

Fall 2025 Course Syllabus
PSY 101(15): Introductory Psychology
Tue 10:00 am - 11:15 am, Lake Michigan Hall (LMH)114
Department of Psychology

Instructor: Walter Sá, Ph.D.
Office: 2210 Au Sable Hall (ASH)
Office Phone: 616-331-3705
E-mail: saw@gvsu.edu
Office Hours: T&TH 8:45 am – 9:45 am (& by appointment)

SLA Facilitator: Autumn Brenner
SLA E-mail: vandeau3@mail.gvsu.edu
SLA Sessions: (16) T 9:00 am – 9:50 am, LSH 225
(17) TH 9:00 am – 9:50 am, MAK A1182

Course Description

This will be an introductory course to the science of psychology. Psychology is the scientific study of behavior and mental processes. The course will provide a general survey of a wide variety of psychological topics including the history and roots of psychology, research methods used in psychology, biological processes, sensation and perception, behavioral learning perspectives, memory processes, language, reasoning and judgment, intelligence, emotions, personality, and social psychology.

Course Objectives

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

1. Demonstrate an understanding of the scientific process in Psychology.
2. Identify major psychological theories and use psychological terminology correctly.
3. Critically evaluate the findings of psychological research.
4. Recognize examples of how psychological concepts are applied to daily life.

GVSU Course Policies*

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

Textbook (Mandatory):

Introducing Psychology: Brain, Person, Group. Version 5.1 (2020). By Stephen M Kosslyn & Robin S. Rosenberg. Flatworld.

* You will find digital copy of this syllabus up on blackboard with the clickable links.

Course Evaluation*

Midterm Exam 1	15 points
Midterm Exam 2	15 points
Midterm Exam 3	15 points
Final Exam	20 points
Assignments	12 points
Attendance / In-Class Activities	15 points
Enrichment Activities	8 points
<hr/>	
100 points**	

* This scheme assumes a regular full face-to-face (f2f) semester. It is subject to substantial modifications in the event of a necessary change in course format (e.g., the need to go online or a hybrid mode)

** Note that the terminology “points” and “percentage” are interchangeable in this grading scheme since the sum of points is 100.

Concerning your final submitted grade

Your final course grade will be recorded as a letter grade under the following schedule:

A	93-100%	B+	87-89%	C+	77-79%	D+	67-69%
A-	90-92%	B	83-86%	C	73-76%	D	60-66%
		B-	80-82%	C-	70-72%	F	0-59%

For purposes of letter grade submission, numerical scores are rounded up from the **second decimal place value** to the nearest whole number (i.e., xx.45 and greater). For example, 82.45, (a B-) would be rounded up to an 83 (a straight B). An 82.44, however would remain a B- (the border needs to be placed somewhere).

Exams (65 points)

There will be three non-cumulative midterm exams and one cumulative final exam. Exams will consist of multiple-choice questions. Questions will be drawn from both lectures and assigned readings. Although there will be a very large overlap between lecture content and the assigned readings, lectures will present some content not found in the assigned readings, and lectures will not cover all the content of the assigned readings for which you will be responsible for. A result of this is that a non-trivial portion of exam questions will comprise of both material that is unique to lectures, and material that is unique to assigned readings. In other words, to do “well” on the exams you must do both the assigned readings and attend class (which means paying attention and taking good notes--not just physically being present). **A good rule-of-thumb for estimating how much time you should devote to studying for a psychology class is two (to three) hours outside class for every hour in class.** Thus, you are strongly encouraged to plan on spending at least six hours a week studying outside of class time.

On exams days

On exam days make sure you bring to class a #2 pencil and a good eraser--you will be responding on a scantron form.

A point of caution, be conscientious about filling these scantron forms. Bubbles should be filled in properly, and you should thoroughly erase any changed answers. Your answers as bubbled-in on these scantrons will be considered your response to the questions. No corrections will be made due to errors on your part.

All electronic devices (e.g., phones) must be placed away (also make sure to silence your phones)

On missing exams

Don't!

Rescheduling exams presents problems for the class, for me as an instructor, and for support staff in the psychology department. Numerous people may be inconvenienced by any modifications to course scheduling due to a student missing an exam.

If, however, you miss an exam for a valid reason, be prepared to provide documentation for your justified absence (e.g., a doctor's note) and be prepared to make up the exam ASAP. This is by no means an issue taken lightly, you **must** have a justified reason for your absence, and you **must** be able to document it.

If you are going to be absent, get in touch with me ASAP (E-mail or telephone call)--this is your responsibility (do not wait for me to get in touch with you, or simply wait until you see me at the next class). If I do not hear from you within 24 hours of the exam, you have forfeited your opportunity to write that exam.

Any alternative date/time exam arrangement is likely to consist of an alternative short-answer version of the exam.

Emergency closings on exam dates

If the university closes on the date of a scheduled exam, the affected exam will be held during our next regularly scheduled face-to-face class.

Students should assume the university is open unless they are notified otherwise via the GVSU website.

Assignments (12 points)

There will be an assignment that draws upon lecture-covered material due almost every week. Assignments will be made available on blackboard and largely scored on a full credit/no credit basis. **It is your effort on these that is essentially being gauged.** Submitting the assignments by the due date will be considered part of the assignment requirement—i.e., **late assignments will not be credited**. **Incomplete assignments will not be credited** (i.e., the assignment must be fully complete as outlined in the provided instructions to receive credit.) Assignments that display “low effort” will also not be fully credited.

Attendance / In-Class Activities / (15 points)

Attendance in both class and your SLA sessions is a minimal expectation, and it will reflect upon your grade. A total of two absences from class and two absences from an SLA session will not affect this portion of your grade. **Each subsequent absence beyond your second from either class or SLA sessions, however, will result in a one-point deduction from this portion of the grade.**

In-class activities will be unannounced. Some of these may take the form of pop quizzes that draw upon either assigned readings that should have been completed or material presented in class (including content presented in the class in which the activity is conducted in.) Some other in-class activities will consist of quick “mini-experiments” generating class data that will serve to illustrate upcoming course concepts/material. Note that these activities will be brief (typically no more than 10 or so minutes) and **you must be in class during the time of their administration to be credited.**

A little more about missing classes ...

- I will be presenting material in class that is not covered in the assigned readings.
- I often give clues to students about especially important assigned reading material during lecture/discussion.
- **Lecture notes for missed classes are not provided**—please do not ask as I can make no exceptions on this out of fairness to all students.
- You may miss important announcements and/or handouts in a timely manner. You can mitigate some of these—see the **A helpful suggestion** section below.

Enrichment Activities (EA; 8 points)

You will need to complete a total of four Enrichment Activity (EA) credits to attain the full eight points (8%) for this class section. Each **EA** credit will be worth 2 points (2%) in this grading scheme for this class section (each ½ credit = 1 point or 1%).

Please see pages 8 for more details.

1 EA Credit = 2 Points (2%) for this class section.

Please do NOT email me the following (or variants of the following) questions:

1. “I missed class today. Did I miss anything important?”
2. “Can you send me the lecture notes that I missed?”

Answers to above questions will always have to be:

1. *uh ... yes, of course you did.*
2. No, sorry. See the A helpful suggestion section below.

A helpful suggestion

Get to know some of your fellow classmates. Pair up with at least one other student as a “**Lecture-Notes-Buddy.**” In the event you do miss a class, your Lecture-Notes-Buddy would allow you to copy their notes for that missed class.

On being late for classes

It is a mistake to think that missing the first few minutes of class is harmless. All things being equal, the worst x minutes that you could possibly miss in a lecture is often the **FIRST** x minutes. Those first few minutes of class are often where the context for all the remaining lecture material gets outlined. Your comprehension of lecture material will often be “challenged” when you miss the preceding material—even just a few minutes. If you do arrive late, please be courteous to your fellow classmates and quietly take the closest or least disruptive seat.

Our responsibilities:

Both the professor and student have responsibilities in the teaching / learning process. My responsibilities as an instructor include...

- providing an informative course
- being well organized
- being courteous and helpful with students
- returning graded materials promptly
- being fair and unbiased with grading (e.g., neither discriminating nor privileging any student over other students)

Your responsibilities as a student include...

- **attending classes** and being punctual--especially for exams!
- **paying attention**, taking notes, and contributing to class discussions
- seeking help with material if you are having difficulty (e.g., meeting with me)
- doing the assigned readings and studying the course material
- being courteous to your fellow students by not creating distractions during class, examples:
 - silence your phone
 - refrain from “chatting” during class
 - if you arrive late, take the first available seat, or if you plan on leaving early sit close to the exit door
- **In addition to silencing your phone, please stow your phone away during the class session** (minimize distractions).

Important note about Laptop Computers in class

FYI: Research indicates that students that write their notes by hand generally do better than those that use laptops in class. If you really feel the need to use a laptop in class, then please **ensure that you are utilizing it solely for taking notes** (e.g., don't be watching videos, playing games etc.) This matter is not solely about how these “extracurricular” computer activities distract you from the focal class material, it also concerns the potential distractions you'll create for those students around you.

A note about student dissatisfaction with grades:

An unfortunate reality of any course is that not all students will obtain the final grade they desire. As an instructor of the course, my responsibility is to ensure that evaluation procedures were fair. To a very large extent, this can be determined by how the class is performing overall. If your performance as a member of this class is substantially below the general class performance, then you cannot simply conclude that the evaluation procedures were unfair. Some careful thought must be given to what else might possibly be wrong, and how it might be changed.

To minimize any damage to your student records, **it is important that you consult with me very early once difficulty arises** (e.g., discuss this with me during an office hour.)

Remain vigilant about your progress in the course.

When students approach me late in the term claiming that they NEED a specified grade, what can I (the instructor) do for them? the answer will be disappointing. You as a student are in control and responsible for your own grade. As an instructor, I must be fair and unbiased with the grading procedures, which includes sticking to the same procedures that applied to the entire class. Deviations on my part from the outlined procedures for any single student amounts to cheating those students who were evaluated under the original scheme.

Topics covered:

The following is a list of the topics that will be covered in this course. Although no dates are indicated below, we will progress through the topics in the order listed. **Topics are not of equal length** (i.e., the duration of time we devote to them.) **Please note that Topic # ≠ Chapter #.** Throughout the course I will often refer to the topic number as indicated below, so please don't confuse topic number with chapter number.

Topic #	Topic Title	Assigned Readings†
1	Introduction & History of Psychology	Chapter 1: Sections 1.0 - 1.2
2	Research Methods in Psychology	Chapter 1: Sections 1.3 - 1.4 & Appendix A (Basic Statistics)
3	The Biology of Mind and Behavior	Chapter 2: Sections 2.0 - 2.4
4	Sensation & Perception	Chapter 3
5	Learning	Chapter 4
6	Memory	Chapter 5
7	Language & Thinking††	Chapter 6: Sections 6.0 – 6.3
8	Intelligence & Personality: Individual Differences	Chapter 6: Section 6.4 Chapter 8: TBA
9	Social Psychology & Emotion	Chapter 13: Sections 13.0 – 13.3 Chapter 7: Sections 7.0 - 7.1
10	Development, Disorders & Treatment	Chapter 9: Section 9.2 Chapter 11: TBA Chapter 12: TBA

† The above listed readings should **NOT** be viewed as the official assigned readings that you are responsible for and is presented here only as a useful guide for you. Some of the above may be scaled back, removed and/or **additional readings may be added**. These modifications will always be announced.

†† While there will always be some material presented in lecture that you won't find in the assigned textbook readings, the Topic 7 (Chapter 6) lecture presentations will consist of more material unique to lecture presentations than usual.

Exam and other important dates:

Last day 100% refund

August 29 (5:00 pm)

Midterm 1

Sept 18

Last day 75% refund

Sept 19 (5:00 pm)

Midterm 2

Oct 16

Fall Break

No class on Tuesday October 21

Drop deadline with a grade of "W"

November 7 (5:00 pm)

Midterm 3

Nov 13

Enrichment Activities Deadline

December 5 (5:00 pm)

Final Exam

**Thursday Dec 11
10 am**

Important:

Your continuation in this course indicates **your acceptance** of all the above scheduling and procedural details along with the acceptance that some modifications may have to be made in the event of extenuating circumstances.

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> and Questions? Email psychfriends@gvsu.edu

APPENDIX #1:

Enrichment Activities: Learning about Psychological Research

In the Enrichment Activities (EA) portion of the course, students will be given the opportunity to experience psychological research first-hand. Two kinds of enrichment activities are available:

- *Option 1* involves being a participant in research studies conducted by Psychology Department faculty and students.
- *Option 2* involves completing activities that will introduce you to a variety of research techniques used in psychological research.

Students must earn **four** EA credits for this requirement. The credit you earn by completing each EA is a function of the amount of time it takes to complete it. For example, by participating in a brief online study (30 minutes or fewer) you would earn ½ of an EA credit whereas an EA that takes one hour to complete would earn 1 credit. Both types of Enrichment Activities will be available in face to face and online formats. You may complete the EA requirement using any combination of EA types, however, **at least two full credits of EAs must be completed in person.**

Enrichment activities are scheduled and offered through the Sona Study Scheduling System. You will receive an email from Study Scheduling System at the beginning of the semester containing your User ID and an initial password, and a link to the Sona system website at <https://gvsu.sona-systems.com>. If you do not receive an email regarding your account by end of day on Wednesday, September 3rd, please check your spam folder. Should the email still not appear, please contact the Lab Manager, Hannah Todd, at psychlab@gvsu.edu.

SONA Systems maintains a strict policy protecting your privacy and confidentiality. This policy is available for review in the Psychology Office. Additional details regarding the enrichment activities and an FAQ are available online at <https://www.gvsu.edu/psychology/psy-101-participation-in-research-sona-435.htm>

Screening Instrument: Once you receive your User ID and password, you will be able to immediately earn .5 credits by completing an online prescreening questionnaire. This is a short questionnaire used by some researchers to determine your participation eligibility for studies carried out throughout the semester. You must be 18 or older to complete the prescreen survey. You are not required to complete it, but doing so increases the number of studies you will be able to choose from during the semester. You can complete the prescreen at any time from the My Profile tab on the blue bar at the top of the page, however, completing it early (within the first two weeks of class) ensures that you will have access to the widest variety of EA activities within the Sona System.

Enrichment Activity Deadline

The last day to complete your EA requirement is **Friday, December 5th @ 5:00pm.**

If you have questions regarding any aspect of the Enrichment Activities, please contact the Lab Manager, Hannah Todd, who can be reached in the Psychology Department Office (2224 Au Sable Hall, 616-331-2427) or by sending an email to psychlab@gvsu.edu.