

Georgetown University General Psychology Syllabus, Summer Session 1 2022
Mon, Tu, Wed, Th, 1:15-3:10 p.m. Location: White-Gravenor 211

I. Instructor Information

Professor Brett Pelham

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Office Hours: every day immediately after class

Note: The best way to reach me **quickly** is to **text** me on my cell. If you email me and I don't respond quickly, text me, at any time. **When texting, please identify yourself by name and course.** (I am teaching two different courses at different schools in summer session 2.)

II. General Course Information

Readings & Materials

I am the first author of *Introductory Psychology in Modules Understanding Our Heads, Hearts, and Hands* (published by Routledge Publishing, 2021). This book should be available at the GU bookstore. I will also post old drafts of modules 1 and 2 of the text on Canvas to give you time to get the textbook. Finally, because I may someday receive a small amount of royalties on your text, and because I do not wish to make money on my own students, I will donate the small amount of likely royalties I'll receive on the book to a charity we jointly choose in class.

Course Overview and Learning Goals

The GU course catalog describes general psychology by saying that: "This introductory course surveys the field and acquaints the student with the major areas of psychology, including perception, memory, cognition, neuroscience, learning, motivation, emotion, personality, social behavior, development, and psychopathology." Let me add that most problems humanity faces today – from obesity to ethnic cleansing – are highly **psychological**. I hope this course will teach you ways in which psychology can help us tackle real problems we all face every day.

Course Structure

The course will include lectures, class discussions, small group activities, film and video clips, readings, and exams.

Course Outcomes

Students who complete this course will develop and be able to apply their knowledge of:

- 1) principles of learning, including classical & operant conditioning and social learning theory.
- 2) theories of the biological transmission of information. This includes both the function of the nervous system (e.g., neuronal communication. action potentials) and genetic transmission of traits and behavioral tendencies from parents to offspring.
- 3) principles of sound research design. This includes the scientific method, differences between research methods, independent and dependent variables, statistical significance, and rules for the generalization of empirical results to populations.
- 4) an understanding of the powerful effects of culture and social forces (such as stereotypes, social norms, and power hierarchies) on human thought, feeling, and behavior.

Course Grading Scale A = 90.00 & above, B = 80-89.99, C = 70-79.99, D = 55-69.99, F = 54.99 and below.

Your final course grade will be based on your five highest of six scores: (a) five exams and (b) a class participation score. I automatically drop the **lowest** of your six grades, weighing each score equally. I believe that anyone who works hard can earn an A in this class. This is because (a) I go to some trouble to let you know exactly what to study, (b) class participation is worth 110 points rather than 100 points, and (c) I often assign a few extra credit opportunities over the course of the semester. Students who do well on the first four exams and have a good class participation score often find that they do not need to take the fifth exam (a cumulative final). Because I automatically drop your lowest grade, I do not need any documentation if you miss a single exam. However, I'd like to know about it if an ongoing challenge makes it hard for you to be in class on time or take any one exam.

I offer my drop rule because life is full of uncertainty. No one has control over everything. On the other hand, you do have some control over ***paying attention in class when you are here***. This means that I **hold the bar very high when it comes to grading class participation**. Here are a few examples of how that is so.

If you're not in your seat and listening when my very accurate watch tells me that it's time to *begin* a lecture, you're late. Leaving class and returning is disruptive and unacceptable. Having said that, if you are feeling sick or you are dying to go to the restroom, you should obviously do that. Having said *that*, unless you have a chronic medical problem, I will assume that having to get up *often* from your seat to leave class is a sign of poor planning – especially given that we will have two 10-minute breaks in every class. I take roll in almost every class. Thus, if you arrive late, and you do not hear me say that you were here, it is your job to tell me you arrived late during a break (or when class is done) – so I can update attendance. If you leave class early, I'll score you as being late that day. I give partial credit for partial attendance. If you have a medical condition or disability that makes it impractical for you to sit through a full class, speak with me about it, and I will work with you to accommodate your medical needs.

For reasons I will explain in class, I have long had a zero-screen-use policy. This includes smart phones, tablets, personal computers, Apple watches, electric shavers, etc. This has always been a hard rule to enforce, and it has led many students to try to monitor and use their phones secretly. Many students have failed to realize that I saw them using their phones and have been surprised and unhappy to receive a poor class participation grade for so doing. Further, when a student repeatedly used his or her phone in class, this has been a burden to me to remind the student frequently to put away a phone or even to ask the student to leave class. In light of all these problems, my new (experimental) policy is that I will ***not*** explicitly grade people on smartphone use. Instead, class participation grades will be based on four objective things (A-D) and one subjective thing (E):

- A) **Class Attendance:** How many lectures did you attend?
- B) **Punctuality:** How often were you on time (meaning in your seat and ready to go when a lecture began)?
- C) **Quizzes:** How did you perform on the group or individual short quizzes that I gave during or after some of the lectures?
- D) **Name tag:** Is your name tag out on your desk? And is it clearly printed and visible to me?
- E) **Class Engagement:** Were you attentive and focused on learning, especially during group activities?

For pragmatic reasons, I may not always create grades on all of these things. For example, my morning class is in Germantown, MD. If I get stuck in traffic, and I'm barely on time for class, I may skip taking roll that day. Likewise, not all lectures will be followed by – or include – short quizzes. Of course, the best way to guarantee doing well in all of these five areas is to assume that I always assess everything. That means never or rarely being late, always putting out your name tag, etc.

III. Course Requirements

Exams

There will be four regular exams and a cumulative final. Each of these five exams will include about 40-50 questions. Most questions will be **multiple-choice** questions, but I reserve the right to experiment with other formats such as fill-in-the-blank, matching, or short essays. I may make it a point to include some questions that come directly from the practice quizzes in your text (or variations on these questions). In the past, my students have done more poorly on questions that come from the text than from questions that come from lecture. This may be less true now that I am the author of your text – because the book and class lecture will overlap a great deal. That being said there are some modules in the text on which I do not lecture at all – and there is still some material I only present during lecture. For example, I always give one or two lectures on stereotypes, but I do not include a complete module on stereotypes in the text.

Posted Lectures and Study Guides

Both my own casual observations and empirical research shows that students like it when professors post their Powerpoint lectures on-line. However, many instructors feel that posting lecture notes on line encourages students to skip class, to fail to take good notes in class, or to be otherwise disengaged in class. The studies that have examined this issue empirically have yielded mixed results. With this in mind, I am going to do my own study. I will post my Powerpoint lecture notes for two and only two of the four sections of this course – and see if there is any effect of note posting (good or bad) on student attendance and exam performance. To be more specific, I will post Powerpoint lecture notes for sections 2 and 4 of the course, but not for sections 1 and 3. Incidentally, to be sure that any effects I observe are not merely content effects, I will reverse the procedure the next time I teach this class – so that students have posted notes for sections 1 and 3 but ***not*** for sections 2 and 4.

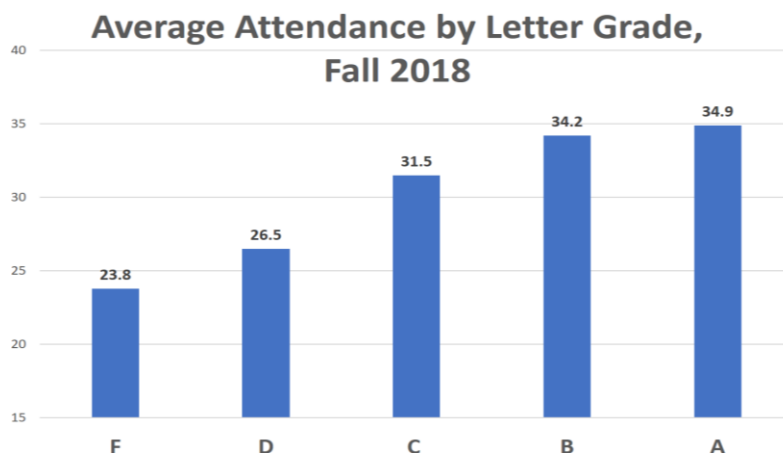
Incidentally, it has been my past policy to post textbook study guides. However, now that we are using my textbook, your textbook **study guide** is simply every term, study, or theory that is in **bold font** in the text. In fact, if I test you on something from the book that is ***not*** in bold font in the text, and you bring this to my attention, I will give everyone in class credit for the question I asked by mistake. On the other hand, anything covered in lecture is fair game on the test. I hope it makes sense that if something is covered in lecture ***and*** in the text as well, this means I consider it especially important.

Make-Up Exams

Because I drop your lowest score in this class, I do not normally give make up exams. If you miss one exam, I'll simply drop that score. If you miss two exams, I'll consider a make-up exam for the second missed exam only if you can document an emergency that caused you to miss this second exam. Make-up exams are usually papers or essay exams (that cover the same material as the original exams).

A Final Bit of Advice about This Class

In my classes, even more than in most others, attendance is essential to student success. Here are some data from the three sections of General Psych I taught in the fall of 2018. I've seen this same pattern every time I have looked closely at my grades. If you hope to earn an A or a B in this class, it will be extremely hard for you to do so without attending class regularly.



This chart means for example, that my A students attended an average of 34.9 of the 36 lectures in which I took roll. In contrast, my C students attended only 31.5 of these 36 lectures.

Title IX Syllabus Statement (endorsed by Georgetown Faculty Senate)

Georgetown University and its faculty are committed to supporting survivors and those impacted by sexual misconduct, which includes sexual assault, sexual harassment, relationship violence, and stalking. Georgetown requires faculty members, unless otherwise designated as confidential, to report all disclosures of sexual misconduct to the University Title IX Coordinator or a Deputy Title IX Coordinator. If you disclose an incident of sexual misconduct to a professor in or outside of the classroom (with the exception of disclosures in papers), that faculty member must report the incident to the Title IX Coordinator, or Deputy Title IX Coordinator. The coordinator will, in turn, reach out to the student to provide support, resources, and the option to meet. [Please note that the student is not required to meet with the Title IX coordinator.]. More information about reporting options and resources can be found on the Sexual Misconduct Website: <https://sexualassault.georgetown.edu/resourcecenter>.

If you would prefer to speak to someone confidentially, Georgetown has a number of fully confidential professional resources that can provide support and assistance. These resources include:

Health Education Services for Sexual Assault Response and Prevention: confidential email sarp@georgetown.edu

Counseling and Psychiatric Services (CAPS): 202.687.6985 or after hours, call (833) 960-3006 to reach Fonemed, a telehealth service; individuals may ask for the on-call CAPS clinician

More information about reporting options and resources can be found on the [Sexual Misconduct Website](#).

(Above statement and TIX faculty resources found at: <https://sexualassault.georgetown.edu/get-help/guidance-for-faculty-and-staff-on-how-to-support-students/>)

Title IX Pregnancy Modifications and Adjustments

Georgetown University is committed to creating an accessible and inclusive environment for pregnant students. At any point throughout their pregnancy students may request adjustments/modifications based on general pregnancy needs or accommodations based on a pregnancy-related complication or medical need. Students may also request accommodations following labor and delivery based on a complication or medical need.

SCS students must complete the [Pregnancy Adjustment Request Form \(https://titleix.georgetown.edu/title-ix-pregnancy/student-pregnancy/\)](https://titleix.georgetown.edu/title-ix-pregnancy/student-pregnancy/) and submit it to the SCS Deputy Title IX Coordinator at titleixscs@georgetown.edu. Upon receiving the completed form, the Deputy Title IX Coordinator will schedule a meeting with the student to discuss the requested adjustments and implementation process. More information about pregnancy modifications can be found on the [Title IX at Georgetown University Website](#).

Tentative Class Schedule

Week	Date	Topic	Modules
1	June 6-9	History of Psych, Methods, the Brain, Genetics, etc.	1-8, but must choose 7, 8, or both 7 and 8
2	June 13-16	Exam 1 (Modules 1-8; Tue. June 14) , Sensation & Perception, Learning, Motivation, Emotion, Memory	9-17
3	June 20-23	Consciousness, Exam 2 (Modules 9-17; Tues. July 21) Thinking Lightly (Heuristics), IQ, IQ Testing, IQ Myths and Controversies, Human Development,	18-26, but must choose 21, 22, or both
4	June 27-30	Social Psychology, Exam 3 (Modules 18-25; Wed. June 29) , Stereotypes, Health Psychology, Clinical Disorders	27-36
5	July 4-7	Exam 4 (Modules 26-36; Wed. July 6) , Treating Clinical Disorders, The New Asylums, Applied Psychology, Exam 5 (Cumulative Final Exam; July 7)	27-36, but skip any one of modules 27-31 and choose 35 or 36

Note. I will score the exam almost immediately on July 6. Thus, you'll know on that day if you need to take the final exam on Thursday July 7.