

This course relies on textbook reading, lecture, online homework, and classroom discussions for learning and reinforcing the material. Most of the course learning will occur through a careful reading of the textbook, along with classroom discussions and activities. You will have to keep up on the reading, and come to class, in order to do well in the course.

**You cannot succeed in this class if you only come to lecture.** You will need to read the textbook. For each week, your course calendar will list the parts of your textbook which need to be read in order to be prepared for the class. You will need to read all assigned pages very carefully. Careful reading involves not just reading and highlighting. It involves taking notes while you’re reading, and sometimes re-reading. This takes **TIME**! The usual formula is 2–3 times the number of lecture hours for reading and studying. If you cannot devote six to nine hours per week to reading and studying for this class, you may not do very well.

Although I expect a lot from you in terms of reading and participating, you will have support. A good part of my time is devoted toward helping you (and your classmates) learn about psychology and complete this course successfully (and get a good grade as a result). **If you begin to feel lost** or that you don’t have the academic skills you need, I will be here for you to try to focus your attention or help you acquire new skills. **Your responsibility** in this deal is to contact me if you feel insecure about your class situation. If I don’t notice you struggling, and you don’t tell me, it’ll only get worse for you. If you do let me know, we can work on it together.

Student Learning Outcomes

My goals for you during this course are to:

1. Learn how we study human behavior, including some of the key vocabulary you’ll need to engage in discussions about psychology.
2. Understand that psychology is not hocus-pocus psycho-babble, but rather a disciplined, scientific exploration of the nature (and nurture) of human behavior.
3. Discover things about yourself, and how you interact with the world around you.
4. Apply an understanding of psychological principles to your experiences, and your observations of others, so you can make better decisions about how to respond to others, and even to make better public policy decisions.
5. Last but not least, to have some fun while you learn psychology at the same time.

**How we’ll accomplish these goals:**

All the readings, class exercises, and other assignments you’ll engage in are intended to move you closer toward accomplishing these five goals. I have put together a full semester’s worth of learning, and I hope you’ll take advantage of that planning, and participate whole-heartedly, regardless of your individual motivation for being here.

**The textbook**, Psychology, by OpenStax, is required for this course. It is part of the LRNR online adaptive learning system that is REQUIRED for the course. I expect you to engage in a careful and thorough reading of the text. As I said before, some will find it easy, and others will be challenged. All I ask is that you actively read the assigned pages, and try to connect it in some way to your own life.
During certain topics, I will include some experiments and activities we will engage in to wake up your brains and learn actively, instead of passively. These are good chances to break away from the traditional lecture-style class for an opportunity to learn actively.

Grading and Assignments

One of my duties to you, the university, and to the academic enterprise is to evaluate your performance in the course and to assign a letter grade. This helps you achieve your goals, and it assures TAMUT and other academic institutions that you have demonstrated sufficient progress toward learning general psychology. So that I can fulfill that duty toward you and the school, I will be evaluating your performance using five exams, online adaptive learning work, and class participation. So that I can fulfill that duty toward you and the school, I will be evaluating your performance using exams, online material completion, and attendance and participation.

Grades

Here is the breakdown of the grade distribution:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source of grade</th>
<th>Points</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Exams (3 x 50 pts [4 exams, lowest score dropped] + 1 x 100 pts)</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LRNR Homework Assignments (12 assignments x 10 pts)</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>420</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Consistent with faculty policy, I will assign letter grades using the following cutoffs:
< 60% F; 60% D; 70% C; 80% B; 90% A

Exams

You will take five exams during the term. The exams may be made up of multiple choice questions, fill-in-the-blank, and/or short answer questions. You may not refer to any materials during the exam, and you may not use any electronic devices. If you feel that you need to use a device (such as a translator or spell checker) or require other accommodations for disability or any other reason, please contact me well before the exam date.

I appreciate that we are not always functioning at our best as a product of life circumstances, biology, etc., and one of the days you’re not functioning at your best might fall in an exam day. Therefore, my policy is to remove your lowest exam score (except for the final exam) when calculating your exam total for your grade.

The first four exams are non-cumulative - I will ask detailed questions regarding material we covered since the prior exam. You will be given a study guide before each exam which lists topics and sections of the text and lecture from which questions are taken. The final exam is cumulative—you will be required to review material from the entire semester.

Exam absences. I do not routinely administer make-up exams after the exam date, but if you know you will be absent from an exam on an exam date, please contact me at least a week in advance, and I will arrange for you to take it early. For extenuating circumstances (e.g. sports travel schedules, college sanctioned activities, disabilities which require accommodations, etc.), please talk with me at least one week in advance of the exam.

Missed exams. Life is not entirely routine and predictable, and it is possible that you will have an emergency on an exam day that prevents you from taking the exam. If you have such an emergency, contact me immediately and be prepared to offer written documentation of the circumstances that prevented
you from taking the exam during class time. These circumstances should be unexpected, unavoidable, and significant. I can then make a determination of whether or not the exam can be taken late.

**LRNR Reading Quizzes**

Psychology researchers have made a consistent finding in the scholarship of teaching and learning: testing improves learning. This is referred to as the “testing effect.” Therefore, I will be giving you numerous opportunities to use testing to improve your learning.

For each module in LRNR, you will complete readings, videos, etc. and several testing assignments. All of this is a guided activity to test your knowledge and direct your studying. This is a technology that has shown good results in improving learning and grades in courses like this. It probes your knowledge of the chapter material, and can direct you to learn what you need, and skip what you don’t. You will receive further instruction for registering for LRNR and completing the assignments.

**Extra Credit**

There will very likely be opportunities during the semester for you to earn some extra credit. If there are, I will announce them in class. Please do not ask me at the end of the term if there are more chances. Extra credit points will simply be added to your point total at the end of the course.

**Class Attendance and Participation**

I will take attendance. I do this for two reasons: (1) I use it to get to know who you are, and (2) to encourage you to come to class. I encourage class attendance because you may miss an important exercise, activity, or topic discussion that may be crucial for understanding a concept or topic. There will also be the opportunity to earn a few extra credit points for regular attendance. In short, come to class every day you possibly can! It is up to you to drop the course if you decide to not attend class any longer. I will not drop you from the course.

You are not sitting in a room by yourself. You will be expected to be aware of the other students in class and contribute meaningfully toward their education. Specifically, you will have opportunities throughout the class to ask questions that are relevant and helpful to the whole class, and to speak up during discussions, offering insights and clarifications that will benefit others in the class. You will also have opportunities to participate in activities, helping yourself and your classmates learn the material more meaningfully.

If you’re absent, you should make it a point to get lecture notes from one of your classmates. You might use this as a convenient excuse to talk to that attractive classmate you noticed in the first week of class! Here’s a starter: “Pardon me, [sir or madam], but I regretfully cannot attend our class next Thursday. I have noticed your thorough and careful note taking all term. Would you be ever so kind as to make a copy of your notes for me? Here’s my telephone number.” From there on, it’s up to you to get the first date—oops—I meant notes. Good luck!

Being late to class is strongly discouraged, but something we all might suffer once or twice in a semester. If you’re unavoidably late, please be very quiet when you enter the room so you disrupt the class as little as possible. Check with your classmates after class to see whether you missed any important announcements or information. Similarly, leaving class early is also discouraged. PLEASE inform me at the beginning of the class session if you’re planning to leave early, and again, plan to sit in a place that will create the least disturbance when you leave.

**Cell phones and technology in class.** I make extensive use of technology in my teaching, and I am not a Luddite regarding the use of technology. However, to create an effective learning environment for your fellow classmates, I ask that you silence cell phones during class periods and turn them off during exams (even vibrating phones can be very distracting). Phones should not be on your desk during class. I also ask you to limit use of laptop computers or mobile devices (e.g. iPad, etc.) to note tak-
ing or other class-related activities. If you notify me before the class that you have an urgent need to receive a call (e.g. sick child, etc.) during class time, I will make an exception. Do NOT do the following things during class lecture, exams, discussion, or activities:

- Text message
- Look at your phone
- Take calls or make calls
- Use your laptop or mobile device for messaging, email, web surfing, etc.

Inclement Weather or Disaster
My policy on this is simple: if the campus is scheduled to be closed at the start time of class, we will not have class. In the event that the campus is open, but I cannot safely travel to campus, I will cancel the class and notify you via eMail as soon as I can.

Miscellaneous policy information

Disability Accommodations: Students with disabilities may request reasonable accommodations through the A&M-Texarkana Disability Services Office by calling 903-223-3062.

Academic Integrity: Academic honesty is expected of students enrolled in this course. Cheating on examinations, unauthorized collaboration, falsification of research data, plagiarism, and undocumented use of materials from any source constitute academic dishonesty and may be grounds for a grade of ‘F’ in the course and/or disciplinary actions. For additional information, see the university catalog.

A&M-Texarkana Email Address: Upon application to Texas A&M University-Texarkana an individual will be assigned an A&M-Texarkana email account. This email account will be used to deliver official university correspondence. Each individual is responsible for information sent and received via the university email account and is expected to check the official A&M-Texarkana email account on a frequent and consistent basis. Faculty and students are required to utilize the university email account when communicating about coursework.

Drop Policy: To drop this course after the census date, a student must complete a Drop/Withdrawal Request Form, located on the University Registrar’s webpage or obtained in the Registrar’s Office. The student must submit the signed and completed form to the instructor of each course indicated on the form to be dropped for his/her signature. The signature is not an “approval” to drop, but rather confirmation that the student has discussed the drop/withdrawal with the faculty member. The form must be submitted to the Registrar’s office for processing in person, email Registrar@tamut.edu, mail (7101 University Ave., Texarkana, TX 75503) or fax (903-223-3140). Drop/withdraw forms missing any of the required information will not be accepted by the Registrar’s Office for processing. It is the student’s responsibility to ensure that the form is completed properly before submission. If a student stops participating in class (attending and submitting assignments) but does not complete and submit the drop/withdrawal form, a final grade based on work completed as outlined in the syllabus will be assigned.

Information for Web-Enhanced Courses

Class Participation: Students are responsible for beginning their participation starting on the FIRST CLASS DAY by logging on and completing assignments according to the COURSE CALENDAR. Failure to submit online assignments between the first day of classes and the University census date (according to the University schedule) may result in an ADMINISTRATIVE DROP from the course.

Students with federal loans and/or grants: Students who have federal loans and grants must be aware that participation is monitored in online courses. In the event a student withdraws from a course the student will be required to refund all federal funds prorated from the last date of participation. A
student’s last access to Blackboard would not suffice as participation. The required weekly activity could include a comment to a blog, a discussion board posting, a journal entry, a quiz or exam, a submitted assignment, or other measurable and tracked activity.

**Student Technical Assistance:** Solutions to common problems and FAQ’s for your web-enhanced and online courses are found on the [Online Student Training](#) page on our website.

If you cannot find your resolution there, you can submit a support request by contacting the IT Service Desk:

Email: [isite@tamut.edu](mailto:isite@tamut.edu)
Phone: 903-334-6603
Submit a [Support Request - isite.tamut.edu/](mailto:supportrequest@isite.tamut.edu)

Additional student help for Blackboard can be found here:

[Blackboard Help for Students](https://en-us.help.blackboard.com/Learn/9.1_2014_04/Student)

**Technical Requirements:**

The following are the minimum computer requirements for online learning:

- A computer capable of handling streaming video. A mid-range multi-core CPU should be adequate.
- A sound card.
- A high speed internet connection preferably directly connected to the computer via a hard-wired Ethernet connection rather than wirelessly connected.
- Virus and adware protection software.
- Microsoft Word, minimum version 2007 or above.
- [Mozilla Firefox](https://firefox.com) browser available free.
- The most recent versions of Java, Flash, QuickTime, Adobe Reader, and Shockwave. You can check this in the Firefox browser by visiting:
  - [Firefox Plugin Check Tool](https://firefox.com/plugincheck)

Please note: some instructors may require the use of a headset with microphone and/or a webcam. If so, the cost of these items is not included in your course fees and will need to be acquired at your own expense.

**Blackboard Mobile for iOS and Android Devices**

Android and iOS devices are currently supported using the Blackboard Mobile App, available for free from your App Store. Scan the QR code to the right to get it.

The Blackboard Mobile App provides limited access to courses, including the ability to read and contribute to discussions, check grades and announcements, access content, read and comment on blogs, reflect in journals, link to your personal Dropbox, and receive push notifications when courses are updated. Limited course features may also be available via your mobile device’s browser; however, your mobile device does not replace your personal computer and should not be used as a substitute for one. High stakes assignments, tests, etc. should be completed on your personal computer, and not on your mobile device.