

Introduction to Psychology

PSYC 1

Fall 2025 Section 61 In Person 3 Unit(s) 08/20/2025 to 12/08/2025 Modified 08/24/2025

Contact Information

The best way to contact me is via email @ desiree.ryan@sjsu.edu.

I will do my best to reply to emails within 48 hours, but response times may take longer at the beginning of the semester and during finals.

Office Hours: Thursdays, 12-1:30, DMH 316, or by appointment

Phone: 408-924-5653

Course Information

Class Time: TR 10:30 am-11:45 am

Classroom: DMH: 355

Course Description and Requisites

Psychology is the scientific study of behavior and mental processes. The content focuses on the exploration of major psychological theories and concepts, methods, and research findings in psychology. Topics include the biological bases of behavior, perception, cognition and consciousness, learning, memory, emotion, motivation, development, personality, social psychology, psychological disorders and therapeutic approaches to treatment, and applied psychology.

Satisfies 4. Social and Behavioral Sciences (Formerly Area D).

Grading: Letter Graded.

Classroom Protocols

Inclusivity and Engagement Principles: Together, we will co-create a classroom environment that is inclusive and welcoming to everyone. In this course, we will respectfully discuss diverse experiences related to gender identity, race and ethnicity, and socioeconomic status, among others. To ensure that everyone's identities and experiences are valued and heard, I expect each of you to regard one another with the utmost respect. If you feel these principles are not being met by me or your peers, please let me know immediately.

Note on Device Use: To ensure the environment is marked by respect and inclusivity, I ask that you please refrain from texting, browsing the internet, and/or using social media. I understand some of you may need to check your texts or phones for family emergencies, etc., so I ask that you please do so quietly and mindfully. *If you are becoming distracted and not listening to or engaging with the course material, me, or your peers, I will ask to speak to you privately. If the behavior continues, I will ask you to leave the classroom.*

Accessibility: I aim to make our learning community as accessible as possible. This means that I will provide accessible materials and create opportunities for different kinds of classroom engagement (i.e., traditional test taking, written assignments, group discussions, personal reflections, take-home assignments). If course materials are inaccessible, or you experience a barrier to participating in class, please bring this to my attention immediately, and I will gladly work with you to ensure accessibility. If you are a student with a disability who requires accommodations to achieve equal access to this course, please visit the [Accessible Education Center \(https://www.sjsu.edu/aec/\)](https://www.sjsu.edu/aec/). Additionally, please get in touch with me privately during my office hours or by appointment, preferably during the first few weeks of the semester, so I can ensure your needs are being met and I am doing all I can to support you.

Academic Integrity: All submitted work must be your own original work and produced exclusively for this course. Academic integrity includes following exam and paper rules, using only permitted materials during an exam, keeping what you know about an exam to yourself, incorporating proper citation of all sources of information, and only submitting your own original work. The use of sources (ideas, quotations, paraphrases) must be properly acknowledged and documented.

The use of AI (e.g., ChatGPT) at any stage of course assessments is prohibited. For example, students may not use AI to generate ideas, guide paper writing, or construct sentences, paragraphs, or full papers. Violations will be taken seriously and may result in a failing grade for the assignment and/or the course. I cannot guide you in developing your critical thinking and writing skills if you use AI during this course.

Academic misconduct includes, but is not limited to, disclosing exam content during or after you have taken an exam, accessing exam materials without permission, copying/purchasing any material from another student, or from another source, that is submitted for grading as your own, and plagiarism such as using internet material without proper citation.

Violations will be taken seriously and may result in a failing grade for the assignment and/or the course. If you have any questions, please talk with me before completing an assignment.

Distribution of Lecture Notes and Other Course Materials: All materials in this course are the intellectual property of their creators. As a student, you have access to many of the materials in the course for the purpose of learning, engaging with your classmates, and completing assignments. You have a moral and

legal obligation to respect the rights of others by only using course materials for purposes associated with the course. You are not permitted to share, upload, stream, sell, republish, share the login information for, or otherwise disseminate any of the course materials, including video and audio files, assignment prompts, slides, notes, syllabus, simulations, datasets, discussion threads.

Please note that teaching and learning is an iterative process, and as such, the course schedule and other syllabus content (e.g., exam question format) may shift as we progress through the semester.

Program Information

Welcome to this General Education course.

SJSU's General Education Program establishes a strong foundation of versatile skills, fosters curiosity about the world, promotes ethical judgment, and prepares students to engage and contribute responsibly and cooperatively in a multicultural, information-rich society. General education classes integrate areas of study and encourage progressively more complex and creative analysis, expression, and problem solving.

The General Education Program has three goals:

Goal 1: To develop students' core competencies for academic, personal, creative, and professional pursuits.

Goal 2: To enact the university's commitment to diversity, inclusion, and justice by ensuring that students have the knowledge and skills to serve and contribute to the well-being of local and global communities and the environment.

Goal 3: To offer students integrated, multidisciplinary, and innovative study in which they pose challenging questions, address complex issues, and develop cooperative and creative responses.

More information about the General Education Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs) can be found on the [GE website \(https://sjsu.edu/general-education/ge-requirements/overview/learning-outcomes.php\)](https://sjsu.edu/general-education/ge-requirements/overview/learning-outcomes.php).

Course Learning Outcomes (CLOs)

Course Learning Outcomes

1. Demonstrate understanding of key concepts in each area of psychology discussed in the course (e.g., cognitive, developmental, social).
2. Apply psychological concepts and theories to real-world situations and social issues. To facilitate this goal, students will link and discuss knowledge gained from course readings with news articles about current events in both written assignments and small group discussions.
3. Develop and practice critical thinking skills via written assignments. Students will gain experience reading scholarly, peer-reviewed articles and considering how researchers use materials (e.g., measures/scales) to answer their core research questions.

Area 4: Social and Behavioral Sciences

Area 4 courses increase students' understanding of human behavior and social interaction in the context of value systems, economic structures, political institutions, social groups, and natural environments. Through fulfillment of the Area 4 requirement, students develop an understanding of problems and issues from different disciplinary perspectives and examine issues in their contemporary as well as historical settings and in a variety of cultural contexts. Courses that emphasize skills development and professional preparation are excluded from Area 4.

The CSU requires students to complete General Education courses in the Social and Behavioral Sciences in at least two different disciplines. Students may meet this requirement by either 1) taking two lower-division Area 4 courses in different disciplines, or 2) taking two lower-division Area 4 courses in the same discipline and an UD Area 4 upper-division GE course in a different discipline.

GE Area 4 Learning Outcomes

Upon successful completion of an Area 4 course, students should be able to:

1. demonstrate understanding of the ways in which social institutions, culture, and environment shape and are shaped by the behavior of individuals, both past and present;
2. compare and contrast the dynamics of two or more social groups or social systems in a variety of historical and/or cultural contexts;
3. place contemporary social developments in cultural, environmental, geographical, and/or historical contexts; and
4. draw on social/behavioral science information from various perspectives to formulate applications appropriate to historical and/or contemporary social issues.

Writing Requirement

The minimum writing requirement is 1500 words in a language and style appropriate to the discipline.

Course Materials

Course Textbook: We will be using the following open-source, free textbook for this course:

Openstax. psychology-2e. Available at: <https://openstax.org/details/books/psychology-2e>

You can view or download a PDF of this textbook at the above link.

Course Website: Information and materials will be posted on the course Canvas page.

Additional Materials: Please bring paper and a pen/pencil to each class meeting.

Course Requirements and Assignments

Lectures and Class Activities/Discussions:

For the bulk of the semester, each week will be composed of a lecture on Tuesdays, and a lecture or mini-lecture and discussion on Thursdays. Group discussions are an important part (~10%) of this course as they give you a way to apply course concepts, develop critical thinking skills, and guide your verbal reasoning abilities while engaging with research findings. Both passive learning (i.e., lecture) and active learning (i.e., applying course concepts in discussions and activities) are implemented in this course to support your success as a well-rounded thinker.

Course Assessments:

Course Total Points = 100 points

1. **44 points:** 2 exams (22 pts each)
2. **25 points:** Letter to legislator (12.5 pts letter proposal, 12.5 pts final letter)
3. **15 points:** Content quizzes (3 quizzes, 5 pts each)
4. **10 points:** In-class activities & discussions and/or take-home assignments
5. **6 points:** Research Participation

1. Exams (44 points: 2 exams, 22 points each):

To meet CLO #1, you will take 2 exams on Canvas. Exams will be open-note and open-book (BUT not open-partner, open-Google, or open-AI). You will have 75 minutes to answer 44 questions. Because the exams are timed, I strongly suggest you study as if this were an in-class, scantron exam, and only use your notes as a backup. Exam questions may take the form of multiple choice, true/false, fill-in-the-blank, fill-in-multiple blanks, multiple answers, multiple drop-downs, matching, and short essay answer questions.

Throughout the course, I will hold 3 exams; you will only need to take 2 of them. You are welcome to take all 3 and drop your lowest score, or only take 2 of them. Please plan accordingly as students cannot retake any exam. Canvas will automatically drop your lowest score (which will be a zero if you do not take it). I will open the exam at 9am on the exam date and leave it open for 48 hours. Once you open the exam, a timer will start and will only have 75 minutes to complete the exam. Please ensure you are in a quiet environment with stable wifi. If the wifi goes out, this exam will be dropped as your lowest score. Once you've seen the exam, I cannot reopen it for you under any circumstances (this is why I have a very flexible exam policy). I will be in our classroom during the regular class time if you wish to take the exam there (I recommend this option).

Further detailed information regarding exam content will be given in class.

2. Letter to Legislator (25 points: 12.5 points proposal, 12.5 points final letter):

To deepen your understanding of a course topic and learn how to use research to support an argument about a social or policy issue affecting a community you care about, you will write a letter to your representative about a topic of your choosing. This assignment will facilitate the completion of CLO #2. This assignment is broken into 2 components:

1. **Proposal** (12.5 pts)

2. Final Letter (12.5 pts)

Please follow the steps below to complete these assignments:

Step 1:

- Consider an issue that is in the realm of psychology that you feel particularly passionate about.
- It is best to choose an issue we have discussed in lecture or read about. However, if there is an issue not covered in lecture or in the readings that you would like to write about, please email me your topic for approval. For example, you may want to write about sex trafficking of young girls or women but this is not covered in class. I can work with you to ensure your topic is feasible for this assignment.

Step 2:

- Look up 3 articles in PsycINFO related to your topic. I suggest finding a chapter to get a grasp of where the field is at with your topic (you will want a more recent article for this). I then suggest finding articles on the implications of the issue. Why is it important? Why are you writing your legislator about this issue?

Step 3:

- Write up a proposal that gives a ~500-word summary of the issue (a good way to go about writing this summary is to craft 3 main points and center your summary and letter around those 3 main points), ~200-word summary of all 3 sources (e.g., what does each source tell you, how do you see these sources working together, how will these sources help you write your actual letter). Clearly cite each article in *proper* APA style at the end of your proposal in a reference list.

Step 4:

- Submit your proposal on **Friday, 11/14 by 11:59 via Canvas.**

Step 5:

- Work your summary into a proper letter. Please see below for ACLU's guidelines for writing your representative and assignment details. Your letter should be formatted like a real letter, and flow like a real letter. You will need to explain to the legislator what the issue is, who the issue impacts, and incorporate all 3 sources (you will need to cite in-text).
- You may then suggest solutions, perhaps point out a country that handles the policy or issue in a way you appreciate, etc. (Please note this will require you to look up and cite the information). Your letter will need to be addressed to your representative and signed off like a real letter. Your letter should be one page, 650-700 words. You may use the summary you wrote and revised based on my feedback in your letter (it needs to have changed based on my edits).

Step 6:

- Submit letter on **Wed, 12/2 by 11:59 via Canvas**

ACLU: Tips on Writing to Your Elected Officials

Letters are an extremely effective way of communicating with your elected officials. Many legislators believe that a letter represents not only the position of the writer but also many other constituents who did not take the time to write. These tips will help increase the effectiveness of your letter:

Keep it brief: Letters should never be longer than one page, and should be limited to one issue. Legislative aides read many letters on many issues in a day, so your letter should be as concise as possible.

State Who You Are and What You Want Up Front: In the first paragraph, tell your legislators that you are a constituent and identify the issue about which you are writing. If your letter pertains to a specific piece of legislation, it helps to identify it by its bill number (e.g. H.R. ____ or S. _____).

Hit your three most important points: Choose the three strongest points that will be most effective in persuading legislators to support your position and flesh them out. *Note: these three points will be the space where you integrate research findings.

Personalize your letter: Tell your elected official why this legislation matters in the community or state.

You are the Expert: Remember that your legislator's job is to represent you. You should be courteous and to the point, but don't be afraid to take a firm position. Remember that often your elected official may know no more about a given issue than you do.

You can get the contact information for your Members of Congress at Congress.org

Assignment Notes/Reminders:

Craft three main points in your letter about your issue. Explain why your elected representative should care about this issue. What are the implications of this problem?

Letter must be well-written, professional, and address the representative(s) appropriately (e.g., using the official's proper title and spelling their name correctly!)

Your letter should be 1 page, single-spaced (about 650-700 words)

Consider not just talking about an issue, but also:

1. Expressing support for a proposed law, policy, or course of action.
2. Expressing opposition against a proposed law, policy, or course of action.
3. Suggesting an alternate course of action that they may not have previously considered.
4. Look up and include a discussion of past decisions that your representative has made that you approve of (or disapprove of).
5. Providing a solution you think will be beneficial for your community or the community you are discussing.

Proposal Score Breakdown (12.5 points):

1. Appropriate topic/issue (discussed in class or approved by instructor): **1 pts**
2. Thorough summary of what the issue or policy is, why it's important to focus on this issue or policy, what the implications are: **3 pts**

3. 3 main points are identified sufficiently discussed and relevant to the topic of letter: **4.5 pts**
4. Inclusion and discussion of 3 research articles (must be accurately and appropriately used): **3 pts**
5. Proposal if polished, well-written, displays critical thinking skills: **1 pt**

Proposal Score Breakdown (12.5 points):

1. ~500-word summary of the issue: **4.5 pts**
2. 3 main points identified: **3 pts**
3. 200-word summary of all 3 sources: **3 pts**
4. Reference list: **2 pts**

Helpful Sites:

<https://guides.lib.berkeley.edu/ContactingOfficials/Tips>

<https://ctb.ku.edu/en/table-of-contents/advocacy/direct-action/letters-to-elected-officials/main>

Example letter (you can use this as a guide but don't forget to discuss research findings and insert citations ["i.e., Bullock & Singh, 2020; Singh & Bullock, 2020; Vallegra & Zurbruggen, 2018"]).

<https://evans.house.gov/media-center/press-releases/congressman-evans-letter-governor-wolf-and-mayor-kenney-about-election>

3. Content Quizzes (15 points: 3 quizzes, 5 points each):

To ensure you are regularly engaging with content outside of lecture, reading, and keeping pace with the course, I will hold 3 quizzes throughout the semester. Like the exams, quizzes will be taken on Canvas (so you will need to bring a computer to class on quiz days). I will open the quiz at 9am on the quiz date and leave it open for 48 hours. Once you open the quiz, a timer will start and you will only have 10 minutes to complete the quiz. Please ensure you are in a quiet environment with stable wifi. On the actual day of the quiz, I will reserve the first 10 minutes of class for people to take the quiz if they choose to not take it at home. I recommend taking it during class time, in the classroom with me. We will have regular lecture after the quiz. Quizzes meet CLO #1.

4. In-Class Activities & Discussions and/or Take-Home Assignments (10 points):

Throughout the semester (usually once a week), you will break into groups to engage in discussions and/or activities where you will apply course concepts. These discussions (or activities) are important as we will be engaging actively and deeply with the course content in ways that cannot be facilitated by reading lecture slides at home on your own. These activities and discussions will facilitate CLO#1 and CLO #2.

This class is part of California's Promise Program which requires you to attend a campus or community event. Five of the 10 points will be sectioned off for the fulfillment of this requirement. Details about events that satisfy this assignment will be given in class.

5. Research Participation (6 points)

Department of Psychology Research Completion (Revised for Fall 2025)

An important part of the educational experience of Psyc 1 is not only learning about important facts and findings from scientific research in psychology but also serving as a participant in research in psychology. Broad exposure to a variety of research methodologies (experiments, correlational studies, lab studies, online studies, etc.) will provide experiential knowledge for students. This experience contributes to **Course Learning Objective 4**, as well aligning with **Program Learning Outcome 2** (Research Methods in Psychology).

Thus, it is mandated for Psyc 1 courses that each student obtain a certain number of hours as a participant in research studies in the department. Research participation will count towards your course grade.

You can view available studies offered by the psychology department and sign up for the research participation on the SONA online system:

<https://sjsu.sona-systems.com/>

Details on how to set up an account in SONA in order to participate in research is included in the handout and on the psychology department's website.

There are several requirements by the department in order to receive full credit for research participation:

1. All students should complete at least one hour of their required research hours by October 1st.
2. Half of your research credit participation or 2 credit hours of your 4 hours must be in-person lab studies. Lab studies are studies that require your physical attendance at an experiment held on campus, as opposed to online studies that include virtual participation in research.

Research participation will be treated as a course assignment worth 6% of the final course grade. But to obtain the full 6%, you will need to complete 4 hours of research participation. Anything less than 4 hours will result in less than 6%. (1.5% per hour)

- o If you elect to not participate in research, you can consider the alternative assignment option for full or partial credit for your research hours. Please see the distributed handouts on the alternative assignment for details on the requirements.
- o All research hours and alternative assignments must be completed by December 8th.

Department of Psychology Policy for Awarding Research Hours for Partial Completion

For psychology students at SJSU, research participation is a requirement for completion of the Psyc 1 General Psychology course. However, it is the view of the department that **proportional credit** can be given in that points awarded should be commensurate with the effort expended by participants in studies.

Consistent with IRB ethical guidelines, participants can always elect to withdraw from a study for any reason. In these cases, credit will be granted in proportion to the amount of the study completed, with a minimum credit of 0.25 hours.

In cases where participants complete a study unreasonably quickly, credit will be granted in proportion to the amount of the study completed, with a minimum credit of 0.25 hours.

✓ Grading Information

93-100% A	87-89% B+	80-82% B-	70-76% C
90-92% A-	83-86% B	77-79% C+	60-69%

University Policies

Per [University Policy S16-9 \(PDF\)](http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S16-9.pdf) (<http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S16-9.pdf>), relevant university policy concerning all courses, such as student responsibilities, academic integrity, accommodations, dropping and adding, consent for recording of class, etc. and available student services (e.g. learning assistance, counseling, and other resources) are listed on the [Syllabus Information](https://www.sjsu.edu/curriculum/courses/syllabus-info.php) (<https://www.sjsu.edu/curriculum/courses/syllabus-info.php>) web page. Make sure to visit this page to review and be aware of these university policies and resources.

Course Schedule

Week	Date	Lecture Topic	Due Date
Foundations of Psychology			
1	Thurs, 8/21	Welcome & Class Overview	No readings due
2	Tues, 8/26	History of Psychology	Ch. 1
	Thurs, 8/28	Contemporary Psychology	Ch. 1
3	Tues 9/2	Psychological Research Methods	Ch. 2

	Thurs, 9/4	Psychological Research Methods	Ch. 2 Quiz #1
The Body, Brain, and Behavior			
4	Tues, 9/9	Biopsychology	Ch. 3
	Thurs, 9/11	Biopsychology	Ch. 3
5	Tues, 9/16	States of Consciousness	Ch. 4
		States of Consciousness	Ch. 4
	Thurs, 9/18	Exam 1	Exam 1
6	Tues, 9/23	Sensation and Perception	Ch. 5 Last day to add courses and register late Last day to drop the course without an entry on the student's permanent record
	Thurs, 9/25	Sensation and Perception	Ch. 5
7	Tues, 9/30	Learning & Thinking and Intelligence	Ch. 6
	Thurs, 10/2	Library Day	Ch. 7

8	Tues, 10/7	Memory	Ch. 8 Complete at least one hour of their required research hours by 10/8.
Development, Personality, and Social Contexts			
	Thurs, 10/9	Lifespan Development	Ch. 9
9	Tues, 10/14	Lifespan Development	Ch. 10
	Thurs, 10/16	Emotion and Motivation	Quiz #2
10	Tues, 10/21	Personality	Ch. 11
	Thurs, 10/23	Personality	Ch. 11
11	Tues, 10/28	Social	Ch. 12
	Thurs, 10/30	Exam 2	Exam 2
12	Tues, 11/4	Social	Ch. 12
	Thurs 11/6	I/O Psychology	Ch. 13
13	Tues, 11/11	Film- <i>Separated at the Border</i>	

	Thurs, 11/13	Letter Proposal Workshop Day	Letter Proposal due Friday, 11/14 by 11:59 via Canvas.
14	Tues, 11/18	Industrial Organizational Psychology	Quiz #3
Mental Health and Well-Being			
	Thurs, 11/20	Stress, Lifestyle & Health	Ch. 14
15	Tues, 11/25	Psychological Disorders	Ch. 15
	Thurs, 11/27	No class/Thanksgiving	
16	Tues, 12/2	Psychological Disorders	Ch. 15 Letter due Wed, 12/2 by 11:59 via Canvas
	Thurs, 12/4	Treatment & Course Wrap- up	All research hours and alternative assignments must be completed by Monday, 12/8
17	Tues, 12/9	No class/Campus Study Day	
	Thurs, 12/11	Exam 3	8:30 am - 10:30 am