

Syllabus - Introduction To Psychology - Fall/Winter - 2016/2017

Please read this information carefully. It contains everything you need to know about the course components & the features of Desire2Learn that will allow you to successfully complete this course.

Contacts

Dr. Mike Moland

mikemoland@shaw.ca or mrmoland@lakeheadu.ca (quickest response)

- ✓ questions about course material
- ✓ filenames of broken multimedia links

D2L Issues?

- ✓ Click on the “Help” link on the navigation bar on the main course page. You should be able to find some useful tips related to the use of course tools and who to contact for assistance.

Textbook

Lilienfeld, S. O. (2016). Psychology: From Inquiry To Understanding (Third Canadian Edition). Pearson Education.

Important Dates

Please refer to the **Timeline** for test dates, deadlines, & a suggested study schedule.

Overview of Course Components

See below for details.

Item	Date	Weight	Notes
Test 1	October 22, 2016 @	20%	Ch. 1 – 4. Tests written

	10AM		at 10AM on test days.
Test 2	December 10, 2016 @ 10AM	20%	Ch. 5 – 8 Tests written at 10AM on test days.
Test 3	February 11 2017 @ 10AM	20%	Ch. 9 – 12 Tests written at 10AM on test days.
Test 4	April 08 2017 @ 10AM	20%	Ch. 13 – 16 Tests written at 10AM on test days.
Bulletin Board Participation	Throughout.	20%	Last day to post message to bulletin board is April 8, 2017.

Tests - 20% each

1. Tests are taken online (from the comfort of your home!) by accessing the **Assessments** tab and the selecting the **Quizzes** option. You can try out the 5-item Practice Test to get acquainted with the online testing environment and to ensure your computer is up for the task.

2. You will be required to write each test at a specific time and date (see **Overview of Course Components above**). You **MUST** begin the tests at the specific time indicated (i.e., 10AM Eastern Standard Time) on the specified test day. I usually give students a 15 minute time window to enter the course (i.e., 10AM to 10:15AM). Once you enter the course, you have the full 100 minutes to complete each test. If you fail to enter the test within the 15 minute time window, you will miss the test, so please make sure to be ready to write on time. **Just in case you are wondering, I will not provide more than 100 minutes to complete each test so please do not ask.**

You need to be well prepared for each test to be able to complete it with extra time to spare. If you are writing in a different time zone, make certain that you write each test at the correct time (i.e., Test times reflect Eastern Standard Time). If you have a conflict with any test as scheduled above, please contact me via e-mail (mikemoland@shaw.ca). **If any conflict arises, students may be permitted to write**

early. It is to your benefit to discuss time conflicts due to sports or family commitments with me well in advance. If you miss a test – contact me right away. Do not contact me days after a test is no longer available.

3. Each test will comprise 100 questions (1 mark each). A timer will appear. Students who are well prepared for the tests will have ample time to complete the questions. There is a grid showing question status (not answered, answered) on the upper left-hand side of your test screen. If this sounds complicated - don't worry - once you try out the sample test you will see that it is pretty straightforward. Just give the 5-item practice quiz a try. Once you become familiar with answering questions in the practice test - you will be home free because the official tests look exactly the same way - using the same mouse clicks, same buttons, same feel, and same look.

4. Test questions are automatically randomized from a large pool of items. Every student will be exposed to a different, but equivalent, set of questions. A great perk of online tests is that you will receive your score the moment you indicate that you are finished! Keep in mind that **you are NOT permitted to consult your textbook or study notes while completing tests.** Considering that you only have 1 minute per question - consulting these materials will not allow you to complete the test on time anyway. Also, it is important to keep in mind that **you are not allowed to complete tests in this course with other individuals (e.g., other students, friends, acquaintances).** This IS considered “cheating” and is not permitted. Explanations such as “But you didn't say that we couldn't _____ during the tests” or “Our other online instructors allow us to do _____” are **NOT** valid. The same rules and regulations concerning the writing of on-campus tests and misconduct apply. It is your responsibility to be familiar with the Code of Student Behaviour and Disciplinary Procedures. If you have any questions or concerns about the tests – consult with me first before proceeding. Consider this a friendly warning. 😊

5. If your computer crashes during a test (this is rare) **e-mail me right away** at (mikemoland@shaw.ca). I typically sit in front of my computer during the regularly scheduled test times and am available in case there is an issue with the test. In your e-mail, indicate your name and how many questions you were able to finish, and a brief description of the

problem. The good news is that if you encounter a problem while completing the test – you should be able to get back into it and finish where you left off - and all will be good in your world again. **PLEASE DON'T PANIC!** The Desire2Learn server retains a copy of your saved answers as you progress through the test - so you will not lose anything if your computer crashes. If disaster does strike – I can go in afterwards and view your test personally and correct problems that have occurred and typically resolve any issues in a manner that is both fair and reasonable. . **IMPORTANT**
If you notice that you can no longer save your answers while completing a test – just log out of the test and then log back into it – you should then be able to save your answers again. This is a little glitch with the system that hasn't been ironed out yet.

Multimedia

Multimedia will be covered on tests.

You will require Windows Media Player (or similar) to view video material in .wmv format. Although I check the links, some may not work (this can occur when a course is re-uploaded back onto the server). If you encounter a broken link, e-mail me directly with the filename, video title, and the chapter so I can fix it promptly.

Class Participation - Bulletin Board - 20%

To encourage you to keep up-to-date with your studies and participate in scholarly discussions with your classmates, you are required to keep current on the postings and contribute once weekly to the **Bulletin Board** discussion. As usual, quality is valued over the number or word-count of your submissions. If you miss a couple of weeks for whatever reason – feel free to post more frequently in subsequent weeks to compensate. This year I require students to post 12 messages (i.e., one high quality posting every two weeks on average) – so you will be required to create 12 postings before the course is over.

What am I looking for? I want you to show me that you are learning what the key words and concepts mean in our textbook. Show me through your postings that you are

learning something in the course. Use terms that the textbook uses. The more you can relate what you are learning in the textbook to a critical review of your research article the better you will do. If you just address the Six Principles of Scientific Thinking (see below) and briefly and non-specifically describe how they relate to your research article you will do poorly. Why? Because I want to see you put some thought into your postings. And I want you to begin applying what you are reading. If your post looks like something any person could do without reading through the textbook, then you will also do poorly. So how do you find an interesting topic from the textbook to select? Here is an example. Let's say you are reading through the textbook and then suddenly wonder about some concept you are reading about. This can often happen where you read about something – and then suddenly have a question about it – that the textbook does not answer. Let's say you were reading about “working memory” in the textbook and then suddenly thought – “I wonder if working memory would work the same for someone who is blind visually”? If the textbook does not address this question – then you can go looking for a research article (preferably one published between 2010-2016) that conducts a study on working memory in blind individuals and then you can begin working on your posting. You may even develop an idea based on something discussed in the **Multimedia** video material. That can work too! Science is a brutal competition of evidence. Whatever you decide to write about on the Bulletin Board - you must provide good research evidence to support your viewpoint. That is why I want you to attach (in .pdf format) a copy of the research article that relates to the topic you've selected. In our course bulletin board, it is fine to share your experiences – but keep in mind - opinions, testimonials, and anecdotal claims are useless in all scientific investigations - including psychology – if they are not supported by evidence. As a result, **it is vital that you back up any opinions with sound research evidence.** This evidence must NOT come from a Google search. It must come from the articles and databases found on the Lakehead U. online library site here:

<https://ezproxy.lakeheadu.ca/login?url=http%3a%2f%2fsearch.proquest.com%2fpsycinfo%3faccountid%3d11956>

Each posting you contribute to the Bulletin Board must consider the **Six Principles of Scientific Thinking** described on p. 23 and used throughout your textbook. What

does this mean? Well, any topic you decide to discuss in your postings must be critically examined and evaluated on the basis of these six principles. So let's say you decide to discuss the research evidence concerning the consumption of sugar and hyperactivity in children – because you find that topic interesting – and wish to learn more about how research studies have come to this conclusion (this isn't the best topic because the textbook already informs us that there is NO relationship between sugar and hyperactivity. I will use this as an example anyway). You can then look online through the scholarly research journal databases and find some articles related to sugar and hyperactivity. You can then pick the research article that you think is the most scholarly (good articles usually contain reviews of lots of other research studies – or conduct true experiments that are well-designed and well-controlled) – comment on it in your Bulletin Board discussion – and then attach it in .pdf file format to your discussion so others can open it and read through the article too if they wish. So how should you organize your comments related to your discussion topic and research article? Well – in your discussion you will need to use the Six Principles of Critical Thinking to address issues related to your topic.

1. **Ruling Out Rival Hypotheses.** Are the results of the sugar and hyperactivity research findings applicable to all groups of children? Are there some groups of children that might actually be affected by sugar and others who are not? Has this been tested experimentally? Could it be that beliefs about sugar and hyperactivity may be due to the effects of caffeine which is often found in products that also contain sugar (e.g., colas, chocolate bars)? Could this at least partly explain why some people believe there is a relationship between sugar and hyperactivity? Is it that parents who already hold the belief that children who consume sugar become hyperactive – only “perceive” the hyperactivity after their children have consumed sugar – and simply fail to notice those instances where their children are just as hyperactive – after NOT consuming sugar? (This effect is known as “confirmation bias” in your textbook). Do they simply forget those instances where their children were very active after not having consumed sugar? Also, do research studies take into account that when children receive candy – they often become excitable – but that this behaviour may merely be due to the fact that kids simply get excited when they are given a tasty treat – and has nothing to do with the

actual consumption of sugar at all? You could address some of these kinds of questions in your posting. Don't you think that these are good questions to ask? ☺ Would a good scientist ask these kinds of questions?

2. Correlation vs Causation. When interpreting the results discussed in your research article – are the results obtained from a true experiment (or experiments) conducted by the authors of the research article? True experiments allow one to draw conclusions based on cause and effect. They typically have a treatment group and a control group. Correlational research on the other hand - typically only tells you that two or more things are related to each other in some way – and that one factor predicts another – but says nothing about cause. For instance, there is a relationship between depression and hopelessness – as depression increases, hopelessness also tends to increase. Yet the cause is often unclear. Does depression cause hopelessness, or does hopelessness lead one to become depressed instead? Or perhaps some other variable or variables causes both – like experiencing numerous frustrations or rejections over time? So is the research discussed in the article correlational in nature? If so – one must be very careful about not assuming that one thing causes another in such studies. Using the sugar and hyperactivity example, let's say you discover research that indicates that children who have a very high activity level – also seem to come from homes that contain higher than average amounts of junk food - including candy and potato chips. Is it that candy consumption causes increased activity levels in these families? Or is it that children who already show high activity levels – just prefer to eat larger amounts of candy? Or that some other factor we've missed – could explain both increased activity level and the consumption of large amounts of junk food. A good example of correlation vs causation involves eating ice cream. Research suggests that there is a correlation between ice cream sales and drownings. More specifically, as ice cream sales increase, drownings in rivers and lakes also increase. So does this mean that ice cream sales cause drownings? This is doubtful. Do drownings cause ice cream sales? I suspect this is unlikely too. The more tenable explanation is that when the temperatures increase during the summer, there are more people buying ice cream and more people swimming in lakes and rivers (which increase the probability of drownings). This demonstrates why it's

important to never assume that correlational research can provide information about the cause of some behaviour.

3. **Falsifiability.** This simply refers to the possibility that the results from a research study have the potential to be deemed false. Before someone conducts a research study, they are required to predict what findings are likely to occur (these are called hypotheses) – and if the findings turn out just like they had predicted – the person can then say that the results confirm their predictions. HOWEVER, good researchers ALSO must predict what WILL NOT occur at the outcome of their study – before they conduct it. If what they predict will NOT happen – actually *happens* – then the person needs to accept that their predictions (hypotheses) may be incorrect. This allows scientific knowledge to move forward – and gives direction to research. If you never predicted what was NOT supposed to happen – you could never be proven wrong. You could just say “Oh....yeah.....that’s not surprising....I knew that would happen.....and it still...um....supports my predictions”. So does the research you have examined for your Bulletin Board discussion allow for their findings to be rejected? This is an important part of testing claims using the scientific method.

4. **Replicability.** Has the research you’ve examined in your Bulletin Board posting topic been repeated by other scientists? Keep in mind that “replication” doesn’t mean that the exact same study must be conducted. A different study could use a different method, but still be interested in finding an answer to the same question. But the bottom line is this: Do different research investigations arrive at the same kinds of conclusions when studying the same phenomena? You should strongly avoid making comments like “I disagree with the notion that sugar does not cause hyperactivity in children, because I found one study that suggests that it does”. Why? Because you can’t generalize the findings from one study, particularly if there are several other well-controlled studies that contradict the findings found in that one study. Replicability gives strength to research findings – because it adds reassurance that other researchers (often many other researchers) have arrived at the same kind of conclusions through a variety of other research methods designed to answer the same question. That gives us more confidence that the findings are real and didn’t occur just by chance.

5. **Extraordinary Claims.** The saying goes like this: “Extraordinary claims require extraordinary evidence”. What does this mean? Well, it means that startling claims such as “Humans are occasionally abducted by aliens while sleeping”, require more evidence than less remarkable claims like.....”Finding ways to organized information into meaningful chunks improves encoding, retention, and later recall of that material from memory.” For the topic that you have chosen, does it involve an extraordinary claim? Were you able to find lots of sound evidence to support it or disconfirm it? If not – it’s probably best to be cautious and admit that your topic area (or a belief you may have about that topic area) has not been effectively researched. So if you find a research study that claims that all of the previous research findings on sugar and hyperactivity are WRONG and that sugar DOES cause hyperactivity – you should evaluate such claims very carefully. Why? Because a mountain of research studies have consistently found that sugar does NOT cause hyperactivity. So if one study reports that it does – this would be unusual. You must also require the authors of that study to present an extraordinary amount of convincing scientific evidence before you begin to cautiously entertain or even remotely being to give credence to such an unexpected and extraordinary claim.

6. **Occam’s Razor.** Is a simpler explanation more likely to better fit an observation or claim than a more unusual, far-fetched, and complex one? When you watch an illusionist like David Blaine “levitate” a few inches off the ground – would a simpler explanation better fit that observation (e.g., He is fooling you into thinking he is levitating based on the angle you are viewing him from, or that he is using a cable hidden from view to raise himself up) than concluding that Mr. Blaine has some kind of magical and special super power? If you read a research study that indicates that sugar leads to hyperactivity in children eating chocolate – you could argue that Occam’s razor would suggest a simpler explanation. A more parsimonious explanation would be that the hyperactivity observed in the study is related to the consumption of stimulants (e.g., caffeine and theobromine) that are found in chocolate – rather than the sugar itself.

So the bottom line is this. Do you wish to receive an "A" in the participation component of the course? Make sure to be critical of your postings by utilizing the six principles listed above in evaluating the research you’ve gathered on your

topic. The best scientists continually ask themselves “How might I be wrong here?” They show a continuous distrust of themselves. They proceed cautiously – knowing they can at times be easily fooled into thinking that they know more than they actually do. And they are very critical of their own methods, findings, and conclusions. If even after trying to “tear apart” their own research (as well as have peers try to tear it apart too) – their work still seems compelling and convincing – and stands up to such scrutiny – then this gives it more clout!!

What else do you need to do? Post on average, once every 2 weeks (once again, if you miss a couple of weeks of postings, you can just post more frequently in the subsequent weeks to compensate!). So you will need 12 high quality postings by the time the course is over. While you can post as frequently as you wish, you will not receive any extra marks for posting more than 12 high quality messages to the bulletin board. What is a high quality posting? Of course – it involves critical thinking. A high quality posting is also thoughtful, well-organized, and relevant to the content discussed in the course. **It also includes an attached scholarly research article (e.g., .pdf format) that one can readily find through the L.U. online research databases from the library. Do not simply include a link to a research article. Include an attached .pdf copy of it.** In order to optimize your participation grade you will need to read through most of the bulletin board postings from other students in the course as well. You may also have to click the postings as “read” to ensure the computer registers that you’ve read each posting. Does responding to someone else’s posts count toward your participation grade? Yes!!!! Particularly if you can cleverly comment on some aspect of critical thinking that the original poster may have left out of their discussion. If you follow these directives - you should be able to obtain an "A" in the participation component of this course. Also keep in mind that it is rare for a student to receive a grade of 20/20 on the participation component. The top marks in the class will likely range from 16/20 to 18/20. Do not expect to get a perfect grade on participation. Much like with Olympic Figure Skating competitions – perfect scores are rare. If you wish to receive some feedback on your Bulletin Board contributions, perhaps to improve your postings as you progress through the course – send a sample to me via e-mail (you can cut and paste it into a return e-mail) and I’d be more than happy to help you optimize the quality of your postings. ☺

What is the best way to **do poorly** on the participation component of the course? O.K. – a bit tongue in cheek here – but bear with me.....

1. Just summarize a research study or information discussed in the textbook and don't evaluate it critically and scientifically.
2. Use the word "proves" or "proven" in any posting. One research study or a collection of research studies does not prove anything. This is not how the scientific method works. Scientists never use the word "prove" or "proven".
3. Discuss anything related to Sigmund Freud without being critical of his work from a scientific perspective. The textbook heavily criticizes Freud and explains why his notions about development, personality, and mental illness are largely untestable and thus unfalsifiable. Where his work has been amenable to testing – it has largely been discredited by modern scientific psychology. So extolling the virtues of Freud - from a scientific perspective - would be akin to attending a World Astronomy Conference in San Francisco and presenting on how fascinating you find Astrology and palm reading – without mentioning at any point how all the scientific evidence indicates that they are without merit in predicting events or describing one's personality.
4. Contribute less than 12 high quality postings to the Bulletin Board and neglect to read through most of the other student postings.
5. Generalize findings based on only one research study.
6. Defend a certain claim or belief with one research article, even though the bulk of the research evidence presented in the textbook contradicts it.
7. Attach a link to an online site to provide evidence or support your Bulletin Board topic.

About half-way into the course, I will provide an interim participation grade for everyone. This will give you a chance to improve your participation (if necessary) throughout the second half of the course.

Bonus Marks and Other Odds and Ends

You may earn up to a maximum of 6 bonus points to be added to your final mark in one of two ways, or in combination:

1. Participate in Psychology Department approved research studies that are posted throughout the academic term(s) on <http://lupsych.sona-systems.com> Keep in mind that only research studies that can be done at home on your computer are eligible. Why? Because many students enrolled in this course are taking it from outside of Thunder Bay and are unable to travel to the Lakehead University to participate in studies that includes an on-campus component. So only allowing students to complete online research studies makes it fair for everyone in the course. An account will be created for you by the 2nd week of classes. You must complete all participation in studies by the last day of classes.

2. Submit a synopsis of a recent journal article. This involves choosing a journal article published in 2014 onward that interests you, write a 500-word (2 pages double-spaced) critical commentary about that article, and submit an e-copy of your synopsis and the article to my e-mail address by the last day of classes. Each submitted synopsis is worth 1.5 bonus points.

Bonus marks are added onto your final grade in the course. For instance, if you complete this course with a final grade of 72%, and you've earned 4 bonus marks, the final grade that will appear on your transcript will be 76%. Tests, participation, and bonus marks are the only way to earn marks in this course. Asking me for extra assignments or some other way to gain extra marks in this course is not only considered unfair to other students, but is also considered to be disrespectful towards the instructor. If you wish to do well in this course – you must focus all of your time, attention, and effort on the tests and your participation grade.

Don't be afraid to ask questions! Chances are someone else is wondering the same thing. Much of my work in this course involves answering e-mails and helping students better understand specific concepts. I will do my best to respond to your questions as quickly and as thoroughly as possible.

It is my sincere hope that you will finish the course with a completely different view of psychology as a science.

Also, make sure to check out the additional info in the **FAQ** listed on the homepage.

Teleconferences & Online Chats

There are no audio teleconferences scheduled for this course.