

PSYC*6900 - Philosophy and History of Psychology as a Science

Winter 2026 Course Outline

Section: 01

Credits: 0.50

Land Acknowledgement: Time for Some Personal Investigation

I urge each of you to look into the history of this land and its peoples through the ages, and to reflect on how you relate to that history.

Calendar Description

This doctoral course examines the philosophical and metatheoretical issues involved in the scientific analysis of human experience. Both the historical context of these issues and the status of current metatheoretical debates are covered.

Restriction(s): Restricted to Psychology students.

Department(s): Department of Psychology

Course Description

What is Psychology? In this course we will view the discipline, not as a timeless and abstract set of ideas and theories, but as concrete activity by persons located in particular times and places. That is, we will try to understand the nature of Psychology in terms of the “mangle” of people, ideas and technologies that make it up. To do this, it will be necessary to contextualize Psychology within broader historical, philosophical, cultural and technological developments in society. We will look at how Psychology emerged and has been shaped in relation to political concerns, war, social structure and economic ideology, new technologies and influential personalities, as well as the key theoretical and methodological debates among psychologists themselves.

This course will provide a critical historical overview of the development of Psychology in North America and Europe, and its dissemination around the world. It is not a history in the conventional sense of a chronological account of events in Psychology, but rather it is an historical and critical approach to the central theories, topics, and practices of Psychology.

This is an advanced seminar course, which means that the course material will be challenging, and my expectations for your preparation and participation will be high. The single greatest determinant of what you will gain from this class is how carefully and thoughtfully you study the readings before, during, and after class. In class, you should be prepared to engage actively with me and your peers to develop our understanding of the central issues and concerns of the course. That means it is okay if you come to class feeling like you only have a partial grasp of the central issues for the week, since our goal is to work out what these are collaboratively.

Lecture Schedule

Th 11:30am-2:20pm in MACS*231 (1/5 to 4/21)

Instructor Information

Ian Newby-Clark, PhD

Professor

Email: inewby@uoguelph.ca

Office: MCKX 3008

Office Hours:

By Appointment

Office Phone: x53517

Textbooks

Group	Title	Author	ISBN
Required	A history of modern psychology in context	Pickren, W. E. & Rutherford, A.	978-0-470-27609-9

Learning Resources

- An electronic copy of the required textbook is available at the University Library.
- There is additional required reading that I will post on the CourseLink website.
- TIPS for effective reading:
 - The readings for this course are predominantly historical and philosophical. Many of you might be unfamiliar with these genres. Unlike the empirical literature, it is not possible to skim the readings and grasp their arguments. To read effectively for this course, budget enough time to read slowly and look things up.
 - Don't be discouraged if you initially find the papers difficult to understand. Our class discussions (and your writing assignments) will be an opportunity to clarify and deepen your understanding of these papers.

Cost of Textbooks and Learning Resources

Textbook / Learning Resource	Required / Recommended	Cost
A history of modern psychology in context by Pickren, W. E. & Rutherford, A.	Required	\$145.99

Students are advised that prices are often determined by the publisher or bookstore and may be subject to change.

Course Level Learning Outcomes

By the end of the course, you should be able to:

1. Understand and articulate the value of historical and theoretical analysis in Psychology.
2. Compare and contrast "natural science" and "human science" approaches to Psychology.
3. Describe the internal and external factors that led to the development of Psychology and its major schools/fields.
4. Reflect on the historicity of the theories and methods you employ in your own research.
5. Reflect on and situate your own research in relation to contemporary society.

Schedule of Topics and Assignments

Day	Date:	Topic	Activities	Due
Thu	1/8	Introduction and Course Overview		
Thu	1/15	Why (and How) Do We Do History?		
Thu	1/22	The Beginnings of Psychology What is Psychology?		
Thu	1/29	Human Science or Natural Science? Experiments and Origin Myths		
Thu	2/5	Psychoanalysis, "Madness" and Psychotherapy		
Thu	2/12	The New Profession of Psychology: War and Industrial Psychology		
Thu	2/19	Winter Break		
Thu	2/26	The Internationalization of Psychology		

Thu	3/5	Psychology, Gender, and Feminism
Thu	3/12	Psychology, Race, and Racism
Thu	3/19	Psychology's Crises
Thu	3/26	Descriptive Psychology as a Different Approach
Thu	4/2	"What is Psychology?" Revisited

Teaching and Learning Activities

Weekly Activities

This course has a seminar format, with an emphasis on intensive reading, and open and active discussion. Informed, respectful, and enthusiastic scholarly discussion is expected. PLEASE NOTE: This is a **reading-intensive** course.

Assessment Breakdown

Description	Weighting (%)	Due Date
In-Class Reflection Papers (10 @5%)	50	End of Class
Scholarly Engagement in Group Discussion	25	n/a
Final Paper	25	April 2 (Last Class)

Assessment Details

Reflective Activities

In-Class Reflection Papers

50

Except for the first class and the last class, you will write a reflection paper in the last 45 minutes of class (1000 words maximum). You will write the paper either by hand or on CourseLink in a Respondus Lockdown environment. What you write about will vary by the week's topic and your thoughts about that topic. A good reflection paper is one that characterizes your point of view on the week's topic and how it relates to your developing thinking about the theme of the course (Psychology as a Science). It should be informed by, and integrate, your thoughts about that week's readings and points raised during the class discussion.

Discussion

Scholarly Engagement in Group Discussion

25

Come to class **extremely well-prepared** to discuss the week's readings.

As your contributions will shape the experience of the whole class, they should aim to help to move our discussion in productive directions. Accordingly, and to personal taste, think about bringing along your notes on the readings and discussion questions.

You should aim to be responsive to, and respectful of, your classmates' contributions.

Essay

Final Paper

25

You will write a final paper of roughly 1200-1500 words (title page and references excepted), in which you critically reflect on the history of Psychology and the forms taken by the discipline today. To do so, you may focus on any topic or field of interest, including your own area of research. Alternatively, you can focus on a specific methodology or form of practice. You may find that one or more of your reflection papers to be of use in developing your thinking.

Limit your use of so-called Artificial Intelligence to grammatical advice ONLY. Any evidence that you used AI in any other way will result in you receiving a zero on the essay.

ESSAY DEVELOPMENT

You will meet one-on-one at least once with the instructor to discuss the development of your essay. In advance of your first meeting with the instructor, submit a preliminary outline of your essay to the CourseLink Dropbox (ungraded). At least two weeks prior to the deadline, submit a draft of your essay to the CourseLink Dropbox for feedback (ungraded).

Last Day to Drop Course

The final day to drop Winter 2026 courses without academic penalty is the last day of classes: April 06

After this date, a mark will be recorded, whether course work is completed or not (a zero is assigned for missed tests/assignments). This mark will show on the student's transcript and will be calculated into their average.

Course Grading Policies

Submission of Assignments

Please submit all assignments using the appropriate CourseLink Dropbox folder, on or before the due date.

Late Assignment

If you are unable to meet a deadline for whatever reason, please let your instructor know in advance. The standard late penalty of 10% per day will be applied depending on the circumstances and if no alternative arrangements are made.

CSAHS Graduate Academic Misconduct Policy

The *Academic Misconduct Policy* is detailed in the Graduate Calendar. The University of Guelph is committed to upholding the highest standards of academic integrity and **it is the responsibility of all members of the University community – faculty, staff, and students – to be aware of what constitutes academic misconduct** and to do as much as possible to prevent academic offences from occurring. University of Guelph students have the responsibility of abiding by the University's policy on academic misconduct regardless of their location of study; faculty, staff and students have the responsibility of supporting an environment that discourages misconduct. Students need to remain aware that instructors have access to and the right to use electronic and other means of detection.

Whether or not a student intended to commit academic misconduct is not relevant for a finding of guilt. Students who are in any doubt as to whether an action on their part could be construed as an academic offence should consult with a faculty member or faculty advisor.

Standard Statements for Graduate Courses

Academic Integrity

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Please note: Whether or not a student intended to commit academic misconduct is not relevant for a finding of guilt. Hurried or careless submission of assignments does not excuse students from responsibility for verifying the academic integrity of their work before submitting it. Students who are in any doubt as to whether an action on their part could be construed as an academic offence should consult with a faculty member or faculty advisor.

The Academic Misconduct Policy (<https://calendar.uoguelph.ca/graduate-calendar/general-regulations/academic-misconduct/>) is outlined in the Graduate Calendar.

Accessibility

The University promotes the full participation of students who experience disabilities in their academic programs. To that end, the provision of academic accommodation is a shared responsibility between the University and the student.

When accommodations are needed, the student is required to first register with Student Accessibility Services (SAS). Documentation to substantiate the existence of a disability is required; however, interim accommodations may be possible while that process is underway.

Use of the SAS Exam Centre requires students to make a booking at least 10 business days in advance, and no later than the first business day in November, March or July as appropriate for the semester. Similarly, new or changed accommodations for online quizzes, tests and exams must be approved at least a week ahead of time. For students at the Guelph campus, information can be found on the SAS website. (<https://www.uoguelph.ca/sas/>)

Accommodation of Religious Obligations

If you are unable to meet an in-course requirement due to religious obligations, please email the course instructor within two weeks of the start of the semester to make alternate arrangements.

See the Academic calendar for information on regulations and procedures for Academic Accommodation of Religious Obligations (<https://calendar.uoguelph.ca/graduate-calendar/general-regulations/academic-accommodation-religious-obligations/>)

Copies of Out-of-class Assignments

Keep paper and/or other reliable back-up copies of all out-of-class assignments: you may be asked to resubmit work at any time.

Drop Date

Courses that are one semester long must be dropped by the end of the last day of classes; two-semester courses must be dropped by the last day of classes in the second semester. The regulations and procedures for Dropping Courses (<https://calendar.uoguelph.ca/graduate-calendar/general-regulations/registration/>) dropping courses are available in the Graduate Calendar (<https://calendar.uoguelph.ca/graduate-calendar/general-regulations/registration/>).

Email Communication

As per university regulations, all students are required to check their <uoguelph.ca> e-mail account regularly: e-mail is the official route of communication between the University and its students.

Health and Wellbeing

The University of Guelph provides a wide range of health and wellbeing services at the Vaccarino Centre for Student Wellness (<https://wellness.uoguelph.ca/>). If you are concerned about your mental health and not sure where to start, connect with a Student Wellness Navigator (<https://wellness.uoguelph.ca/navigators/>) who can help develop a plan to manage and support your mental health or check out our mental wellbeing resources. (<https://wellness.uoguelph.ca/shine-this-year/>) The Student Wellness team are here to help and welcome the opportunity to connect with you.

Illness

Medical notes will not normally be required for singular instances of academic consideration, although students may be required to provide supporting documentation for multiple missed assessments or when involving a large part of a course (e.g., final exam or major assignment).

Recording of Materials

Presentations that are made in relation to course work—including lectures—cannot be recorded or copied without the permission of the presenter, whether the instructor, a student, or guest lecturer. Material recorded with permission is restricted to use for that course unless further permission is granted.

Resources

The Academic Calendars (<http://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/calendars/?index>) are the source of information about the University of Guelph's procedures, policies and regulations which apply to undergraduate, graduate and diploma programs.

When You Cannot Meet a Course Requirement

When you find yourself unable to meet an in-course requirement because of illness or compassionate reasons, please advise the course instructor (or designated person, such as a teaching assistant) in writing, with your name, id#, and e-mail contact. See the Graduate Calendar for information on regulations and procedures for Academic Consideration (<https://calendar.uoguelph.ca/graduate-calendar/general-regulations/grounds-academic-consideration/>).