

**Faculty of Health
Department of Psychology
PSYC 4180 Section A
CRITICAL THINKING IN PSYCHOLOGY**

Fall/Winter 2016-17; Wednesdays 11:30-2:30 in SC 303(Fall) DB 1005 (Winter)

Instructor and T.A. Information

Instructor: Alistair P. Mapp
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Course Prerequisite(s): Course prerequisites are strictly enforced.

- HH/PSYC 1010 6.00 (Introduction to Psychology), with a minimum grade of C.
- HH/PSYC 2020 6.00 (Statistical Methods I and II) or substitutes
- HH/PSYC 2030 3.00 (Introduction to Research Methods) or substitutes
- Students must be in an Honours program in Psychology and have completed at least 84 credits (excluding (EDUC) education courses)

Course website: [Moodle](#)

Course Description

In this course students will develop and practice the critical thinking skills required to be analytical consumers of psychological research. The format of the course will be lectures, tutorials, peer-review sessions, and student presentations.

Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of this course, students should be able to:

1. Demonstrate ability to think critically about applications of psychological findings reported in the media.
2. Demonstrate knowledge of variety of ways to express psychological findings in everyday life.
3. Critically identify myths or stereotypes in common discourse.
4. Recognize limits of conclusions based on inferential statistics.

Specific Learning Objectives

In this course we will discuss and demonstrate the critical thinking skills required of analytical consumers and communicators of psychological research. Students will learn to gather, interpret, evaluate, and integrate distinct, and sometimes conflicting, theories and evidence in Psychology to arrive at an informed opinion. Students will also learn to communicate their informed opinions, both orally and in writing, at a level appropriate for the general public.

Upon completion of this course, students should be able to:

- Locate research articles on emerging trends and demonstrate critical thinking about research findings in Psychology
- Critically assess the methodology used to address specific research questions
- Critically assess the statistical analyses used in simple research designs
- Correctly interpret results from reported research and from the application of simple statistics
- Evaluate the credibility of scientific evidence and differentiate it from scientific conjecture
- Communicate, in writing and orally, the methods, results, and conclusions of a research study in layman terms
- Critically assess and communicate, in writing and orally, the validity and accuracy of media reports about psychological findings

Course Requirements and Assessment

In the first half of the course we will discuss and develop the basic skills required to gather, interpret, and critically evaluate research findings in Psychology. Emphasis will be placed on evaluating research studies based on key criteria, such as, construct validity, internal and external validity, and statistical validity. These concepts will be discussed and applied to both correlational and experimental studies and to both qualitative and quantitative studies. In addition, students will acquire hands-on experience making sound arguments based on the appropriate analysis and interpretation of simple data sets that are provided to them.

In the second half of the course students will apply their critical thinking skills in various real-world scenarios. Two main themes will be explored. In one theme students will be tasked with presenting, orally and in writing, the results of primary source research articles in a manner appropriate for the general public. For example, students could prepare an evidence-based report for teachers on the validity of learning styles or an evidence-based report for lawyers on the reliability of eyewitness testimony. The actual topics to be explored will be discussed in class and will be mutually agreed upon by the students and the Course Director. In the other theme students will be tasked with critically evaluating the validity and accuracy of current media reports about psychological findings. These evaluations will involve comparing the original research article to the media report.

Assessment	Date of Evaluation	Weighting
Test	October 19, 2016	10%
Article Assignment	November 30, 2016	15%
SPSS Assignment	February 1, 2017	15%
Media Report Assignment	March 1, 2017	20%
Student Presentations	March 8-29, 2017	10%
Target Audience Assignment	April 5, 2017	20%
Attendance and Participation		10%
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Total		100%

Description of Assignments

Please see Moodle.

Grading as per Senate Policy

The grading scheme for the course conforms to the 9-point grading system used in undergraduate programs at York (e.g., A+ = 9, A = 8, B+ = 7, C+ = 5, etc.). Assignments and tests will bear either a letter grade designation or a corresponding number grade (e.g. A+ = 90 to 100, A = 80 to 89, B+ = 75 to 79, etc.)

(For a full description of York grading system see the York University Undergraduate Calendar - calendars.students.yorku.ca/2016-2017/academic-and-financial-information/academic-services/grades-and-grading-schemes)

Late Work/Missed Tests

Presentations can neither be rescheduled nor made-up. Missed presentations will receive a grade of zero. Late written assignments will be penalized 2% per day (i.e., 2/100), including each day of weekends.

Students with a documented reason for missing a course test, such as illness, compassionate grounds, etc., which is confirmed by supporting documentation (Attending Physician Statement which can be found at: <http://registrar.yorku.ca/pdf/attending-physicians-statement.pdf>) may request accommodation from the Course Instructor. Further extensions or accommodation will require students to submit a formal petition to the Faculty.

If you miss a test you will be given **one** chance to write a make-up test if and only if:

- (a) you email me (amapp@yorku.ca) no later than 48 hours after the missed test, and
- (b) you provide me with appropriate documentation (e.g., an Attending Physician Statement) verifying the circumstances for the missed test.

Failure to comply with points (a) and/or (b) above will result in a grade of F on any missed tests.

Add/Drop Deadlines

For a list of all important dates please refer to: [Important Dates](#)

Important dates	Fall (F)	Year (Y)	Winter (W)
Last date to add a course without permission of instructor (also see Financial Deadlines)	Sept. 21	Sept. 21	Jan. 18
Last date to add a course with permission of instructor (also see Financial Deadlines)	Oct. 5	Oct. 19	Feb. 1
Last date to drop a course without receiving a grade (also see Financial Deadlines)	Nov. 11	Feb. 10	March 10
Course Withdrawal Period (withdraw from a course and receive a "W" on the transcript – see note below)	Nov. 12 - Dec. 5	Feb. 11 - Apr. 5	March 11 - Apr. 5

Attendance Policy

Attendance is mandatory and comprises a graded component of the course.

Academic Integrity for Students

York University takes academic integrity very seriously, please visit [an overview of Academic Integrity at York University](#) from the Office of the Vice-President Academic.

The following links will assist you in gaining a better understanding of academic integrity and point you to resources at York that can help you improve your writing and research skills:

- [Information about the Senate Policy on Academic Honesty](#)
- [Online Tutorial on Academic Integrity](#)
- [Information for Students on Text-Matching Software: Turnitin.com](#)
- [Beware! Says who? A pamphlet on how to avoid plagiarism](#)
- [Resources for students to help improve their writing and research skill](#)

Academic Accommodation for Students with Disabilities:

While all individuals are expected to satisfy the requirements of their program of study and to aspire to do so at a level of excellence, the university recognizes that persons with disabilities may require reasonable accommodation to enable them to do so. The [York University Accessibility Hub](#) is your online stop for accessibility on campus. The [Accessibility Hub](#) provides tools, assistance and resources. Policy Statement

Policy: York University shall make reasonable and appropriate accommodations and adaptations in order to promote the ability of students with disabilities to fulfill the academic requirements of their programs.

The nature and extent of accommodations shall be consistent with and supportive of the integrity of the curriculum and of the academic standards of programs or courses.

Provided that students have given sufficient notice about their accommodation needs, instructors shall take reasonable steps to accommodate these needs in a manner consistent with the guidelines established hereunder.

For Further Information please refer to: [York university academic accommodation for students with disabilities policy](#)

Course Materials Copyright Information:

These course materials are designed for use as part of the PSYC 4180 6.0A course at York University and are the property of the instructor unless otherwise stated. Third party copyrighted materials (such as book chapters, journal articles, music, videos, etc.) have either been licensed for use in this course or fall under an exception or limitation in Canadian Copyright law.

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Course Schedule: (see Moodle)