

PSY101: Introductory Psychology

PSY 101 03 Course Syllabus
Spring/Summer 2024

Instructor Information

Instructor: Paolo Campus, Ph.D.

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Virtual Office Hours: By appointment (online Zoom meetings)

How to contact me: The best way to contact me is via e-mail. I will do my best to reply within 24 hours to e-mails received during business hours (Monday-Thursday, 9:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.). I will be in limited contact during weekends, and I won't be able to reply until the following Monday. For urgent communication, make sure to write "URGENT" in the subject line of the e-mail, and I will do my best to reply as soon as possible.

Course Information

Credits: 3

Prerequisites: None

Course Format: This course is delivered entirely online in an asynchronous format. You will be able to access course materials and participate in different learning activities at your own pace and schedule.

Course Overview

This course is designed to provide students with a comprehensive overview of psychology, the science that studies the relationships between mind and behavior. Over the course of the semester, we will reflect over a variety of psychological phenomena related to our everyday life, their underlying theories, and the research strategies used by psychologists to investigate them.

The course will cover a vast range of topics divided into six learning modules:

1. **Module 1: The Science of Psychology.** In the 1st module we will discuss the scientific foundations of psychology, the common research strategies used in psychology (i.e., descriptive, correlational, and experimental research) and their strengths/limitations. We will also explore how scientific knowledge is generated, and how we can use this knowledge to make informed decisions in our personal lives.
2. **Module 2: The Nervous System.** In this module, we will explore the biological basis of behavior, including how neurons communicate with each other, and how drugs and neurotransmitters act in the brain. We will discuss the differences between the central and peripheral nervous systems, we will learn to identify the main regions of the brain and discuss their primary functions.
3. **Module 3: Sensation, Perception, and Consciousness.** This module will discuss how sensory information is received and processed by the nervous system and how the brain affects our conscious experience of the world. During Module 3 we will also discuss the theories and neural correlates of consciousness, the subjective experience of ourselves and of the external world. We will focus in particular on sleep, a state of mind characterized by reduced consciousness and decreased sensory responsiveness, which is critical for survival. We will explore the different stages of sleep and discuss the most common sleep disorders and their treatments.
4. **Module 4: Cognition.** In this module we will discuss cognitive processes, a wide range of mental activities that influence our ability to understand and interact with the world. In particular, we will explore mental faculties such as thinking, reasoning, problem-solving, decision-making, learning & memory, and language.
5. **Module 5: Emotion, Motivation, and Social Behaviors.** In this module we will explore the mental processes underlying the expression and regulation of emotional responses, motivated behaviors (e.g., hunger & satiation, sexual behaviors, etc.), and how social interactions can influence individual behavior through mechanisms such as conformity, obedience, leadership, and group cohesion.
6. **Module 6: Psychopathology.** In the last module we will discuss the complex factors that render individuals resilient vs. vulnerable to chronic disease. We will describe some of the most common mental disorders (e.g., depression, anxiety, schizophrenia, etc.) and discuss the current approaches to their diagnosis & categorization. We will learn to distinguish between the different classes of psychotropic drugs currently available on the market, discuss their clinical applications and the risks associated with their use. Finally, we will explore some of the most common psychotherapy techniques, discuss their main differences, and address their strengths and limitations.

Course Objectives

The main goal of this course is to provide you with the scientific foundations for understanding human nature, including how and why we feel certain emotions, how we handle stress, how we learn new information and how we remember the past and, in general, why we behave the way we behave.

By the end of this course, you will:

- Develop a foundational knowledge of the major theories, concepts, and ideas in psychology.
- Build a fundamental understanding of the relationship between mental processes, brain functions, and behavioral outcomes
- Gain insights into the biological, cognitive, emotional, and social factors that influence human behavior.
- Critically evaluate the findings of psychological research, and recognize examples of how psychological concepts are applied to daily life.

Required Materials

Textbook: Spielman, R. M., Jenkins, W. J., & Lovett, M. D. (2020). *Psychology 2e*. OpenStax. The textbook is available for free at: <https://openstax.org/books/psychology-2e/pages/1-introduction>.

Internet Access: All relevant content, such as announcements, lecture slides, assignments, grades, and other additional information will be posted on the course Blackboard page, available at <http://mybb.gvsu.edu/>.

Computer/Tablet/Smartphone: Blackboard runs on Windows, Linux, iOS, Android, or any other electronic device with an up-to-date web browser.

PDF Reader: Some material in this course may be presented in PDFs. To view these materials, you will need a [PDF reader](#).

Word Processor: You will need a word processing software (e.g., Microsoft Office, Google Docs, etc.) to complete some course assignments. [Office 365](#) is available for free for personal computers/devices for qualifying GVSU students.

Methods of Evaluation

Grades will be determined by your scores on three types of assessment:

1. **Exams (50% of the final grade).** The course will have a total of two exams (one midterm and one final). Each exam consists of 60 multiple choices or fill in the blank questions. The exams will be available on Blackboard, at least seven days prior to the due date. You can take the exam anytime during this window. Once you start, the exam can't be stopped and resumed, and must be completed within 70 minutes. During each exam, you may access slides, textbook, notes, and the Blackboard page of the course. Use these resources sparingly: because of the time constraints, you won't be able to look up every answer. Therefore, the best strategy for doing well is reading the material in advance.
2. **Homework (30% of the final grade).** To keep up with the lectures, encourage continuous learning, and facilitate exam preparation, you will have to complete weekly homework (except for the exam weeks). Homework consist of interactive quizzes and other activities that will be made available on Blackboard. The questions are not designed to be difficult or stressful. They are meant to help you study the material covered in class, and retrieve the corresponding information on the textbook. There is no time limits, and you can stop and resume the activity at any time (your progress will be automatically saved). You will have to complete a total number of four tests, each worth 18 points, for a total of 72 points, or 30% of your final grade.
3. **Discussion Board Assignments (20% of the final grade).** Every week I will post one or more discussion board questions exploring some of the concepts introduced over the course of the week. You will have to choose one of the available discussions and write a 150/200 words response. The purpose of this assignment is to engage students in exploring key psychological concepts and applying them to real-life scenarios. While your subjective perspective on a given topic will be welcomed and appreciated, do not base your answers solely on your personal opinion. Make sure to explain your answers referring to concepts and/or theories discussed in the course. If necessary, provide empirical evidences to support your claims, and cite any referenced source. Always keep in mind that the Discussion Board is not an informal chat room. Your contribution should be thoughtful, considerate, professional, and respectful of others' opinions/beliefs. There will be a total of six discussion board assignments (one for each learning module/week). Each discussion is worth 8 points, for a total of 48 points available (20% of the final grade). Further instructions, including due dates, grading rubrics, and specific guidelines will be provided on the Blackboard page of the course.

You can find a breakdown of the points assigned in the table below:

Type of Assignment	Number of Assignments	Points (each)	Points (total)	% of Final Grade
Discussions	6	8	48	20
Homework	4	18	72	30
Exams	2	60	120	50
Total			240	100

Grading Scale: The percentage of total credit earned during the semester will be converted to a letter grade according to the table below. Percentages will be rounded up or down to the nearest decimal.

Percentage	Grade
93-100%	A
90-92%	A-
87-89%	B+
83-86%	B
80-82%	B-
77-79%	C+
73-76%	C
70-72%	C-
65-69%	D+
60-65%	D
≤59%	F

Class Policies

GVSU Email and Course Communications. Students are responsible for all communications sent via Blackboard and to their GVSU email accounts. GVSU student email can be accessed by visiting: mail.gvsu.edu and Blackboard at: mybb.gvsu.edu.

Assignments and Assessments. Each student is required to complete all learning activities by the due date deadline, as indicated on Blackboard. No learning activities or assignments are accepted late. All assignments, graded discussions, quizzes, exams etc. are submitted electronically to Blackboard.

Participation. A large part of the learning in this course comes not only from reading, but also from participating in class activities. Therefore, it is to your benefit to take advantage of these learning opportunities. You are responsible for all material covered in class whether you attend or not. Be sure to visit the Blackboard page of the course to locate the course materials.

Accommodations. Students requiring accommodations should contact the instructor and accessibility services.

University Policies

Caring for Students. Your health and your family's health should be your priority. If you are dealing with illness, sick family members, travel difficulties, a bad internet connection, increased anxiety, childcare challenges, or any other issues, please reach out and we will figure out accommodations.

Mental Health. Mental health concerns, including overwhelming stress, excessive worry, difficulty participating in daily activities, and changes in mood, appetite, or sleep patterns can interfere with your academic performance. College student surveys report that roughly 1 out of 3 students screen positive for a current mental health concern ([Healthy Minds Study](#)). GVSU values your health and wellness and provides services to support your mental health. If you would like mental health support or are concerned for another member of our campus community, reach out to the [University Counseling Center](#) for free resources, self-help options, and services. Also, visit [Campus Recreation & Wellness](#) for additional health and wellness programming.

Disability Support Resources. If you need accommodations because of a learning, physical, or other disability, please contact your instructor and Disability Support Resources (<https://www.gvsu.edu/dsr/>). Furthermore, if you have a physical disability and think you will need assistance evacuating this classroom and/or building in an emergency situation, please make me aware so I can develop a plan to assist you. Assistive technology computers are available in many GVSU computer labs (<https://www.gvsu.edu/dsr/accessible-computer-labs-68.htm>). Also, Blackboard has a commitment to accessibility statement (blackboard.com/accessibility.aspx) providing information about accessibility in all of their products.

Student Code of Conduct. Standards of conduct are established in order to generate an atmosphere in which the goals and objectives of the institution can flourish. Individual rights can only be ensured with acceptance of individual and group responsibilities and respect for the rights of others. Individuals attending GVSU automatically place themselves under the applicable rules and regulations of the institution.

Academic Integrity. All course assignments, learning activities, and assessments, are to be authored and completed individually, by the student themselves. Failure to be able to correctly cite, explain and defend your submissions is an indication that it is not your work. While assisting another student in learning is part of the academic process, completing the assigned work as a team or group effort (with the exception of group projects as assigned by the instructor) is not allowed and will be considered Academic

Dishonesty. No Academic Dishonesty will be tolerated and such activity may result in failure of a specific assignment, an entire course, or, if flagrant, dismissal from Grand Valley. For further information see the Student Code, and the consequences include penalties established by GVSU's Academic Integrity policy (<https://www.gvsu.edu/conduct/academic-integrity-14.htm>).

Plagiarism. Any ideas or material taken from another source for either written or oral presentation must be fully acknowledged. Offering the work of someone else as one's own is plagiarism. The language or ideas taken from another may range from isolated formulas, sentences, or paragraphs to entire articles copied from books, periodicals, speeches, or the writing of other students. The offering of materials assembled or collected by others in the form of projects or collections without acknowledgment is also considered plagiarism. Any student who fails to give credit in written or oral work for the ideas or materials that have been taken from another is guilty of plagiarism. Such activity may result in failure of a specific assignment, an entire course, or, if flagrant, dismissal from Grand Valley. For further information see the [Student Code](#).

Campus Emergencies. In case of fire, immediately proceed to the nearest exit during a fire alarm. Use a staircase, not an elevator. To sign up for campus emergency alerts and to access more information, please visit the GVSU Emergency website (<https://www.gvsu.edu/emergency>).

Learning Resources. See the "Help & Support" section of Blackboard for help with using Blackboard; a link to the Blackboard Student Mobile App and Blackboard IM; GVSU computer lab hours and locations; GVSU IT Help Desk (<https://www.gvsu.edu/it/helpdesk/>); accessibility and Disability Support Resources (<https://www.gvsu.edu/dsr/>).

Changes to the Syllabus. [The instructor reserves the right to change the contents of this syllabus. Students will be given notice of relevant changes in class, through a Blackboard announcement, or through GVSU e-mail.](#)

Psych Friends. If you feel you could use some extra help/guidance/support in any academic domain or for your well-being, please consider scheduling an appointment with a mentor through Psych Friends. Psych Friends mentors are upper-level undergraduate peer mentors who are trained to provide support in many areas including: effective study and time management techniques, exam preparation and reflection skills, comprehension of the psychology and behavioral neuroscience major requirements, tips for engaging in the field, strategies for education continuation, methods for maintaining physical and mental health. Schedule an appointment here: <https://www.gvsu.edu/navigate>. Questions? Email psychfriends@gvsu.edu.

This course is subject to the GVSU policies listed at <http://www.gvsu.edu/coursepolicies/>