Basic Concepts in Psychology

Day/Time: Tuesdays and Thursdays 9:00 – 10:15 in Innovation 103

Book: Noba Psychology (free and online)

Q&A: I am always available before and after class to talk with you. If you need more time, please come to Drop-in Student Office Hours Tuesdays 12:30-1:30 in David King 3066A OR by appointment (click here -evening hours available)

Instructional Team
Professor: Alison H. Melley, Ph.D. amelley@gmu.edu (you can call me Dr. Melley, pronouns she/her)

Graduate Teaching Assistants (GTAs):
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Accessibility: I've worked to make this course user-friendly and flexible, so that you can learn well. GMU’s Disability Services office can identify specific learning accommodations that will help make all your learning environments equitable. If you have already met with them, be sure to send me your faculty contact sheet and feel free to talk with me about any changes that are needed. You do not need to divulge any personal information to advocate for yourself. We can work together to be sure the course meets your needs. If you do not require accommodations to learn well, please understand that some of your fellow students might, and it is important to me that you do not make assumptions about where, when, or how they learn.

LEARNING IN A TIME OF GLOBAL CRISIS
My goal is to facilitate your growth and success during 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.

College Compassion
It is important to me that you feel able to show up fully in our work together. I am human first, as are you – and we work best when we feel whole, healthy, and secure: 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 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!

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, see help immediately. Call 911, the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline (1-800-273-8255) or text the Crisis Text Line (741-741) I am also available to speak with you about stresses related to your work in my course.

Things We Will Learn and Do

Psychology Content
Learn basic psychological concepts and apply these to everyday life.

Scientific Thinking
Become an informed consumer of psychological science.

Key Themes
Retain knowledge that will guide you even after you finish this course.

Transferable Skills
Practice skills that transfer to any profession.
The Big Stuff: Learning Activities and Grading

Things You Do Solo:

**READ:** You do not need to purchase a book. The readings are linked in Blackboard, from an open access resource: NOBA Psychology.

**TAKE:** Mini Quizzes. These are based on the readings, and you can take them multiple times.

**RESEARCH:** The Psychology Department requires all PSYC100 students to participate in research studies conducted by faculty and graduate students.

**PROCESS:** This is where you record what you have done for the unit, give yourself a grade, and get individual feedback.

Things We Do Together:

**ONBOARDING** Before we begin learning, we spend time building community, becoming familiar with the course design, 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.

**TOPHAT in CLASS**
Class time is a mix of lecture and activities.

**COLLABORATION**
This is where you work with others to make connections across concepts and answer big questions.

How am I graded?
Research shows that when grades are prioritized, less learning happens – so I use nontraditional grading techniques based on concepts of “ungrading” and “specifications grading.” You need a grade and I want it to represent both the work you have done and the amount you have learned. You decide what grade you need or want, and you work towards it.

Each unit contains a checklist to track your learning activities and guidance on grades. At the end of each unit, you will evaluate your learning (in the process letter) before you begin the next unit. We will do the first one together in class. If the instructional team agrees with your evaluation, then you move on. If we believe you could do more, then you can continue to work on that unit until you get where you want to be.

You may feel apprehensive about this approach – that is completely normal. I ask you to give it time before you make a judgment.

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<tr>
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<th>Percentage</th>
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<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>90-100%</td>
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<tr>
<td>A+</td>
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<td>B</td>
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<td>C+</td>
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<td>C</td>
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<td>D</td>
<td>60 to 69%</td>
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<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>less than 60%</td>
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Deadlines & Late Work: We have deadlines because experience tells me that learners need structure. It also infuses distributed practice (i.e., cramming means only short-term learning). However, there are always learners who need a different schedule or have unexpected events. You can turn in your process letter after the due date and it will not hurt your grade. You will need to wait for the feedback from the previous unit to answer the questions in the next process letter – so you will need to do it ASAP, but you can do things off-schedule.

Attendance: You registered for in person instead of online for a reason – and we will maximize the time in class. We will complete many assignments *during class time*, so you have less to do on your own. If you cannot attend, there will be *different* things you can do and include on your process report.

Choose your grade:
During the onboarding process, you will choose the grade that you want to work towards. This is not binding, but it helps both of us to set a goal.

There are several ways to get to your goal. For example, out of 8 Units (7 plus “Onboarding”) – if you earn an A in 5 units and a B in 3 units, you will reach an A in the course.
Learning Principles

This is some of the course content but is so important that I include it in the syllabus. This course is designed to maximize what we know about how people learn best – and you should be able to find or create these opportunities in your other courses as well.

1. Elaborative Processing (the first time you learn about something, you remember best if you do something with the info)
   You will make predictions, READ, and process what you read considering the predictions. You will attend class and actively participate in the lectures, answering questions in TopHat. You will CREATE, DISCUSS & SHARE work during class time.

2. Retrieval Practice (the mere act of trying to remember things, helps to strengthen memory!)
   You will TAKE reading quizzes to consolidate the information in your memory.

3. Distributed Practice (spreading out the learning over time is best for long term memory)
   You will use and apply the major concepts and themes several times throughout the course. You will participate in RESEARCH studies and see the concepts in action, then communicate about it to your peers. You will discuss your learning with your peers and review what they have learned.

4. Metacognition (thinking about what you know and don’t know is a skill that benefits everyone!)
   You will evaluate your own learning in a PROCESS letter. You will read the feedback on the process report and use it to enhance your learning in the next unit.

Learning Objectives - Details

This course focuses on applications of psychological science that will help students navigate their lives. It also meets the Mason Core requirement in the Social and Behavioral Sciences category. Following are the detailed learning objectives for the course.

**PSYCHOLOGY CONTENT**

⇒ Identify basic concepts and interpret research findings.  
⇒ Apply psychological principles to personal growth and other aspects of everyday life.

**SCIENTIFIC THINKING**

⇒ Solve problems using psychological methods.  
⇒ Describe the advantages and limitations of research strategies.  
⇒ Evaluate psychological research.  
⇒ Draw logical and objective conclusions about behavior and mental processes from empirical evidence.  
⇒ Examine how psychological science can be used to counter misinformation.

**TRANSFERABLE SKILLS**

⇒ Critical and analytical thinking  
⇒ Information Management  
⇒ Communication  
⇒ Collaboration  
⇒ Integrity  
⇒ Inclusivity  
⇒ Technology

**KEY THEMES**

⇒ Provide examples of psychology’s integrative themes

**MASON CORE LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

⇒ Explain how individuals, groups or institutions are influenced by contextual factors.  
⇒ Demonstrate awareness of changes in social and cultural constructs.  
⇒ 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.
**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.

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**Technology**

Use of Blackboard and TopHat is required for this course. All learning activities must be completed online, but you can always write or draw and take a picture to upload! You will need a device in class – TopHat works well on a smartphone. If your Wi-Fi connection is weak or you will be away from the internet, it is your responsibility to plan ahead to complete your work.

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**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 your MyMason account: 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/](https://registrar.gmu.edu/calendars/)

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**Student Privacy Statement**

At times, students may disclose personal information in online class discussions. It is expected that you will respect the privacy of classmates. The personal information disclosed in this class should not be repeated outside of the course.

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**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 themselves with the honor code. The honor code is available HERE. If a student cheats by plagiarizing, the instructor may assign an F grade for the assignment, and/or for the course.

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**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](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.

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**Tips**

**Managing your Time**

You are expected to spend 8-10 hours per week on this course. PRINT the schedule and unit checklists, and mark off each item as you complete it. These are designed to help you steadily progress in the course. If you begin to fall behind talk to me about how best to get back on track. Students who wait until the last minute before each deadline, or until the end of the course do not do as well in my courses. Start early and keep a schedule to stay organized.

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**Email/Announcements**

Announcements that are made in class are not always repeated in writing. If you miss class, make sure to check with a classmate for notes. Reminders are posted in Blackboard and sent to your GMU email. Read these. Use Course Messages or email to contact Dr. Melley and email to contact your TA or LA.

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**Revisions/Extra Credit**

There is no extra credit, but you can re-do any process letter where you did not reach your goal. Go back to the learning activities and do them again, then resubmit your letter. Do this soon after getting the feedback!

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**Come see me!**

Attend Drop-in Student Office Hours or make an appointment for 1:1 conversation.
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Readings, Focusing Question, Tasks</th>
<th>Due Dates</th>
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| **Week 1: Jan 25-27 Introductions and Onboarding** | Reading: *Syllabus*  
Onboarding Tasks: TopHat, Padlet Introductions, Semester Start Survey, email TA.  
Due: Onboarding Process Letter – How will this class work? (will do this in class) | Jan 27    |
| **Weeks 2-3: Feb 1-10 Unit 1: Cognitive Bases of Behavior** | Readings: *Memory, Decision-Making, Eye-witness Testimony*  
TopHat Activities  
Due: Process Letter #1 – How can cognitive psychology help me in school? | Feb 10    |
TopHat Activities  
Due: Process Letter #2 – How can I think like a psychological scientist? | Feb 24    |
| **Weeks 6-7: Mar 1 – 13 Unit 3: Biological Bases of Behavior** | Readings: *The Brain & Nervous System, Sensation & Perception, Motives & Goals*  
TopHat Activities  
Mid-semester course enhancement survey  
Due: Process Letter #3 – How does my nervous system affect how I think, feel, and interact with the environment? | March 10  |
| **SPRING BREAK March 14- 20** |                                                                                                      |           |
| **Weeks 8-9: Mar 22 – Apr 5 Unit 4: Developmental Influences on Behavior** | Readings: *Conditioning and Learning; Social & Personality Development in Childhood; Aging*  
Due: Process Letter #4 – How did I become the person I am becoming today? | March 31  |
| **Weeks 10-11: Apr 5 – 14 Unit 5: Personality and Social Influences on Behavior** | Readings: *Personality Traits and choose two from: Persuasion, Cooperation, and Social Cognition*  
Due: Process Letter #5 – How can psychology help us understand and effect change in social problems? | April 14  |
| **Weeks 12-13: Apr 19-28 Unit 6: Mental and Physical Health** | Readings: *(Choose 3) Anxiety and Related Disorders, Mood Disorders, The Healthy Life, Happiness, Psychopharmacology, Therapeutic Orientations*  
Due: Process Letter #6 – How can I manage stress or change my behavior? | April 28  |
| **Week 14: May 3-5 Unit 7: Careers** | Reading: *Careers in Psychology*  
Due: Final Process Letter #7 – How can psychology help in my job or career?  
All Research Requirements due May7, no exceptions. Anything else done after May 7 is not given the opportunity to revise (we must stop working sometime!). | May 5     |

*Finals Week (no exam) – any late work must be submitted by May 12 – no revisions, no feedback, no exceptions.*