GRANDE PRAIRIE REGIONAL COLLEGE
PY1040: A2
Basic Psychological Processes
Mon – Fri 8:30 – 9:50
Sept 7 – Dec 7, 2005
(3-0-0) UT to all Alberta Universities (3)

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Office Hours: TR: 9:00–12:00, 1:00-2:30; MW: 10:00-12:00, 2:00–3:30

REQUIRED TEXT:
Wade, C., Tavris, C., Saucier, D., & Elias, L. (2004). Psychology, Pearson Education Canada Inc.

STRONGLY RECOMMENDED:
Hacker, D. (2000). A Pocket Style Manual, Bedford/St. Martin's.

Hacker, D. (2002). Research and Documentation in the Electronic Age, Bedford/St. Martin's.

THE COURSE: This course is designed as an introductory course in psychology for freshmen, and will give students an understanding of themselves and other people through the study of the basic concepts, principles, theories, and methods used in the scientific study of human behaviour. It will cover research methods in psychology, neurophysiology and the biological bases of behaviour, sensation, perception, learning, memory, and cognition.

GOALS: This course may be different from almost any other course you have ever taken. There will be no memorizing lists of facts or definitions; students must learn the material, organize it for themselves so that they understand it, and apply it to their own lives such that they can reflect upon how these principles have been at work creating the people that they are now. Further, students are required to develop the skills of discussing, both through written and verbal communication, their knowledge of course material.

Please be aware that your normal strategies for passing classes may not work here, and new strategies may have to be developed; do so quickly. We will not follow the text chapter by chapter. Topics will be introduced in the lectures and students are expected to find and read the topics in the text. Extra readings will be recognized, going beyond lecture material will be rewarded.

BEHAVIOURAL OBJECTIVES: Nine minor summary papers (2-3 pages minimum, typed and double spaced) are assigned, plus a comprehensive final examination. As a result of taking this course, students will demonstrate the ability to:

1. define and explain the theories, concepts, principles, and perspectives listed below in their own words.

2. give practical examples from their own lives as to how these concepts and principles have been at work to develop the persons they are now.

3. develop the skills of structuring, organizing and interrelating knowledge of these perspectives, not simply a rote listing of details and definitions, as demonstrated by writing structured, organized, related, interrelated, and applicable summary papers and taking part in class discussion.

4. begin to develop the skills of evaluation of the concepts and principles of these perspectives on the basis of how well they describe and explain the students' behaviour and that of others, by using higher order cognitive skills of independent thought, logic, reason and data, rather than relying on authority, tradition, emotion, personal feelings, or personal experiences.

5. express themselves in written and verbal form using higher academic standards of grammatically correct and properly spelled Standard English.

COURSE CONCEPTS, PRINCIPLES AND PERSPECTIVES:

1. Animistic and mechanistic perspectives, dualism and monism, nature, genetic transference and variability, natural selection, evolution, genetic determinism of behaviour, reflexes, fixed action patterns, Wilson’s socio-biology, animal parallels (chapters 1 and 3).

2. Behaviourism, environmental determinism, nurture, learning, Pavlov's classical conditioning, conditioned and unconditioned stimuli and response, association, acquisition, extinction, stimulus generalization and discrimination, Skinner's operant conditioning, the three term contingency, reinforcement and punishment, extinction, stimulus generalization and discrimination, positive and negative contingencies, stimulus control (chapter 7).

3. Nature with nurture, natural selection of learning potential, enabling and constraining influences of biology, species-specific learning differences, Epling & Pierce’s Biobehaviourism (Chapter 7).

4. Critical thinking, the scientific perspective, theories versus opinions, evaluation of theories, operational definitions, measurement, description, correlation, controlled experimentation (chapter 2).
Options:
a. Evaluate any theory covered to date using the criteria of a theory or using logic and evidence.
b. Discuss how principles of science (theory and evidence) are used in psychology.
c. Design a controlled experiment that would test a prediction of any discussed theory.

5. Bandura's social learning theory, latent learning, Tolman's cognitive maps, internal symbolic representation, modelling, reciprocal determinism (chapter 7 & 13).

6. The Brain, the biological basis of behaviour, emotion, and cognition, neurological structures and functions, lateralization and specialization, biological rhythms, dreams and drugs (chapters 4 & 5).

7. Sensation and Perception: sight, audition, discrimination of quantity and quality, neural coding, feature detection (chapter 6); feature analysis, constructivism (Chapter 7).

8. Atkinson and Shiffrin's information processing model, intelligence, models of human information processing, sensory, short, and long term storages, structures and processes, metacognition (chapter 10).

9. Schema theory, prototypes, stereotypes, frames, story schemas, scripts, narratives, person schemas, self schemas, formal and informal/irrational thought, intelligence (chapter 9).

10. Final Exam: The Big Picture: what is psychology, what does it seek to do, how does it do it, how well does it succeed (chapters 1 through 10).

COURSE OUTLINE:

Sep 7	Introduction
Sep 12-14	Sociobiology
Sep 26	Paper #1 due.
Sep 19-26	Learning
Oct 3	Paper #2 due.
Sep 28-Oct 3	Nature with nurture
Oct 12	Paper #3 due.
Oct 5-17	Research Methods
Oct 24	Paper #4 due.

Oct 19-2	Social Learning
Oct 31	Paper #5 due.
Oct 26-Nov 2	Brain & Behaviour
Nov 9	Paper #6 due.
Nov 7-14	Sensation and Perception
Nov 21	Paper #7 due.
Nov 16-23	Information Processing
Nov 30	Paper #8 due.
Nov 28-Dec 5	Schema Theory
Dec 7	Paper #9 due.
Dec 7	The Big Picture
Exam Day	TBA

GENERAL COMMENTS:

There is so much more to learn than we can cover in our limited class time. Make the most of your college experience by reading the text (and other sources) beyond what is called for in the papers. It will also make your papers all the more insightful. Note that there are no assigned papers for chapters 5 and 9; however, you are still responsible for this material for the final exam as well as other text material not specifically covered in lectures.

My preferred teaching style is interactive lecture, derived from the teaching philosophy that little is learned until responses are made (either verbally or written).

I am extremely available for student consultation, and I will be more than happy to proof students' rough drafts and to further discuss course material.

Papers are due at the beginning of the class period on the specified dates. Late papers will be marked, but penalized 2 points per day. As adequate time is allotted between the end of the unit and the due date, no excuses other than medical situations, major emergencies, or single parenthood will be accepted. Ensure that you have an adequate supply of ink cartridges and paper and back up all papers on disk. Papers with spelling and grammatical errors will be penalized. Papers with multiple errors will be returned unmarked.

ASSESSMENT: Research psychology recognizes the authority of, and bases its judgements on, carefully collected data, as opposed to opinion, tradition, or authority. In keeping with this philosophy: rather than me imposing my authority on you and telling you what you must know and then arbitrarily assigning cut-off points for grades through non-standardized tests, you as a class will inform me what you are capable of, through my careful measurement of your performance. Students will be assessed according to their relative position within the class. The field of psychology always measures human behaviour in this way. This method will be explained fully in the first class period; a handout is available if requested.

Assessment will be based on the nine papers and final exam, each weighted at 10%. Following the final grade assignments, students will be subjectively assessed for bonus points on the basis of their involvement in, and contributions to, the class, which will include attendance.

Alpha Grade	**4-point Equivalence**	**Descriptor**	**Alpha Grade**	**4-point Equivalence**	**Descriptor**
A+	4.0	Excellent	C+	2.3	Satisfactory
A	4.0		C	2.0	
A-	3.7	First Class	C-	1.7	
B+	3.3	standing	D+	1.3	Poor
B	3.0	Good	D	1.0	Minimal pass
B-	2.7		F	0.0	Fail

A GENTLE WARNING: Some students try to copy work from textbooks or other published writing and claim it as their own. This form of cheating is called plagiarism or theft of intellectual property. This is easy for me to spot; the difference in writing style between undergraduates and professionals is immediately obvious.

Other students may try to buy papers from the Internet, or copy from other students. This is also easy for me to spot, as a purchased paper is invariably different in scope from the highly specific requirements of this course. Further, it can be seen when the student shows no knowledge during class discussion of what was in the paper that he or she has just submitted.

A third way of cheating is to buy or borrow papers from students who took this course from me last year. Please be forewarned that I have changed the course material, student requirements, and textbook substantially from last year, and papers from last year will be radically different and easily identified.

If you cheat in any way, you will be given an "F" for the paper and the term, and I will write a letter to the administration recommending you be suspended from my class and

the college.