AS.200.101

Introduction to Psychology
Fall 2018

The only introductory course where the subject matter is you.

The psychologist finds himself in the midst of a rich and vast land full of strange happenings: there are men killing themselves; a child playing; a child forming his lips trying to say his first word; a person who, having fallen in love and being caught in an unhappy situation, is not willing or not able to find a way out; there is the mystical state called hypnosis, where the will of one person seems to govern another person; there is the reaching out for higher and more difficult goals; loyalty to a group; dreaming; planning; exploring the world; and so on without end. It is an immense continent full of fascination and power and full of stretches of land where no one ever has set foot.

Psychology is out to conquer this continent, to find out where its treasures are hidden, to investigate its danger spots, to master its vast forces, and to utilize its energies.

**When:** T Th, 1:30-2:45      **Where:** Hodson 110

for more information, visit:

[http://intropsych.jhu.edu](http://intropsych.jhu.edu)
Instructor

Chaz Firestone
Assistant Professor of Psychological and Brain Sciences
Director, Perception & Mind Laboratory
Office: Ames 223
Office Hours: Wednesday, 11:00am-12:00pm. (Please stop by! Even if just to say hello.)
Email: chaz@jhu.edu

Teaching Assistants: ta@lists.johnshopkins.edu

There are no sections in this course, but we have a talented and dedicated group of teaching assistants who are eager to help you learn and succeed. You will be ‘assigned’ a primary TA after the first week of the course; this person will be your first point of contact for help, and will also return assignments to you. TAs keep regular office hours, and you can contact any one of them individually (not just your assigned TA). You can also e-mail all the TAs at once using the listserv ta@lists.johnshopkins.edu.

**Important: Email**

We do not yet have an Intro Psych Snapchat account, but we are available to you by e-mail. However, there are almost 500 of you, and only 5 of us. For this reason, we have a system in place to make our digital correspondence manageable for everyone. It requires that you:

**add ‘intro18’ to the subject of every e-mail**

We have dedicated e-mail inboxes specifically for your questions, and our system requires that you add “intro18” to the subject-line of every e-mail you send. Indeed, some of us may not even receive your e-mail at all without this tag! So please be sure to add it to every e-mail you send to Prof. Firestone or the TAs, including general questions, appointment requests, etc.

There is one exception to this rule. For reading responses (see below), you should add the subject “intro18-r” to the e-mail. Again, we may not receive your assignments otherwise, in which case they may not count!

**TAs**

Chenxiao Guan
Graduate Student, Perception & Mind Lab
Office: Ames 101
Office Hours: Th 4:00pm-6:00pm
Email: chenxiao@jhu.edu

Vyash Puliyadi
Graduate Student, Knierim Lab
Office: Ames 116
Office Hours: T 11:30am-1:30pm
Email: vyash.puliyadi@jhu.edu

Qian Yu
Graduate Student, Vision & Cognition Lab
Office: Ames 150
Office Hours: M 9:30am-11:30am
Email: qianyu@jhu.edu
Readings

Textbooks provide comprehensive overviews of new fields, and so are widely used in introductory courses. But they also increase the amount of boredom in the universe, and decrease the amount of money in your wallet to buy Uni Mini mozz sticks.

For this reason, our course will not use a textbook at all. Instead, all of our readings will be articles that present psychological concepts and findings with a bit more zest (and often more depth), including papers from the primary scientific literature, popular books written by psychologists, and relevant pieces of writing from magazines such as The New Yorker or The Atlantic.

Additionally, some of our classes won’t have “readings” at all, but instead will ask you to watch a video or even play an online game illustrating a psychological concept. You’ll find links to all these materials on our course website before the relevant class meets.

Format

Each class will consist of a lecture, usually by Prof. Firestone but occasionally by a special guest. The lectures will not always perfectly match the readings; psychology is an extremely broad and diverse field, and there is more material worth covering than there is time to cover it. The single best ‘secret’ to succeeding in this course is to attend all the lectures and do all the readings.

There will be copies of the lecture slides available online after class, but they will not contain very much text and so are no substitute for attending the lectures and taking good notes. Indeed, since psychology is the study of our own minds, lectures will almost always involve some interactive or dynamic component that you simply cannot experience or understand by reviewing the slides alone. Come see for yourself!

Requirements & Evaluation

Exams (75%)

There will be three ‘mid-term’ exams (and no ‘final’), worth 30%, 30%, and 15%, with your lowest-scoring exam counting for the fewest points. This seems better than if all exams counted for the same amount of points, since this way one bad day cannot ruin your grade all on its own. (In fact, if you scored 50% on one of the exams but then aced the rest of the course, you would be guaranteed an A under our grading rubric). But it also means that every exam counts, and that “tanking” one of the exams is a bad idea.

Each exam will consist entirely of multiple choice questions. In some ways, this is not ideal, since short answer questions would allow for more variety in the sorts of questions that we ask and answers that you give. At the same time, however, those kinds of questions open the door to more subjectivity in grading, and less uniformity across graders (which we may learn a bit about in our class!). So, we'll try to make the questions interesting and
thoughtful, while also avoiding unfair “trick” questions. We’ll also debrief as a group after each exam, to make sure things went smoothly and fairly.

The exams are not cumulative, meaning that each exam will cover the course material since the previous exam (or, for the first exam, since the beginning of the course). But the exams are cumulative in the sense that later exams may rely on concepts introduced earlier in the semester. For example, the “Brain” lecture will be early in the course — but later exams may still mention the brain! Consider an analogy with a trilogy of books or movies: Each third is “self-contained” in the sense that you could watch it and still enjoy yourself; but there would be references and details that you would miss if you watched only the third movie without having seen the first and second.

How can you succeed on these exams? As noted above, the ‘secret’ to success is to attend all the lectures and do all the readings. In fact, here is a graph from the last time our course was offered (Fall 2017) showing that the % of classes a student attended strongly predicted that student’s score on our exams:

(But wait, didn’t I learn somewhere that correlation ≠ causation? Maybe people who do better on the exams also just like the topic more and so show up to class more often! Well, yes, but if you’re thinking that then you probably already sit in the front row?)

**Reading Responses (15%)**

Approximately once per week, class will end with a short writing assignment (150-200 words or so) having to do with that week’s material. Each reading response should take no more than 20 minutes of work, and each will be graded pass/fail; I expect nearly every one of you to pass nearly every time. Your goal in these assignments is simply to demonstrate that you completed (and understood the gist of) the readings; our goal is to encourage you to deeply engage with the material. The total number of these assignments may depend on how different parts of the course go, but there will be more than 5 and fewer than 15 of them. If the total number of assignments is \( N \), each individual assignment will be worth \((15/N)\%\) of your final grade. These are not collaborative assignments, and should be done individually. Unless noted otherwise, reading responses will be assigned Thursday after
class, and they will be due by 1pm the following Tuesday. **Important: When submitting reading responses to your TA, add “intro18-rr” to the subject of your e-mail! We may not receive them otherwise, in which case they may not count!**

**Participation (10%)**

In other words, showing up. 10% is a massive amount of points to give for participation, but this reflects just how crucial participation is to succeeding in this course. We will use the “Clicker” system here at JHU, and so you should acquire one if you haven’t already (see http://cer.jhu.edu/tools-and-tech/clickers). There will be at least one clicker question during every lecture, and you will signal your presence in class simply by answering that question. These will not be comprehension questions, and in fact many of them won’t have right answers at all. For example, they may ask you to predict the outcome of a famous psychology experiment, guess how many Americans suffer from mental health disorders, or tell us whether you would shock a cute fluffy puppy if a person in a labcoat asked you to.

To assign you a participation score at the end of the semester, we have taken a cue from Prof. Linda Gorman: **If you answer at least one clicker question during at least 80% of the lectures, you earn 100% of the participation points.** But if you answer fewer than that, you earn that percentage of the participation points. So, someone who is present for 60% of the lectures (as indicated by clicker answers) will earn a 6/10 for participation, but someone who is present for 85% of the lectures (as indicated by clicker answers) will earn a 10/10 for participation. This system is great because it excuses you from random clicker mishaps: If the batteries fail one day, or if you step into the restroom just as a clicker question goes up, that lecture will just be part of the “freebies” afforded by your 20% buffer zone. But that means we will not be entertaining pleas for extra attendance points: Even if there’s a “good reason” you missed class, that absence won’t count against you in any meaningful way unless you also miss 20% of our other classes. At this rate, simply showing up to a given lecture adds about 0.5% to your final grade!

**NB:** Having your friend take your clicker to class for you so that you can earn participation points without actually being there is cheating, and will be treated like any other case of cheating. In fact, it is worse than many other forms of cheating, because it implicates both you and the friend who “helped” you, since helping someone else cheat is also a violation of academic integrity. Asking someone to take your clicker to class for you is asking them to risk both your academic career and theirs; don’t do it!

**Your Final Grade**

We will be borrowing a brilliant grading system developed by Prof. Stewart Hendry which ensures that (i) an A is available to every single student, and indeed it is possible for the entire class to earn an A; (ii) many students will certainly get an A; (iii) there are protections against both grade inflation and deflation; and (iv) nobody is in competition with one another for an A grade. How does this magical system work? Behold:

1. The top 5% of scores earn an A+. (NB: At JHU, an A+ and an A are both worth 4.0)
2. The next best score becomes the upper “benchmark” for getting an A.
3. Anyone within 10 percentage points of the benchmark gets an A or A-.
4. Anyone within 10-20 percentage points of the benchmark gets a B+, B, or B-.
5. Anyone within 20-30 percentage points of the benchmark gets a C+, C, or C-.

For example, if there were 400 people in the course, the top 20 scores earn an A+. Now, consider the 21st best score — say, a 94%. In that case, 84-94% is an A or A-, 74-84% is a B+, B, or B-, and 64-74% is a C+, C, or C-. (+ and – are awarded by dividing up the relevant 10% range into equal parts.) Anything else is a D or below.

As you can see, in this system, everyone can get an A, and many students will certainly get an A. At the same time, if the course is “too easy” or “too hard”, the system compensates for that to some degree. Finally, even though this is technically a “curve” of some sort, it is not the kind of curve that puts you in any meaningful competition with your friends for GPA points, since your A has no effect on your friend’s A: As long as you both fall within the range specified by the system, you both get the A. Brilliant!

**Extra Credit**

Finally, you can earn up to 2% of extra credit by participating in psychology experiments. They are fun and educational, and your participation helps researchers in the Department of Psychological and Brain Sciences learn more about how the mind works! Each 1-hour “credit” you receive for participation in an experiment adds 0.5% to your final grade for the course (up to 4 credits total), applied after the A/B/C range has been set but before your score is converted into a letter grade. So, in the above example, we would determine that 84%-94% is an A before we looked at anyone’s extra credit, and then we would add your extra credit to your score before determining your final letter grade; if you were at 83% based on the course assignments (which would, in the above example, be a B+), but you had completed four one-hour studies (worth 2% extra credit), you would now have 85% and you would go from a B+ to an A-. (Extra credit will not move you from an A to an A+, however.)

To sign up to participate in studies, visit [https://jhu.sona-systems.com](https://jhu.sona-systems.com), create an account, and select Introduction to Psychology to see studies that you are eligible for. Once you’ve completed a study, be sure to click “assign credits to your courses” and select this course; simply completing a study is not enough for us to know that you have earned extra credit. Please contact Tracy Cottrell, Academic Program Coordinator, at tcottrell@jhu.edu with questions or concerns regarding the use of the Sona Portal.

The last day to assign extra credit is the last day of class; if you have not assigned your extra credit to the intended courses prior to the last day of class, you will not receive extra credit.

**Other Important Policies**

**Disability Services**

Students with disabilities are offered accommodations, but first they must make themselves known to the Office of Disability services. Any student with a disability who may need accommodations in this class must obtain an accommodation letter from Student Disability Services, 385 Garland, (410) 516-4720, studentdisabilityservices@jhu.edu.

**Makeup Policy**

Students who miss an assignment for reasons beyond their control can make up the work accordingly. Our 80%-threshold for full participation points (see above) ensures that
occasional absences will not affect that portion of your grade. For exams, makeups will be handled on a case-by-case basis. Please make every effort to anticipate absences, and let your TA or instructor know about them whenever possible.

**Academic Honesty**

Cheating is bad, and not even worth it. It cheapens the value of your work and everyone else’s, and a single violation can literally ruin your entire academic and professional career. The Dean's Office thinks so too, and has provided this message about academic integrity:

```
The strength of the university depends on academic and personal integrity. In this course, you must be honest and truthful. Ethical violations include cheating on exams, plagiarism, reuse of assignments, improper use of the Internet and electronic devices, unauthorized collaboration, alteration of graded assignments, forgery and falsification, lying, facilitating academic dishonesty, and unfair competition. You may consult the associate dean of student conduct (or designee) by calling the Office of the Dean of Students at 410-516-8208 or via email at integrity@jhu.edu. For more information, see the Homewood Student Affairs site on academic ethics: (https://studentaffairs.jhu.edu/student-life/student-conduct/academic-ethics-undergraduates) or the e-catalog entry on the undergraduate academic ethics board: (http://e-catalog.jhu.edu/undergrad-students/student-life-policies/#UAEB).
```

Note that no for-credit assignments in this course are collaborative. That means that reading responses are written completely on your own, participation points should not be earned by giving someone your clicker, and exams are completed by yourself.

It is sometimes said that cheating happens when “desperation meets stupidity”. If you are ever feeling desperate enough that a few extra points in this course seem to be worth risking so much, please consider talking to someone first — that could be Prof. Firestone, a TA, or even someone at the JHU Counseling Center (https://studentaffairs.jhu.edu/counselingcenter/). We want you to succeed, and we are happy to talk to you if you are feeling undue pressure from this course or anything else.
**Schedule** (subject to change! Check back here and [intropsych.jhu.edu](http://intropsych.jhu.edu) for updates)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Readings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9.4.18</td>
<td>Introduction to Introduction to Psychology</td>
<td>Watch this video: <a href="https://intropsych.jhu.edu/movie">https://intropsych.jhu.edu/movie</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.6.18</td>
<td>This is Your Brain</td>
<td>Selection from Sapolsky, <em>Behave</em> Required: pp. 20-71 (the rest is optional, and worth it!)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.11.17</td>
<td>Foundations of Psychology</td>
<td>Finish up the <em>Behave</em> reading if you haven’t yet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.13.18</td>
<td>Language: A Psychological Battleground</td>
<td>Selection from Pinker, <em>The Language Instinct</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.18.18</td>
<td>Seeing the World</td>
<td>Sacks, “Stereo Sue” (<a href="http://www.newyorker.com">New Yorker</a>)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.20.18</td>
<td>Culture and Perception</td>
<td>Gandhi et al., “Immediate susceptibility to illusions…” (<a href="http://www.currentbio.com">Current Bio.</a>)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.25.18</td>
<td>Conscious of the past: Memory</td>
<td>Saletan, “The memory doctor” (<a href="http://www.slate.com">Slate</a>)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.27.18</td>
<td>NO CLASS</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.2.18</td>
<td>Mini-Lecture on ‘Quality Control’ + Exam Review Session #1</td>
<td>Engber, “Daryl Bern proved ESP is real” (<a href="http://www.slate.com">Slate</a>)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.4.18</td>
<td>Exam #1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.9.18</td>
<td>What is it Like to be a Baby? (Guest Lecture by Prof. Lisa Feigenson)</td>
<td>Talbot, “The Baby Lab” (<a href="http://www.newyorker.com">New Yorker</a>)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.16.18</td>
<td>Sex (what we are) &amp; Sex (what we do)</td>
<td>Hamlin et al., “Social evaluation by preverbal infants” (<a href="http://www.nature.com">Nature</a>)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.18.18</td>
<td>Mental Illness</td>
<td>Kinzler et al., “The native language of social cognition” (<a href="http://www.pnas.org">PNAS</a>)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.23.18</td>
<td>Drugs, Enhancement, Performance</td>
<td>“Selective males and ardent females in pipefishes” (<a href="http://www.journals.org">Behavioral Ecology &amp; Sociobiology</a>)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.25.18</td>
<td>How We Decide</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.1.18</td>
<td>Exam #2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.6.18</td>
<td>Who Are You? The Psychology of Personality</td>
<td>“Why the Myers-Briggs test is totally meaningless” (<a href="http://www.vox.com">Vox</a>)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.8.18</td>
<td>From ‘Person’ to ‘People’: Group Behavior</td>
<td>Pinker, “My genome, myself” (<a href="http://www.nytimes.com">NYT Mag</a>)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.13.18</td>
<td>Emotions</td>
<td>Play this game: <a href="http://ncase.me/trust/">http://ncase.me/trust/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.15.18</td>
<td>Relationships (Guest Lecture by Prof. Jeff Bowen)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.27.18</td>
<td>What Makes Us Happy?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.29.18</td>
<td>The People Decide! ([Intro Psych students will select the topic])</td>
<td>You tell us!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.4.18</td>
<td>Mini-Lecture on “Mysteries of Psychology” + Exam Review Session #3</td>
<td>Switzgebel, “Do we dream in color?” (<a href="http://www.dreaming.com">Dreaming</a>)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.6.18</td>
<td>Exam #3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>