



Society for the Teaching of Psychology (APA Division 2)
OFFICE OF TEACHING RESOURCES IN PSYCHOLOGY (OTRP)
Department of General Academics, Texas A & M University at Galveston, Galveston, TX 77553-1675

PSY 131: INTRODUCTION TO PSYCHOLOGY

Barry X. Friedman

Tuesday & Thursday, 2:30 – 3:45
Langner Hall 120
Fall, 2001

Instructor Information

Office: Langner Hall Room 102

Office hours: Tuesday & Thursday 12:00 - 1:00, and by appointment.*

*Please make appointments for meetings via email. 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 psychology graduate school is like, what one can do with a psychology degree, or to generally shoot the breeze...

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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. Through my experience teaching introductory psychology, I have become interested in exploring factors that predict student success in introductory psychology courses. As for my non-academic life, I enjoy playing golf (poorly), disc golf (somewhat better), racquetball (good), and softball (pretty good). I'm also a huge movie buff (Fincher, Kevin Smith, Paul Thomas Anderson, Linklater, et al) and music fanatic (U2, Radiohead, Counting Crows, Led Zeppelin, Ani DiFranco et al).

Textbook

Psychology (3rd Edition) by Davis, S. F. & Palladino, J. J. (2000). New Jersey: Prentice Hall.

At various times, short readings may be distributed in class in anticipation of their discussion during the next class session.

Course Description and Objectives

The TLU Bulletin describes *PSY 131: Introduction to Psychology* as a survey of psychology's theories, methods, and basic principles, and how they apply to human behavior.

A goal of this course is to address, in part, number two 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 enable you to understand the major methods, theories, findings, and

historical trends in psychology, and to apply that knowledge to your everyday life. 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, which 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.

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 entertaining 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. ACTIVELY PARTICIPATE, PLEASE!!!

Attendance

Attendance is required for this class. Missed exams and quizzes cannot be made up, and missed notes cannot be borrowed from me, so please COME TO EACH AND EVERY CLASS! Much of the material covered in lecture is not in the textbook, and will be included on the exams. If you miss a class you are responsible for finding out about class announcements.

Experiment Participation

Psychology majors and professors at TLU are often involved in research projects that necessitate human participation. Your involvement as a participant is invaluable to the students and professors seeking answers to important research questions. You will not be placed at risk as a result of involvement in a research project, and you may withdraw from a study at any time without penalty. ***All Psyc 131 students must either participate in TWO research projects for the department, write TWO 1-page journal summaries, or do one of each (participation and summary).*** Further details about the nature, time, etc. of research projects will be made available part-way through the semester—check the bulletin board in the psychology department suite (near Langner Hall offices 134, 136, and 140). If your schedule will not accommodate your participation, if you wish to satisfy this requirement early in the semester, or if you simply do not want to serve as a human subject, there is an alternative assignment for you to fulfill. Specifically, students who choose not to participate in research (and those who fail to notify the experimenter 24 hours in advance that they will be unable to meet a scheduled appointment) are required to write a paper instead. The paper shall be a 1-page typewritten (double-spaced) summary and critique of an article from a current issue of a psychology journal. Please clear the journal article with me prior to writing your summary.

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

There will be 4 exams (non-comprehensive) and an optional comprehensive final exam. Comprehension of the lectures and assigned readings will be assessed with the exams. If you're satisfied with your 4 exam grades you may skip the final. If you are not satisfied with an exam grade, you may take the final exam and replace your lowest exam grade with your score on the final. Thus, 4 exams (20 % each) will count toward your course grade. Exams will consist of a combination of multiple choice, fill-in-the-blank, and short answer questions. I will provide you with sample exam questions before the first exam. You will have 75 minutes to complete each exam.

The remaining 20% of your course grade will come from 11 in-class quizzes on the lectures and assigned reading since the last quiz/exam. The brief quizzes will consist of 3-5 multiple choice and/or fill-in-the-blank 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.

Grades will be calculated as follows:

- 4 Exam scores: 100 points each for a total of 400 pts (80% of grade).
- 10 Quiz scores: 10 points each for a total of 100 points (20% of grade).

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 exams are difficult.
- 2) Exams must be taken as scheduled. Missed exams *cannot* be made-up. If you miss an exam you may take the final exam to replace it. 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 can not 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 November 20th.

Course Schedule

Date	Topic	Chapter/Reading	Quiz
Aug. 28	Introduction, Perspectives	1	
Aug. 30	Research Methods	1	Quiz 1
Sept. 4	Biopsychology	2	
Sept. 6	Biopsychology	2	Quiz 2
Sept. 11	Evolutionary Psychology	Assigned Article	
Sept. 13	Sleep, Hypnosis, and Drugs	5	Quiz 3
Sept. 18	EXAM I		
Sept. 20	Learning & Conditioning	6	
Sept. 25	Learning & Conditioning	6	Quiz 4
Sept. 27	Memory	7	
Oct. 2	Memory	7	Quiz 5
Oct. 4	Intelligence & Behavior Genetics	8	
Oct. 9	Intelligence & Behavior Genetics	8	Quiz 6
Oct. 11	EXAM II		
Oct. 16	Developmental Psychology	9	
Oct. 18	<i>NO CLASS (Enjoy Fall Break!)</i>		
Oct. 23	Sex, Gender, Mating, & Sex Differences	11	
Oct. 25	Sex, Gender, Mating, & Sex Differences	11	Quiz 7
Oct. 30	Personality Psychology	12	
Nov. 1	Personality Psychology	12	Quiz 8
Nov. 6	Social Psychology	16	
Nov. 8	Social Psychology	16	Quiz 9
Nov. 13	EXAM III		
Nov. 15	Disorders	13	
Nov. 20	Disorders	13	Quiz 10
Nov. 22	<i>NO CLASS (Happy Thanksgiving!)</i>		
Nov. 27	Therapy	14	
Nov. 29	Therapy	14	
Dec. 4	Health Psychology	15	Quiz 11
Dec. 6	EXAM IV		

FINAL EXAM: Tuesday, December 13th, 1:30 - 4:30.

Suggestions About How to Study

Particularly following the first exam, students often ask about how to study for PSY 131. 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 exams.

1. Look over the assigned readings BEFORE you start reading. Each chapter is organized into modules. Indeed, organization is the hallmark of textbooks. Read these modules. Review after reading each module. Take breaks after each module.
2. At the end of each module, 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 module 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 modules, 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).