

# Psy 105: Introduction to Psychology

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## Course Syllabus, Fall 2009

PSY 105, Section 106, Course #15760

**Course location:** Online. The course Blackboard site is linked from my home page:  
<http://www.depaul.edu/~dallbrit>

**Meeting time:** This is a fully online course. There are no classroom meetings for this class. Our class “meeting” time is Monday at noon. That is when the materials and assignments for each week will be made available (at the latest), and it is also the time when the final version of each week's assignments are due (unless an earlier due date is given on the course web site). Your score for the weekly quiz on the textbook readings for week 1, for example, will be permanently recorded at noon Monday of week 2 and the quiz will no longer be available after that time. For discussion board assignments, your final entries must be posted by the time listed in the “Index of Due Dates” on the course web site, but many assignments will require that you make your first posting several days before the deadline so that others can reply to it – and last-second posts will not earn high marks for “timeliness” in the discussion grading system used for this course.

**Textbook:** Myers, *Psychology: 8<sup>th</sup> Edition in Modules*.

You can get the textbook at the bookstore, or anywhere you like. You can use any edition you like, but the quizzes will come from the 8th edition of Myers, and the page numbers in the reading assignments will refer to that edition.

**Course Description:** Psychology 105 is the first in a two-quarter sequence that introduces some of the major areas, approaches, theories, and empirical findings in psychology. Topics to be covered in Psy 105 include: learning; memory; intelligence; development; stress and coping; personality; and social psychology. The use of scientific methods to investigate psychological phenomena will be emphasized throughout.

**Liberal Studies Program:** Psy 105 (or 106) is a pre-requisite for many courses in psychology. It also can be used by non-psychology majors to fulfill a Liberal Studies Program requirement in the Self, Society, and Modern World learning domain (see the Liberal Studies web pages for details).

**Course Learning Goals:** In this course, students will learn to:

- Use critical thinking and scientific reasoning to evaluate psychological claims, both in research and in everyday life
- Distinguish scientific reasoning from ideas that are based on anecdotal evidence, intuition, personal biases, or pseudo-scientific reasoning.
- Apply theories and findings from psychological research to real-world issues and your own experiences
- Identify and explain important psychological concepts, theories, and empirical findings in the areas covered in this course

**Grading:** Your grade in the course will be determined as follows:

50 pts	Course pre-test ( <i>all-or-none; not based on test score</i> )
600 pts	Weekly discussion board and written assignments
200 pts	Weekly quizzes on textbook readings
100 pts	Final project
50 pts	Course post-test ( <i>all-or-none; not based on test score</i> )
up to +50 pts	OCB's ( <i>see details below</i> )
-166 to +33 pts	Research participation requirement ( <i>see details below</i> )

Thus there will be 1000 points possible for the course. Letter grades will be based on the percentage of the total possible points earned. The cutoffs for letter grades are 93.33% for A, 90% for A-, 86.66% for B+, 83.33% for B, etc. Grading will be based strictly on the points earned rather than on a “curve,” and no extra credit opportunities (other than OCB's and the research participation requirement, described below) will be offered.

**Late assignments** will not be accepted, and missed assignments can not be made up. This is both a course policy and a simple practical reality: Because many of the assignments for this course involve collaboration and online dialog, they can only be completed while the collaboration or conversation is actually taking place, not after the fact. Failing to complete an assignment by the stated deadline will result in a grade of zero for that item. Exceptions will only be considered when verifiable documentation is presented for a valid excuse, and in the case of a prolonged excused absence withdrawal from the course may be recommended.

**Assignment Details:**

- 1) **Pre-test.** Full credit will be awarded for completing the pretest on time and *making an honest attempt to answer the questions*. Your pretest score will not play any role in your course grade; it is just to help assess the effectiveness of the course. I will compare the overall class pretest and post-test scores to see how much people are learning from the class, and where improvements can be made in the future. Please try to answer the questions as best you can, but do NOT use your textbook or any other resource (Google, Wikipedia, etc.) while taking the test. The whole point is to accurately assess what you know before and after the course, so that I can tell whether the course is effective.
- 2) **Weekly discussion board assignments.** Each week there will be one or more assignments that require you to collaborate with or respond to other students in the class. These interactions will take place via the Blackboard discussion boards. Each assignment will have specific instructions for what you are expected to contribute and where the discussions will take place (sometimes a single discussion forum for the whole class; sometimes in “group” forums with just one or a few other students). In general, however, I will evaluate your discussion contributions using the following rubric:

Category	1 point	2 points	3 points	4 points
<b>Promptness and Initiative</b>	Does not respond to most postings; rarely participates freely	Responds to most postings several days after initial discussion; limited initiative	Responds to most postings within a 24 hour period; requires occasional prompting to post	Consistently responds to postings in less than 24 hours; demonstrates good self-initiative
Delivery of Post	Utilizes poor spelling and grammar in most posts; posts appear "hasty"	Errors in spelling and grammar evidenced in several posts	Few grammatical or spelling errors are noted in posts	Consistently uses grammatically correct posts with rare misspellings
Relevance of Post	Posts topics which do not relate to the discussion content; makes short or irrelevant remarks	Occasionally posts off topic; most posts are short in length and offer no further insight into the topic	Frequently posts topics that are related to discussion content; prompts further discussion of topic	Consistently posts topics related to discussion topic; cites additional references related to topic
Expression  Within the Post	Does not express opinions or ideas clearly; no connection to topic	Unclear connection to topic evidenced in minimal expression of opinions or ideas	Opinions and ideas are stated clearly with occasional lack of connection to topic	Expresses opinions and ideas in a clear and concise manner with obvious connection to topic
Contribution to  the  Learning Community	Does not make effort to participate in learning community as it develops; seems indifferent	Occasionally makes meaningful reflection on group's efforts; marginal effort to become involved with group	Frequently attempts to direct the discussion and to present relevant viewpoints for consideration by group; interacts freely	Aware of needs of community; frequently attempts to motivate the group discussion; presents creative approaches to topic

Thus there will be at least 20 points possible for “discussion participation” each week for each discussion board assignment. In general, only substantive posts will receive credit for participation. A substantive post is one that is relevant to the topic, course materials, and previous posts, provides reasons (or evidence) to support or oppose a position, and advances the conversation in meaningful ways. “I agree!” or “Good idea, I couldn't have said it better,” or “I think the answer lies somewhere in the middle” would not, for example, be considered substantive comments. One or two sentences are seldom a very substantive post. A substantive post is more likely to consist of one or more paragraphs, in which an idea is coherently stated and logically supported. Although the exact number and frequency of posts will vary depending on the assignment and the nature of the conversation, on average you should be

making several substantive posts each week.

A further word or two on the “timeliness” component of the discussion grades: When discussion assignments require that you respond to posts from other students, your initial posting must be made several days BEFORE the final deadline so that others have time to reply to it. If you wait and do all your posts the day of the deadline, you will be marked down significantly for not posting in a timely fashion. Occasionally (rarely, one hopes) you may find the other members of your discussion group have not heeded this warning. If, 24 hours before the final due date, there are no other posts for you to make your required replies to, post a reply to your own message noting that it is less than a day before the deadline and there was nothing to reply to. If you do, you will not be penalized for other people’s procrastination. They, however, will be.

There may also be individual writing assignments or final “products” that are to emerge from the discussions in some weeks. Additional instructions and grading guidelines will be provided for each such assignment.

Note that all assignment grades in this course are individual grades – even for group projects. You will be evaluated for your own contributions to any group project, as revealed in your contributions on the discussion boards. There are no assignments in which all group members receive the same grade. This tends to greatly reduce the classic “social loafing” problems associated with group assignments.

- 3) **Weekly quizzes on textbook readings.** The discussion board and written assignments are designed to let you explore important ideas from the field of psychology in some depth. But an introductory psychology course should also have enough breadth to give you some idea of what the possibilities for study and research are in the field, and to give you a foundation for subsequent courses you may take. The weekly textbook quizzes are designed to help you get that broad overview of the field and enable you to recognize important concepts, theories, and empirical discoveries when you encounter them again later in more advanced courses.

The quizzes may be taken multiple times up until the deadline. Only your most recent score is recorded in the gradebook, so you may retake the test until you are satisfied with your score. Each time you take the quiz you will get a different set of randomly chosen questions from a large test bank of questions for that topic.

There will be two copies of the quiz posted for each week (Copy A and Copy B). Only the higher of your two quiz scores each week will be counted towards your course grade. The copies are indistinguishable (both are randomly drawn from the same pool of items), but I provide these two copies of the quiz each week to help you maximize your quiz grade (see the strategy advice below).

The best strategy for taking the weekly quiz is to first read the assigned textbook chapters and view the online lectures for the week. Then, with your textbook open, take Copy A of the quiz. If you get a perfect score, great! If not, look up the answers to the questions you missed (in case they are randomly selected again) and then take Copy B of the quiz. If neither of your scores is perfect, retake whichever copy of the quiz has the lower score. Repeat until you have a score of 100% on one of the versions of the quiz. If you follow this procedure (and do not wait until the last minute) you should get all 200 of the possible quiz points for the course, and

you should learn quite a bit about psychology in the process.

Remember, only the higher of your two quiz scores will be counted each week. Even more importantly, remember that whenever you retake a quiz, your previous score for that copy of the quiz is erased from the gradebook and can not be recovered – so always retake only the copy that has the *lower* score and leave your “high score” intact. Finally, be sure to check the gradebook after you take the quiz to make sure your score was recorded correctly – you should see a number, not an exclamation point or a dash.

- 4) **Final Project.** A four to seven page paper in which you apply one or more ideas from the course to something in your own experience is due during final exam week. The goal is for you to *use* what you have learned in the class in a way that is meaningful to you. You could use what you have learned about psychology to make sense of an experience you have had, to explain some behavior you have observed in yourself or other people, or to help create a plan to achieve some goal in the future, just to name a few examples. A paper which merely cites general ideas from the textbook or lectures (“Similar contexts at encoding and retrieval make it easier to remember something”) is likely to be decidedly mediocre. One that cites specific empirical evidence in a way that supports your interpretations and arguments (“Morris, Bransford, and Franks (1977) found that words were better remembered if the way they were tested matched the way people thought about them when they studied them. I could use this ‘encoding specificity principle’ to help me ...”) is likely to be a much better paper.
- 5) **Course Post-test.** This test and the PreTest will be used to assess how much the class as a whole has learned in the course. Your score on the PostTest will NOT count towards your course grade! If you complete the PostTest by the deadline *and make a good-faith effort* to answer the questions, you will receive full credit (50 points). The 50 points should appear in the gradebook within a few days after you complete the PostTest - as soon as I have had a chance to verify your PostTest completion and enter the full credit by hand. If it does not appear within a few days, email me.

Please do NOT use your textbook or any other resources while completing the PostTest . Its purpose is to see what you have learned in the course. (Remember that your *score* on the test does NOT count towards your grade.)

- 6) **OCBs.** I/O Psychologists use the term “organizational citizenship behaviors” (OCBs) to refer to positive things that members of an organization do that are not really *required* as part of their job. OCBs are not mandatory, but they are to be encouraged because they create a sense of community and benefit the organization. I will try to recognize and reward the things you do in this course that are analogous to OCBs – things that help everyone to learn and get the most out of their experience in this class.

In an online course, building a learning community is particularly important because much more of the responsibility for learning rests with the students themselves, and to a large extent learning is a product of your interactions with one another. All of you will no doubt go far beyond the basic course requirements in your interactions with your classmates, providing one another encouragement and assistance and (yes) **teaching** each other.

Many of your OCBs I may not even know about, but there are some that I can watch for and try to recognize and reward, such as answering other students' questions. When I see helpful

substantive responses to questions, or interesting and meaningful course-related discussions going on, I will acknowledge them with up to 5 bonus points per week in the gradebook category “OCBs” (perhaps more points for something like providing comments on a rough draft of a paper).

- 7) **Research Participation Requirement.** All of the interesting things we will learn about psychology this quarter ultimately come from psychological research. The research participation requirement serves two purposes: 1) It is educational for you, in that you get to see first-hand how cutting-edge research is being done, and 2) It helps the advancement of knowledge in psychology by enabling faculty to do new research. Details about this requirement and how it affects your course grade can be found on the Psychology Department web site under “Research” from the “Student Resources” tab. If you ever have questions or problems related to research participation, you can also contact the research participation coordinator by email at [depaulpsychexp@yahoo.com](mailto:depaulpsychexp@yahoo.com) for help.

There will be a number of studies that you can participate in online, as well as lab studies conducted on the Lincoln Park campus. If you are able to do lab studies on campus, I strongly encourage you to do so – they not only carry more credit than online studies (1 hour minimum credit vs. 0.5 hours for online studies), but also give you more opportunities to talk with researchers and see how a psychology laboratory is run. If you can not come to campus for studies, you can still fulfill this requirement with online studies or optional papers.

**NOTE:** In this class, all optional papers must be turned in through Blackboard, rather than in hard copy as described in the general instructions. See the “Research Participation” section of Course Documents for details.

**What I expect from you:** In an online course, it is critical that you actively participate and complete all assignments on time. In a course where most of the grade comes from a midterm and final exam, you might be able to sometimes get away with letting your attention stray for a few weeks and then cramming for a week or so before the exams. In this class there are no exams. The work (and consequently the learning and the points for grading) are spread out over the entire quarter.

**To do well in the course, you will need to actively participate and put serious work into the assignments every week.** In a course that has 3 hours of classroom meetings per week, a rule of thumb is that you should expect to put in an additional 9 hours per week of work outside of the class. In an online course like this one, you should expect to put in about that much time per week also: 10 to 12 hours of reading, watching lectures and other materials, working on assignments, and discussing course content. Logging in to Blackboard once a week will NOT do the trick – you should plan on visiting the discussion boards several times per week and devoting a significant amount of time to the course each week.

The flip side of that, however, is that **if you put in the time and do good work every week, you will do well in the course.** Because I will be able to evaluate your effort and learning through what you produce each week, your grade in the course does not have to hinge on whether you have a bad day during final exam week, or whether you are prone to test anxiety. Steady, consistent effort and intellectual engagement throughout the quarter will result in a good outcome for you. And because this course is not graded on a “curve” there is no reason that everyone can not get some type of “A” grade if everyone chooses to do the work.

I also expect you to respond to your fellow students with courtesy and respect. Although online

discussions can have the benefit of making people feel more comfortable expressing themselves than they might in person, online communication can also make it easier to be rude, condescending, and downright mean. I'm sure you've seen an online discussion or two that degenerated into a "flame war." Civility and respect are just as essential in an online learning community as in a physical classroom, and I will insist that we observe the usual social norms of cooperative conversation and politeness in our online "classroom." That does not mean we can not disagree in our discussions – just that we must not do so disagreeably.

**What you can expect from me:** Just as I expect you to be consistently engaged with the class throughout the quarter, you can expect me to respond in a timely fashion to questions, and to monitor and guide your progress throughout the quarter. I will be checking my email and the class discussion boards several times per week. In general you can expect me to respond within about 24 hours to questions posted to the "Course Q&A" forum and within about 48 hours to questions on other forums or in emails.

**Where to go for answers to questions:**

- **Course discussion board forums in Blackboard.** In the Discussion Board section of the Blackboard web site for this course there is a forum called "Course Q&A," where you can post any question about the class or about psychology. These might include questions about the course structure, assignments, and all other details that relate to how the course is run, as well as questions about course content, careers in psychology, and so on.
- **Technology Help button in Blackboard.** This navigation button will direct you to a number of sources of help and information for using Blackboard and other technology resources in the class.
- **Student Support Services button in Blackboard.** This button will give you links and contact information for resources such as the Writing Center, advising office, etc.
- **Email me.** If you need to discuss something that you would rather not post to the discussion boards for the rest of the class to see, contact me by email.

**Academic Dishonesty:**

Cheating or other forms of academic dishonesty will be dealt with according to university policy and may result in at a minimum a zero on the exam or assignment in question. Plagiarism (using the words or ideas of someone else as if they were your own) is also a form of academic dishonesty, and carries the same penalties as other forms of cheating. Plagiarism can occur as a blatant attempt to cheat (buying a term paper over the internet and turning it in as if you wrote it), but it can also occur through careless writing (failing to provide a reference for an idea that you found in a book or article). A good rule of thumb is to always provide a reference for any idea that came from someone else's writing, and if more than a few words in a row are repeated exactly either put it in quotes or rephrase it. It is also possible to plagiarize yourself -- by turning in a paper from a previous class as if it were original work, for example. (NOTE: Plagiarism in an "optional paper" for Research Participation credit is just as serious as cheating in any other context. Do not copy phrases or sentences from the article you are summarizing! Paraphrase it in your own words instead!)

You should also be aware that I (and many other instructors also) now routinely use automated programs to scan submitted assignments for evidence of plagiarism. So please DON'T EVEN THINK ABOUT cutting and pasting text from articles, old papers, or the internet into assignments you submit.

Students should consult the Academic Integrity Policy in the DePaul Student Handbook (see the “Student Support” button in Blackboard) for more information on what constitutes plagiarism and other violations of academic integrity. Contact the instructor if you have questions about how to properly acknowledge source materials and the works of others.

**Students with disabilities:**

Students who feel they may need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact me privately to discuss their specific needs. All discussions will remain confidential. You should also contact the PLS Program (for LD, AD/HD) at 773-325-8656 in SC 370 or the Office for Students with Disabilities (for all other disabilities) at 773-325-7290 in Student Center 307.

**Course Schedule:** See the “Course Documents” section in Blackboard for schedule details. We will cover one module per week. The topics to be covered are:

- Module 1 – Course Intro; Learning (classical conditioning)
- Module 2 – Learning (operant conditioning; modern learning theory)
- Module 3 – Memory (basic concepts, key findings and theories)
- Module 4 – Memory (reconstruction and reliability)
- Module 5 – Intelligence
- Module 6 – Development
- Module 7 – Stress, Coping, and Health
- Module 8 – Personality
- Module 9 – Social Psychology (social thinking; social influence)
- Module 10 – Social Psychology (social thinking; social relations)