

REALITY IS NOT WHAT YOU THINK

PSY 100 General Psychology

Time: MWF 9:00–9:50 (Section 001)
Location: BH 201

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Course Overview

Why do we do what we do, feel what we feel, think what we think? What will make us happy? Are we rational? Does our environment determine our behavior? Are we wired to acquire language? This course is designed to provide students with a broad introduction to the field of psychological science and its areas of specialization. We will survey some of the major psychological theories and findings in areas such as sensation and perception, learning and memory, language, and development.

Outcomes

By the end of this course, you will be able to

1. Identify and describe psychological concepts, principles, and theories
2. Discuss how psychological concepts and principles apply to everyday actions and events
3. Describe what it is like to be a participant in psychological research
4. Judge the adequacy with which conclusions are supported by data

Readings

Chambers, K. E. (Curator). (2016). [Reality is not what you think](#). This is an online textbook that is provided at no cost to you by the Diener Education Fund through the Noba Project. Please create an account *using your Gustavus email address* (ending in @gustavus.edu) at <http://nobaproject.com>.

Evidence-Based Teaching

As a scientist, I like to make decisions and choices based on the best evidence currently available—not only in my research but also in my teaching, so when I design my courses, I incorporate assignments, activities, and methods that help students learn and benefit the most from a class. In case you are interested in knowing more about why we are doing certain activities, throughout the syllabus I have added footnotes that include references to journal articles that helped shape this particular course.

Schedule

In [our course schedule](#), I provide an overview of the main topics that we will be covering during the semester, information about the reading assignment for each class period, and the presentation slides from previous semesters¹. The schedule also gives you the major due dates for the class assignments. If you are ever wondering what’s going on, that’s the place to go. Pro tip: Bookmark it. You can also get to it by using the “schedule” link on my personal webpage (gustavus.edu/go/kyle).

Course Components

Your progress in the course will be evaluated in different ways, each designed to assess different aspects of your progress. Below’s an overview.

Online Cumulative Exams with the Option to Retake

(450 points = 4 exams: 1st 50 points, 2nd 100 points, 3rd 100 points, 4th 200 points)²

When one begins to study any discipline, there is a lexicon and a set of basic concepts that must be committed to memory before it is possible to read and think further about the questions being examined. In order to assess your mastery of these, there will be four exams, each containing multiple-choice questions. During lectures, I will cover material discussed in your textbook as well as material that your textbook doesn’t mention or only mentions in passing. When studying for exams, you should review both your notes from the textbook as well as your notes from my lectures. In addition, during the class period prior to each exam, we will have a practice exam quiz show.³ The exam will be taken on Moodle⁴ by yourself without consulting with other class members; however, you

¹ Marsh, E. J., & Sink, H. E. (2010). Access to handouts of presentation slides during lecture: Consequences for learning. *Applied Cognitive Psychology*, 24(5), 691–706. doi:10.1002/acp.1579

² Roediger, H. L. I., & Butler, A. C. (2011). The critical role of retrieval practice in long-term retention. *Trends in Cognitive Sciences*, 15(1), 20–27. doi:10.1016/j.tics.2010.09.003

³ Gibson, B. (1991). Research methods jeopardy: A tool for involving students and organizing the study session. *Teaching of Psychology*, 18(3), 176–177. doi:10.1207/s15328023top1803_13

⁴ If you would rather not take the exam online (for any reason), I would be happy to provide you with a paper exam. Please let me know a week before the exam that you want to take a paper version, and I will make the arrangements.

can refer to your textbook or notes as needed during the exam.

The exam will be available from the 8am on the day of the exam to the end of the same day (midnight). You may begin the exam anytime during that period (though you must allow yourself time to finish before midnight). Once you start the exam, you will have 50 minutes to complete it (120 minutes for the final exam), and you will not be able to "pause" the clock, so please be comfortable and prepared before choosing to begin.

Traditionally, exams are administered on a certain day, and you receive a grade based on how many questions you answered correctly *on that particular day*, but what I value the most is how much you learn throughout the semester (and beyond). Therefore, you can retake the first 3 (non-final) exams multiple times. This is how it'll work. You must take an exam for the first time during the day that the exam is scheduled. After completing that attempt, you will be shown what questions you answered incorrectly. Take some time to review the material related to those questions, come talk to me about those topics, and then study some more. After **one week** has passed and when you feel that you're ready, take the exam again. After the first retake, you can continue to retake an exam **every 2 weeks** until **Wednesday, May 23rd, 2018**. **Your final score for an exam will be the average score across all of the attempts you completed for that particular exam.** My hope is that this approach will reduce anxiety that you might feel on exam days,⁵ encourage a growth mindset⁶, and improve your memory for the course material.

Note: The questions you receive on an exam are a random subset from a larger bank of questions; therefore, each time you take the exam, you may not always get the same questions.

Quizzes ⁷ (200 points = 10 quizzes each worth 20 points)

The textbook provides a nice overview of the topics that we will be discussing in class. During lectures and our class activities, I want everyone to be on the same page. To this end, you should complete online quizzes before coming to class. The questions are intended to assess your basic understanding of the general concepts from the reading and help everyone stay caught up from week to week. **Quizzes will be taken on Moodle. You will have an opportunity to take the quiz twice and will receive the higher of the two scores.** In order to learn the most, the best strategy is to first do the reading and then take the quiz without using your textbook or notes. This allows you an opportunity to recall the information unaided and will highlight areas that you might want to go back and review before taking the quiz a 2nd time.

Note: The questions you receive on a quiz are a random subset from a larger bank of questions; therefore, each time you take the quiz, you may not always get the same questions.

⁵ See overview at <https://www.brainpickings.org/2014/01/29/carol-dweck-mindset/>

⁶ Schaack, A. V., Schweighofer, N., & Lewis, A. S. (2015). A new method to maximize the effectiveness and efficiency of learn, memory, and performance. Retrieved from https://cerego.com/pdf/Cerego_Whitepaper.pdf

⁷ Johnson, B. C., & Kiviniemi, M. T. (2009). The effect of online chapter quizzes on exam performance in an undergraduate social psychology course. *Teaching of Psychology, 36*(1), 33–37. doi:10.1080/00986280802528972

Forum Posts (200 points = 4 each worth 50 points) ⁸

I hope that you will discover that psychological research is relevant to your everyday life. To facilitate this discovery, I would like you to find examples of what we are discussing in class in the real world. For each section of the course, you will write a forum post that draws a connection between course material and real-world examples. At the end of the syllabus, you will find more information about post content, including an example post.

Participation in Experiments (150 points = 3 experiences each worth 50 points) ⁹

As another way of introducing you to psychological research methods and topics, you will participate in research being conducted by Gustavus faculty members and psychology majors. You will have a variety of opportunities available throughout the semester from which to choose and will be expected to sign up for **3** different experiments outside of class. If you who do not wish to participate in research, you may instead read **3** empirical research articles published in *Current Directions of Psychological Science* and complete a brief written assignment for each of these **3** articles. Specific written guidelines both for experiment participation and the alternative assignment are included at the end of the syllabus.

Reminders

You've got a lot of classes and other activities going on each day. It's easy to forget about an assignment or quiz. To help out, I use a service that will provide you with due date reminders (e.g., push notifications, text messages, or emails--you choose) for exams, quizzes, and forum posts. The service is free and easy to use on your phone. [Please signup during the first week of class.](#)

Grading

To determine your final letter grades, I will calculate the percentage of total points you acquired from the course components and use that percentage to look up your letter grade in the chart below.

Assignment	Points
Examinations	450
Quizzes	200
Forum Posts	200
Experiment Participation	150
Total	1000

⁸ Rider, E. A. (1992). Understanding and applying psychology through use of news clippings. *Teaching of Psychology*, 19(3), 161–163. doi:10.1207/s15328023top1903_8

⁹ Rosell, M. C., Beck, D. M., Luther, K. E., Goedert, K. M., Shore, W. J., & Anderson, D. D. (2005). The Pedagogical Value of Experimental Participation Paired with Course Content. *Teaching of Psychology*, 32(2), 95–99. doi:10.1207/s15328023top3202_3

Letter grade chart

A 100-93%	A- 92-90%	B+ 89-87%	B 86-83%	B- 82-80%		
C+ 79-77%	C 76-73%	C- 72-70%	D+ 69-67%	D 66-63%	D- 62-60%	F <60%

For example, Janice received 40, 80, 80, and 160 points on her four exams (360 points total), received full credit for the quizzes (200 points), received 180 points on her forum posts, and completed the experiment participation requirement (150 points). So, for the semester she earned 890 points out of a possible 1000 points, which is 89% and a B+. Throughout the semester, you should be able to figure out your current grade using a similar process. If you have any questions about your grade, I would be happy to meet with you and discuss them.

Note: There is an opportunity for **extra credit** in this course (see “GUIDELINES FOR PARTICIPATING IN RESEARCH” below). If Janice earned 9 extra credit points during the semester, she would have received 899 out of 1000 points, which is 90% and an A-.

Classroom Expectations & Resources

Late assignments

Given that you know about all the assignments and their due dates well in advance, you should hand them in on time. In fairness to all students, it is important that you complete assignments by the deadlines contained on the course schedule (gustavus.edu/go/kyle). If you feel that you have a circumstance warranting an extension, please come talk to me as soon as possible.

Classroom atmosphere & support

I want everyone to enjoy this course and to learn a lot. In order to accomplish this, we need to foster an inclusive and supportive classroom with integrity. There are many policies and services on campus that will help us work toward this end and those can be viewed at <http://bit.ly/gustavusclassroom>. I'd be happy to talk with you in more detail about any of these.

More Information

Forum Posts¹⁰

One of my goals for this course is to encourage you to see connections between the materials we discuss in class and things you observe/read/experience outside of class. To help achieve this goal, you will submit **4** forum posts. Your entries should address course reading or discussion in the 2 to 3 weeks prior to their due date (or since your last forum post was due). They may also seek to make connections between the recent class material and earlier class material. Some

¹⁰ Thanks to [Kathryn C. Oleson at Reed College](#) for this assignment idea.

ideas of topics to write about include...

- **Media watch** – Do you see examples of what you have learned in class appear in the media? Analyze interesting examples from the media (Netflix, websites, books, comic strips, newspapers, blogs, Tumblr, BuzzFeed, etc.). For example, how does psychology explain a character's behavior or reactions, or how do advertisements use psychology to sell a product or service?
- **Personal application** – How do you see psychology play out in your own life (friendships, roommate situations, class dynamics, etc.), or in the world at large? Use a specific example to illustrate this. Does knowing more about psychology change the way you interact with people or interpret situations?
- **Connections with other classes** – Have you learned things in other classes that relate to the material in this class? What can psychology learn, and how could particular theories and experiments be improved, by integrating approaches from other disciplines?
- **Your choice** – Feel free to come up with another creative way of making connections.

Regardless of what you choose to discuss in your post, **your post should (1) clearly describe the outside material you identified, (2) clearly demonstrate an understanding of the relevant course content, and (3) clearly discuss the relationship between the two.** If all three parts are present, you will receive full credit.

Example Post

Below is an example of a post that would receive full credit. In the first paragraph, the author has summarized the outside material satisfying point #1. In the second paragraph, the author has demonstrated that they understand correlations and the third variable problem (satisfying #2). In addition, they have shown how those issues are important in the news article (satisfying #3).

Recently, I read an article in the Mankato Free Press (http://www.mankato-freepress.com/archivesearch/local_story_220235338.html) arguing that if parents and children had family meals together, children would have fewer behavioral problems including less substance abuse. They based this conclusion on research demonstrating a positive correlation between having family meals and good behavior.

However, as we learned in class, correlation is NOT causation, and we need to consider possible third variables. In this case, maybe parenting style influences both family meals and child behavior. Parents who are more attentive are more likely to have family meals and parents who are more attentive are also more likely to have children who don't get into trouble, so family meals has nothing to do with the good behavior—it's the parenting style that matters. If the researchers actually want to argue that family meals cause good behavior, they would need to randomly assign families to either an eat-together or eat-apart group, and observe the children's future behavior. What do you all think? Are there other third variables that might be coming into play here?

Guidelines for Participating in Research

All Gustavus General Psychology students are required to participate in research experiences carried out by Gustavus Psychology faculty members and students. Students are expected to accumulate **3** credits of research experience (note that online surveys are valued at .5 whereas “live” experiences carry at least 1 credit). You will have a variety of research studies throughout the semester from which to choose and will be expected to complete these experiences on your own outside of class.

Participating in these research experiences is typically enjoyable and provides a sense of the kinds of psychological science going on in the Department. Moreover, your participation is critical to advance psychological science. Most of the findings psychologists discover (and report in psychological journals and your textbook, for example) are the result of studies that involved undergraduate students just like you!

How and where to sign up

Notices of research opportunities are posted online at:

<http://gustavus.sona-systems.com/>. To sign up to participate you need to log in to this site using the password provided to you via an email that you will receive later this semester, and add your name to the list that corresponds to the research study you choose. When you sign up to participate, you must take note of three things: 1) the **title of the experiment**, 2) the **date and time**, and 3) the **location**. Write these things down so you have them for later. You are also encouraged to write down the phone number and/or e-mail of the experimenter in charge in case you need to contact him/her. During the last 4 weeks of the semester, time slots may not be readily available because data collection is winding down, so I would **strongly recommend that you complete your research experiences as early in the semester as possible**.

How to receive credit for participating

Credit is awarded by the researcher and is tracked by the research administrator (Psychological Science Department Administrative Assistant, Amy Mukamuri). Participants do not need to do anything beyond their participation to receive credit. If you have concerns about the points you’ve been awarded, you should talk first to your General Psychology instructor.

Extra credit

Students who wish to participate in additional research experiences (beyond the 3 required) will receive extra credit for doing so. Each additional 1 credit experience will be worth 3 extra credit points, so if you do one extra “live” experiment (1 experience credit) and one extra online experiment (0.5 experience credit), you would receive 4.5 extra credit points. Although you can participate in as many research experiences as you desire, you may earn no more than 9 extra credit points for doing so.

Participant responsibilities and rights

When you sign up for an experiment you are making a commitment to show up for the experiment. You should take that seriously. If an emergency arises that prevents your attendance, you are responsible for notifying the experimenter listed on SONA. Students who show a pattern of missing experiments will lose the opportunity to participate and thus will lack the points necessary to fulfill the research requirement of the course.

As a research participant you should expect to be fully informed of the tasks you will be asked to complete before the experiment begins. Part of this information will be included in a consent form, which you should read before signing. You have the right to ask questions before participating and to stop your participation at any time if you desire. Most researchers enjoy talking about their research so you should feel free to ask questions once your participation is complete.

All researchers will share information about their experiment with you either immediately after your participation or later in the semester (via e-mail or Gustavus PO mail). In addition, a summary of research findings will be presented at the Gustavus Psychology Science Research Symposium at the end of the semester, which you are encouraged to attend. Details of this event will be forthcoming from your instructor.

Alternative Research Assignment Option

Students who are opposed to participating in research may complete **3** brief research reports instead of participating in three research experiments. To do so, students must select three different research articles from the journal *Current Directions in Psychological Science* which is available in the Gustavus library both in print and online and answer for each article the four questions listed below. **These alternative assignments must be turned in to your instructor via email no later than the start of the eleventh week of the semester (April 23rd, 2018).**

To receive full credit, each assignment should be completed on one page with the reference to the article you read typed at the top of the page (see example below). These four questions should be typed as headings on the page.

1. What is the purpose of this article?
2. Describe in your own words one of the interesting findings the authors discuss.
3. What do the authors conclude?
4. What are the implications or applications of this work?

Your corresponding answers should be written in complete sentences in your own words (do not simply quote the authors) and typed below each question. **Note that students cannot receive extra credit for completing additional written assignments.**

Example summary showing required format

Pat Smith
9:00 General Psych

Authors: David Riccio, Paula Millin, and Pascale Gisquet-Verrier
Title: Retrograde Amnesia: Forgetting Back
Journal: Current Directions in Psychological Science
Year: 2003

1. What is the purpose of this article?

The authors are interested in examining the characteristics of retrograde amnesia in an attempt to consider whether the memory-consolidation hypothesis (memory storage is disrupted by a trauma) is a suitable explanation for the phenomenon. They also examine alternative explanations.

2. Describe in your own words one of the interesting findings the authors discuss.

In some studies amnesia is reversed by providing a reminder cue. For example, in one study rats were trained to avoid a location and then were made amnesic (they forgot to avoid the location). If these rats were given a reminder (exposure to a small part of the original training) their amnesia was eliminated and they remembered to avoid the location again.

3. What do the authors conclude?

The authors conclude that the forgetting that accompanies amnesia may not be the result of a disruption in the storage of information as many authors believe. Instead it may result from the inability to retrieve information that is stored but for some reason has become inaccessible.

4. What are the implications or applications of this work?

This work suggests that researchers need to continue to look for new ways to explain the memory loss that results from amnesia. It would be incredible if these explanations could someday be used to develop methods for alleviating amnesia in humans who suffer from this potentially debilitating condition.