Grand Valley State University

Psychology 492-03: Capstone Fall 2018

Mondays and Wednesdays 1:30-2:45 PM ASH 1117

SYLLABUS

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Course Description

By the time you take this required course for psychology majors, you must have been told many times that psychology is science. Yet it is one thing to receive and accept a message at its face value, and quite another to assimilate it into your belief and value systems. The main objective of this course is to reach a deeper understanding about the status and the functions of psychological inquiries in life and society. The questions that I invite you to explore include: What does it mean to take psychology and allied inquiries seriously as science? Does scientific psychology represent a neatly separate body of knowledge from common sense and personal experience? How is psychology related to other areas of inquiry including physical sciences, biological sciences, social sciences, philosophy, and literature? Could and should new discoveries from scientific psychology be applied to ethical and productive living of individuals and social policies? What other bodies of human knowledge have to be called on to bear on resolving the issues that you care about?

To ensure that class discussions are as informed as possible, you are required to first read and review what psychologists and philosophers of science have written on some of the related topics, which will serve as anchors for discussions and reflections on what psychology is and is not. We will not only review textbook "recipes" for doing science, but also examine the socio-historical contexts and philosophical presumptions/underpinnings for different schools/approaches in psychology, including evolutionary psychology, cultural psychology, and neuropsychology.

We will then delve into several special areas of inquiry within the traditional territories of academic psychology, including the relationship between nature and nurture, mind and body connections, conscious and unconscious minds, social perceptions, self and society. We will examine, in each case, how and to what extent scientific psychology can illuminate our understanding on important issues and how such studies have impacted people's lives and contemporary culture. I will encourage you to raise further questions that seem to be neglected in contemporary psychology as far as you know, or that you believe should or could be approached differently.

Keep in mind that this class is not primarily about the psychological studies and the consensus or conclusions reached so far. Although some of the topics and empirical studies may sound familiar because they are mentioned in other classes you have taken, please keep an open mind, be critical (but not blindly critical), and be prepared to gain new insights on the same "old" issues. The class is intended to be a disciplined as well as open-ended exploration of the issues you care about, and you are expected to talk and write about your own understanding on those issues, informed by what you read and class discussions. An essential skill you will learn or consolidate is raising meaningful as well as logically and empirically answerable questions. To help reach these objectives, I will frequently ask you, in classroom and writing assignments, to elaborate and articulate your questions, or transform them into testable hypotheses. In the latter case, I will occasionally ask you search scholarly literature for research findings that support or reject your hypotheses.

Course objectives (as stated in GVSU official Catalog)

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

1) Identify concepts associated with major theoretical perspectives and empirical findings in the discipline.

2) Engage in the application of major theoretical perspectives and empirical findings in the discipline.

3) Describe alternative theoretical perspectives within the discipline and, where possible, integrate/synthesize across these perspectives.

4) Recognize various sources of bias in psychological research, and how these can affect the interpretation or usefulness of research findings.

5) Analyze and explain interdisciplinary approaches to psychological questions.

6) Recognize and produce an appropriate level of professional-style writing.

Reading material

No textbooks are required. Most of the reading material will be accessible in pdf files that can be downloaded either from the Blackboard or directly from the web. In exchange for the cost of the textbook, you have to defray the cost of printing the reading material yourself. **Please bring your printed copies of the articles to class for discussion whether or not you are assigned the presenter of the article**. You are not allowed to use laptop computers in classroom, except on a few occasions for research purposes, in which cases I will let you know by announcements on the blackboard beforehand. You may also have to purchase three books from amazon.com or other online used bookstores such as alibris.com at your own expenses, if they are not available from libraries. The two required books are listed on page 8 in the syllabus. Most of the books cost under $15.

Structure of the class

There will be six topics for class discussion, debates and exploratory writing assignments. Each of these topics will consume about two weeks, or four class sessions except for the first topic (scientific psychology and rational inquiry), which takes six class sessions. While there is room for change due to unforeseeable circumstances, each of the four-day block for a topic will be structured similarly.

Components of the class

1. Class discussions on assigned readings: More than 50% of the class sessions will be spent on discussions centered around the articles or book chapters assigned for the six topics. Three or four students will be assigned as presenters for each of the six topics. Each presenter will be responsible for presenting one or two articles and raising one or two questions for class discussion. The essential requirement for the task is being able to grasp the main points of the article in your own words and not being bogged down to inessential details. I will post an instruction for article presentation soon. I will also post a list of questions for each topic before the class discussion starts.

2. Qizz and questions: To ensure optimal engagement from all students of the class in debates and class discussions it is important that each of you know at least the gist of each article before we start a new topic. Accordingly, I will routinely ask you to write one or two sentences to summarize each article and raise questions you are truly concerned or confused at the start of each new topic.

3. Debate: Four times during the semester we will conduct group debate on controversial issues. I will be the moderator for each debate and ask questions prepared by myself or hinted from your quiz answers. Two teams, each consisting of two or three students, will take opposite positions on an issue to start with, and debate each other by logical arguments and/or empirical evidence. It is allowed for a debater to change his/her position or reach a compromised position. More detailed formats and rules will be given in class.

4. Summary and reflection papers: After the last class session for a topic, you are required to write a paper with three main sections: 1) summaries of the articles in your own words, 2) conceptual connections between the articles, and 3) reflections on the issue(s) raised in the articles and class discussion. An instruction for each paper will be posted on BB. The due time is typically Thursday midnight, or one day after the last class session for the topic. Late works will incur deductions of points of at least 30% per delayed week. I will give full credit (20 points) to all papers that fulfills the basic requirements articulated in my instruction. Due to logistical constraints, I will comment and give feedback on a selected set of the papers (about 30%) on each topic.

5. Book-club meetings and book reports: There are two books that you are required to read: Andrew Shtulman's "ScienceBlind" and Sam Harris' "Free will'. We will hold two "book-club" style meetings on Shtulman's book and one such meeting on Harris' book. You are required to submit a book report on each book. Instructions for how to write the

book reports will be posted on the BB.

6. Book presentation: A third book, a different one for each of you, will be assigned at the beginning of the semester. Starting from 10/03 until right before the finals week, there will be five class sessions designated for book presentation. On each book presentation day, four of you will present a summary and some highlights of the book assigned to you and be prepared to answer questions from the audience. Each of you will have about 15 minutes for the presentation and about 2 minutes for Q/A. A more detailed instruction will be posted later.

7. Review paper: You are required a review paper of about 3000 words (double spaced and #12 font) on an issue under one of the six topics. I will give you a list of somewhat controversial and potentially interesting issues to consider, but you are encouraged to find your own by the criteria I set in my instruction. Ideally it is an issue that there has been researched with rather different theoretical approaches and perspectives, both biological-evolutionary oriented and social-cultural oriented, and even those that may seem to be on the “borderlands” of science. Your task is to describe the issue as clearly as possible, describe the different research approaches to the issue and how well each of them is supported by evidence gathered so far. You are expected to provide a critical assessment of the research findings and conclusions, and propose new researches needed to resolve the issue. I will ask you to submit a draft before submitting the final version. You will receive comments and feedback to the draft from your peers or myself. The purpose of doing so is to leave sufficient time for reflection and gathering research findings and thoughts that most scholars and experts find difficult to do in one shot. A more detailed instruction will be posted later on the BB. Your review paper will be graded with a rubric that requires, among other things, a demonstration of progress in writing and thinking from the draft to the completed paper.

8. Final exam: There will be a final take-home exam for assessing your understanding and thoughts on the key issues covered throughout the class.

9. Capstone Forum: A forum will be implemented on the Blackboard discussion board. This is where you can communicate with your peers on any class-related issues and seek help from each other. You are strongly encouraged to post your messages on it. As an incentive, you will earn extra credit of up to 7 points by posting on the forum, depending on the frequency and the quality of your posts.

Grading distribution

Your final grade will reflect your performance on following components:

1) 6 summary/reflection papers: 20 points each = 120 points
2) Book report ("ScienceBlind") = 20 points
3) Book report ("Free will") = 20 points
3) Book presentation = 20 points
4) Review paper = 55 points
5) Final exam = 55 points
6) Discussion leading = 15 points
7) Quizzes = 12 points
8) Attendance = 40 points
9) Class participation including debates and class discussion = 30 points
10) Forum postings = up to 7 points of extra credits

Total= 387 points + 7 extra credit points

Your total points will be converted into percentage points, and your final letter grade will then be determined according to the following scale:

A >94%;	B- = 79-81%;	D+ = 65-68%;
A- = 89-93%;	C+ = 76-78%;	D = 60-64%;
B+ = 86-88%;	C = 72-75%;	F <60
B = 82-85%;	C- = 69-71%;	

Schedule (Subject to change, please check BB frequently):

8/27: Course overview

Topic One: Scientific psychology and rational Inquiries

8/29: Introduction and debate on what psychological science is and is not

9/3: Labor day recess, no class
9/5: quiz on assigned readings, class discussion
9/10, 9/12: class discussion continues
9/13 midnight: reflection paper 1 due on BB
9/17, 9/19: 'book club' meetings on "ScienceBlind"
9/20 midnight: book report 1 ("ScienceBlind") due on BB

Topic 2: Nature, nurture and culture

9/24: quiz on assigned readings, debates on nature and nurture, mind and body
9/26, 10/1: class discussion
10/3: Book presentations 1
10/4 Midnight: reflection paper 2 due on BB

Topic 3: Mind and body

10/8: quiz on assigned readings; class discussion
10/10, 10/15: Class discussion continues
10/17: Book presentations 2
10/18 midnight: reflection paper 3 due on BB

Topic 4: Attention and Unconscious minds

10/22: quiz on assigned readings; class discussion
10/23: Draft of the review paper due on BB
10/24, 10/29: class discussion continues
10/31: book-club meeting on "Free will"
11/1 midnight: reflection paper 4 due on BB
11/2 midnight: book report on "free will" due on BB

Topic 5: Stereotypes and social perception

11/5: Quiz on assigned readings; Debate on stereotypes and related social perception topics
11/7, 11/12: Class discussions
11/14: book presentations 3
11/15 midnight: reflection paper 5 due on BB

Topic 6: Self, Identity, values, and society
11/19: Quiz on assigned readings; debate on values, identities and the role of science in social changes
11/21: Thanksgiving holiday, no class
11/26, 11/28: Class discussions
12/3: Book presentation 4
12/5: Book presentation 5, wrap-up
12/6: reflection paper 6 due on BB
12/7: review paper due on BB

12/10: final exam due

Reading list

Topic one: Scientific psychology and rational Inquiries

Gilbert, D. (1991). How mental systems believe, *American Psychologists*, 46(2), 107-119.

Meinrad, P. (1991). The difference between everyday knowledge, ideology, and scientific knowledge, *New Ideas in Psychology*, 9(2), 227-231.

Lillienfeld, S. O. (2010). Can psychology become a science? *Personality and Individual Differences* 49 (2010), 281–288.

Shermer, M. (2008). Folk numeracy and middle land, *Scientific American,* September, 40

Boudry, M., Blancke, S., and Pigliucci, M. (2015). What makes weird belief thrive? The epidemiology of pseudoscience, *Philosophical Psychology*, 28(8), 1177–1198.

Topic two: Nature, nurture and culture

Champagne, F. A. & Mashoodlh, R. (2009). Gene in Context: Gene-Environment interplay and the origins of individual differences in behavior. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 18(3), 127-131.

Peterson, M. & Aaroe, L. (2015). Birth weight and social trust in adulthood: Evidence for early calibration of social cognition, *Psychological Science*, 26(11) 1681–1692

Fuss, J., Auer, M. K., & Briken, P. (2015). Gender dysphoria in children and adolescents: a review of recent research, *Current Opinions in Psychiatry*, 28, 430-434.

Baron-Cohen, S. (2005). The male condition. http://www.nytimes.com/2005/08/08/opinion/the-male-condition.html

Tomasello, M.,Hermann, E. (2010). Ape and Human Cognition: What's the difference? *Current Directions in Psychological Science,* 19(1), 3-8.

Topic three: Mind and body

Van Oudenhove, L. & Cuypers, S. E. (2010). The philosophical "mind- body problem" and its relevance for the relationship between psychiatry and the neurosciences. *Perspectives in Biology and Medicine*, 53(4), 545-57.

Piedimonte, A. Benedetti, F. (2016). Words and Drugs: Same Mechanisms of Action? *Journal of Contemporary Psychotherapy*, 46, 159-166.

Wright, R. J.& Rakow, T. (2017). Don't sweat it: Re-examining the somatic marker hypothesis using variants of the Balloon Analogue Risk Task. *Decision*, 4(1), 52-56.

Mobbs, D., Lau, H., Jones, O.D., & Frith, C.D. (2007). Law, Responsibility, and the brain, *PLoS Biology*, 5(4), 693-700.

Weir, K. (2011). The exercise effect. *APA Monitor*, 42(11), 48-52.

Topic four: Attention and Unconscious minds

Rensink, R., O'Regan, K., & Clark, J. J. (1997). To see or not to see: The need for attention to Perceive changes in scenes, *Psychological Science*, 8(5), 368-373.

Johansson, P. et al. (2014). Choice blindness and preference change: You will like this paper

better if you (believe you) chose to read It! choice blindness and preference change. *Journal of Behavioral Decision Making*, 27(3), 281-289.

Peterson, M. B. et. al. (2013). Motivated reasoning and political parties: Evidence for increased processing in the face of party cues, *Political Behavior*, 35, 831–854

Dijksterhuis, A. et al. (2005). The Unconscious Consumer: Effects of Environment on Consumer Behavior, *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, 15(3),193–202.

Solms, M. (2000*).* Freud returns. *Scientific American*, 290(5), 82-88.

Topic five: Stereotypes and Social perception

Todd, A. R., Thiem, K. C., Neel, R. (2016). Does seeing faces of young black boys facilitate the identification of threatening stimuli? *Psychological Science*, 27(3), 384–393.

Jussim, L, Crawford, J. T., Rubinstein, R. S. (2015). Stereotype accuracy in perceptions of groups and individuals. *Current Directions in Psychological Science,* 24(6), 490.

West, T. V., Pearson, A. R., Dovidio, J. F., Johnson, B. T., & Phills, C. E. (2014). Racial attitudes and visual cues in political judgments: Support for Obama during the 2008 presidential election. *Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology,* 20(4), 583-590.

Kunda, Z. & Sinclair, L. (1999). Motivated Reasoning with stereotypes: Activation, application, and inhibition, *Psychological Inquiry*, 10(1), 12-22.

Cohen, G. L., Sherman, D. K. (2005). Stereotype threat and the social and scientific contexts of the race achievement gap. *American Psychologist*, 60(3), 270-271.

Topic six: Self, Identity, values, and society

Dweck, C. S. & Molden, D. (2008). Self-theories: The construction of free will. In J. Baer, Kaufman. J. N., & L. Lawrence (Eds.) *Are We Free? Psychology and Free Will* (pp.44-64) Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press.

Dutcher, J. et al. (2016). Self-Affirmation Activates the Ventral Striatum: A Possible Reward-Related Mechanism for Self-Affirmation, *Psychological Science*, 27(4), 455–466.

Schwartz, S. H. (2012). An overview of the Schwartz theory of basic values. *Online Readings in Psychology and Culture,* 2(1). http://dx.doi.org/10.9707/2307-0919.1116

Przybylinski, E. & Anderson, E. (2015). Systems of meaning and transference: Implicit significant-other activation evokes shared reality, *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 109(4), 636–661

Barbera, P. et al. (2015). Tweeting from left to right: Is online political communication more than an echo chamber*? Psychological Science*, 26(10), 1531–1542.

Required Books:

Andrew Shtulman (2017). Scienceblind: Why our intuitive theories about the world are so often wrong
Sam Harris (2012). Free will

Books assigned individually (You will be assigned a unique one from the list):

Banaji, M. R. & Greenwald, A. G. (2013). *Blindspot.*
Bloom, P. (2010). *How pleasure works: the new science of why we like what we like.*
Bloom, P. (2016). *Against empathy: the case for rational compassion*
Cain, S. (2013). *Quiet: The power of Introverts in a world that can't stop talking*
Chabris, C., Simons, D. (2011). *The Invisible gorilla: How our intuitions deceive us*
Carey, N. (2013). The epigenetics revolution: How modern biology Is rewriting our understanding of genetics, disease, and inheritance
Dweck, C. (2006). *Mindset.*
Gilligan, C. (1982). In a different voice
Gopnik, A. (2009). *The philosophical baby: What children's minds tell us about truth, love and* the meaning of life
Gorman, S. & Gorman, J. M. (2016). Denying to the Grave: Why We Ignore the Facts That Will Save Us
Haidt, J (2013). *The righteous mind: Why good people are divided by politics and religion*
Hood, B. (2013). *The Self Illusion*: *How the social brain creates identity*
Iacoboni, M (2009). *Mirroring People: the science of empathy and how we connect with others.*
Kagan, J. (2010). *The temperamental thread: How genes, culture, time and luck make us who we are.*
Kahneman, D. (2013). Thinking, fast and slow
Mercier, Hugo. (2017). The enigma of reason
Pfaff, D. (2015) The altruistic brain
Sapolsky, R. M. (2017). Behave: the biology of humans at our best and worst
Shermer, M. (2012). *The Believing brain: From ghosts and Gods to politics and conspiracies---How we construct beliefs and reinforce them as truths.*
Shermer, M. (2016). *The moral arc: How science makes us better people.*
Shermer (2001), M. The borderlands of science
Stanovich, K. (2010). *What intelligence tests miss: The psychology of rationality.*

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