

**PSY 150 – General Psychology, Honors
Course Syllabus – Fall Semester, 2005**

I. Course Instructor:

Dr. James Goodwin
Office: 326 Killian Office hours: M-Th 1:00-2:00, or by appointment
Phone/voice mail: 227-3358
The best way to reach me is via email → jgoodwin@wcu.edu

II. Required Textbook:

Myers, D. G. (2004). *Psychology* (7th edition). New York: Worth.
Recommended–textbook website at www.worthpublishers.com/myers

III. Course Description and Objectives:

The course in general psychology is designed to introduce you to the basic concepts of modern psychology, to the research methods used by psychologists to make discoveries about behavior and mental processes, and to the manner in which psychologists tend to think. The course can be used to satisfy one of the two courses needed in the Social Sciences Perspectives category (P1) of the Liberal Studies Program and it is a prerequisite for most of the other psychology (PSY) courses.

Course objectives: By the time you have completed the course, you should be able to:

- Create a reasoned argument about whether psychology can be considered to be scientific
- Distinguish between and describe the main approaches taken by modern psychologists (biological, evolutionary, psychodynamic, behavioral, cognitive, and social-cultural)
- Understand scientific research methods as they are used by psychologists to answer questions about behavior and mental processes
- Apply critical thinking processes to be an informed consumer of information about psychology
- Acquire first-hand knowledge about the conduct of empirical research by participating in research studies being conducted by faculty, graduate students, and advanced undergraduate psychology students at WCU, and by completing several data collection exercises as class assignments and/or in-class activities
- Understand how the Ethics Code of the American Psychological Association affects the behavior of psychologists
- Appreciate the effect of culture on human behavior and understand how the study of culture bears on important issues in psychology (e.g., the nature-nurture issue)
- Find and critically evaluate web-based information about psychology
- Become generally familiar with several career paths available in psychology and very knowledgeable about a specific career path of your choosing

IV. Course Schedule:

You will notice that we will not come close to finishing the book. This is because I believe it is of greater value to examine some topics in depth, rather than many topics superficially. You will also notice that the final three chapters will be of your choosing—we'll vote sometime around midterm.

August 24 – September 16

Prologue. The Story of Psychology
Chapter 1. Thinking Critically with Psychological Science
Chapter 2. Neuroscience and Behavior
EXAM #1. September 16

September 19 – October 17

Chapter 6. Perception
Chapter 8. Learning
Chapter 9. Memory
EXAM #2. October 17

October 19 – November 9
 Chapter 15. Personality
 Chapter 16. Psychological Disorders
 Chapter 17. Therapy
 EXAM #3. November 9

November 11 – December 9
 Student Choice #1
 Student Choice #2
 Student Choice #3
 FINAL EXAM. As scheduled

V. Course Requirements:

1. Exams. During the semester, you will take three, each comprised of objective, short essay, and essay items. Each exam will cover three chapters in the text. Taken together, these exams will be worth **300** points. Each exam will be worth 75 points and the score on your best exam will be counted twice in the final weighting. That is, your point total on the exams will include four numbers—your three exam scores, and the score for your best exam of the three. *No exam scores will be dropped.*
2. Final Exam. During final exam week, you will take a comprehensive final examination. Although it will place primary emphasis on material considered after November 11, it will also cover material for the entire semester. Like the three semester exams, it will include objective, short answer, and essay items. The final exam will be worth **100** points.
3. Careers Assignment. Psychologists find themselves employed in a wide variety of careers. One of your written assignments will be to identify a professional career in psychology and prepare a comprehensive paper on it. It will be due on Friday, December 9. More details will be forthcoming. The assignment is worth **100** points.
4. Reflective Article Summaries. Based on the reading of articles of your choice from the journal *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, you will write four brief summaries, each accompanied by your analysis of how the information might affect your life (more details in separate handout). These summaries will be due on the following Fridays—September 9, October 7, October 28, November 18. The summaries will be worth **40** points.
5. Website Analysis. There is a huge amount of information on the Internet about psychology and it varies considerably in quality. One of your assignments will be to identify a topic in psychology and then search for a good and a poor website that examines that topic. It will be due on Monday, November 21. The assignment will be worth **60** points.
6. Research Participation. You will be asked to participate in research sponsored by the psychology department. If you would prefer not to participate, there are alternative assignments. Extra credit may be earned for participating in more than the minimum (i.e., 10 points per participation). More details will be forthcoming.

7. <u>Summary</u> .	Semester exams.....	300 points
	Final Exam.....	100 points
	Careers Assignment.....	100 points
	Article Summaries.....	40 points
	Website Analysis.....	60 points
	Sum.....	600 points

Once a point total has been determined, letter grades for the course will be assigned as follows:

A = 94 – 100% = 564-600 points	C = 73 – 76% = 438-461 points
A- = 90 – 93% = 540-569 points	C- = 70 – 72% = 420-437 points
B+ = 87 – 89% = 522-539 points	D+ = 67 – 69% = 402-419 points
B = 83 – 86% = 498-521 points	D = 63 – 66% = 378-401 points
B- = 80 – 82% = 480-497 points	D- = 60 – 62% = 360-377 points
C+ = 77 – 79% = 462-479 points	F = 0 – 59% = 000-359 points
C = 73 – 76% = 438-461 points	

VI. Miscellaneous:

Class Attendance. I expect to see you in class on a regular basis and I will keep a record of attendance. The most fundamental reason for coming to class is simple—it will have a clear effect on your grade. There is strong evidence that missing class is related to poor exam performance. This is especially true in my classes, because a substantial portion of exam material will be from topics covered and discussed in class. For example, we will do a number of exercises and class demonstrations, and I almost always ask about these on tests. There will be no specific penalty for missing class, however. You are adults, and it is your decision about whether to come to class. In the words of the well-known philosopher:

“Eighty percent of success is showing up” → Woody Allen

Policy on Make-up exams. If you miss any of the exams for an *acceptable* reason, you may take a make-up exam. These exams will be given during the final week of classes. Acceptable reasons for missing exams are limited to the following:

- illness that can be documented by medical personnel
- death or serious family illness that takes you away from campus (and can be documented)
- documented participation in obligatory campus activities (e.g., athletics, student government)

All excused absences from exams must be accompanied by written documentation. Furthermore, if you miss an exam, you must produce the evidence of an excused absence within seven calendar days of the scheduled exam. If you must miss an exam, notify me as soon as possible, so I will know where you are.

Academic Honesty. Cheating on an exam or plagiarizing on any of the written work will result in an automatic grade of F for the course and a recommendation from me to the Administration that you be dismissed from the university.

Summary of Deadlines. The assignments described above will be due as follows:

September 9	article summary #1
October 7	article summary #2
October 28	article summary #3
November 18	article summary #4
November 21	website analysis
December 9	careers paper

Late penalties: All written assignments will lose 10 points for each day they are late (note: this means the article summaries will have zero value if late).

Classroom Climate. I think learners thrive in an environment where everyone contributes in positive ways to make learning interesting and fun. To those ends, here is what I expect as your contribution to creating a positive atmosphere:

- Actively read assignments before coming to class; there’s a lot to argue about in psychology, and I hope we will have good, and informed, discussions
- Be in your seat and be ready to go when class starts (chronic latecomers run the risk of being embarrassed or told to go away)
- Avoid having informal discussions during class time, regardless of whether it is me or another student addressing the group
- Ask questions at any time if something is unclear or to raise issues for discussion, but do so without interrupting, if someone else has the floor
- Treat your peers (and me) in a fair, civil, and professional fashion
- Take reasonable measures to keep yourself awake and alert (i.e., never allow your head to touch the desk or your eyes to close for more than 3 seconds—if your head touches your desk or your eyes close for more than 3 seconds, I will ask you to leave the class)

In turn, here is how I will contribute to a positive and energizing course climate. I will:

- Start and end class on time and be thoroughly prepared for each class
- Treat all students in a fair and civil fashion
- Return exams and written work promptly (i.e., within one class period)
- Spend extra time with you if you need help with anything related to the course
- Be available to you outside of class. My office hours are posted at the top of this syllabus, but you will also find me generally available and easy to find