



Society for the Teaching of Psychology (APA Division 2)

OFFICE OF TEACHING RESOURCES IN PSYCHOLOGY (OTRP)

Department of Psychology, University of St. Thomas, 3800 Montrose Blvd., Houston, TX 77006

Psy 120: Psychology and Life **Barry X. Friedman**

Section 120-2: Monday 4:00 – 5:45

Section 120-3: Monday 6:00 – 7:45

Langner Hall 235

Spring, 2002

Instructor Information

Office: Langner Hall Room 102

Office hours: Mondays, 7:45 PM - 9:45 PM, and by appointment.*

*Please make appointments for meetings via email, even during designated office hours, in order to ensure that we will be able to meet. By-appointment meetings will be adapted to your scheduling needs. Appointments may be scheduled as often as necessary or desired. Feel free to drop by my office hours to discuss the class, what graduate school is like, what one can do with a psychology degree, or to generally shoot the breeze...

Email: bfriedman@mail.utexas.edu

Telephone: TLU Office: 372-6566; UT Office: (512) 471-0506; Austin Home: (512) 795-0837

Class Homepage: www.barryxfriedman.com

Brief Autobiography

I was born and raised on Long Island, New York. After receiving my B.A. in psychology from Binghamton University, I made my academic manifest destiny west to study evolutionary psychology at The University of Texas, Austin. My research interests lie mainly in the area of interpersonal relationships, with a primary focus on the evolved psychological mechanisms that underlie romantic relationships. I am also interested in the evolution and development of menopause, and the psychological changes that accompany it. As for my non-academic life, I enjoy playing golf (poorly), disc golf (somewhat better), baseball (pretty good) and racquetball (good). I'm also a huge movie buff (e.g., Kubrik, Kevin Smith, Paul Thomas Anderson, Linklater) and music fanatic (e.g., U2, Radiohead, Counting Crows, Led Zeppelin, Ani DiFranco).

Textbook

Mean Genes: From Sex to Money to Food, Taming Our Primal Instincts by Terry Burnham & Jay Phelan (2000). USA: Penguin Books. Available at the campus bookstore for \$24.00. Reviews of the book, bios of the authors, and references/explanatory notes of the cited literature can be found at www.meangenes.org. I highly encourage you to visit this site if you'd like a reference or some background information on studies discussed in the book.

Course Description and Objectives

The TLU Bulletin intends *PSY 120: Psychology and Life* to examine major areas of adult development from a personal management perspective. Our course will explore how psychological knowledge can assist in understanding, evaluating, and shaping one's personal experience and relationships with others. The special topic for these sections is evolutionary psychology applied to everyday life.

An objective of this course is to address, in part, number eleven from the list of Institutional Goals for TLU Graduates (please see page 5 of the 2001-2002 TLU Catalog for the complete list). Successful completion of this course will leave you with a desire to cultivate physical and/or psychological health and well-being. Knowledge of how and why your mind works the way it does will best allow you to use your mind to tackle the myriad obstacles that life throws at you!

Psychology Program Goals

The psychology program strives to help students learn the subject matter related to psychology, to think critically about psychology and related fields, and to develop skills that will prepare students for graduate school and/or a psychology-related profession. In addition, the psychology department encourages students to study the relationship between psychological and biological processes.

This course, although taught by the psychology department, counts toward the personal well-being requirement. The department's goal for this class is to introduce the student to a topic in psychology that can be applied to the student's life and well-being, regardless of major. Please note that this course does not count toward the psychology major.

Teaching Philosophy

I take great pride in a teacher's responsibility to foster student learning. I strive to engage my students' interests inside and outside of the classroom by requiring high standards and using effective and engaging teaching methods to help my students meet them. I believe that my role as a teacher is to foster critical, creative thinking, and intellectual risk-taking. I believe that your role as a student is to work hard and HAVE FUN with this class. I encourage you to ask questions, interject humorous anecdotes, and seek clarification as needed. I most enjoy teaching psychology and want you to most enjoy learning it. PARTICIPATE ACTIVELY, PLEASE!!!

Attendance

Attendance and active participation are required for this course and are factored into your course grade. Missed quizzes cannot be made up, and missed notes cannot be borrowed from me, so please COME TO EACH AND EVERY CLASS! If you miss a class, you are responsible for finding out about class announcements.

Special Accommodations

In accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Acts, TLU seeks to provide reasonable accommodations for all qualified individuals with disabilities. If you require special arrangements in order to meet class requirements, it is your responsibility to register with the Dean of Community Life (BC 213) and to notify me as soon as possible. The Dean will inform me of appropriate accommodations.

Grading

Attendance/Participation = 20 %

This is a discussion-based course, so your attendance and active participation in class is of prime importance to your learning experience and to that of your fellow classmates. Your grade will be based on your class attendance and your contribution to the class discussions.

Discussion Questions/Comments = 20%

Upon completion of the assigned chapter, please email me (bfriedman@mail.utexas.edu) three discussion questions/comments by 10 PM Sunday night (This deadline is firm). I'm looking for penetrating and thought provoking comments or questions about the assigned reading that will serve as jumping-off points for discussion of the chapter in class. Suitable comments include 1) a critical

evaluation of a finding/suggesting from the reading, 2) the relating of a finding/suggestion from the book to your own, or another's personal life, and 3) your own suggested means of dealing with our "mean genes" in order to lead more satisfying lives. Satisfactory submissions received by the deadline will receive credit. Unsatisfactory, partial, and late submissions will not receive credit.

Weekly Quizzes = 20 %

There will be 11 in-class quizzes, with quizzes 2-11 assessing command of the assigned reading since the last quiz. Quiz 1 will assess comprehension of the first two chapters (pages 1-34), my introductory lecture on evolutionary psychology, and this here course syllabus. The brief quizzes will consist of approximately five multiple choice, fill-in-the-blank, or short-answer questions. Quizzes will take place during the first 5 minutes of class. If you are absent or late to a class that is a quiz day, you will receive a zero for that quiz. Missed quizzes *cannot* be made up. However, your lowest quiz grade will be dropped (i.e., only 10 quizzes will count towards your quiz grade).

Paper = 20 %

A five-to-seven page paper is due at the beginning of class on April 22. The paper should be stapled, paginated, and double-spaced, with 12-point font and 1-inch margins. I'd like you to choose one subsection of the book (i.e., Thin Wallets and Fat Bodies, Constant Cravings, Romance and Reproduction, or Family Friends and Foes), and in light of the information contained in the subsection's chapters, 1) reflect on your past life and 2) discuss how, if at all, you will lead your life differently. I'm basically looking for you to filter your past and future actions / decisions / mindsets through the knowledge you have garnered from this course. For example, if you choose the "Thin Wallets and Fat Bodies" sub-section, you could discuss (in addition to other things) your past experiences with trying to save money and your future plans to grow a bank account in light of the information contained in the subsection. Papers will be graded on their clarity of thought, quality of expression, and command of the course material. Spelling and grammar count. Papers not turned in at the beginning of class on April 22 must be emailed to me as a WORD attachment for PCs, and will be docked 5 points for each day they are late.

Final Exam = 20%

Comprehension of the lectures and assigned readings will be assessed with the final exam. The exam will consist of a combination of multiple choice, fill-in-the-blank, and short answer questions.

Grades will be assigned as follows*:

| | |
|-----------|------|
| 93 – 100% | = A |
| 90 – 92% | = A- |
| 87 – 89% | = B+ |
| 83 – 86% | = B |
| 80 – 82% | = B- |
| 77 – 79% | = C+ |
| 73 – 76% | = C |
| 70 – 72% | = C- |
| 60 – 69% | = D |
| < 60% | = F |

* The Current TLU grading policy is to show pluses and minuses (e.g., A-, B+, C -) on grade sheets (as applicable) at the end of the semester. However, these pluses and minuses are not used in calculating GPAs and are not shown on official transcripts.

Other Course Policies

- 1) I hold high expectations for my students. My quizzes and exams are difficult.
- 2) Quizzes must be taken as scheduled. Missed quizzes *cannot* be made up.
- 3) No extra credit is available for this course.
- 4) Performance, not solely effort, is what determines your final grade.
- 5) Grades are rounded to the nearest whole number. For example, an 89.4 rounds down to an 89 while an 89.6 is rounded up to a 90.
- 6) Cheating will not be tolerated. Cheaters will receive an “F” for the course.
- 7) You are strongly encouraged to ask a classmate for notes if you miss a lecture. Notes cannot be borrowed from me.
- 8) Feel free to eat and drink (non-alcoholic beverages only!) in class as long as you don’t disturb others with your munchin’ and slurpin’.
- 9) The last day to drop this course without a grade is April 16.
- 10) Do **not** talk with other students during class. Please share your thoughts with me and the entire class, not just a select few! Talking with your classmates distracts you, your classmates, and me.
- 11) Turn off all cell phones, pagers, and beepers before class begins.

Course Schedule

| <u>Date</u> | <u>Topic</u> | <u>Pages</u> | <u>Quiz</u> |
|--------------|---|--------------|-------------|
| Jan. 21 | Intro. to Evolutionary Psychology | 1-14 | |
| Jan. 28 | Debt | 15-34 | Quiz 1 |
| Feb. 4 | Fat | 35-58 | Quiz 2 |
| Feb. 11 | Drugs | 59-82 | Quiz 3 |
| Feb. 18 | To Be Announced | TBA | None |
| Feb. 25 | Risk | 83-104 | Quiz 4 |
| Mar. 4 | Greed | 105-130 | Quiz 5 |
| Mar. 11 | <i>NO CLASS (Enjoy Spring Break!)</i> | | |
| Mar. 18 | Gender | 131-152 | Quiz 6 |
| Mar. 25 | Beauty | 153-172 | Quiz 7 |
| Apr. 1 | <i>NO CLASS (Enjoy Easter Break!)</i> | | |
| Apr. 8 | Infidelity | 173-198 | Quiz 8 |
| Apr. 15 | Family | 199-212 | Quiz 9 |
| Apr. 22 | Friends and Foes (Paper Due) | 213-243 | Quiz 10 |
| Apr. 29 | Conclusion | 243-254 | Quiz 11 |
| May 6 | Final Exam for 6:00 section: 6:30 - 9:30 | | |
| May 8 | Final Exam for 4:00 section: 6:30 - 9:30 | | |

Suggestions About How to Study

Particularly following the first quiz, students often ask about how to study for PSY 120. There is no reason to wait until that time to become concerned about study techniques. I have put together few suggestions below from the published literature on study skills. It goes without saying that these tactics should be applied as soon as possible: They will *not* bail you out if you wait until you have already done poorly on one or more quizzes.

1. Look over the assigned readings **BEFORE** you start reading. Each chapter is organized into sections. Indeed, organization is the hallmark of textbooks. Read these sections. Review after reading each section. Take breaks after each section.

2. At the end of each section, stop and ask yourself what you have learned. Ask yourself, without looking at the book, what the major points are and what the key terms were. If you can't define the terms and remember the points in a section right after reading them, you didn't read at a useful level and must re-read. At the end of each chapter do a review of all the sections, being sure to understand how each module relates to each other.

As you find important things, consider marking them with a highlighter or something in the margin. Better yet, **ORGANIZE** the ideas by drawing pictures, making lists, or composing **OUTLINES** to better encode the information in your memory. Important things are not just definitions. They also include study findings, theories, and summaries of areas of research. Read for about 45 minutes or so--after that your efficiency drops. Stop and do laundry for 15 minutes or something before you go back to reading.

3. Work on psychology by doing the assignments by the time they are due, a little bit at a time. No athlete would prepare for a big game by sitting around doing nothing for weeks and then staying up late the night before intensively working out. The same principle applies to learning. **LEARN THE MATERIAL AS YOU GO ALONG.** You will have to take responsibility for learning the material. You should not have to spend too many hours studying for the exams. By the time the exam is near, you should already know the material.

4. Study in a place that is quiet and in which you will not be disturbed. Plan to work very hard when you read and study. Many failing students think that studying is nothing more than reading the book over and over with the stereo blasting or the TV on and people running in and out while the phone rings. They spend hours at this, but they are not really doing anything useful. To make an analogy--it would be like trying to increase physical fitness by walking slowly and having an ice cream cone every two blocks. This is fun, but it does not result in a hard body. Laying around in front of a TV chatting with friends while scanning a book is also fun, but it is a complete waste of time as far as learning is concerned. To get fit, one must work the muscles, get out of breath and that sort of thing. In order to learn, one must **WORK** hard and intensely, focusing on the task at hand. No pain, no gain.

5. Study in the time of day during which you are most alert. Do not put studying off until you can hardly keep your eyes open. Successful students report that they make good use of the hour or two they have between classes by studying. It is easy to waste that time by returning home and doing things of little consequence. Much work can be accomplished during the day by finding quiet places that are near to where your classes meet and hitting the books.

6. It is probably not worthwhile to re-copy your lecture notes after class. It is a very good idea, however, to take notes as thoroughly as possible in class, leaving some space as you are taking them. Then, as soon after class as you can, review the notes and clarify things you have not recorded in sufficient detail.

7. Take responsibility for your own performance. Blaming roommates, textbooks, time of class meetings or whatever will not improve your performance. If you are not spending two to three hours in good,

dense, quiet study for each hour in class, you are not doing enough. This point is usually ignored by students who do poorly. Following these steps exactly will not be easy at first. If you do poorly on an exam, the first thing you will have to admit is that you have to do something DIFFERENT if you expect your grades to be different. A second thing you might have to admit is that you may have managed to get through high school and subsequent life without maximum efficiency in learning how to learn. Most students who do not do well are either (1) not working long enough or (2) not working efficiently.

Additional Studying Strategies

Although you are expected to study and ultimately learn a wide range of material, you are rarely taught any systematic strategies allowing you to study more effectively. However, psychologists have devised several excellent techniques for improving study skills, two of which are described below. By employing one of these procedures—known by the acronyms “SQ3R” and “MURDER”—you can increase your ability to learn and retain information and to think critically, not just in psychology classes but in all academic subjects.

SQ3R

The SQ3R method includes a series of *five* steps, designated by the initials S-Q-R-R-R.

The first step is to *survey* the material by reading the parts of the chapter that give you an overview of the topics covered. Some textbooks contain, for example, chapter outlines, chapter summaries, lists of learning objectives, prologues and epilogues, or some combination of these features and others.

The next step—the “Q” in SQ3R—is to *question*. Formulate questions—either aloud or in writing—before actually reading a section of the material. Some textbooks contain critical thinking questions that are a good source of questions. However, do not rely on them entirely. Making up your own questions is crucial. You may want to write them in the margins of your book. This process helps you to focus on the key points of the chapter, while at the same time putting you in an inquisitive frame of mind.

It is now time for the next, and most important, step: to *read* the material. Read carefully and, even more importantly, read actively and critically. For instance, while you are reading, answer the questions you have asked yourself. You may find yourself coming up with new questions as you read along; that’s fine, since it shows you are reading inquisitively and paying attention to the material. Critically evaluate material by considering the implications of what you are reading, thinking about possible exceptions and contradictions, and examining the assumptions that lie behind the assertions made by the author.

The next step—the second “R” is the most unusual. This “R” stands for *recite*, meaning that you look up from the book and describe and explain to yourself, or a study partner, the material you have just read and answer the questions you posed earlier. Do it aloud; this is one time when talking to yourself is nothing to be embarrassed about. The recitation process helps you to clearly identify your degree of understanding of the material you have just read. Moreover, psychological research has shown that communicating material to others, or reciting it aloud to yourself, assists you in learning it in a different—and a deeper—way than material that you do not intend to communicate. Hence, your recitation of the material is a crucial link in the studying process.

The final “R” refers to review. As the chapter in your textbook on memory points out, reviewing is a prerequisite to fully learning and remembering material you have studied. Look over the information, reread the features in your textbook that provide you with an overview of the chapter, be sure again that you can answer any critical thinking questions, review questions, and questions you posed for yourself. Reviewing should be an active process, in which you consider how different pieces of information fit together and develop a sense of the overall picture.

MURDER

The MURDER system, although not altogether dissimilar to SQ3R, provides an alternative approach to studying (Dansereau, 1978).

In MURDER, the first step is to establish an appropriate *mood* for studying by setting goals for a study session and choosing a time and place so that you will not be distracted. As mentioned previously, it is best if you schedule regular blocks of study time and select one place that you reserve specifically for studying.

Next comes reading for *understanding*, paying careful attention to the meaning of the material being studied.

Recall is an immediate attempt to recall the material from memory, without referring to the text.

Digesting the material comes next; you should correct any recall errors, and attempt to organize and store newly learned material in memory.

You should work next on *expanding* (analyzing and evaluating) new material, trying to apply it to situations that go beyond the applications discussed in the text. By incorporating what you have learned into a larger information network in memory, you will be able to recall it more easily in the future.

Finally, the last step is to *review*. Just as with the SQ3R system, MURDER suggests that systematic review of material is a necessary condition for successful studying.

Taking Exams

There are some principles of exam performance known only to successful, test-wise students. Millman (1966) defined test-wiseness as the ability to use knowledge of the characteristics of tests and the testing process to improve one's performance. Studies show that test-wise students do better on exams (Rogers & Bateson, 1994; Towns & Robinson, 1993). Here are the basic principles:

Know your stuff. The single most important point is to have a good, solid knowledge and understanding of the material being tested. Using the tips for doing well in college and managing your time, as well as the study strategies described above, can help you to achieve this kind of knowledge and understanding.

Schedule your time. Look the test over and calculate the time you can afford to spend on each item.

Read completely. Be sure to read the entire item. If the item is multiple choice, try to answer it before looking at the alternatives so that you will know which is correct.

Eliminate options. If you don't immediately know the answer, eliminate unlikely options quickly, then choose among the remainder. Your score may well be higher (Kim & Goetz, 1993).

Look to other items. It is common for information in one item to provide an answer or partial answer to another.

Don't think too much. If you don't know an answer, put down your best guess and come back later if time permits. Mark questions you are most uncertain of so that you can return to them later.

Don't leave items blank. Despite rumors to the contrary, it is to your advantage to guess unless the professor will deduct substantial credit for guessing (Budescu & Bar-Hillel, 1993).

Ask questions. Ask the professor to clarify an item if necessary.

Review your answers. Time permitting, go back over the entire test before turning it in. If you are short on time, concentrate on the difficult items you marked.

Change your answers! I emphasize this one because the idea that you should never change an answer is so widespread among students and faculty alike. It is a myth (Schwarz et al., 1991). Studies show that students change answers from right to wrong about 20 percent of the time, but change them from wrong to right 58 percent of the time (Benjamin et al., 1984). Other work shows that 3 points are gained for every 1 lost by changing answers (Geiger, 1991).