Introduction to Psychology

Course Title

Course Number
PSYCH-UA.9001001

SAMPLE SYLLABUS

Lecturer Contact Information
Timur Sevincer
Timur.sevincer@nyu.edu
Office hours: Wednesdays, 11:45am to 1:15pm, Room "Kreuzberg"

Course Details
Wednesdays, 1:30pm to 4:15pm
Location of class: NYUB Academic Center, Room "Kreuzberg"

Prerequisites
None

Units earned
4

Course Description
Psychology is the scientific study of mind (e.g., experience) and behavior. Psychology is a popular topic for students, the public media, and a part of our everyday life. Psychology is an exciting field that addresses various questions: Why do people behave in the way they do? To what extent are we in control of our own actions? Can we manipulate behavior (e.g., consumption & public health)? What is the neural basis of experience, thought and behavior? What is the purpose and nature of consciousness? How can we define mental illness? How can we help mentally ill people?

Course Objective
The course provides students with a broad understanding of scientific psychology, including its historical development, dominant concepts (e.g., memory, learning, emotion), major theories, perspectives (e.g., general, differential, developmental, interpersonal) and methods (e.g., experiments, observations), and may finally cumulate in more or less satisfying answers to some of the questions raised in the course description.

Assessment Components

Class Participation 15%
The 2 best out of 3 Tests  40% (20% each)  
Class Presentation  15%  
Final Exam  30%  

Tests/Exams:  
There will be three in-class tests (30 min each). Each will be composed of multiple choice questions and cloze test. Your worst score out of the 3 tests in-class will be dropped. There will be a final exam (45 min) that will be cumulative and similar in structure to the tests.  

Class Presentation:  
Each student will present a research proposal in class.  
Duration: 15 minutes.  
The main point is to introduce students to reading and understanding empirical research papers, to develop research questions, and to train presenting research in a concise manner. The presentation should follow the structure of a paper, i.e., include an introduction to the topic, explanation of the methods, and hypothesized results, and their interpretation and discussion. The presenting student will prepare 3-5 questions about the proposal / topic / method to discuss in class.  

Failure to submit or fulfill any required component may result in failure of the class, regardless of grades achieved in other assignments  

Assessment Expectations  
**Grade A:** The student makes excellent use of empirical and theoretical material and offers well-structured arguments in their work. The student writes comprehensive essays / answers to exam questions and their work shows strong evidence of critical thought and extensive reading.  
**Grade B:** The candidate shows a good understanding of the problem and has demonstrated the ability to formulate and execute a coherent research strategy.  
**Grade C:** The work is acceptable and shows a basic grasp of the research problem. However, the work fails to organize findings coherently and is in need of improvement.  
**Grade D:** The work passes because some relevant points are made. However, there may be a problem of poor definition, lack of critical awareness, poor research.  
**Grade F:** The work shows that the research problem is not understood; there is little or no critical awareness and the research is clearly negligible.  

Grade Conversion  
Your lecturer may use one of the following scales of numerical equivalents to letter grades:  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Letter Grade</th>
<th>Numerical Range</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>94-100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>84-86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>74-76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>65-66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D+</td>
<td>67-69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>77-79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>87-89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>below 65</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Alternatively:

A = 4.0  A- = 3.7
B+ = 3.3  B = 3.0  B- = 2.7
C+ = 2.3  C = 2.0  C- = 1.7
D+ = 1.3  D = 1.0  F = 0.0.

Attendance Policy

Participation in all classes is essential for your academic success, especially in courses that meet only once per week. Your attendance in both content and language courses is required and will be checked at each class meeting. As soon as it becomes clear that you cannot attend a class, you must inform your professor by e-mail immediately (i.e. before the start of your class). Absences are only excused if they are due to illness, religious observance or emergencies. Your professor or NYU Berlin's administration may ask you to present a doctor's note or an exceptional permission from NYU Berlin's Director or Wellness Counselor as proof. Emergencies or other exceptional circumstances must be presented to the Director. Doctor's notes need to be submitted to the Academics Office, who will inform your professors. Doctor's notes need to be from a local doctor and carry a signature and a stamp. If you want the reasons for your absence to be treated confidentially, please approach NYU Berlin's Director or Wellness Counselor.

Unexcused absences affect students' grades: In content courses each unexcused absence (equaling one week's worth of classes) leads to a deduction of 2% of the overall grade and may negatively affect your class participation grade. In German Language classes two or three (consecutive or non-consecutive) unexcused absences (equaling one week's worth of classes) lead to a 2% deduction of the overall grade. Three unexcused absences in one content course and five unexcused absences in your German language course may lead to a Fail in that course. Furthermore, your professor is entitled to deduct points for frequent late arrival or late arrival back from in-class breaks. Being more than 15 minutes late counts as an unexcused absence. Please note that for classes involving a field trip, transportation difficulties are never grounds for an excused absence. It is the student's responsibility to arrive in time at the announced meeting point.

Exams, tests and quizzes, deadlines, and oral presentations that are missed due to illness always require a doctor's note as documentation. It is the student's responsibility to produce this doctor's note and submit it to the Academics Office; until this doctor's note is produced the missed assessment is graded with an F and no make-up assessment is scheduled. In content classes, an F in one assignment may lead to failure of the entire class.

Attendance Rules on Religious Holidays

Members of any religious group may, without penalty, excuse themselves from classes when required in compliance with their religious obligations. Students who anticipate being absent due to religious observance should notify their lecturer AND NYU Berlin's Academics Office in writing via e-mail one week in advance. If examinations or assignment deadlines are scheduled on the day the student will be absent, the Academics Office will schedule a make-up examination or extend the deadline for assignments. Please note that an absence is only excused for the holiday but not for any days of travel that may come before and/or after the holiday. See also http://www.nyu.edu/about/policies-guidelines-compliance/policies-and-guidelines/university-calendar-policy-on-religious-holidays.html
Late Submission of Work
(1) Written work due in class must be submitted during the class time to the professor.

(2) Late work should be submitted in person to the lecturer or to the Academics Office, who will write on the essay or other work the date and time of submission, in the presence of the student. Another member of the administrative staff may also personally accept the work, and will write the date and time of submission on the work, as above.

(3) Work submitted late receives a penalty of 2 points on the 100 point scale for each day it is late (excluding weekends and public or religious holidays), unless an extension has been approved (with a doctor's note or by approval of NYU Berlin's administration), in which case the 2 points per day deductions start counting from the day the extended deadline has passed.

(4) Without an approved extension, written work submitted more than 5 days (excluding weekends and public or religious holidays) following the submission date receives an F.

(5) End of semester essays must be submitted on time.

(6) Students who are late for a written exam have no automatic right to take extra time or to write the exam on another day.

(7) Please remember that university computers do not keep your essays - you must save them elsewhere. Having lost parts of your essay on the university computer is no excuse for a late submission.

Provisions for Students with Disabilities
Academic accommodations are available for students with documented disabilities. Please contact the Moses Center for Students with Disabilities at 212-998-4980 or see their website (https://www.nyu.edu/students/communities-and-groups/students-with-disabilities.html) for further information.

Plagiarism Policy
The presentation of another person’s words, ideas, judgment, images or data as though they were your own, whether intentionally or unintentionally, constitutes an act of plagiarism. Proper referencing of your sources avoids plagiarism (see as one possible help the NYU library guide to referencing styles: http://nyu.libguides.com/citations).

NYU Berlin takes plagiarism very seriously; penalties follow and may exceed those set out by your home school. Your lecturer may ask you to sign a declaration of authorship form.

It is also an offense to submit work for assignments from two different courses that is substantially the same (be it oral presentations or written work). If there is an overlap of the subject of your assignment with one that you produced for another course (either in the current or any previous semester), you MUST inform your professor.
For a summary of NYU Global's academic policies please see: 
[www.nyu.edu/global/academic-policies](http://www.nyu.edu/global/academic-policies)

**Required Text(s)**

**NYU Berlin Library Catalogue:** [http://guides.nyu.edu/global/berlin](http://guides.nyu.edu/global/berlin) or follow the link on NYU Berlin's website (Academics/Facilities & Services).

**Supplemental Text(s) (not required to purchase)**
Research papers will be made available online.

**Internet Research Guidelines**
To be discussed in class.

**Additional Required Equipment**
None.

**Session 1 – 30 Aug 2017**
The Science of Psychology & Scientific Method
Prologue & Chapter 1 (1-47)
What is psychology? Why do we do scientific psychology at all? Concepts, focus, perspectives, naïve vs. scientific view; How do we get solid knowledge about the human mind and behavior? Scientific methods; data collection; planning an experiment; What is a theory? Why do we need probabilities and statistics? How can we describe data properly? Why do we need data at all? Observation vs. experiment?

**Session 2 – 6 Sep 2017**
Perception & Consciousness
Chapter 5 & 6 (180-257)
How are perceptual inputs coded into the language of the nervous system? Is there perception without consciousness? What is the relation between objective and subjective intensity of perception? How can we selectively pay attention? Why do certain stimuli catch our attention? What is consciousness? Is there a neural basis for consciousness? How can we measure consciousness? What is the function of consciousness? How can drugs change our state of consciousness?

**Session 3 – 13 Sep 2017**
Mandatory field trip to the “Alte Nationalgalerie”
You will meet as usual at 1:30pm at the Academic Center. A member of staff will accompany you to the Alte Nationalgalerie. Alternatively you can meet the group at 2:00pm at the main entrance of the Alte Nationalgalerie, Bodestraße 1-3, 10178 Berlin. Attendance is required until 3:45pm. Students who do not have class afterwards are welcome to stay longer. Each student will receive a handout with discussion questions for the visit and present his or her responses at Session 4.

**Session 4 – 20 Sep 2016**
Learning & Memory
Chapters 7 & 8 (258-339)
What is a working memory? Why do we need the working memory? What is the long-term memory? How are items encoded into long-term memory? What other types of memory are there? How can we improve memory? What is learning? How does the brain learn? Why do we need the concept of learning at all? What is emotional learning? Is there unconscious learning?
Presentation of field work results from the Alte Nationalgalerie.

Session 5 – 27 Sep 2016
1st part: Test 1 (30 min)
2nd part: Intelligence
Chapter 11 (424-459)
How can we measure intelligence? What is IQ? Are there different types of intelligence? How do genetic and environmental factors interact in determining our intelligence? Are there group differences in intelligence?

Session 6 – 4 Oct 2016
Thinking
Chapter 9 (340-377)
What are mental representations? Judgment: How do we draw conclusions from experience? Reasoning: How do we draw conclusions from our beliefs? What is the role of heuristics in decision making? How do we attain a decision? What is the role of emotion in decision making? What are the implications for everyday life, public health, and policy making?

Session 7 – 11 Oct 2016
Motivation: at the heart of psychology
Chapter 12 (460-490)
What is motivation? Why do people do what they do? Motives and drives. Motivation in relation to emotions. How can we measure motivational states? How can we manipulate behavior? How do we set and successfully pursue personal goals?

18 Oct 2016 – Semester Break - No Class

1st part: Test 2
2nd part: Emotion
Chapter 12 (490-503)
What is an emotion? What is the history of emotion? Are expressions of emotions universal across cultures? Are there emotions without feelings? Are emotions learned or innate? How do emotions help us to behave appropriately? How can we regulate our emotions?

Session 9 – 1 Nov 2016
Developmental Psychology
Chapter 14 (544-589)
How do human beings develop over the course of their life? Are there certain periods where children are especially sensitive to certain information (e.g., learning a language)? Can we
predict later development and performance from certain estimates that have been gathered during childhood? Are older adults more depressed than younger adults? Can mental fitness be improved in older adults?

**Session 10 – 8 Nov 2016**
Social Cognition & Interpersonal Processes
Chapter 13 (504-543)
We are agents in a social world. It is obvious, that social processes (perception, attribution, persuasion etc.) play an important role in our daily lives. What are these “social processes”? Do we behave differently when in the presence of others? Why do we fall in love? How do people perceive us and how do we perceive them? How can social roles shape our behaviors? How does obedience arise?

**Session 11 – 15 Nov 2016**
1st part: Test 3 (30 min)
2nd part: Personality & Interpersonal Differences: Theory & Diagnostics
Chapter 15 (590-633)
What is personality? What is a trait? How can we describe personality? What is the relation between trait and behavior? How can we assess personality?

**Session 12 – 22 Nov 2016**
Extreme Deviations: Psychopathology
Chapter 16 (634-675)
What are mental disorders? How do they relate to “normal” functioning? How can we objectively define mental disorders? What is vulnerability? Can everybody go crazy? What are the costs and benefits of diagnostis and labeling? Am I compulsive? What is neurosis and how does it relate to psychosis?

**Session 13 – 29 Nov 2016**
Treatment of Psychopathology
Chapter 17 (676-715)
What is the history of treatment? How does this differ from modern approaches? Let’s talk vs. let’s take a pill: How efficient is “talking”? Are biomedical approaches superior?

**Session 14 – 6 Dec 2016**
Summary, Feedback, Outlook
Review for final exam

**Session 15 – 13 Dec 2016**
Final exam (45 min)

**Classroom Etiquette**
To be discussed in class.

**Suggested Co-Curricular Activities**
To be discussed in class.

**Your Lecturer**
Dr. Timur Sevincer is a deputy professor at the Institute of Psychology at the University of Hamburg. His primary area of research is motivation and self-regulation. His research was funded by the Germany Research Foundation. Dr. Sevincer has authored and co-authored over 25 scholarly publications and is co-editor of a volume on the psychology of thinking about the future (to be published at Guilford Press).