



**School of Arts & Science  
PSYCHOLOGY DEPARTMENT**

**PSYC 130-003  
Contemporary Issues  
2009w**

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## **COURSE OUTLINE**

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**Dr. R. G. Tonks**

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308A

**Office Hours:** Mon 11:30-12:20; Tues: 2:30-3:30, Thurs 10:30-  
11:20

**Lecture ~ Section 003:** Mon 12:30-3:20 (Y 300)

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**Psychology Applied to Contemporary Issues.** This course acquaints students with major contemporary issues in psychology and considers their historical antecedents. Topics includes the application of psychological knowledge on lifespan development, personality, abnormal behaviour, social cognition, social influence, and social relations to a variety of contemporary social issues. Topics vary with instructor and changing problems. Pre-requisites: English 12 or assessment.

### **Learning outcomes**

Upon completion of this course the student will be able to:

1. Describe major contemporary issues in psychology and explain their historical antecedents.
2. Apply psychological theories and understanding of current psychological issues to personal experience.
3. Conduct impartial studies of psychological topics and arrive at logical inferences and conclusions from collected data.

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Beginning with a brief overview of the nature of psychology and a sample of the diverse areas of human life that it touches, this course aims to provide

students with a foundation in understanding how the basic research methods from [psyc 110](#) can be applied to everyday social issues. This course also aims to help students develop critical thinking skills needed to understand the social issues to which we would like to apply our research. An emphasis is placed on understanding psychology as an applied social science, covering topics such as: social influence, motivation & emotion, cultural and ethnic psychology, psychological disorder and therapies, health psychology and personality human development. Along with providing students with some 'hands-on' training in carrying out psychological research applied to social issues, there is an opportunity for students to become fluent with psychological theories and concepts through seminar activities that accompany the lectures.

**Course Text:** **Gerrig, Zimbardo, Desmarais, Ivanco (2009). [Psychology and Life](#). Toronto: Pearson.**

While we will be following along with the chapters of the textbook, as indicated on the attached [syllabus](#), the lecture topics may stray from the material covered in the weekly readings. Students are responsible to read the assigned chapters as the material is covered in class, however students are also encouraged to read the assigned material *before* it is covered in class.

**Evaluation:** There will be **three exams**: a Quiz, a Midterm, and a Final Exam; all of which will be based upon the material covered in lecture, assigned readings, and seminar activities. These tests will involve various multiple-choice and short answer questions. The Quiz and Midterm exams will be on or about the date indicated on the course syllabus and the final exam will be during the regular exam final exam period, so don't book your travel arrangements until you know when is the final. There will also be several **seminar activities** and a **group research project**, including a report and presentation that students will be expected to complete as part of their course work.

### **Seminar Activities:**

Various class and small group activities will be carried out as seminar activities. It is expected that students show up to class as marks will be allotted for work completed during and for seminars time. Should a student be unable to attend class, missing an important activity due to illness or some other legitimate excuse, they may be permitted to make up for it in a suitable fashion such as a take home essay or exercise. The class will be divided into seminar groups where some topics will be take-home assignments.

## **Group Project:**

Students will be organised into groups early in the middle of the semester in order to carry out projects on contemporary issues (i.e., homelessness, bullying, propaganda) from a psychological perspective. Over several weeks of discussion the instructor and students will determine the specific contemporary issue(s) for study this semester. At times in the past the entire class has taken on a theme, (such as terrorism), other times different themes have been taken on across the class.

Given what even topic, groups of students will examine the relationship between an applied issue and psychology from one of the major orientations to the field. As such there will be presentations and reports made on applications of the following perspectives: *social psychology* (i.e., propaganda, persuasion, conformity, obedience, ...), *motivation* (what makes people do it? or help others?) & *emotion* (how it makes us react and feel), *personality* (individual differences), *health* (how does it affect health?), psychological disorders & therapies (psychological problems that arise such as depression), and human development (What impact on children or seniors?). Students will review literature on their topic and present their reviews to the class. There is a choice of the format and type of project where students can review previous studies that can be applied to recent events or they can develop their own research or psychological application related to their topic. The exact nature of the projects will be negotiated with the instructor based upon the project proposals.

## **Marking Scheme:**

### **Exams**

Quiz 15% Jan 26th

Midterm Exam: 20% - Mar 2nd

Final Exam: 25% - (April 14-22)

### **In Class**

Seminar Activities: 15%

Class participation: 5%

**Group Research Project:** 20% April 9<sup>th</sup>

Proposal: 5%

Presentation: 5%

Report : 10%

## Grading Scheme: (Camosun Standards)

A+ 90 - 100	B 73 - 76	D 50 - 59
A 85-89	B- 70 - 72	F 0 - 49
A- 80 - 84	C+ 65 - 69	I = Incomplete*
B+ 77-79	C 60 - 64	

\*(If the missing work is not completed within 6 weeks from the semester end, the grade will become F).

## Interpretation of Grades

Letter Grades are established according to the college definition as well as my own teaching experience.

- A: Superior levels of achievement.** High quality is expected which shows a full understanding of the work that is to include some form of exceptional achievement (i.e. new insight, obvious quality of research, clear presentation above and beyond the minimum required, better work than the majority of the class).
- B: High levels of achievement.** Here a grade corresponds to good work that shows full understanding. It does not have the same degree of exceptional achievement that makes an A, but is distinctly beyond the minimum required, and above average.
- C+: Satisfactory level of achievement.** This is seen as average or acceptable quality.
- C: Sufficient level of achievement to proceed with next level of study.** Reaches average work, showing an understanding of the material and the minimum requirements have been met, however there are usually some errors and mistakes made that hold the grade here. It does not indicate the student is having any significant difficulties.
- D: Minimum level of achievement for which credit is granted; a course with a D grade cannot be used as a prerequisite.** This grade is given for work that is present but is not providing sufficient insight or completeness. It is likely lacking in details, but has some approximation of adequate work.
- F: Minimum level is not achieved.**

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## Academic Honesty

Beyond learning basic concepts and research strategies, students are expect to

produce some original written work that stands as an example of their expressed understanding of psychology as it has been applied to a specific area of research. As such students will write article summaries and group reports in their own words, making use of [standard psychological styles of referencing](#) and reporting psychological information. *Plagiarism*, or the unacknowledged use of another person's ideas or words represents academic dishonesty and is grounds for expulsion from the college. Camosun policy states "If an instructor remains convinced that there has been a violation [plagiarism or cheating], he or she may assign a grade of F for the work involved or in the course..." Let's avoid that!

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## STUDENT RIGHTS and RESPONSIBILITIES

1. Students are responsible for reading the assigned material according to the assignment dates so that they are prepared to participate in online discussions and group tasks. It is essential for students to consult the chapter study guides since they will reveal the topic activities that will form the basis of the tests.
2. If a student requires special accommodation to be successful in this course, please contact me the first week of class.
3. Students, and their prospective participants have the right not to participate in any given course research activity.
4. As part of the course, specifically in the seminar activities, you always have the right **NOT** to self-disclose any information.
5. Students are expected to follow certain standards of conduct:
  - a) Work must be used for this course only, and it must be original-authored by the student who submits the work.
  - b) Assignments that are copied (identical or plagiarized) between students will be given 0% for ALL students with identical work. If you want to work cooperatively, inform me ahead of time.
  - c) Fabrication of research data is not acceptable.
  - d) It is college policy that *"If an instructor remains convinced that there has been a violation [such as plagiarism or cheating], he or she may assign a grade of F for the work involved, or for the course..."*

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### LEARNING SUPPORT AND SERVICES FOR STUDENTS

There are a variety of services available for students to assist them throughout their learning. This information is available in the College calendar, at Student Services or the College web site at [camosun.bc.ca](http://camosun.bc.ca)

## **STUDENT CONDUCT POLICY**

There is a [Student Conduct Policy](#) which includes plagiarism. It is the student's responsibility to become familiar with the content of this policy. The policy is available in each School Administration Office, at Student Services and on the College web site in the Policy Section.

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[Psyc 130 Home](#)