

Psychology 103A: Introduction to Psychology, Spring 2009

Tuesday, Thursday, 9:00-10:30am, Olin 202

Instructor: Kristin Lane

Office Hours: Tuesday, 10:30-12:00, Wednesday, 10:15-11:45, and by appointment

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Course Overview

How does the mind create the reality we perceive? How do experiences shape the brain, and how do processes in the brain influence thought, emotion and behavior? This course investigates these and similar questions by studying the science of the human mind and behavior. The course covers topics such as memory, perception, development, psychopathology, personality, and social behavior. A focus is on the biological, cognitive, and social/cultural roots that give rise to human experience. Additionally, the course will consider how behavior differs among people, and across situations.

Materials (Available at the Bookstore, perhaps cheaper online)

1. Gazzaniga, M. & Heatherton, T. (2006). *Psychological science*. (2nd ed.). New York: Norton Books. You may get either the softcover or hardcover version – I'd recommend the softcover because it is lighter. In either case, please make sure you are getting the **second** edition, and not the first (which is obviously older) and not the third (which is scheduled to be released in February 2009).
2. Marcus, G. (Ed.) (2005). *The Norton psychology reader*. New York: Norton Books.
3. Additional readings to be made available by the instructor.
4. You must register for this course on Moodle: go to <http://moodle.bard.edu> and follow the instructions to add this class. The password to enroll in this course is brainS09. [capitalization is important, and the last two characters are zero-nine]
5. OPTIONAL: ZAPS from Norton Psychology Labs (\$10 if you buy the first two books as a package; \$28 on its own)

Note on textbook: Any college student can read a textbook by herself. The benefit of *class* is threefold: you receive an additional professional's perspective on Psychology (i.e., I will lecture some), you get to engage and grapple with the material (i.e., you will discuss some), and you experience many of the phenomena that we learn about (i.e., we will do fun activities some). To accomplish the latter three, the textbook needs to take a bit of a back seat in the hours we have together. No one wants me to regurgitate the well-written textbook, but that doesn't mean that knowing and absorbing the information in it is not integral to the course. Please keep in mind that you are responsible for the material in the book even if it is not directly covered in class – I will post reading suggestions on Moodle for each chapter to give you guidance on where to spend more (or less) of your time and attention.

Policies

Attendance. Attendance will be noted and excessive absences will have a negative influence on your grade. Late arrivals are disruptive: Consistent patterns of lateness will be addressed. Please be on time.

Plagiarism. Quizzes, exams and other written assignments are to be completed independently. Plagiarism is unacceptable. In its most easily identifiable form, plagiarism represents copying someone else's words. This kind of offense is rare. More common are other, similarly damaging ways to plagiarize. Use of someone else's ideas or words without citing them constitutes plagiarism, and is unacceptable. When in doubt, check with me. No one ever got in trouble for citing too often. Unless explicitly stated, you must work independently on every assignment.

Cell Phones and Laptops. Please turn off all cell phones before class. Furious typing is loud and can be distracting - no laptop computers will be allowed.

Late Assignments will immediately lose 15% of their grade, and another 10% for every additional day late.

Submissions. Your written assignments will be posted on Moodle. For assignments due the day of class, they must be posted before the start of class time.

Assessment

N.B. If you need a special accommodation for any of the assignments, please speak with me **after the first class**. Grading will be out of 550 points, as follows.

Assignment	Points	Due Date
Short Paper 1	45	Monday, February 23 by 5pm
Short Paper 2	45	Monday, March 30 by 5pm
Short Paper 3	45	Friday, May 8 at 5pm
Group Presentation	45	To be decided per group
Exam 1	80	02/17/09
Exam 2	80	03/19/09
Exam 3	80	05/19/09
Class Participation	55	ongoing
Experimental Participation (2)	30	First (or alternate assignment) by 3/20; second by 5/15
Quizzes (One per chapter)	3 points each (45 total)	As indicated below

The total number of points earned will determine your grade; rough guidelines for the threshold for each grade are below – I may change the range (in a way that could only help you). Pluses and minuses will be assigned at the top and bottom of each range.

Grade	Point range	Grade	Point range
A	495 or higher	D	330-384
B	440-494	F	Below 330
C	385-439		

Exams. There will be three non-cumulative in-class examinations in this course. The exams will consist of multiple-choice, short answer, and essay questions, and will be closed-book. Make-up exams will be 1 hour and 20 minute oral exams covering the material, and only offered with a written excuse from the Dean of Students or medical professional.

Papers. There will be three short papers in this course – details are at the end of the syllabus.

Participation. This course will be a mixture of lecture, discussion, and hands-on activities. Your contribution to the discussions and hands-on activities will count toward your participation grade. Good participation is comprised not only of speaking, but also of listening (and then responding) to your classmates and to me. Occasionally I will ask you to complete a small (less than 15 minute) activity outside of class in preparation for class, and consistent completion of these will count toward your participation grade as well.

Presentation. One of the big themes we will keep in mind throughout the course is that human thought and behavior is best understood by considering any phenomenon or process from multiple levels of analysis (from the biological to the more social). In these presentations, groups of two or three students will examine a phenomenon from these different levels of analysis and make a presentation to the class. More details are at the end of the syllabus.

Research participation. One of the best ways to learn about the business of doing Psychology is to see what goes on in those lab rooms: how does psychological science happen – how are hypotheses generated, and how are experiments conducted? A lot of exciting research is happening right here at Bard, and much of it makes use of college undergraduates as participants. You will participate in **two such experiments** and write a brief (1-page) summary and response of the experiment. More details are at the end of the syllabus.

Moodle quizzes. You will complete one quiz on Moodle for each chapter. The quizzes must be taken **before** the class indicated on the schedule below (by ** next to the chapter number). These quizzes will be multiple-choice and open-book, and will emphasize conceptual understanding and application of the topics in that chapter. You will have 12 minutes for each of these quizzes – questions will be randomly selected from a larger set of questions, so each student will have a different quiz. If you answer a question incorrectly, you will receive a penalty but will have the opportunity to try again to select the correct answer. These quizzes are intended to help solidify the main points of each chapter, and also provide an indication of the topics and issues I think are worth emphasizing.

Schedule: Reading should be completed BY the date indicated

G&H: Gazzaniga and Heatherton; **NPS:** in *Norton Psychology Reader*; **M:** posted on Moodle

Note reading suggestions for each chapter on Moodle

Indicates that the Moodle quiz for this chapter should be completed **prior to this class period

	TOPIC	G & H	Additional Reading
Tues.	1/27	Introduction to Psychological Science	
Thurs.	1/29	Introduction to Psychological Science	1** How to Think Straight about Psychology NPS Principles of Psychology NPS
Tues.	2/3	Methods of Psychological Science	2 (to p. 48)
Thurs.	2/05	Methods of Psychological Science	2** (to end) How to Lie with Statistics NPS
Tues.	2/10	Genetics and Biological Basis of Behavior	3** How the Mind Works NPS
Thurs.	2/12	The Brain	4 (to p. 140)
Tues.	2/17	Consciousness, <i>Group presentation: Dreams</i>	4** (p. 140-end) The Man who Mistook his Wife for a Hat NPS
Thurs.	2/19	EXAM 1	
Mon.	2/23	Short Paper # 1 due on Moodle by 5pm	
Tues.	2/24	Sensation and Perception	5 (to p. 181)
Thurs.	2/26	Finish sensation and perception, <i>Group presentation: Pain</i> Start Learning and Reward	5 (to end)** 6 (pp. 209-231)
Tues.	3/3	Learning and Reward	6 (.231-243)** Conditioned Emotional Reactions NPS
Thurs.	3/5	Memory	7 (to p. 279) H.M., an Unforgettable Amnesic, Dies at 82 M
Tues.	3/10	Memory, <i>Group presentation: False memories</i>	7 (279-end)**
Thurs.	3/12	Emotion	10 (up to middle of p. 408)**
Tues.	3/17	Higher-order cognition	8 (up to p.319)** The Geography of Thought: How Asians and Westerners Think Differently...and Why NPS
Thurs.	3/19	EXAM 2	
MARCH 24 and 26: NO CLASS - SPRING BREAK			
Mon.	3/30	Short Paper # 2 due on Moodle by 5pm	
Tues.	3/31	Motivation	9 (pp. 341-354; 370-378)**
Thurs.	4/2	Development	11 (to p. 454) The Scientist in the Crib: What Early Learning tells us about the Mind NPS
Tues.	4/7	Development, <i>Group presentation: Childhood and adolescent aggression</i>	11 (pp. 454-459)** A Review of B.F. Skinner's Verbal Behavior NPS The Girl in the Window M
Thurs.	4/9	Personality, <i>Group presentation: Shyness</i>	12**
Tues.	4/14	Social Psychology	15 (pp. 607-610; 634-647)
Thurs.	4/16	Social Psychology, <i>Group presentation: Stereotyping and prejudice</i>	15 (610-632)**
Tues.	4/21	Psychological Disorders	13 (pp.518-541) An Unquiet Mind NPS
Thurs.	4/23	Psychological Disorders, <i>Group presentation: Borderline personality disorder</i>	13 (pp.543-end)**
TUESDAY, APRIL 28 ADVISING DAY - NO CLASS			
Thurs.	4/30	Treatment	14 (pp. 565-591); Listening to Prozac NPS
MAY 5 AND MAY 7: NO CLASS - BOARD WEEK			
Friday	5/8	Short paper # 3 due on Moodle by 5pm	
Tues.	5/12	Treatment	14 (pp.593-end)**
Thurs.	5/14	Review for exam	
Tues.	5/19	EXAM 3	

Group Presentations

One of the big themes we will keep in mind throughout the course is that human thought and behavior are best understood by considering any phenomenon or process from multiple levels of analysis (from the biological to the more social). In these presentations, groups of two to four students will examine a phenomenon from these different levels of analysis and make a presentation to the class. You will rank your interest in the topics during the second week of the semester, and I will assign groups based on your preferences.

The goals of this assignment are to 1. begin to develop the skills needed to read and interpret original empirical articles; 2. make explicit the idea that we should consider the different topics we will cover in this course from multiple levels of analysis; 3. work in a collaborative environment; 4. practice synthesizing and integrating research; 5. give you a chance to pursue a specific topic in more depth than we have time for in class; and 6. improve your skills at oral communication.

For each topic, between two and four articles will be posted on Moodle; you will use these as the basis for your presentation. You may, but are not required, to do additional outside research for your paper. You should plan to meet with your other group member(s) outside of class to prepare the presentation.

Your presentation should provide an overview of the topic for your classmates. You should introduce the topic to your classmates – define the phenomenon, behavior, or illness on which you are presenting. You should give a very broad overview of why it makes sense to study this question from different levels of analysis. Then, you should describe in detail the articles your group was assigned to read (and, any other outside reading you choose to bring in). Be sure to sum up your presentation with one or two key points that you want the audience to know. You will have 20 minutes for your presentation, and I will stop you after that point.

The format of the presentation is up to you – you should be creative in deciding how to present the material. You may (and are encouraged) to use activities, handouts or visual aids. This is a collaborative assignment, and I want to see evidence that all team members contributed in substantial ways to generating the materials and leading the discussion. Domination of the presentation and discussion by one team member will impair other team members' grades.

How to Maximize the Success of your Presentation

- **Begin early!** Skim the readings and meet with your group more than once– this will give you time to let ideas percolate.
- **Have a game plan** for your presentation – know how much time you are going to allot to each piece, and how that will be divided up. I encourage you to meet with me or seek me out for feedback or advice on the direction in which you're going.
- **Practice.** And then practice some more. The key to a good presentation is preparation, you should encourage your roommates, friends, and pets to sit through a few rounds of the presentation – they will let you know when you're being unclear or even boring. (Well, your pets might not but hopefully your friends will).
- **Have fun** with it!

Topics:

Dreams, Pain, False Memories, Adolescent Aggression, Shyness, Stereotyping and Prejudice, Borderline Personality Disorder

Short Papers - Overview

For each section of the course (sections correspond to our exam schedule), you must complete one short paper (three total). You can choose from any of the topics listed under that section. The topics are chosen to let you have a bit of fun with the material, to give you the opportunity to explore the material in more depth and with greater independence than we have time for in class, and to help you study for the test in that section. If you would like help choosing among the topics, talk to me – some options emphasize advanced exploration of topics, and others emphasize reviewing or applying material we covered in class and/ or the textbook; we can discuss which option makes the most sense based on your interests, goals, and performance in the course.

Guidelines for all papers

- Papers should be approximately 500 words (approximately two double-spaced pages), and no more than 600 words. Include a word count at the top of the first page (count only the body of your paper, not your title, References, etc.). Points will be deducted for papers more than 600 words.
- Papers should be double-spaced and carefully proofread.
- Papers must be uploaded to Moodle by the designated due date and time.
- You must work independently on the papers.

SECTION ONE: DUE DATE FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 20 BY 5PM

METHODS

In this paper, you should propose an experiment to investigate whether taking naps improves academic performance. Your description of the experiment should be sufficient for a reader to conduct the experiment by himself or herself. You should use the following terms in your paper (in a way that makes apparent you know what they mean): **independent variable, dependent variable, random assignment, operationalization, control group.**

BIOLOGICAL BASIS OF BEHAVIOR

This chapter of the textbook and Pinker's chapter in the *Norton Psychology Reader* emphasize the extent to which human mind and behavior are products of evolution. In *Evolution of the Mind: Four Fallacies of Psychology* (posted on Moodle), David Buller suggests that the arguments of evolutionary psychologists are perhaps overstated. In this paper, you should pick one human cognitive, social, or personality trait. First, you should describe (drawing on principles outlined in the text and in class) how this trait may have evolved. Next, you should analyze the validity of one or two of what Buller calls Psychology's "four fallacies" as they relate to your chosen trait. You should conclude with a general statement on the potential benefits and limitations of the evolutionary approach to explaining human thought and behavior.

THE BRAIN

In *Mike or me? Self-recognition in a split-brain patient*, David Turk and his colleagues (including the two authors of your textbook) report results of a case-study of a split-brain patient. In this paper, you should write a summary of and response to this article in which you do the following: 1. describe the main goals of doing this study – what did the researchers hope to learn by studying JW? 2. briefly (one paragraph or less) describe the procedures and findings of the study (doing this concisely is challenging) 3. elaborate

on what they mean by the statement “The results showed a double dissociation in JW's face recognition performance”; 4. explain the implications of the findings for our understanding of the brain and human mind; and 5. speculate about what these findings might suggest about JW's everyday life or social interactions.

SECTION TWO: DUE DATE MONDAY, MARCH 30 BY 5PM

LEARNING AND REWARD

In this paper, you should identify a behavior that you would like to change in yourself or another person. Then, describe how you might bring about this change using the principles of classical and operant conditioning. You should use the following terms in your paper (in a way that makes apparent you know what they mean): **classical conditioning, conditioned stimulus, unconditioned stimulus, conditioned response, unconditioned response, operant conditioning, reward or punishment (or both), reinforcement.**

MEMORY

In this paper, you will analyze the depiction and accuracy of the psychological principles of memory in a popular film. You should focus on just one, or possibly two, specific characters, incidents, or themes from the chosen film. Introduce your main point to the reader before diving into the specific analyses. Your task is then to explore the depiction of memory in the film. In your analysis, describe the main principles of memory that you draw on, although you do not need to go into specific details of any particular study (but you can if it will help your argument).

Some questions you might want to concentrate on:

1. What theories of memory are being called upon in the film?
2. How are different types (e.g., implicit or explicit) or processes of memory (e.g., encoding or retrieval) important to the film as a whole, or specific incidents in the movie?
3. Is the depiction of memory accurate in the film? If it is not, how would an accurate depiction change the film (or particular incidents)?

Movies to choose from: *Memento*, *50 First Dates*, *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*. **Assume your reader has seen the movie** – don't spend space describing the plot or characters.

SECTION THREE: DUE DATE FRIDAY MAY 8 BY 5PM

DEVELOPMENTAL PSYCHOLOGY

Contemporary developmental psychologists have a very different perspective on children's development than did Jean Piaget. What would Piaget say of the current state of developmental psychology? In this paper, you should present an (imagined, obviously) discussion between Jean Piaget and Elizabeth Spelke. (Each of them, for this paper's purpose, acts as an icon of a more general theoretical and empirical perspective on development – so in presenting Spelke's words, for example, you should feel free to incorporate the work of other developmental psychologists.)

SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY

We will discuss in some detail the principles of persuasion that arise from basic social psychological research. In this paper, you will select two of the ads that are posted on Moodle and compare and contrast

the principles of persuasion that are used in the ads. In analyzing the ads, you should consider the source (i. e., what magazine, TV show, or website the ad was on), the target audience, and the product.

PSYCHOPATHOLOGY

You will find information about a (hypothetical) client being treated by a psychologist under “Abnormal Psychology” on Moodle. In this paper, you should consider at least two (but no more than four) potential diagnoses for this patient. For each potential diagnosis, you should identify the symptoms and whether or not the patient in the case study is exhibiting them. You should be clear about your best assessment of the patient's condition. There are no right answers here – papers will be graded based on the degree to which you show an understanding of the clinical disorders that you are considering, and the quality of your reasoning and presentation.

Research Participation

One of the best ways to learn about the business of doing Psychology is to see what goes on in those lab rooms: how does psychological science happen – how are hypotheses generated, and how are experiments conducted? A lot of exciting research is happening right here at Bard, and much of it makes use of college undergraduates (e.g. you) as participants. You will participate in **two such experiments**. **At least one of the experiments must be completed and by Spring Break and the other by May 15.**

To sign up for experiments

1. Visit <http://bardresearch.sona-systems.com/> and follow the steps to the left where it says “New Participant? Request an account here.” You must use a Bard email to complete this step. **MAKE SURE YOU INDICATE PSY 103A AS YOUR SECTION!**
2. Login with your new id and select an interesting and available study in which to participate.
3. Upon completing the experiment, the experimenter will tell you about the study and hand you a written debriefing form describing the experiment’s methods and predictions. This sheet should also include a reference to an empirical journal article.

ALTERNATIVE ASSIGNMENT: If you do not wish to participate in research studies or you are under 18 years of age, I will provide an alternative assignment of approximately the same time commitment. Please see me for more details.