

# **PSY 311(02) - Controversial Issues in Psychology**

**Tuesday/Thursday 1:00 – 2:15 AuSable Hall 1302**

**Winter 2025**

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Please put “*Psych 311-02*” in the subject line of your email. I will do my best to respond to emails within 48 hours if they are received Monday-Friday. Send me a gentle reminder if you didn’t receive a reply after two days. See me during office hours if you have any questions/concerns that may require a lengthy response.

\*This syllabus is subject to change. Changes (if any) will be announced in class or posted on Blackboard. Students are responsible for keeping informed of any such notices.

**Office hours in person or on Zoom:** Tu/Th from 10:00am to 11:15am via Zoom or in-person. You must make an appointment at <https://friedlmm.youcanbook.me/>. After booking an appointment, come to my office for in-person meeting or click here to access the **Zoom Office Hours link:**

<https://gvsu-edu.zoom.us/j/9308966369?pwd=NVVZ2Z2tBbTR3a1RhZDJqakhmWVlYZz09>

Meeting ID: 930 896 6369

Passcode: 6CYPAS

## **Email guidelines:**

- Remember to identify the course & section# and possibly the name of the assignment or class session if necessary.
- A formal salutation, as well as informational subject line is a requirement.
- If you do not hear back from me within 48 hours, email me again. See me during office hours if you have any questions/concerns that may require a lengthy response.
- Avoid informal phrases or language that is best used in friendships or social relationships.
- Utilize spell check and proofread your email prior to pressing send.

## **Course Description:**

This course aims to introduce you to a number of issues and controversies in psychology; it is also designed to help improve students’ critical thinking on a broader level. When confronted with contradictory information, differing opinions and points of view, it is necessary to have and work on improving your ability to comprehend and evaluate available sources and material. The use of such “critical thinking skills” can have a profound impact upon one’s life in terms of academic, professional, and personal success.

**SWS Course:** This course is designated SWS. Completion of WRT 150 with a grade of C or better (not C-) is a prerequisite. SWS credit will not be given to a student who completes this course before completing the prerequisite. SWS courses adhere to certain guidelines. Students turn in a total of at least 3000 words of writing. Part of that total may be essay exams, but a substantial amount of it is made up of essays, reports, or research papers. The instructor works with the students on revising drafts of papers, rather than simply grading the finished piece of writing. At least four hours of class time will be devoted to writing instruction. At least one third of the final grade in the course is based on the writing assignments. Students must complete the course with a grade of "C" or better in order to receive SWS credit. Students may receive SWS credit for taking the course as Credit/No Credit provided the student passes the course with a "Credit" grade.

### **Main Course Objectives:**

- 1) To provide you with thinking skills that will enable you to analyze and evaluate complex issues in psychology.
- 2) To help you to improve your ability to express arguments in oral and written format.
- 3) To encourage you to learn how to acknowledge different viewpoints and become more tolerant of diversity.

### **Class Format:**

Classes will be a mixture of discussion, group debates, and some lecture if needed. **You will be expected to read and write extensively.** Only important points from the readings may be emphasized in lecture format. The readings for this class are often difficult and will require you to read the material twice or three times. Make sure you will allocate the necessary time for this! At many times, discussion will center on sensitive and complicated issues, which may involve deeply held beliefs and opinions. Feel free to disagree with and challenge each other's opinions and statements but do so in a respectful way that focuses on the issues, not the individuals.

### **Materials for class:**

No textbooks are required. The reading material will be available in pdf or word files that can be downloaded from Blackboard.

### **Course Outcome Measures:**

Your final grade will be based on the total number of points that you receive on two essay exams (one midterm and one final), one major paper, weekly contributions to BB discussion board, a number of in-class debates, and attendance + participation points.

Exams: Each exam consists of essay questions drawn **from lectures, readings, discussions, and videos.**

Paper (more detailed instructions will be provided in class and on BB): this will be on a topic from a list provided by the instructor. You will be graded on the quality of your writing as well as the content of your arguments and the selected texts. We will spend a significant amount of class time covering content and format of the paper. You will be asked to submit a rough draft worth several points.

A paper is penalized five percentage point for every day it is late (papers submitted after 11:59PM of the due date are already considered late papers). **No late work will be accepted one week after its due date!**

Questions/Observations Submission via BB Discussion Board: In order to facilitate our discussions, you are expected to write and submit on Bb three questions about the readings every time a set of readings has been assigned for that day/week. The questions you compose should both (a) demonstrate that you have thought about the readings, and (b) be designed to stimulate potentially interesting discussion of the topics at hand. Generally, your questions will have to be submitted every Monday before 12pm (unless mentioned otherwise) and will contribute to your participation points. To receive full credit, you need to respond to contributions made by at least one other student. Depending on the quality of your contribution, you may receive 0, 1, 2 or 3 points (**11 topics X 3 = 33 points max.**).

Attendance and Participation. Your attendance of this course will be recorded. You are allowed to miss two class meetings for any reason without penalty; after that, however, each unexcused absence will deduct from your attendance score. Participation points: students can earn one point per topic by showing extra critical thinking initiative, finding information, correcting an argument or generally going above and beyond in terms of class participation or discussion of *relevant* material.

## Grading Scale

			<b>Final Grade</b>	
	<b>Points</b>	<b>Percentage</b>	A	94 - 100%
Midterm Exam	50		A-	90 – 93%
Final Exam	50		B+	87- 89%
Paper	65		B	84- 86%
Questions Submissions (11 X 3)	33		B-	80 – 83%
Debates 4X5	20		C+	77 – 79%
<b>Total</b>			C	74- 76%
			C-	70 – 73%
			D+	67- 69%
			D	60 - 66%
			F	59% and lower

\*\* This is a tentative syllabus, including the grading scale

**Integrity of Scholarship and Grades:** All academic work will be done by the student to whom it was assigned. Anyone caught cheating (e.g., procuring, providing or accepting any materials which contain questions or answers to any exam or assignment, submitting work that has been previously graded) or plagiarizing (taking ideas or material from another source for either written or oral presentation without acknowledging the original source) will be dropped from the course, given an F, and referred to the University for further action. Cheating is a serious violation of academic integrity. For more information on academic honesty please see the GVSU student code <http://www.gvsu.edu/studentcode/section-4-academic-integrity-of-grades-and-scholarship-73.htm> This course is subject to the GVSU policies listed at <http://www.gvsu.edu/coursepolicies/>.

Essential Guidelines for SWS courses:

[Writing with Artificial Intelligence - Supplemental Writing Skills - Grand Valley State University](#) (MUST follow)

<https://www.aiforeducation.io/ai-resources/student-guide-ai-use>

<https://apastyle.apa.org/blog/how-to-cite-chatgpt>

### **Additional Thoughts:**

As you cover the readings for class, share your thoughts with others during class, complete your assignments, I urge you to pay attention to how you've come to hold the beliefs that you have. What sources of knowledge do you use to support your beliefs? How do you respond to evidence or arguments that question a belief that you hold? What do you do when you recognize contradictions among some of your beliefs? When do you find that it makes sense to change a belief? These are all important questions to consider...

### **Writing center:**

The Fred Meijer Center for Writing provides writing assistance to all GVSU students, on any type of project and at any stage of the process. The Writing Center employs both undergraduate and graduate writing consultants from a variety of majors and disciplines. Consultants are trained to help writers brainstorm, organize, and/or develop their ideas; and they can help writers edit their own work and document sources correctly. The Center's services are free and students can work with an idea or assignment prompt all the way through drafting and finalizing their paper.

Writing Center services are available in-person and online during all hours: (Mon-Thurs 9 a.m.-11 p.m., Friday 9 a.m.-3 p.m., Sunday 2 p.m.- 11 p.m.). Students can schedule appointments in advance via [Book It](#) or drop-in (first-come/first-serve) at any service location or virtually. Hours vary by location so please check [Book It](#) and our program website for up-to-date information - [gvsu.edu/wc](http://gvsu.edu/wc).

	Topic	Readings
Week 1 Jan 7	Tu: Syllabus discussion Th: no class	
Week 2 Jan 14 and 16	Do adults repress childhood sexual abuse? Is the concept of repressed and recovered memories valid? Video “Divided Memories” Q & A: topics and guidelines for the paper	Kluft & Loftus 104-122; Tavis, APA link
Week 3 Jan 21 and 23	Debate #1 Effective & beneficial parental discipline methods (spanking, time-out, etc.)	Gershoff et al., 2010; Gershoff, 2013; + websites (will add more)
Week 4 Jan 28 and 30	How to raise children with a “growth mindset”: does praising help	Berlin et al., Henderlong & Lepper 774–795, Kohn 24-30, Dweck, 2015
Week 5 Feb 4 and 6	Debate #2 Are fathers necessary?	NY Times Room for Debate, Cabrera et al. (2000), Sarkadi et al. (2007), Biblarz & Stacey (2001)
Week 6 Feb 11 and 13	Is Social Media harmful to children and adolescents? First Draft due Feb 14	Cataldo et al., 2021 MORE
Week 7 Feb 18 and 20	Midterm exam: February 18 February 20: In-class discussion of First Draft	
Week 8 Feb 25 and 27	AI: ethical concerns, benefits and drawbacks	Add lit
Week 9 March 4 and 6	Spring Break	
Week 10 March 11&13	Nature/Nurture: Human Violence	Caspi et al., 2002; Fergusson et al., 2011; Raine et al., 2010; Documentary “Mind of a rampage killer
Week 11 March 18 &20	Debate#3: Should adolescents who commit serious offenses be tried and convicted as adults?	Steinberg, 2009; Fischer et al.; Steinberg’s response, + Documentary, When kids get life
Week 12 March 25&27	Nature/Nurture on Gender March 27: In-class discussion of Paper Part II	add lit
Week 13 April 1 & 3	<i>The Coddling of the American Mind (Overparenting)</i> Final Draft due April 6	Greg Lukianoff & Jonathan Haidt
Week 14 April 8 and 10	Debate#4: <i>The Coddling of the American Mind (Mental Health)</i>	Greg Lukianoff & Jonathan Haidt
Week 15 April 15 and 17	Suggestions for critical thinking	add

Final Exam: Tuesday, April 22, 12:00 pm-1:50 pm