George Mason University

Basic Concepts in Psychology

Student Office Hours (talk to Dr. Melley: Make a zoom appointment at this link

Professor: Alison Melley (you can call me Dr. Melley). Email me at amelley@gmu.edu.

What will I learn in this course?

This course focuses on applications of psychological science that will help students navigate their lives. We will explore basic concepts and research findings, practice scientific thinking using psychological methods, and learn key themes in psychology that are enduring lessons to take away from the course. The course is entirely online with **no class meetings.** This course meets the Mason Core requirement in the Social and Behavioral Sciences category.

✓ **Psychology Content:** We will define and explain basic psychological concepts, interpret research findings, and apply psychological principles to personal growth and everyday life.

✓ **Scientific Thinking:** We will learn about advantages and limitations of research strategies which will inform the evaluation of psychological research. You will practice drawing logical and objective conclusions about behavior and mental processes from research results and examine how psychological science can be utilized in becoming an informed consumer of science.

✓ **Key Themes:** These are the "takeaways" that will guide you in thinking about psychological concepts even after you are finished this course.

How will I learn about these things?

1. You will **read** about psychology and **watch** videos to help you learn the content.
2. Then you will try to solve problems that require you to **apply** the information.
3. Next you will **discuss** these problems with classmates and ask questions of the instructor.
4. You will then **revise** the solutions to the problems and get feedback from the instructor.
5. There is an optional **semester project** to complete if you want to earn an A.
6. There will be a short **final exam** based on the concepts from the "apply" assignments.

Mason Core Learning Objectives

1. Explain how individuals, groups or institutions are influenced by contextual factors.
2. Demonstrate awareness of changes in social and cultural constructs.
3. Use appropriate methods and resources to apply social and behavioral science concepts, terminology, principles, and theories in the analysis of significant human issues, past or present.

Grading Specifications

Demonstrating Mastery

I use "nontraditional" grading techniques based on concepts of "ungrading" and "specifications grading." The idea is that when grades are prioritized over learning, less learning happens. At GMU, I must assign grades, and I want them to mean that you have mastered the content. You decide what grade you want and earn credit on the number of learning activities specified in the table below. There is no partial credit, you either meet expectations (credit) or not (no credit) but you will have an opportunity to revise and resubmit as needed (up to three times). You may feel apprehensive about this approach – that is completely normal. I will ask you to give it time –before you make a judgement. More details are on the next page.

Deadlines, Late Work, Extra Credit

I build flexibility and choice into this course, balanced with structure. This is a five-week course, and the design of the Apply practice makes it necessary to submit them **twice weekly before a deadline - they are not accepted late**. The remaining activities are due at the end of the course but completing them as you go (as on the course schedule) is best. Former students will tell you that I have been exceptionally accommodating of personal situations preventing them from completing work on time. Please reach out to me if this happens for you. That said, I cannot extend deadlines just because you waited until the last minute and forgot or overslept. Start early and keep a schedule to stay organized. There is no extra credit but you have THREE "tokens" that you can use to re-do an activity you did not earn credit for.

> **Choose your grade:** During the first week of the course, you will choose the grade that you want to work towards. This is not binding, but it helps me to guide you. Each grade level requires a different "bundle" of activities. For example, for a B you will complete at least 32 of the 53 learning activities, you will meet expectations for 8 of 9 Apply practices, and you will earn at least 70% on the final exam, but you will not complete the project.

Grade Bundles: choose the goal grade on the left and follow to the right to see how to earn it.

	Read/Discuss/Take	+	Apply	+	Project	+	Final Exam
A =	At least 32: (for example, 19 readings, 8 discussions, 5 quizzes)	+	8	+	1	+	70%
B =	At least 32: (for example, 19 readings, 8 discussions, 5 quizzes)	+	8	+	0	+	70%
C =	At least 25 (for example, 14 readings, 7 discussions, 4 quizzes	+	7	+	0	+	70%
D =	At least 22 (for example, 12 readings, 6 discussions, 4 quizzes)	+	6	+	0	+	70%
Available	53 total: 38 readings, 9 discussions, 6 quizzes		9		1		1

DETAILS: Learning Activities and Assessments

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

3 Ways to learn and earn credit – meet expectations for any **32 learning activities of your choice (out of 53) to earn an A or B in the course.**

Introductions and Onboarding

The first few days of the course is dedicated to building a learning community, becoming familiar with the course design and grading, and setting you up for success. My goal is to get us started with a positive atmosphere of collaboration and inclusivity that will be maintained throughout the course so that everyone can learn to the best of their ability. There are a few activities to orient you to the course, including practicing in Perusall (where you read and discuss) and practice uploading an Apply activity. I strongly encourage you to engage in these activities to set yourself up for success in this course!

READ/WATCH: Articles and Videos

There are five "modules" in the course. For each, you will have a choice of readings and videos that you can use to help you complete the Apply Practice. You can read and annotate socially in Perusall, which is a place to ask questions and discuss the readings with your fellow students. You can earn credit by meeting a threshold for reading and annotating in Perusall. Lecture videos and other content in Blackboard supplement these readings to enhance your understanding but do not earn credit. **38 readings to choose from!**

DISCUSS: Apply Practice

This is an opportunity to discuss and get help with the "apply practice"(see details in assessments) and are scored in the same way as the readings (above). You will be able to ask questions here that can be answered by peers, learning assistants, or the instructor.
9 discussion opportunities – work with your peers for credit!

TAKE: Reading Quizzes

Many students want to test their knowledge in a more traditional format to prepare for the MCAT or other exam. There is strong research evidence that quizzing is a high-impact study skill. The quizzes contain questions for the readings labeled "required" only**.**
6 quizzes – complete at 80% for credit.

LEARNING ASSESSMENTS

APPLY Practice:

These are both learning activities and assessment of learning – you will answer questions on your own as a learning activity, then can discuss and ask questions, then revise and resubmit to "show what you know." These are scored based on credit/no credit. If you do not meet expectations for credit, you can use your revise tokens to resubmit. To earn an A or B in the course, you will meet expectations for eight of the nine possible assignments.

CREATE: Projects (only for those striving to earn an A)

This is an opportunity to make connections across concepts and to big questions. You must meet expectations to earn credit – revise tokens can be used to revise. Not required if you choose the "B" path or lower.

EXAM: There is one timed, cumulative, online exam at the end of the semester. Earn 70% for credit.

Learning in a time of Global Crisis: My goal is to facilitate your growth and success in this strange and uncertain time; I can only do that if you tell me what is happening. Please communicate with me if there are obstacles getting in the way of your success in this class!

POLICIES & EXPECTATIONS

The following describe various policies that will be in place this semester.

Technology

This course is conducted via Blackboard and Perusall. All learning and assessment activities must be completed online, preferably on a computer rather than a phone. If your wifi connection is weak or if you will be away from the internet for a length of time, it is your responsibility to plan and complete work before the deadlines.

Withdrawal and Refund Dates

It is the student's responsibility to drop a course. Non-participation or failure to pay does not constitute official withdrawal. To view specific deadlines, log into MyMason: 1) Click on "My Class Schedule" under Student Quick Links 2) Select the current term 3) Click on "View Drop Deadline Dates" at the bottom of the page. You can find the academic calendar with these dates here: https://registrar.gmu.edu/calendars/summer-2021/. The last day to drop with a tuition refund is June 23rd!

Student Privacy Statement

At times, students may disclose personal information in online discussions. It is expected that the class will respect the privacy of classmates just as you would if we were in a face-to-face classroom. The personal information disclosed in this class should not be repeated outside of the course.

Accommodations

My courses are designed to accommodate many different learning needs. If you find that you need more accommodations than what is already built in to the course – or if you have an illness or injury that prevents you from completing your work on time (temporary disability), please visit Disability Services at http://ds.gmu.edu/ to request a conversation. Then discuss your approved accommodations with me. Disability Services is in The Student Union Building I (SUB I). Email: ods@gmu.edu | Phone: (703) 993-2474.

Academic Misconduct

George Mason's honor code, requires all community members to maintain the highest standards of academic honesty and integrity. Cheating, plagiarism, lying, and stealing are prohibited. It is every student's responsibility to familiarize himself or herself with the honor code. The honor code is available HERE. In the event that a student cheats by plagiarizing, the instructor may assign an F grade for the assignment, and/or for the course.

Civility (Non-Academic Misconduct)

Please remember that we are members of a larger learning community where excellence is achieved through civility. Our actions affect everyone in our community. Please be respectful of others regardless of gender, age, race, culture, religion, or sexual orientation. It is expected that all students will follow general "netiquette" in online work. For example: http://www.albion.com/netiquette/corerules.html

Individuals who engage in disruptive online behaviors such as posting disrespectful or hostile comments, posting inappropriate comments, or shouting (using all capitals) may have their online access privileges revoked and/or may receive an F for the class.

Title IX: George Mason University is committed to providing a learning, living, and working environment that is free from discrimination and a campus that is free of sexual misconduct and other acts of interpersonal violence in order to promote community well-being and student success. We encourage students who believe that they have been sexually harassed, assaulted or subjected to sexual misconduct to seek assistance and support. University Policy 1202: Sexual Harassment and Misconduct details Mason's process, the resources, and the options available to students. Any faculty or staff member is required to report all disclosures of sexual assault, interpersonal violence, and stalking to Mason's Title IX Coordinator, but please know that this will result only in someone reaching out to you directly to let you know about available services and to determine if you wish to take any action. You can also contact the Student Support and Advocacy Center (703-380-1434) or Counseling and Psychological Services (703-993-2380) to speak to someone confidentially, as those offices are not required to report disclosures. You may also seek assistance from Mason's Title IX Coordinator (703-993-8730; titleix@gmu.edu).

Holidays/College Closures

In general, online classes continue in the event of weather-related or other closures. Please check the calendar for any holidays that may affect your work: https://ulife.gmu.edu/religious-holiday-calendar/. You are expected to submit before a due date that falls on a holiday that you observe.

TIPS FOR SUCCESS

You *can* expect to earn an A in this class. Do the following and you will succeed!

Readings/Videos/Links

Do the readings, ask questions in Perusall while you read, watch the videos, and take notes as you go. After you read or watch, try to summarize (out loud or writing). This helps you remember what you just learned. There are MANY learning opportunities in this class. You can do very well in this class by reading/watching only the items necessary to answer the Apply questions – and that is fine! If you want more, dive in!

Predictions and Retrieval Practice

Research on learning tells us that previewing and frequent retrieval practice (quizzing) helps you learn concepts better. Knowing the concepts well helps you with understanding and applying at a higher level. Read the Apply questions before you read. You can even take the quiz the first time before you read – you have two chances to take it so the second one can be after you read, which also helps with learning. This can all make classes more enjoyable too!

Managing your Time

You are expected to spend 10-15 hours per week on this course. PRINT the schedule and mark off each item as you complete it. If you begin to fall behind talk to me about how best to get back on track. *If a crisis emerges, contact me *immediately** - I cannot accommodate your emergency if you wait until afterwards to talk to me.

Collegiate Compassion

I believe we learn best when we can show up as whole and healthy people. To learn effectively we need to have basic security: a roof over our head, a safe place to sleep, a stable place to live, and enough food to eat. If you are struggling to meet any of these basic needs please talk to me, visit our campus food pantry or other Mason resources. Asking for assistance and advocating for yourself is an important part of your collegiate experience. You are not alone!

Email/Announcements

Announcements/reminders are posted in Blackboard, sent to your GMU email. Check email regularly. I will make every effort to respond to emails within 48 hours. I expect you will extend the same courtesy.

Come "see" me!

Make an appointment (link in the syllabus, in my email signature, and in Blackboard) for 1:1 zoom conversation – this can be about anything! Questions about the course, the psychology major, pondering life in general. E-mail me and I will try to respond within a day or two.

Wellness

If you are experiencing feelings of anxiety, panic, depression, sadness during the semester, Student Health Services (703-993-2831) and Counseling and Psychological Services Offices (703-993-2380) provides a range of resources to assist and support you. Students can call or walk-in during open hours. If you or someone you know experiences a mental health crisis or emergency, seek help immediately. Call 911 for local emergency services, the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline (1-800-273-8255), or text the Crisis Text Line (741-741) anytime. I am also available to speak with you about stresses related to your work in my course.

Personal Success!!!

Please utilize me as a resource to help you succeed, both in class and outside class. I want you to earn the grade that you want and enjoy this class, do well in college, and still have a life with your friends, family, job, and hobbies. If one or more of those things are not happening, please talk to me so we can work together to figure out a plan to improve your situation.

PSYC 100 Summer 2021 Course Schedule: Readings listed are to prepare for quizzes. Due dates only for Apply Practice. All other activities (see bundles in syllabus) due 7/23.

	To Read/Watch/Apply/Discuss/Take	APPLY PRACTICE DUE DATES (all midnight)	
		Attempt 1	**Revision**
Module 1 INTRODUCTION AND RESEARCH Week 1 6/21 – 6/28 *Drop Deadline 6/23*	Mod 1/Introductions and Onboarding READ: Start with the "Begin Here and Syllabus" tab in Blackboard. Read instructions and practice using Perusall with the Syllabus Q & A. Spend time thoroughly orienting to the course before you jump in! DO: Introduce yourself (Padlet link in Blackboard) WATCH: Introduction Video, Learning Online Video (Blackboard) APPLY: practice uploading a document and choose your grade goal	**ASAP**	**ASAP**
	Mod 1/Unit 1: Empiricism & Research READ: Why Science, Research Designs, choice readings (Perusall) WATCH: Why Empiricism, Study Design, Identifying Study Design, Internal/External Validity (Blackboard) APPLY: ONE - Two attempts (6/24 and 6/28) (Blackboard) DISCUSS: ONE (Perusall) between 6/24 and 6/28 TAKE: Quiz 1 - Why Science, Research Designs (Blackboard)	**Thursday June 24**	**Monday June 28**
PROJECT	Project READ: Project Instructions (Perusall, Blackboard), Ask questions in Perusall -not graded but we will answer questions here.	Part 1 Due July 12 if you want feedback.	
Module 2 BIOLOGICAL & COGNITIVE BASES OF BEHAVIOR Week 2 6/28 – 7/6	Mod 2/Unit 2: Biological READ: Brain & Nervous System, Sensation and Perception, and choice readings (Perusall) WATCH: Synaptic Transmission, The Human Brain: Major Structures and Functions, Information Processing in the Brain, and more (Blackboard) APPLY: TWO (Blackboard) DISCUSS: Apply TWO (Perusall) between 7/1 and 7/6 TAKE: Quiz 2 – Brain & Nervous System, Sensation & Perception (Blackboard)	**Thursday July 1**	
	Mod 2/Unit 3: Cognitive READ: Memory (Encoding Storage and Retrieval), choice readings (Perusall) WATCH: How Reliable is your Memory, Eyewitness ID, and optional videos (Blackboard) EXPLORE: Brain Exercises (Blackboard) APPLY: THREE (Blackboard) DISCUSS: Apply TWO (Perusall) between 7/1 and 7/6 TAKE: Quiz 3 – Memory (Blackboard)		**Tuesday July 6 (extra day due to July 4 holiday)**

	To Read/Watch/Apply/Discuss/Take	Attempt 1	Revision
Module 3 HUMAN DEVELOPMENT & PERSONALITY and SOCIAL Week 3 7/6 – 7/12	Mod 3/Unit 4: Developmental Influences on Behavior READ: Conditioning and Learning, choice readings (Perusall) WATCH: The Difference Between Classical and Operant Conditioning, optional videos (Blackboard) APPLY: FOUR (Blackboard) DISCUSS: Apply FOUR (Perusall) between July 8 and July 12 TAKE: Quiz 4 - Conditioning and Learning (Blackboard)	Thursday July 8	
	Mod 3/Unit 5: Personality and Social Influences on Behavior READ AND COMMENT: Personality Traits and choice readings (Perusall) WATCH: Personality Traits - the Big 5 + more (Blackboard) APPLY: FIVE (Blackboard) DISCUSS: Apply FIVE (Perusall) TAKE: Quiz 5 - Personality Traits (Blackboard)		Monday July 12
Module 4 MENTAL & PHYSICAL HEALTH Week 4 7/12 – 7/19	Mod 4/Unit 6: Mental and Physical Health READ: THREE Choice Readings WATCH: Mental Health/Disorders (required) and others (Blackboard) APPLY: SIX (Blackboard) DISCUSS: Apply SIX (Perusall) TAKE: Quiz 6 – based on required video in Blackboard	Thursday July 15	Monday July 19
Module 5 CAREERS and PEER REVIEWS Week 5 7/19 – 7/23 (Friday)	Mod 5/Unit 7: Careers/Projects READ: Careers in Psychology (Perusall) WATCH: Graduate Student Panel (1 hour video in Blackboard) APPLY: SEVEN (Blackboard) DISCUSS: Apply SEVEN (Perusall) No quiz this week.	Weds July 21	Friday July 23 (ALL LEARNING ACTIVITIES DUE TODAY)
FINAL EXAM	Final Exam due 7/24 – complete at any time during 7/18-7/23. One hour, two attempts.		

Schedule is subject to change – I will provide plenty of notice.