AS.200.101

Introduction to Psychology

Fall 2024

The only introductory course where *you* are the subject

> 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:

https://intropsych.jhu.edu/

Instructor

Chaz Firestone
Associated Professor of Psychological and Brain Sciences
Director, [Perception & Mind Laboratory](#)
Office: Ames 223
Office Hours: W, 12:15pm – 1:15pm (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 or visit any one of them (not just your assigned TA). You can also e-mail all of the TAs at once using the listserv ta@lists.johnshopkins.edu.

TAs

Nicole Keller
Junior Lecturer
Office: Ames 132
Office Hours: W 10am–Noon
Email: nkeller9@jh.edu

Di Liu
Graduate Student, [Lab for Child Development](#)
Office: Ames 128
Office Hours: M 4:30pm–5:30pm, F 4pm–5pm
Email: dliu88@jh.edu

Drew Sonnenberg
Junior Lecturer
Office: Ames 132
Office Hours: Th 11am–1:15pm
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Lauren Williams
Graduate Student, [Attention & Cognition Lab](#)
Office: Ames 150
Office Hours: T 10am–11am, Th 10am–11am
Email: lwill204@jhu.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 'intro24' to the subject of every e-mail

We have dedicated e-mail inboxes specifically for your questions, and our system requires that you add "intro24" 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.

Readings

The required textbook is *Psychology* **(4ᵗʰ Edition), by Schacter, Gilbert, Wegner & Nock [ISBN: 9781464155468]**. It is available online and through the campus bookstore, and it is very good — the best psychology textbook I have seen.

But it is also expensive, and that sucks; college is pricey enough as it is! The good news is that, as this textbook has become more popular, there are more and more used copies available for a steep discount; indeed, I've seen it [for sale online](#) for under $10. *We want everyone to have access to this book.* If the textbook is unavailable or its cost is prohibitive, please see me (Prof. Firestone) or your TA and we will find a solution.

Where possible, we will forego the textbook for other sources, including primary readings from leading scientific journals such as *Nature* and *Science*, or long-form journalistic articles in magazines such as *The New Yorker* or *The Atlantic*. (At least once, there will be an interactive game to play before class.) But sometimes the textbook really is the best source of information about a topic, and so you should expect a mix of readings throughout the semester.

Format

Each class will consist of a lecture, usually by Prof. Firestone but occasionally by a special guest. The lectures may not perfectly follow 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 (and sometimes before 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%** of your final grade, with your lowest-scoring exam counting for the fewest points. Why? Well, this seems better than counting all exams the same, since this way one bad day can't ruin your grade on its own. (In fact, if you scored 50% on one of the exams but then aced the rest of the course, you would still be guaranteed an A under our grading rubric; see below.) But it also means that every exam counts, and that "tanking" one of the exams is a bad idea.

Each exam will consist of multiple choice questions. In some ways, this is not ideal, since short answer questions would allow more variety in the questions we ask and the answers you give. At the same time, however, those kinds of questions open the door to subjectivity in grading (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. (As you'll see below, there are other opportunities to show your knowledge through writing.)

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? Again, **the 'secret' to success is to attend all the lectures and do all the readings**. In fact, here's a (real!) graph from a recent year showing that the % of classes a student attended strongly predicted their score on our exams:

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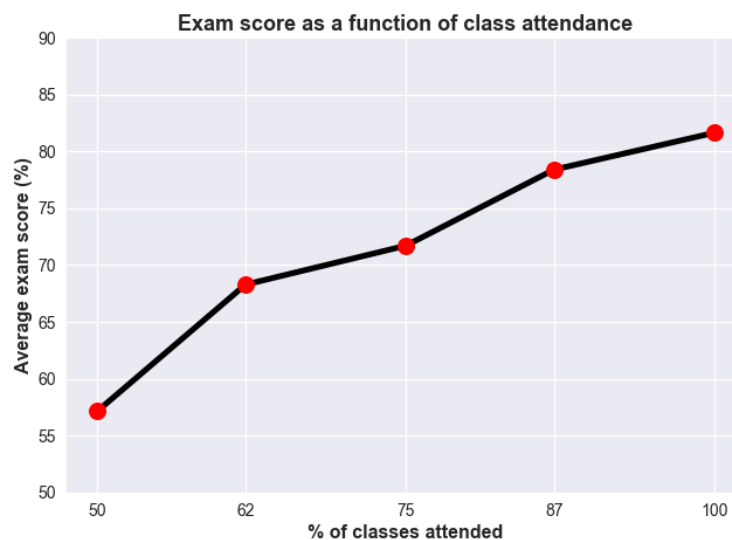
(But wait: Didn't I learn somewhere that correlation ≠ causation? Maybe people who do better on the exams also just like the topic more and so show up to class more often! Well, yes, but if you're thinking that then you probably already sit in the front row?)

Reading Responses (15%)

Approximately once per week, class will end with a short writing assignment (150-200 words) having to do with that week's material. Each reading response should take around 30 minutes of work (if not less), 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 to demonstrate that you completed (and understood the gist of) the readings and lectures; our goal is to encourage you to deeply engage with the material. (The term "reading" here is used loosely; sometimes these questions will be about material from lectures, rather than from the readings themselves.) The total number of these assignments may depend on how different parts of the course go, but there will definitely 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. You will submit your assignments using our course's Canvas page (one of the rare occasions we'll be using that platform).

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 "iClicker" system here at JHU, which you can read up on here: https://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. Note that these are *not* quizzes, and in fact many of the questions won't even have right answers in the first place. For example, the questions might ask you to predict the outcome of a famous psychology experiment, estimate 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. All you have to do is answer.

To assign you a participation score at the end of the semester, we have taken a cue from a recently retired and long-beloved JHU professor: **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 automatically excuses you from random clicker mishaps: If the app fails one day, or if you step into the restroom just as a clicker question goes up, or if you have to miss class that day for whatever reason, that lecture will just be part of the "freebies" afforded by your 20% buffer. But that means we will **not** be entertaining pleas for makeup 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. To put that differently: The 20% attendance buffer **is** our way of excusing absences: If you miss class for any reason (e.g., illness, athletics, family matters, etc.), you essentially just use one of your attendance freebies on that class.

At this rate, simply *showing up* to a given lecture adds about 0.5% to your final grade!

> **NB**: Having your friend take your phone/clicker/app 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. When you ask someone to take your clicker to class for you, you are not only risking your academic career but also asking them to risk *theirs too*; 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: Here 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, 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.

In this system, *everyone can get an A*, and many students *must get an A*. At the same time, if the course is "too hard" or "too easy", the system compensates. Finally, even though this is a "curve" of *some* sort, it is not the kind of curve that puts you in any meaningful competition with your peers 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

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 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.)

Note that this system is beholden to how many studies are available. It is possible that if you (and 200 of your classmates) wait until the last weeks of class to pursue extra credit, there

will not be enough studies for everyone to suddenly complete 4 credits. If that happens, we'll be unable to provide other extra credit — so **if you want extra credit, start early**!

To participate in studies, visit https://jhu.sona-systems.com, create an account, and the select Introduction to Psychology to see studies that you are eligible for. Once you've completed a study, 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 Elissa Zurbuchen, at ezurbuc1@jhu.edu with questions regarding use of the Sona Portal. The last day to assign extra credit is the last day of class; if you have not assigned extra credit to the intended courses prior to that day, you will not receive extra credit.

Other Policies and Frequently Asked Questions

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 let your TA know about absences 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/policies-guidelines/undergrad-ethics/).

Note that no for-credit assignment in this course is 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. 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.

ChatGPT

You are not permitted to use ChatGPT to assist in any assignments (e.g., your reading responses). But (a) we tend to word these assignments in ways that aren't very ChatGPT-able, and (b) the assignments are so short (150-200 words) that it barely seems worth it! For example, if you are asked to write 150 words explaining which example from that day's lecture best illustrates the psychological concept of modularity, it will take you longer to tell ChatGPT all about the lecture and then ask it the question than it will to just do the assignment! Besides, ChatGPT makes mistakes.

Classroom Climate

Everyone should be treated with dignity and respect in our classroom. This not only means your instructors treating you with respect, but also you treating *each other* that way. Psychology is the study of our own minds, including aspects of our minds that are not always comfortable to consider: While some of our classes involve cute baby videos and music, others confront issues such as mental illness, drug abuse, and discrimination. These topics are sensitive as it is, and also *real* for many members of our class: You may know (or be) someone who has experienced depression, addiction, or unfair treatment due to your race, gender, or sexuality. Please approach such topics with maturity and sensitivity.

If you ever have concerns in this course about harassment, discrimination, or unequal treatment, I invite you to contact me or the TAs. I promise to take your concerns seriously and to seek mutually acceptable resolutions and accommodations, and raising such issues will never impact your grade. You may also share concerns with our Department Chair, the Director of Undergraduate Studies, the Assistant Dean for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (Araceli Frias-Ohane, afrias3@jhu.edu), or the Office of Institutional Equity (oie@jhu.edu). In handling reports, we will protect your privacy as much as possible; but please know that faculty and staff are required to report information in some cases (e.g., sexual harassment).

"Professor Firestone, what should I call you?"

I'm not typically one to insist on titles, and most people in my life call me "Chaz"; as you'll see, I sign e-mails this way too. But I think "Prof. Firestone" is a more appropriate way to address me when we are interacting as instructor and student. Some very important research shows that female professors do not have their credentials taken as seriously as male professors, and that students more often drop titles for female instructors than for male instructors. But if female instructors then insist on being called "Professor" or "Doctor", they can be seen as cold or unapproachable — an unfair dilemma wherein female instructors must choose between presenting as competent or presenting as likeable. So, even if it'd be nice to say "oh, just call me Chaz", doing so turns out to be a privilege afforded to me but perhaps not to many of my colleagues. I think this all adds up to "Professor Firestone" or "Prof. Firestone" as the way to go, at least until we get to know each other better.

(For what it's worth, I do think "Dr. Firestone" sounds a bit weird, though; I have a PhD, not an MD, and even though we had "Dr" first, I can't help but think that "Dr. Chaz Firestone" is some parallel-universe version of me who sells wacky supplements on TV. It's no big deal if you prefer to use "Dr." — but "Prof." sounds right on the money to me!)

I use the pronouns *he/him*, and I will respect your pronouns too.

Schedule (subject to change! Check intropsych.jhu.edu for updates)

Date	Topic	Readings
8.27.24	**Introduction to Introduction to Psychology**	Watch this video: https://intropsych.jhu.edu/movie
8.29.24	**This is Your Brain**	*Textbook*: 75-82, 91bottom-102top, 109bottom-118
9.3.24	**Foundations of Psychology**	*Textbook*: 261-284top
9.5.24	**Language: A Psychological Battleground**	*Textbook*: 349-365middle
9.10.24	**Seeing the World**	Sacks, "Stereo Sue" (*New Yorker*)
9.12.24	**Culture and Perception**	Gandhi et al., "Immediate susceptibility to illusions…" (*Current Bio.*) Henrich et al., "Most people are not WEIRD" (*Nature*)
9.17.24	**Conscious of the past: Memory**	*Textbook*: 215-240middle
9.19.24	**Mini-Lecture on 'Quality Control' + Exam Review Session #1**	Engber, "Daryl Bem proved ESP is real" (*Slate*)
9.24.24	*IN CLASS REVIEW SESSION*	Take a deep breath…
9.26.24	*Exam #1*	…and you'll do great!
10.1.24	**What is it like to be a baby?**	Talbot, "The Baby Lab" (*New Yorker*) Stahl & Feigenson, "Observing the unexpected…" (*Science*)
10.3.24	**Morality: Origins**	Hamlin et al., "Social evaluation by preverbal infants" (*Nature*) Kinzler et al., "The native language of social cognition" (*PNAS*)
10.8.24	**Mental Illness**	*Textbook*: 587-612middle
10.10.24	**What Animals Know**	Krupenye et al., "Great apes anticipate…false beliefs" (*Science*)
10.15.24	**Drugs, Enhancement, Performance**	Sanghavi, "Phantom menace of sleep-deprived Drs" (*NYT Mag*) Farah, "Unknowns of cognitive enhancement" (*Science*)
10.17.24	*NO CLASS*	🍁 Fall Break 🍁
10.22.24	**Mini-Lecture on Psychology & Technology + Exam Review Session #2**	Carr, "Is Google making us stupid?" (*Atlantic*)
10.24.24	*Exam #2*	
10.29.24	**How We Decide**	Groopman, "How doctors think" (*New Yorker*) Johnson & Goldstein, "Do defaults save lives?" (*Science*)
10.31.24	**Who Are You? The Psychology of Personality**	"Why the Myers-Briggs test is totally meaningless" (*Vox*) *Textbook*: 471-484middle
11.5.24	*NO CLASS*	https://hopkinsvotes.jhu.edu/
11.7.24	**From 'Person' to 'People': Group Behavior**	Play this game: http://ncase.me/trust/
11.12.24	**Emotions**	309-326middle
11.14.24	**Relationships** (Guest Lecture by Prof. Jeff Bowen)	Finkel & Simpson, "Relationship science" (*Curr. Opinion in Psychology*)
11.19.24	**What Makes Us Happy?**	Aknin et al., "Money matters…" (*Positive Psychology*)
11.21.24	**Sex**	Berglund, "Selective males and ardent females" (*B. Ecology Sociobiology*)
12.3.24	**Mini-Lecture on "Mysteries of Psychology" + Exam Review Session #3**	Schwitzgebel, "Do we dream in color?" (*Dreaming*)
12.5.24	*Exam #3*	You did it!