

George Mason University

Basic Concepts in Psychology

READINGS: You do not need to purchase any textbooks. The readings come from a free open access educational resource, NOBA Psychology. A collection of chapters has been customized for this course and is available to you through the course Blackboard site.

FALL 2023 | PSYC 100
ASYNCHRONOUS ONLINE



Student Office Hours: Mondays 2:30-3:30 pm

My Office: David King Hall room 3041 on campus, or this Zoom room for virtual meetings

<https://gmu.zoom.us/j/97689004777?pwd=V3k3NXlRYUpsaFVBUldmVEtaeFpaZz09>



Instructor: Peter J. McEachern, M.A.

Email: pmceach@gmu.edu

What will we 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:** You will learn the meaning of seven integrative themes. These are “takeaways” that will guide you in thinking about psychological concepts even after you are finished this course.



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.

How will I learn about these things?

1. You will **read**, **watch** videos, and **explore** other materials to help you learn, including **taking** practice quizzes.
2. Then you will apply the information you learned to “real life” scenarios in “**learn & share**” activities. You will discuss the solutions to problems with classmates.
3. You will participate in psychology department **research** studies.
4. You will **write** a final reflection paper summarizing and integrating what you learned during the semester and what you have taken away from the class.

A circular logo with a light gray background. Inside the circle, there is a white outline of a graduation cap (mortarboard) with a tassel hanging from the right side. The text "Grading Specifications" is written in a large, black, sans-serif font across the top of the page, partially overlapping the top of the logo.

Grading Specifications

Demonstrating Mastery

I use nontraditional grading techniques. I do this because research shows that when grades are prioritized over learning, curiosity is dampened, and less learning happens. I must assign grades at the end of the course - but I want them to have meaning: that you have *mastered the content*. You decide what grade you want, and you work towards it based on the table below. There is no partial credit for most learning activities - you either meet expectations (credit) or not (no credit) but you will have an opportunity to revise and resubmit. You may feel apprehensive about this approach – that is completely normal. I will ask you to give it time before you make a judgment. More details are on the next page.

Deadlines, Late Work, Extra Credit

I build flexibility and choice into this course, balanced with structure. The design of the learning experience makes it necessary to complete assignments ***before a deadline***. We are all human, however, and “life happens” - so I do allow some flexibility. Everyone begins the course with two “wishes.” 1 wish = 1 late quiz, discussion, reflection, or learn & share. If you need to turn something in late, you do not need to explain or give a reason – just turn it in and one wish is deducted. There is no extra credit. If you would like to redo a Learn & Share that you submitted but did not receive credit for, please email me. 1 wish = 1 redo of a Learn & Share.

Grading Scale

Total Points	= 700	
Practice Quizzes (23 x 10)	=230	A = 648 points
Learn & Share (8 x 25)	= 200	B = 576 points
Reflection (8 x 10)	= 80	C = 504 points
Research Participation (7 x 10)	= 70	D = 432 points
Final Reflection Paper	= 140	



DETAILS: Tasks

LEARNING ACTIVITIES:

There are many ways to learn in this course. Most of the following earn points for mastery or completion. This means that you will show a certain level of understanding in order to earn credit for that activity.

INTRODUCTIONS AND ONBOARDING

The first week 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 so that everyone can learn to the best of their ability. There are a few activities to orient you to the course, including practice taking a quiz.

READ/WATCH: Articles and Videos

There are seven units in the course. For each, you will have readings and videos.

TAKE: Practice Quizzes (23 x 10 points)

There is strong research evidence that quizzing is a high-impact study skill, so quizzes are provided that are based on the content in the readings. When you earn 85% or better on a quiz, you earn credit – they can be taken multiple times.

LEARN & SHARE: Discussion board (8 x 25 points)

This is an opportunity to discuss and get help with the APPLY practice *after* you complete the questions on your own. You will be able to ask questions here that can be answered by peers or the instructor.

REFLECT (7 x 10 points)

You will practice reflecting on your own learning through a series of “metacognition” questions at the end of each unit.

RESEARCH (7 x 10 points)

The Psychology Department requires all PSYC100 students to participate in 7 credit hours of research studies conducted by faculty and graduate students. Alternative assignments are available. See Blackboard for details.

FINAL PROJECT (140 points)

The final project is a learning and reflection paper. In this paper, you will integrate themes learned throughout the course and discuss your most important takeaways from the course.



POLICIES & EXPECTATIONS

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

Technology

Use of Blackboard is required for this course. All assignments and quizzes must be completed online, preferably on a computer rather than a phone or tablet. If your wifi connection is weak or you will be away from the internet, it is your responsibility to plan ahead 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 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/>

Student Privacy Statement

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

Accommodations

Disability Services at George Mason University is committed to providing equitable access to learning opportunities for all students. If you are seeking accommodations, please visit <http://ds.gmu.edu/> for detailed information about the Disability Services registration process. 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.

PSYC 100 Course Schedule

Date	Unit Topic	Due Dates (Not DO Dates!):
Week 1 8/21-8/27	<i>Introductions and Onboarding</i>	8/27
Weeks 2-3 8/28 - 9/10 <i>Drop Deadline: 9/5</i>	<i>Unit 1: Cognitive Bases of Behavior</i>	9/10
Weeks 4-5 9/11-9/24	<i>Unit 2: Empiricism & Research</i>	9/24
Weeks 6-7 9/25-10/8	<i>Unit 3: Biological Bases of Behavior</i>	10/8
Weeks 8-9 10/10-10/22	<i>Unit 4: Developmental Influences on Behavior</i>	10/22
Weeks 10-11 10/23-11/5	<i>Unit 5: Personality and Social Influences on Behavior</i>	11/5
Weeks 12-13 11/6-11/19	<i>Unit 6: Mental and Physical Health</i>	11/19
Week 14 11/27-12/3	<i>Unit 7: Careers/Projects</i>	12/3
FINALS WEEK	<i>Final Reflection Paper</i>	12/8

See the next page for TIPS FOR SUCCESS!

TIPS FOR SUCCESS

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

Readings/Videos/Links

After you read or watch, try to summarize (out loud or writing). This helps you remember what you just learned.

Predictions and Retrieval Practice

Research on learning tells us that previewing and frequent retrieval practice (quizzing) help you learn concepts better. Knowing the concepts well helps you with understanding and applying them at a higher level. Read and answer the practice quizzes in Blackboard **before** you read. You have unlimited attempts so you can take it again after you read. This can all make classes more enjoyable too!

Managing your Time

You are expected to spend 8-10 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 *as soon as possible** - it is more difficult to accommodate your emergency if you wait until afterward to talk to me.

Research Participation

Try to complete some of your hours at the beginning of the semester. Most students find this interesting! You are responsible for keeping track of the appointment time, location, and experimenter information.

Feedback/Grades

You will see general feedback in Blackboard after the LEARN & SHARE due date.

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 and sent to your GMU email. Read these.

Check email regularly. I will make every effort to respond to emails within 48 hours. I expect you will extend the same courtesy if I send you a private message.

Come see me!

Attend Drop-in Student Office Hours or make an appointment for 1:1 conversation. 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.