

Rhodes College
Psychology 150
Dr. Marsha Walton
Office hours:

Mondays	3:00-5:00	drop-in (no appointments)
Wednesdays, Fridays	3:00-5:00	by appointment

Fall, 1998
Foundational Issues in Psychology
121 Clough

I. Course Objectives

Psychology 150 is a course designed for students who wish to prepare for further study in the field of psychology or in related fields. It is a prerequisite for most advanced courses in the department of psychology. There are two interrelated course objectives for Psychology 150.

A. Students will become familiar with methods of investigation in psychology and will exercise critical thinking skills in evaluating psychological research. This will entail:

1. familiarity with the ethical and scientific principles that guide psychological research.
2. the ability to identify independent and dependent variables, and basic research designs.
3. the ability to formulate empirical questions and operational definitions of psychological variables.

B. Students will become familiar with the foundational issues in the field of psychology and with the five major approaches to the study of these issues: psychobiological, learning theory, cognitive, socio-cultural, and psychodynamic. Familiarity with foundational knowledge will entail:

1. the ability to recognize and discuss recurring themes and underlying principles that emerge in various areas of the discipline.
2. an understanding of the underlying assumptions and principles that guide the five major schools of thought in psychology, and an ability to compare and to evaluate thinking from these different perspectives.

II. Course Requirements

A. Reading Assignments

1. The following two textbooks are required, and must be read by class time on the day they are listed in the schedule below. The first text describes the five major approaches to the field of psychology and presents major themes. The second discusses critical methodological issues and prepares the student to read and evaluate psychological studies.

Tavris, C. & Wade, C. (1995). *Psychology in perspective*. Harper Collins. (TW)

Hock, R. R. (1996). *Forty studies that changed psychology: Explorations into the history of psychological research*. Harper-Collins, Inc. (H)

2. The following book is required for all psychology majors and it is recommended that students purchase a copy in their first course. It includes helpful information about using the library and about writing paper in the professional style required in all psychology courses.

Rosnow, R. L., & Rosnow, M. (1995). *Writing Papers in Psychology, 3rd Edition*. Brooks/Cole.

B. Examinations

1. In-class exams. Three objective, multiple choice and short-answer tests will be given during the term. These will cover material from assigned readings, from class lectures and discussions. Each test will count 15% of the final course grade.

All make-up tests will be given on the day of the regularly scheduled final examination. There will be no make-up exams during the term for any reason. Any student may choose to take any

make-up tests for any reason (no excuses necessary) as long as a written request to do so is turned in by the last class day.

Students may choose to take second-chance exams in order to improve their grades. All second-chance exams will be given at the time of the scheduled final and will have to be completed during the 3-hour time allotted. (Most students finish the final in about 2 hours.)

2. Final Examination. A comprehensive final examination will cover all course work. The exam will be similar in format to the in-class examination. It will count 20% of the final course grade.

3. Opening Quizzes. The first five minutes of most classes will be used for quick quizzes on material from that day's reading assignment or from the previous class lecture. Points earned on these quizzes will be added to the final exam score. Students not present for these (no matter what the reason) will not be given any make-up. The final exam for psychology 150 is a very challenging test, covering quite a lot of material. However, a student who comes well-prepared for class throughout the semester may go into the final exam with as many as 50 points already accumulated.

C. Portfolio Assignments

All students will begin a portfolio in psychology 150. For psychology majors, work on the portfolio will continue until graduation, documenting their progress from their first psychology course through their senior seminar. A detailed description of this requirement is included in the *Psychology Majors' Handbook*, available in the departmental office. All portfolio work (including that of students who do not become psychology majors) will be kept in the department and may be used for departmental research and evaluation. The following work from this semester will be kept in a portfolio file for each student.

1. Critical Issues Essay I. In the first week of class, each student will write an essay of 300-500 words. The essay will specify what the student considers to be the critical issues or most important questions to be addressed by the discipline of psychology. Essays must be typed, double spaced, and pledged (see section below on the honor code). The first essay will not be graded, but no other course work will be accepted until this first essay is turned in. Students are encouraged to keep their own copy of this and all work turned in.

2. Critical Issues Essay II. On the last class day students will turn in a second essay on the same topic as the first, this one informed by the thinking and learning that has taken place throughout the term. Essays must be within the 300-500 word limit, typed, double-spaced, and pledged. This final essay will be graded and will count 5% of the 150 course grade. Late essays will suffer a full-grade penalty.

3. End-of-Term Self Assessment. At the time of the final exam, each student will turn in a typed, double-spaced essay describing what progress he or she has made during the term. This could include a straightforward listing of any new skills developed in or outside of course work in any classes. It should include an attempt to describe any significant changes that have taken place in the student's ways of thinking, perspectives or attitudes. Self-assessments will be used for psychology majors in the senior seminar to assess their cumulative accomplishments. The self-assessment essay may be any length and will not be graded. However, students who fail to turn this in will receive an incomplete for psychology 150.

4. Discretionary Entries. Students may choose to add any other written course work to the permanent portfolio at their own discretion. It is wise to include any work that reflects especially well the student's skills and abilities.

C. Student Investigations

Students will complete three Student Investigation assignments and will turn in a report of their work on the dates listed in the schedule. The three projects will count 30% of the final course grade. Student Investigations assignments involve collecting data and must be done in accordance with the *Ethical Guidelines for Research with Human Subjects* published by the American Psychological Association and kept on reserve in the Atkinson Reading Room (Clough 111a). All projects must be typed and prepared in the format described below. Projects turned in later than 4:30 p.m. of the day they are due will suffer a full letter grade penalty and will not be graded until the end of the term. Those not prepared according to these specifications will be returned and must be redone; they will suffer the late penalty. Students may re-do any of these assignments if they wish to improve their performance. All re-writes will suffer the late penalty. No late work or re-writes will be accepted after December 9.

Students are strongly encouraged to collaborate in pairs or triplets on the Student Investigation projects. Collaboration on these projects allows students to work with more data than each has collected alone. When collaborating, each student should collect data, as specified in the assignment, then the authors should combine the data and write a single report. Each author must sign the pledges as described in the section below on the use of the honor code.

Use the following headings to organize your Student Investigation Reports.

Description and Explanation of Research Question.

Describe your research question, the hypothesis you are testing, and the purpose of the project. Report previous research or background theory that is relevant to the study.

Description of Method.

a. Subjects: Detail the number and relevant characteristics of your subjects (e.g., age, education, etc.). Do not identify research participants by name or by other traits that uniquely identify them.

b. Procedure: Carefully and clearly describe your research procedure.

Results.

Give a clear and orderly description of your results. Present numerical data in tables and/or graphs. Always attach all raw data to the end of the report. Each author's raw data should be identified and pledged (see below).

Discussion.

Explain your research results in light of what was expected, based on previous research and theory. If your results do not support your expectations or corroborate previous research, discuss why you think this happened. You may be able to come up with reasons why your data lead to different conclusions than you initially expected.

Consider the flaws and/or limitations in the procedure you used. How might you change this study to address some of the criticisms you make?

E. Experiment Participation.

Students are encouraged to participate in ongoing research in the department by volunteering for three hours to be subjects in experiments conducted by students in advanced psychology classes. All such research will be approved first by the Human Subjects Review committee, and participants will be given an opportunity to learn about the findings of the research at the end of the project. We believe that participation as a subject is an excellent way to gain first-hand knowledge and deeper understanding about how psychological research is conducted. Students who participate in an experiment will write a short report describing (1) what they did and how they felt during the experiment, and (2) what the research question and the researcher's hypotheses were. These reports are due by December 9.

An alternative to the experiment participation requirement is offered to those students who do not wish to be a research subject or are unable to schedule an experiment. This will involve a comparable amount of writing about research that the student will read.

III. Use of the Honor Code in Psychology 150

As in all courses at Rhodes, students are expected to act honorably in pursuit of our mutual educational objectives. Unlike some other courses, however, collaborative work is encouraged in all out-of-class assignments. Therefore students are free to study together, to share notes, to discuss all assignments with one another or with others outside the class, to proofread and edit one another's work, and to give each other as much helpful feedback as possible. Students should not have access to psychology 150 exams from previous semesters or from other sections. The following pledges are to be made:

1. All in-class examinations should be pledged with the standard college honor code: *I pledge that I have neither given nor received help on this exam.* The pledge should be written on the back of the last page of the exam.
2. For all written, out-of-class work turned in for this course, students should sign the following pledge: *The ideas in this report reflect my understanding of and thinking about this material.*
3. For all written, out-of-class work students should pledge a word count: *I pledge that the word count for this essay (or report) is ____.*
4. Each author of a collaborative report must sign the following additional pledge: *I pledge that I have contributed my fair share to this collaboration.*
5. For student investigations that involve collecting data, each student will attach a copy of the data to the report along with the following signed pledge: *I pledge that I collected these data myself and that this is an accurate and un-tampered-with copy of my results.*
6. For projects that involve research subjects other than the self, the following pledge must be added to the raw data: *I pledge that in collecting these data I have taken all reasonable precautions to protect the privacy and dignity of my research participants.*

VI. Schedule of Assignment and Reading Due Dates