



Psychology 2950

Orientation to the Psychology Major



Offered on Wednesdays & Fridays from 12:30-1:20 in BNR278

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Course Description

Orientation to psychology: students clarify career goals, identify steps necessary to achieve goals, prepare a vita and gain skills in a variety of important tools for the major (APA writing; ethics; library usage). Prerequisites: PSY1010, consent of Psychology Advising Office. This is a 2-credit class.

Course Objectives

There are a variety of broad objectives for this course. All course activities are designed to help students meet these objectives. One set of course objectives is related to establishing, developing, and extending some of the foundational skills that psychology majors should master by the time that they have completed their degree. These skills include:

1. Understand, analyze, and evaluate existing behavioral research.
2. Seeking, acquiring, and evaluating information (also known as: library skills).
3. Conducting yourself as an ethical psychologist.
4. Writing in "APA Style."

This course is also designed to encourage students to communicate clear, compelling, and coherent answers to the following questions:

1. What is psychology, why have I chosen it as my major, and why is it the most appropriate major for me?
2. For what specific career am I preparing, and what resources are available that can help me explore my career?
3. How must I prepare myself for graduate/professional school if my career requires a graduate degree?
4. What are my career options if I decide to end my formal education with a bachelor's degree?
5. How must I change to prepare myself for my career?
6. Is psychology still the most appropriate major for me?

Texts

Three books are required for this course:

- *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (5th Edition)
- *The Psychology Major's Handbook* (2nd Edition) by Tara Kuther (2006)
- *Learned Optimism* by Martin E. P. Seligman

Course Activities & Grading

Students will be evaluated on their performance in a variety of assignments. No extra-credit opportunities will be offered. One thousand points are possible and grades will be assigned as follows: A: 930-1,000, A-: 900-929, B+: 870-899, B: 830-869, B-: 800-829, C+: 770-799, C: 730-769, C-: 700-729, D+: 670-699, D: 600-669, F: 0-599.

There are five assessment activities: IRB certification, readings and discussions on the book *Learned Optimism*, event attendance, skill-building assignments, and "the book."

- **Institutional Review Board (IRB) Certification.** Students are encouraged (by way of 20 all-or-nothing points) to become IRB certified. The IRB certification process is completed online-- follow this link: <http://irb.usu.edu/htm/training/certification-procedures>. The process requires a few hours of effort. If a student is already certified, points will be awarded. Evidence of certification must be submitted by 4/24 to receive credit.
- **Learned Optimism.** Small-group and class-level discussion on the book *Learned Optimism* by Martin Seligman will be held on 1/23, 1/28, 2/13, 2/18, 4/17 and 4/22. For each discussion students will bring a printed list of 3-5 discussion questions from the assigned reading. I am interested in having students think critically about the material that they read. Critical thinking is defined as "process of actively and skillfully conceptualizing, applying, analyzing, synthesizing, and/or evaluating information." I am interested in students engaging in critical thinking when they generate their questions for the discussion groups. Excellent participation is rewarded with up to 20 points per class session. Reading assignments: LO1, LO2 discussed on 1/23; LO3, LO4, LO5 discussed on 1/28, LO6, LO7, LO8 discussed on 2/13; LO9, LO10, LO11 discussed on 2/18; LO12, LO13 discussed on 4/17; LO14, LO15 discussed on 4/22.
- **Event Attendance.** Students are encouraged to attend three events, related to the major and field, outside of class. These events will be useful to their progress as a psychology major and will be selected based on their utility to majors and potential majors. Each event is worth 20 points. Approved Events include:
 - *Apprenticeship Fair*: Friday, 1/16, at 3:30pm in HPER118: Project Fair for PSY4950.
 - *PsiChi Events*: PsiChi will have a variety of activities this term. Dates, times, places, and details will be announced (in class, or see www.usu.edu/psychology/psichi/).
 - *Conferences*: All three 'events' can be consumed at a single time by attending a conference.
 - The Rocky Mountain Psychological Association (www.rockymountainpsych.org) is holding its annual conference in Albuquerque, New Mexico April 16-18, 2009.
 - The Western Psychological Association (www.westernpsych.org) will be holding its annual conference in Portland, OR, from April 23-26, 2009.
 - *Career Fair*: The career services center at USU is holding its annual career fair on 3/4.
 - *Course Sampling*: Students may "sample" a course that they will need to take in the future. Students are free to "sample" a course providing that: 1. They have not taken the course already; 2. The course is not required (e.g. 1400, 2800, 3500)--but may be required as a choice (3400 or 4420/30; social psychology vs. personality psychology). See the psychology major requirement worksheet for options, and; 3. Instructor permission is obtained. Contact the instructor prior to class and ask if you can observe a class session (this is particularly

important for small classes); show up on time!; stay until the end!; do not participate during class (e.g., ask or answer questions, make comments, etc), and; thank the instructor.

- **Skill Building.** Students are to complete three skill-building assignments: *APA Style; Library Skills*, and; *Empirical Articles*. Each is worth 50 points. These assignments are detailed in part 2 of this syllabus.
- **The Book.** This course is designed to encourage students to communicate clear, compelling, and coherent answers to six crucial questions. The answers to each of these questions will be initially written as a three-to-five page APA-style book chapters and eventually collated into a professional appearing six-chapter book. There are various due-dates. The book is extensively covered on BlackBoard and in part 3 of this syllabus.

Table 1. Assignments, tasks, due dates and points.

<i>Assignments</i>	<i>Due Date</i>	<i>Points</i>
IRB Certification	4/24	20
Learned Optimism Discussions		
Chapters 1,2	1/23	20
Chapters 3, 4, 5	1/28	20
Chapters 6, 7, 8	2/13	20
Chapters 9, 10, 11	2/18	20
Chapters 12, 13	4/17	20
Chapters 14, 15	4/22	20
Event-Attendance		
Event 1	4/22	20
Event 2	4/22	20
Event 3	4/22	20
Skills Building		
Assignment 1	2/11	50
Assignment 2	2/25	50
Assignment 3	4/24	50
The Book		
Chapter 1	2/6	100
Chapter 2	2/20	100
Chapter 3	3/6	100
Chapter 4	4/1	100
Chapter 5	4/17	100
Epilogue	4/24	100
Chapter Resubmission	4/30	50

Table 2. Course Schedule.

<i>Date</i>	<i>Topic</i>	<i>Reading</i>	<i>Due Date</i>
Jan 7, 2008	Syllabus & Course Introduction		
Jan 9, 2008	Pathways Through Psychology		
Jan 14, 2008	Chapter One Support	Ku1 - Ku4	
Jan 16, 2008	Chapter One Support		
Jan 21, 2008	Chapter One Support		
Jan 23, 2008	Learned Optimism Discussions	LO 1, 2	
Jan 28, 2008	Learned Optimism Discussions	LO 3, 4, 5	
Jan 30, 2008	Skill Building	Ku5, Ku6	
Feb 4, 2008	Skill Building		
Feb 6, 2008	Chapter Two Support		CH1
Feb 11, 2008	Chapter Two Support		Skill 1
Feb 13, 2008	Learned Optimism Discussions	LO 6, 7, 8	
Feb 18, 2008	Learned Optimism Discussions	LO 9, 10, 11	
Feb 20, 2008	Chapter Three Support	Ku7 - Ku8	CH2
Feb 25, 2008	Chapter Three Support		Skill 2
Feb 27, 2008	Chapter Three Support		
Mar 4, 2008	Chapter Three Support		
Mar 6, 2008	Chapter Four Support		CH3
Mar 18, 2008	Chapter Four Support	Ku9 - Ku10	
Mar 20, 2008	Chapter Four Support		
Mar 25, 2008	Chapter Four Support		
Mar 27, 2008	Chapter Four Support		
Apr 1, 2008	Chapter Five Support		CH4
Apr 3, 2008	Chapter Five Support		
Apr 8, 2008	Chapter Five Support		
Apr 10, 2008	Chapter Five Support		
Apr 15, 2008	Chapter Five Support		
Apr 17, 2008	Learned Optimism Discussions	LO 12, 13	CH5
Apr 22, 2008	Learned Optimism Discussions	LO 14, 15	Events #1, #2 and #2
Apr 24, 2008	Evaluation & Course Close		Skill 3; Epilogue
Apr 30, 2009	Finals		CH Resubmission



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Syllabus, Part 2: Skill Building Assignments

Students are to complete three skill-building assignments, one each related to APA Style, Library Skills, and Empirical Article. Each assignment is worth 50 points.

- **APA Style Assignment.** The Basic APA Assignment has three parts. It is worth 50 points, evaluated on quality and comprehensiveness of the submission, and is due by **2/11**.
 - *First*, given a document (available on Blackboard), identify as many individual problems as possible (there are dozens) and then list (a) the APA manual number that corresponds to the issue, and (b) how to correct the issue.
 - *Second*, students are to create their own 'cheat sheets' for APA style. The document should be typed, should fill at least one page, and may include regular text, bullets, diagrams, examples, etc. The document should include, at least, the following sections: (a) document formatting / typing; citation of various types of sources in the text; reference page, and; quotations.
 - *Finally*, students are to read Madigan, Johnson, & Linton (1995) paper titled The language of psychology: APA style as epistemology and write an essay that accomplishes the following:
 - Describe each of the 5 characteristics of APA style as described by Madigan et al.
 - Describe how each of these 5 characteristics of APA style represent the "core values and epistemology of the discipline" (p. 428).
 - Given Madigan et al and your discussion of the article, discuss how reducing bias in language (APA, pp. 46-60) represents one of the "core values and epistemology of the discipline" (p. 428).
- **Library Skills Assignment.** The library skills assignment has two parts. It is worth 50 points, evaluated on quality and comprehensiveness of the submission, and is due by **2/25**. The assignment follows.
 - **First**, students will attend class on using the PsycINFO and PsyArticles databases to be held on 1/30 or 2/4 in the YETC computer lab and complete the assignment that will be distributed at that meeting.
 - **Then**, they will be asked to put their skills to practice by:
 - Identify and acquire any 10 articles that are referenced in *Learned Optimism*
 - Submit a hardcopy set of the first page of each of these referenced works
- **Empirical Article Assignment.** This empirical article assignment has two parts. It is worth 50 points, evaluated on quality and comprehensiveness of the submission, and is due by **4/22**. The assignment consists of the following
 - **First**, students are to read the article titled Defensive pessimism, self-esteem instability, and goal strivings, by Yamawaki, Tschanz and Feick (2004), which is available on BlackBoard, and complete the following.

- Write an APA style reference for the article.
- Prior to reading the article, examine its abstract. Based on the abstract, what do you expect to learn from this article?
- What was the purpose of the study? Where did you find this information?
- How was the study conducted? Describe the methodology. Where did you locate this information?
- What were the findings of the study? Where did you look to learn about the findings?
- What were the author's conclusions? How did the results of this study compare with prior research? where did you look to learn about the findings?
- Reflect back on the abstract. How well did it reflect the content of the article? Did you learn what you though you would?
- **Second**, students will:
 - Identify and list (in APA style) 5 (five) articles that would "update" *Learned Optimism*
 - Summarize 1 (one) of those articles by answering the following questions:
 - What was the purpose of the study?
 - How was the study conducted? Describe the methodology.
 - What were the findings of the study?
 - What were the author's conclusions? How did the results of this study compare with prior research?
 - Where would this article fit into an updated version of *Learned Optimism*? How would it potentially change the content of *Learned Optimism*?



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"And you may ask yourself, well...how did I get here?" (Byrne & Eno, 1980)

Syllabus, Part 3: The Book

This course is also designed to encourage students to communicate clear, compelling, and coherent answers to the following questions:

1. What is psychology, why have I chosen it as my major, and why is it the most appropriate major for me?
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4. What are my career options if I decide to end my formal education with a bachelor's degree?
5. How must I change to prepare myself for my career?
6. Is psychology still the most appropriate major for me?

The answers to each of these questions will be initially written as a APA-style book chapter. Detail content of the chapters is included on BlackBoard, general guidelines and hints follow.

- **Standard APA style.** Book chapters should be written in standard APA style. Some of the basics: All book chapters must be word-processed on 8.5 x 11 paper in 12-point, Times New Roman or Calibri font, with 1-inch margins.
 - Each chapter should be of sufficient length to adequately answer the questions and address the points. Generally, papers will exceed 4 pages in length.

Getting Good Grades on Book Chapters.

- Do not answer the book-chapter questions like you were answering questions on a test. I could have given you tests in this class, but I believe you will benefit more from expanding and personalizing your ideas within the context of an autobiographical book. Please write in the expanded and enriched style of a book—not the brief, condensed style of a test answer.
- When you have questions about APA style, consult your APA style manual first. You will write in APA style in many of your other psychology classes, so it is important for you to become familiar with your manual so you can use it to help yourself in the future.
- An assumed learning outcome of this course is to strengthen your educational planning skills. Allow sufficient time to complete your assignments, anticipate potential problems (e.g., buy an extra ink cartridge for your printer), and keep yourself organized so you can bring your assignments to class on time and in appropriately acceptable form.