



**OTRP** *online*  
office of teaching resources in PSYCHOLOGY

**OXY** Occidental  
College

**PSYC 101: Introduction to Psychology**  
Section 1: Tuesday/Thursday, 8:30-9:55 AM  
Section 2: Tuesday/Thursday, 10:05-11:30 AM  
Fowler Hall 309

Professor: Leslie Berntsen, Ph.D.

Please call me: Leslie (preferred) or Dr. Berntsen (pronouns: she/her/hers)

E-mail: [lberntsen@oxy.edu](mailto:lberntsen@oxy.edu) (expect a response within 24 hours)

Course management website: [oxyintropsych.weebly.com](http://oxyintropsych.weebly.com)

Office hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 12:15-1:15 PM, and by appointment

Make an appointment at: [leslie-bern.youcanbook.me](http://leslie-bern.youcanbook.me)

Office: Swan Hall 225

Ask me about: Anything related to the class, real world applications of psychology, becoming a psych major, graduate school and other psych-based careers, being a first-generation college student

### Course Description

*Why are people the way that they are? Why do they do the things that they do? What can psychological science tell me about the world around me? And how can I use it to make the world a better place?* If these questions (especially the last two) keep you up at night, this is the perfect section of Intro Psych for you. Over the course of the semester, you'll grapple with these questions and learn how to think like budding scientists—a skill that will benefit you through college and beyond, regardless of your major or ultimate career path.

As an introduction to the scientific study of the human mind, we will cover everything from the organization of our brain cells to the psychology of internet trolling, as well as the scientific methods that help researchers make psychological discoveries. (See the course calendar on the last page for a full listing of topics.) Throughout the semester, you will be highly encouraged to apply your knowledge of the material to your own lives, as well as the world around you.

### Learning Objectives

- Exhibit mastery of basic principles of psychological science by completing weekly quizzes and assigned readings and participating in class lectures, discussions, and activities
- Become active consumers and communicators of empirical research in psychology

- Think critically to formulate opinions about the real-world implications of course material

### Course Materials

Myers, David G. & DeWall, C. Nathan (2016). *Exploring Psychology in Modules. Tenth Edition*. Macmillan Learning.

Please note that the book is required for this course. Lectures will consist of the portions of each unit that I think are the most fun to think about as a group or those that benefit from professional explanation, but there will be a non-negligible amount of material for which you will be independently responsible. (In other words, I will not be reciting the textbook to you during class and I promise you will need to read/internalize it in order to do as well as you hope in this course.)

Thanks to the Associated Students of Occidental College, the textbook for this course is available on reserve at the Info Center on the second floor of the Academic Commons. You can check out the book (for in-library use only) for up to four hours at a time and can reserve your checkout time in advance from the library website.

If accessing a copy of the textbook is going to be prohibitive for you in any way, please come talk to me as soon as possible and I'll do what I can to help you out.

### Course Requirements

#### **Weekly Quizzes: 40%**

Once a week (at the beginning of class), there will be a non-cumulative quiz covering both the lecture material and accompanying textbook modules from the previous two class days. There will be material in the textbook that will not be covered during lecture, as well as topics addressed during lecture that do not appear in the textbook. You will be responsible for the information from both sources.

Quiz questions will be fill-in-the-blank and (very) short answer, and your two lowest quiz grades will be dropped before computing your final grade at the end of the semester. Quiz grades will be posted on the course's Moodle page (accessible through myOxy) within a week, and I'll return each quiz once all students (i.e., those with excused absences) have taken it.

#### **Moment of Geek: 15%**

The beginning of each non-quiz class day will be reserved for Moment of Geek: an opportunity to polish your presentation skills in an informal, supportive environment, learn how to communicate scientific research in an accessible manner, and most importantly, just geek out about something that fascinates you.

For this assignment, your job is to find an article in the popular press that summarizes the findings of a recent study in psychology or neuroscience. and then, in two minutes or less,

share it with us. Tell us what the researchers studied, how they studied it, what they found, and why you think it's awesome.

Everyone will be responsible for completing two Moment of Geek "presentations" (to be scheduled in advance) over the course of the semester. You can expect to receive a Moment of Geek rubric with your grade by the class day following your presentation.

### **Writing Assignments: 25%**

Writing assignments are your chance to independently reflect on the course material and relate what we are learning to your own life and the world around you. There will be one prompt for every major topic area we cover and you can choose any three writing assignments to complete over the course of the semester. The only requirement is that (at least) one of your three assignments must address a topic covered *before* fall break. All prompts will be provided at the beginning of the course so you can plan ahead and select accordingly.

These 1-2 page (double-spaced) assignments will be due one week after the corresponding material has been covered during class. For example, since we will finish discussing theories of personality on September 13<sup>th</sup>, the personality essay would be due by the beginning of class on September 20<sup>th</sup>.

Depending on how many students have chosen to complete each assignment, you can expect to receive (brief) feedback and a grade within 1-2 weeks of the due date. For more detailed feedback on your writing, you can always visit during office hours. If you would like to complete more than three writing assignments (e.g., to make up for a late submission or a lower-than-expected grade), only your three highest scores will be counted.

### **Final Exam: 20%**

Unlike the weekly quizzes, the final exam will consist of multiple-choice questions addressing content from the entire semester. The exam will take place after classes have ended, during a three-hour period on December 12<sup>th</sup>. (Section 1 is scheduled for 8:30-11:30 AM, and Section 2 is scheduled from 1:00 PM to 4:00 PM.)

### **Extra Credit: Research Participation**

Throughout the semester, you'll have the opportunity to participate in research studies conducted by Oxy faculty and students. For every half-hour of research participation, you can earn half a percentage point added to your final grade (for a maximum of 2.5 total percentage points). Studies will be listed on the SONA website and updated regularly. For information on getting started with SONA: [oxy.edu/psychology/research-participants](http://oxy.edu/psychology/research-participants)

If you have any questions about eventually becoming one of the students who assists with/performs this research, please ask me!

### **Extra Extra Credit: It's In the Syllabus.**

This syllabus is your friend! If you have a logistical question about this class (or even about all the campus resources available to you), the answer is very likely somewhere in this document. (I know it's a lot, but I wrote it all to help you, I promise.)

So, to preemptively reward everyone for their excellent syllabus-reading habits, each of you will start off with one percentage point of extra credit (which will be added to your final grade at the end of the semester). But here's the catch: Every time you email me with a question that is *objectively and definitively* answered somewhere in this syllabus (e.g., "How much extra credit do we get for research participation?"), you will lose a quarter of that point. (May the odds be ever in your favor.)

Of course, I am more than happy to answer other (non-syllabus) questions via email and any questions in-person before/after class or during office hours, so please do feel free to ask me things. Just also try to do your part to make sure the question hasn't already been answered for you before sending me an email. ☺

### Grading and Academic Resources

Final letter grades will be assigned according to the following scale:

A: 90-100%  
B: 80-89%

C: 70-79%  
D: 60-69%

F: Below 60%

Final percentage scores will be rounded up/down to the nearest whole number from .50. I will not entertain individual appeals for "personalized rounding schemes" nor will I create "extra assignments" for anyone to attempt to raise their grade in the final weeks of the course. (Each such request will be subject to a deduction from the "it's in the syllabus" extra credit point described above.)

If you become concerned about (or would simply like to improve) your performance in the class at any point, please reach out as soon as you can. There is absolutely no shame in needing or seeking help, but remember that this assistance will be the most beneficial for you, grade-wise, if you are able to put my tips and tricks into practice as early in the course as possible.

Oxy also offers general academic resources that can provide support for this (or any other) class and your overall program of study:

Writing Center: [oxy.edu/writing-center](http://oxy.edu/writing-center)

CDLA Peer Learning Program: [cdla.oxycreates.org/peerlearning](http://cdla.oxycreates.org/peerlearning)

Academic Coaching: Dean of Students' office in Berkus Hall

Advising Center: [oxy.edu/advising-center](http://oxy.edu/advising-center)

### Turning in Assignments

Unless otherwise specified, assignments (e.g., writing assignments, links to your Moment of Geek articles) should be turned in electronically to the course's Weebly website by the start of your class section on the due date.

### Absence & Missed/Late Work Policy

Attendance is expected at every class meeting. If you know you won't be able to attend class on a certain day, please talk to me or email me in advance. If you know you will be absent from an upcoming class period, please let me know as soon as possible so that we can discuss the appropriate documentation for an excused absence and make arrangements for make-up work, if necessary. If unforeseen circumstances preclude you from attending class, please email once you are able.

Unexcused absences will result in no credit for the weekly quiz and/or Moment of Geek, as applicable. For excused absences (addressed on a case-by-case basis), you'll have the opportunity to make up any missed work when you return. Excused absences include (but are not limited to) those due to verifiable medical, personal, or family emergencies, Oxy-sponsored extracurricular activities, and religious holidays or other days of conscience.

Late assignments will only be accepted without penalty in the event of confirmable illness or emergency. (If you know you will not be in class on the day an assignment is due, you are still responsible for submitting that assignment on time.) Without such extenuating circumstances, late assignments will incur a penalty of 20% off of the maximum score for every day late (including non-class days and weekends).

### Technology Policy: The Golden Rule

You are more than welcome to bring laptops, tablets, or any other assistive technology to class if it will help you take notes to the best of your ability. (Laptops can also be borrowed for up to six hours at a time from the Info Center on the second floor of the Academic Commons.)

During structured discussions or in-class activities, I will ask that non-essential technology be set aside to allow for full engagement. Please also note that I reserve the right to revoke your individual technology privileges at any time if you appear excessively and/or inappropriately distracted. If you were speaking to a group of people about something you genuinely care about, you'd probably want them to pay full attention to you. Please just be kind.

### A Note on Classroom Community

It is my goal to foster an environment of mutual respect in which everyone can feel comfortable voicing their opinions or sharing their stories. On the first day of class, we will work together as a group to create ground rules for our discussions. If, at any point, you feel like information covered in this class triggers thoughts, feelings, or concerns that you would like to discuss further, please do not hesitate to reach out to me or to the Counseling staff at Emmons Wellness Center. For (free, short-term) appointments: (323) 259-2657, and for the 24/7 confidential hotline: (323) 341-4141.

### Statement on Accessibility and Accommodations

As an instructor, I strive to create an environment in which every student is given an equal opportunity to excel. If you are in need of certain accommodations (e.g., extra time on

assessments, adaptive technology, class note-taker, etc.), please contact Disability Services (and let me know you have done so) as soon as possible. Remember that any information you share regarding accommodations is confidential and will not be shared with other students.

In order to receive an approved accommodations letter, students must provide documentation and schedule an intake meeting with a staff member from Disability Services. (For more information on this process, see: [oxy.edu/disability-services/academic-accommodations](https://oxy.edu/disability-services/academic-accommodations) . Disability Services can also help students access low-cost neuropsychological testing if you do not yet have appropriate documentation.) Once you provide me with an accommodations letter, we can work together to ensure that your needs are met from that point forward. Please note that accommodations cannot be granted retroactively or by “working something out” personally with a professor without an approved accommodations letter.

Of course, if there is anything that I can do to make my teaching more accessible and inclusive, please do not hesitate to let me know at any time.

### **Statement on Sexual Violence<sup>1</sup> and Identity-Based Harm**

If you ask me, this is the single most important part of the syllabus and I need to know that people are aware of this information, so let’s try something. If you have read this far, please email me your favorite GIF of Olivia Benson (the fictional sex crimes detective from Law & Order: SVU). This is not a joke, and I am 100% serious. (You will lose a quarter of a point from the aforementioned “it’s in the syllabus” extra credit point if you do not do this.) Now, the important information...

If you experience sexual violence or identity-based harm at any point during the semester, please don’t hesitate to reach out to me so I can (1) help you get caught up in class, (2) put you in contact with the appropriate resources and services, and (3) answer questions to the extent that I am qualified to do so. But, if you’d rather not talk to your professor about these issues, I completely understand. Here are some of those resources that I would have ended up telling you about:

Project SAFE (Sexual Assault-Free Environment): [oxy.edu/project-safe](https://oxy.edu/project-safe)  
(Confidential) Survivor Advocate: [survivoradvocate@oxy.edu](mailto:survivoradvocate@oxy.edu)  
Sexual Respect & Title IX Office: [oxy.edu/sexual-respect-title-ix](https://oxy.edu/sexual-respect-title-ix)  
Queer & Trans Guide: [oxy.edu/sexual-respect-title-ix/queer-trans-guide](https://oxy.edu/sexual-respect-title-ix/queer-trans-guide)  
Intercultural Community Center: [oxy.edu/intercultural-community-center](https://oxy.edu/intercultural-community-center)  
Office of Religious and Spiritual Life: [oxy.edu/office-religious-spiritual-life](https://oxy.edu/office-religious-spiritual-life)

Emmons Counseling: [oxy.edu/emmons-wellness-center/mental-health](https://oxy.edu/emmons-wellness-center/mental-health)  
Dean of Students Office: [oxy.edu/student-affairs/dean-students/contact-us](https://oxy.edu/student-affairs/dean-students/contact-us)

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<sup>1</sup> Please note that I am required by both college policy and federal law to report all disclosures of sexual violence to the appropriate campus authorities, but that I am qualified and more than willing to support survivors throughout the process.

Campus Safety: [oxy.edu/campus-safety](http://oxy.edu/campus-safety)

And finally, for information about your legal rights under Title IX: [knowyourix.org](http://knowyourix.org)

### **Statement on Basic Needs**

If you have trouble securing food, housing, or any other basic need during your time at Oxy, there are resources available to help you, including an emergency loan of up to \$500 per semester (apply through myOxy). If you feel like such circumstances are impacting your performance in this class, please speak to me (if you feel comfortable) so that I can provide whatever resources I can. For additional information and support, you can also contact the Dean of Students' Office at (323) 259-2661.

### **Statement on Academic Integrity**

Do your own work. Honestly, that's really it. Believe it or not, it's very, very easy to tell when students try to cheat or pass others' work off as their own. Please don't sacrifice your own academic future (and insult my intelligence) by trying to pull something. You will get caught, and it will not be pleasant. (More specifically, all suspected cases of academic dishonesty will be referred to the Judicial Examiner for further review, with potential penalties ranging from a failing grade on the assignment to expulsion from the College.)

Again, if any part of you feels even slightly tempted to engage in academic dishonesty for the sake of a better grade, *come talk to me* and I will give you all sorts of tips and tricks to *earn* that grade you're hoping for.

For this class, specific examples of academic dishonesty include, but are not limited to: conferring with another student, looking at someone else's paper, or using any outside source during weekly quizzes or the final exam; and submitting writing assignments that have been written by another person or lifted from the internet, either in part or in full.

If you have any questions about these policies or academic dishonesty in general, I would be more than happy to answer them, so please do ask.

### **Course Schedule**

The schedule on the following page is tentative and subject to change. Any major revisions will be announced during class, posted to Weebly, and confirmed via email.

DAY	DATE	IN-CLASS WORK	TOPIC AREA	TEXTBOOK MODULES
R	August 30 <sup>th</sup>	--	Welcome and Introduction	
T	September 4 <sup>th</sup>	--	History (and Current State) of Psychological Science	1
R	September 6 <sup>th</sup>	--	Research Methods and Critical Thinking	2
T	September 11 <sup>th</sup>	Quiz	Theories of Personality	38, 39
R	September 13 <sup>th</sup>	Moment of Geek	Theories of Personality	
T	September 18 <sup>th</sup>	Quiz	Introduction to Neuroscience	3, 4, 5
R	September 20 <sup>th</sup>	Moment of Geek	Introduction to Neuroscience	
T	September 25 <sup>th</sup>	Quiz	Nature and Nurture	6, 14, 15
R	September 27 <sup>th</sup>	Moment of Geek	Nature and Nurture	
T	October 2 <sup>nd</sup>	Quiz	Developmental Psychology	10, 11, 12, 13
R	October 4 <sup>th</sup>	Moment of Geek	Developmental Psychology	
T	October 9 <sup>th</sup>	--	<b>NO CLASS: Fall Break</b>	
R	October 11 <sup>th</sup>	Quiz	Social Psychology	35, 36, 37
T	October 16 <sup>th</sup>	Moment of Geek	Social Psychology	
R	October 18 <sup>th</sup>	Quiz	Social Psychology	
T	October 23 <sup>rd</sup>	Moment of Geek	Motivation, Stress, and Illness	29, 30, 33
R	October 25 <sup>th</sup>	Quiz	Emotions, Health, and Happiness	31, 32, 34
T	October 30 <sup>th</sup>	Moment of Geek	Understanding Mental Illness	40, 41, 42, 43
R	November 1 <sup>st</sup>	Quiz	Understanding Mental Illness	
T	November 6 <sup>th</sup>	Moment of Geek	Treating Mental Illness	44, 45
R	November 8 <sup>th</sup>	Quiz	Consciousness, Sleep, and Altered States	7, 8, 9
T	November 13 <sup>th</sup>	Moment of Geek	Sensation and Perception	16, 17, 18
R	November 15 <sup>th</sup>	Quiz	Learning	19, 20, 21
T	November 20 <sup>th</sup>	Moment of Geek	Memory	22, 23, 24
R	November 22 <sup>nd</sup>	--	<b>NO CLASS: Thanksgiving Break</b>	
T	November 27 <sup>th</sup>	Quiz	Language and Cognition	25, 26
R	November 29 <sup>th</sup>	Moment of Geek	Intelligence	27, 28
T	December 4 <sup>th</sup>	Quiz	Flex Day	
W	December 12 <sup>th</sup>	--	<b>Final Exam</b>	

**Reminders:** Everyone is responsible for completing two Moment of Geek presentations over the course of the semester (with dates assigned in advance). There will be time set aside every week for MoG, but only 5-6 people will be presenting at a time. Quizzes will also occur every week, and your two lowest quiz grades will be dropped at the end of the semester.