Concordia College

Psychology 477 - Section 2041
Senior Seminar
Spring 2011

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Office Hours: T R 10:00-12:00 most days and by appointment

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Course Description: This course is intended to be the top and last stone that completes the structure of your psychology major. As such, it allows you to reflect on and apply what you have learned in the major. We will review the main psychological perspectives and how they differ yet inter-relate, and re-visit some areas of psychological research and examine some current hot topics in them and the direction they are heading in the future. In addition, you will have the opportunity to critically think about ethics in psychology through reflection on ethical principles and ethical dilemmas, to explore your future career/graduate school options, and to polish your research, writing, and presentation skills in preparation for the world after graduation.

Learning Objectives
By the end of this course, you will be able to:

- Understand the scientific methodology employed in the field of psychology. Addressed through class discussions of research articles and a capstone project that involves either empirical research or library research.
- Understand major theoretical approaches relevant to psychology. Addressed through readings and discussions on major psychological perspectives.
- Demonstrate knowledge of major advances in the field. Addressed through readings and discussions of articles on different areas of psychological research from sources such as Current Directions in Psychological Science.
- Understand ethics and inclusiveness issues in psychology. Addressed through discussions of ethical principles and dilemmas.
- Identify the skills you developed throughout your major, your goals, and your job/grad school plan post-graduation.
- Communicate ideas in the field. Addressed through written assignments, presentations, discussions, and the capstone project.

Some Helpful Resources to Consult

- An introductory psychology textbook.
Class Attendance and Active Participation
This course is conducted as a seminar, and therefore it is critical that you come to class ready to engage in thoughtful discussions of the readings. You are not expected to have all the answers. No one does! You are expected to raise questions, offer your point of view, initiate new directions for discussion, seek clarifications, and follow up on your classmates’ contributions. Your classmates, you, and I will rate your participation at two different points throughout the semester.

Job/Graduate School Portfolio
During the first half of the semester, you will be asked to work with the career center on developing and refining your career/grad school portfolio. The portfolio should include:
1. Self analysis of skills and weaknesses and how they match up with
   - the goals for liberal learning & for psych majors
   - what employers look for
   - your post-graduation short-term & long-term goals
2. Summary of the information your learned about your intended field of work/study
3. Cover letter/personal statement
4. Resume/vita
5. DVD of a mock interview completed at the Career Center
6. A letter that will be used to request recommendation letters
7. Evidence of consideration of/application to at least 3 jobs/graduate programs with an explanation of why you chose them and how they fit the skills you have

Reflections on the Psychological Perspectives
After reviewing the major psychological perspectives, answer the questions below and come to class ready to discuss them.
1. Overall, what do you think of Freud theory? Was it valid? Explain and support your answer. What is Freud’s greatest contribution to psychology today? What do you believe is his weakest point? Explain why you made the choices that you did.
2. Watson is known to have said that if given control over a young child for a while, he can “produce” any kind of adult desired. What is your reaction to this assertion?
3. In Skinner’s last writing [Skinner, B. F. (1990). Can psychology be a science of mind? American Psychologist, 45, 1206-1210.], he argued that cognitive psychology is a much less useful approach than behaviorism. Do you agree with Skinner? Why or why not? Use examples to support your opinion. In which areas is the cognitive approach most useful? How about the behaviorist approach?
4. Some might consider Freud pessimistic, Skinner neutral, and Roger & Maslow optimistic about the nature of humans. Do you agree or disagree? Why?
5. Are there limits to the aspects of behavior to which you think the biological approach can be applied?
6. Do you find any of the applications of the evolutionary approach more or less compelling than the others? Are there any areas that are untouchable by the evolutionary approach?
7. The Cognitive research is sometimes criticized for lacking external validity. Do you agree? Explain your answer and support it with examples.
8. Can researchers be eclectic? Does adopting one of the perspectives fundamentally change what topics are researched and how the research is designed, conducted, analyzed, and interpreted? Give a specific example to bolster your arguments by considering some well-known experiments (either from psychology textbooks or from methods course projects). What theoretical perspective did the researcher take and how would the study have changed if the researcher had adopted each of the other perspectives?
9. Is there any particular perspective that fits best with your worldview and that you most identify with? Explain.
10. Can any of the perspectives, on its own, account for the majority of human thought and behavior? Is there any perspective that we can easily discard?

Reflections on Ethical Principles
After a review of the APA code of ethics as well as the Belmont Report and federal regulations on the protection of human subjects in research (websites provided on the first page of this syllabus), reflect on these questions:
1. Do you believe that confidentiality when working with kids should be handled differently than confidentiality when working with adults? Explain your answer and how it fits with the APA Ethical Principles and Codes.
2. According to the APA’s ethical guidelines, is a researcher ethically obligated to (a) ensure that informed consent is comprehended by participants, (b) write the consent form in clear, non-technical language, or (c) both? Defend your answer.
3. What is your view regarding whether subgroup norming is a legitimate testing practice or discrimination? How 9.06 of the APA’s ethical standards fit into the discussion? Does 9.06 suggest that we must adjust scores by subgroups? Which other standards or principles, if any, are relevant? Explain.
4. Overall, are you comfortable with the APA’s ethical principles regarding deception? Why or why not?
5. What are the major ethical issues raised by obedience research? Are the ethical issues of Zimbardo’s prison study any different from Milgram’s obedience study? Why or why not?
6. Are there any parts of the APA code of ethics that you do not understand?
7. Take the IRB quiz given in class. How did you do? What areas did you need to review?

**Ethics Case Studies**

You will be provided with a set of cases related to research and another set related to practice in Psychology. You will be asked to analyze the ethical issues that each case presents and to provide a written response to questions pertaining to each dilemma and to participate in class discussion on it. When you analyze a case, be sure to reflect on and refer to all relevant ethics codes, standards, or laws.

**Reactions to intro psych textbook discussions on Areas of Psychological Research**

We will choose 5 areas from the list below to reflect on and discuss as a class:

- Genes, Environment, and Behavior
- The Brain and Behavior
- Development across the Lifespan
- Learning
- Memory
- Cognition & Language
- Motivation and Emotion
- Personality
- Psychological Disorders
- Treatment of Psychological disorders
- Social Thinking & Behavior

For each area, you should review the relevant chapter in an intro psych textbook and type-up a reaction paper (due at the beginning of class on the day the area is scheduled to be discussed) addressing the following questions:

1. What do you know now that you did not know a few years ago?
2. What are you still confused about?
3. What are the major theories/findings in this area?
4. What methodology is typically employed in this area?
5. What questions do you wish to see further investigated in this area?
6. How does research and knowledge in this area impact your own life?
7. How does research in this area make a difference in the world?

**Discussions on the Areas of Psychological Research**

For each of the areas chosen, 2 students will be assigned as the discussion leaders. Your task is to get classmates to think critically about the area and to engage in a thoughtful discussion on it. To accomplish this, you will be responsible for searching for and providing the class (2 weeks before your topic is scheduled) with:

1. A recent popular media article/piece that addresses the area in some way. You should then lead the class in reflecting on how the popular media presents or mis-presents psychological information. Examples of popular media include: MSNBC, USA Today, Good Housekeeping, The New Yorker, The Washington Post, New York Times, Newsweek, Time, NPR’s Talk of the Nation, 48 Hours, Good Morning America, web tests, self-help books, advice columns, popular books/novels, popular movies, and TV drama.

2. Relevant readings/information on a major debatable hot topic within the area. Your job will be to help the class critically think about the psychological findings backing each side of the debate. You may provide the class with journal articles (e.g. Psychological Science, Psychological Bulletin, Review of General Psychology, Cognitive Psychology, Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, American Psychologist, APA Monitor, Scientific American, Psychology Today, Science), references to web sites or discussion forums, audio recordings, video recordings, or any other sources you find. Examples of debatable topics: Do men and women have different brains? Is it appropriate for society to use drugs like Ritalin to alter brain functions of developing children? Is daycare bad for children? Can childhood memories be repressed and return? Does language determine thought? Does internet use increase loneliness/depression?
3. One article from *Future Directions in Psychological Research* or other sources that serves as an example of **where research in the area is headed**. Your job is to stimulate discussion about what we have yet to know in this area, the methodology that would be employed, and the applicability of this area’s research to everyday life.

4. A set of discussion questions on the materials you provided above.

Students will [**e-mail our TA Marnie Rosenheim (mrrosenh@cord.edu)**](mailto:mrrosenh@cord.edu) **their responses to the discussion questions by the Monday of the week** you are scheduled to discuss the topic. Marnie will forward the responses to you. You should use these responses to guide your plan for conducting the classroom discussion.

When **leading the discussion**, you need to start by checking classmates understanding of the basic concepts in the area (perhaps divide the class into 3 teams and have them play a Jeopardy game). When the debatable issues are discussed, make sure to ask classmates to clarify their responses, defend them, or elaborate on them as needed. You might raise new questions, you might focus on the most common questions/misunderstandings/difficulties raised by the readings, or you might play “wonder ball” by tossing a ball and whoever gets it must keep the discussion rolling. Most importantly: relax, feel free to be creative, and enjoy yourself!

**Capstone Project**

In this project, you demonstrate your ability to integrate and apply your knowledge of the different perspectives and areas of psychology, as well as your critical thinking skills, your ability to communicate in the field, and your career/graduate school preparedness. You can **choose one of the following two options:**

a. **Empirical Research:** Select a research topic, review the relevant literature (include at least 10 references), obtain IRB approval, collect the data, analyze it, write a research report, and present your research to the class. For this project, you should refine and polish the skills you gained in the Methods course. This option gives you additional practice in doing psychological research. You need to run your research idea by me ASAP and get IRB approval before the mid-semester break. The report should include the following sections: a) Abstract, in which you briefly state the research objectives, the basic outline of the methods used, and the main results, b) Introduction, in which you provide the “why” for your research, how it fits into the larger body of work, and describe your objectives, c) Methods, which includes a description of participants, measures, and procedures, d) Results, which includes figures & tables, and e) Discussion, including an interpretation of the results and study implications and limitations.

b. **Literature Review and psychology practicum:** Engage in some service learning work in a field that you might pursue a career in, review the literature on the status of the field and the contribution of psychology to it, write a review paper, present your work to class and to your agency supervisors. Your review paper should be in APA style, reference at least 10 sources, and include reflections on
   1. the history of the service field/area you were involved in
   2. the field’s/area’s principal theories, research methods, hot topics
   3. how psychological science has been incorporated to promote human wellbeing in this field/area
   4. what you learned from the service-learning experience
   5. what surprised you about your experience
   6. what you would do differently if you were to repeat this experience
   7. how your service learning experiences relate to various theories or concepts in psychology
   8. how your psychology major helped you interpret, predict, and improve your experiences
   9. how these experiences influenced your views and interpretations of psychological theories
   10. how these experiences helped you develop your own professional identity and your career goals
   11. the issues/problems that the program is designed to address
   12. the program’s effectiveness in addressing those issues
   13. the barriers that the program faces in its effort to address the issues
   14. the population that this program is designed to serve
   15. how the population served views the program
   16. your suggestions or insights for the program leaders on how to better apply psychological science in meeting the needs of those served and promote human welfare

**Final Assessment**

Toward the end of the class, you will be asked to complete a departmental assessment instrument that will be used to determine your grade in this course, as well as to assess the effectiveness of the psychology curriculum.

**Special-Needs Students**

If you have disabilities or other special needs that require special accommodations in this course, you must visit the Counseling Center located in Academy Hall. The counselors there will then officially inform me of any special requirements you may have.
Storm Policy: If class is cancelled due to bad weather, then any tests or assignments that were scheduled that day will automatically become due the next time we meet.

Academic Honesty: You and I have a responsibility to maintain academic integrity at Concordia College. All work in this course must be completed in a manner consistent with the Joint Statement on Academic Responsibility found in the College Handbook. Plagiarizing others’ work, falsifying data, using your own work from previous semesters or from other courses without my permission, or allowing others to copy your work are all acts of academic dishonesty. Academic dishonesty will result in a grade of “F” and a report to the office of academic affairs for possible further disciplinary actions.

Grades:
The total number of points possible in this class is 400 pts, distributed as follows:

| Class Attendance and Active Participation in class discussions | 50 pts |
| Job/Graduate School Portfolio | 40 pts |
| Reflections on Ethical Principles | 20 pts |
| Ethics in Research Case Studies | 20 pts |
| Ethics in Practice Case Studies | 20 pts |
| Reflections on the Psychological Perspectives | 20 pts |
| Reaction Papers on 5 areas of psychological research discussed in intro psych textbook | 25 pts |
| Responses to the 5 sets of discussion questions provided by the area discussion leaders | 25 pts |
| Timeliness, completeness, and quality of materials provided for the area you are leading | 20 pts |
| Discussion Leadership of your area | 20 pts |
| Capstone Project | 100 pts |
| Final Assessment | 40 pts |
| **Total** | **400 pts** |

Letter grades will be assigned based on the total number of points out of 400 as follows:

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<th>Total</th>
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<tr>
<td>372-400</td>
<td>93-100</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>320-331</td>
<td>80-82.9</td>
<td>B-</td>
<td>268-279</td>
<td>67-69.9</td>
<td>D+</td>
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<tr>
<td>360-371</td>
<td>90-92.9</td>
<td>A-</td>
<td>308-319</td>
<td>77-79.9</td>
<td>C+</td>
<td>252-267</td>
<td>63-66.9</td>
<td>D</td>
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<tr>
<td>348-359</td>
<td>87-89.9</td>
<td>B+</td>
<td>292-307</td>
<td>73-76.9</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>240-251</td>
<td>60-62.9</td>
<td>D-</td>
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<tr>
<td>332-347</td>
<td>83-86.9</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>280-291</td>
<td>70-72.9</td>
<td>C-</td>
<td>&lt; 240</td>
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<td>F</td>
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Note: Concordia College’s policy states that if you wish to discuss your grade in this course, you must do so before the middle of the next semester/summer session. Course materials will be recycled after that date.

Tentative Schedule

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<th>H</th>
<th>Jan 6</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Course overview, introductions, and assignment of discussion areas</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Discussion on short and long term post-graduation goals</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Review APA code of Ethics and IRB regulations</td>
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<tr>
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<th>Jan 13</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Career Center presentation on identifying your skills, writing a resume/vita &amp; cover letter/personal statement, and job/grad school search strategies (Sue Zurn: 4346; <a href="mailto:zun@cord.edu">zun@cord.edu</a>)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Reflections on Ethical Principles due</strong></td>
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<tr>
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<th>Jan 20</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Panel of psychology alumni speak about career paths</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Career Center presentation on interviewing skills</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Bring draft analysis of personal skills, statement of short &amp; long term goals, draft of resume/vita, and draft of cover letter/personal statement</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Ethics in Research Case Studies due</strong></td>
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<td>Date</td>
<td>Notes</td>
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| Jan 27 | - Discussion on Ethical Principles, Ethics in Research, & Psychological Perspectives  
|        |  - **Reflections on Psychological Perspectives due**                 |
| Feb 3  | - No class meeting  
|        |  - Attend mock interview at your scheduled time  
|        |  - Work with career center staff on your vita/resume and personal statement/cover letter  
|        |  - Area 1 discussion materials and questions distributed by discussion leaders |
| Feb 10 | - Discussion on ethics in practice, how to write a literature review, how to write a research paper, and how to select & conduct statistical analyses  
|        |  - **Ethics in Practice Case Studies due**  
|        |  - **Complete Job/Graduate School Portfolio due**  
|        |  - Area 1 Responses to Discussion Questions due by M 2/14  
|        |  - Area 2 discussion materials and questions distributed by discussion leaders |
| Feb 17 | - Classroom Discussion on Area 1  
|        |  - **Area 1 Reaction to intro psych textbook due**  
|        |  - Area 2 Responses to Discussion Questions due by M 2/28  
|        |  - Area 3 discussion materials and questions distributed by discussion leaders  
|        |  - Peer evaluations of participation level  
| Feb 24 | - No class meeting. Have a relaxing mid-semester recess. |
| Mar 3  | - Classroom Discussion on Area 2  
|        |  - **Area 2 Reaction to intro psych textbook due**  
|        |  - Area 3 Responses to Discussion Questions due by M 3/7  
|        |  - Area 4 discussion materials and questions distributed by discussion leaders |
| Mar 10 | - Classroom Discussion on Area 3  
|        |  - **Area 3 Reaction to intro psych textbook due**  
|        |  - Area 4 Responses to Discussion Questions due by M 3/14  
|        |  - Area 5 discussion materials and questions distributed by discussion leaders |
| Mar 17 | - Classroom Discussion on Area 4  
|        |  - **Area 4 Reaction to intro psych textbook due**  
|        |  - Area 5 Responses to Discussion Questions due by M 3/21  
| Mar 24 | - No class meeting. Attend Red River Psychology conference. |
| Mar 31 | - Classroom Discussion on Area 5  
|        |  - **Area 5 Reaction to intro psych textbook due**  
|        |  - **Capstone Project due**  
| Apr 7  | - **Final Assessment**  
| Apr 14 | - Capstone Project Presentations, 8-10 minutes each |
| Apr 21 | - No class meeting. Happy Easter.  
| Apr 28 | - Capstone Project Presentations 11-12:15  
|        |  - Evaluation of class participation 12:20-12:30  
|        |  - Course evaluations 12:30-1:00  
|        |  - **11-1 pm**  