

Faculty of Health
Department of Psychology
PSYC 4180 6.0 C: CRITICAL THINKING IN PSYCHOLOGY
Thursday/7:00 – 10:00 PM/ Online via Zoom
FW2020-2021

The course will have both synchronous and asynchronous elements.

- **Zoom class meetings**, varying from 60 to 90 minutes in length, will be held every **Thursday evening at 7:00 pm**. By means of the Zoom Rooms feature, students will be divided into groups of four for these meetings and provided specific activities and questions to discuss in their groups. Attendance in these online discussion groups is a factor in the course evaluation.
- **Readings** to be completed before the Thursday meetings will be assigned each week (see schedule below). Most of the discussion questions taken up in the Thursday meetings will be based on these readings. Students will write a reflection paper each week based on one or more of the assigned readings. In the week following submission, these papers will be peer reviewed anonymously by a random selection of classmates. Each person who submits a review paper will be allocated, randomly and anonymously, three papers from classmates. The submission and peer review process is managed by a Moodle app, and thus, no email or physical exchange of papers is necessary.
- **Instructor comments** on each of the assigned readings will be recorded and made available on the course Moodle page. There will be at least two separate recordings each week - one very brief and providing a simple introduction to the readings with no expectation that listeners have begun studying them; another one (or more) with comments that do assume familiarity with the readings. These latter comments will include explanations of difficult concepts, elaboration on central ideas, and linkages to other aspects of the course. Typically the recordings will be available early in the week for which the reading is assigned, and students can listen to these on the schedules that suit them best.
- **Q and A sessions** with the instructor will be held each week on **Tuesdays 12:30 - 1:30 pm** and on **Wednesdays 7:00 - 8:00 pm**. These sessions are optional, and the students who do participate may enter and leave a session as they please - their purpose is to give everyone opportunities to ask questions and/or clarify their ideas.

Instructor and T.A. Information

Instructor: Ron Sheese

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T.A.	Tony Miller
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Course Prerequisite(s): Course prerequisites are strictly enforced

- HH/PSYC 1010 6.00 (Introduction to Psychology), with a minimum grade of C.
- HH/PSYC 2020 6.00 (Statistical Methods I and II) or substitute
- HH/PSYC 2030 3.00 (Introduction to Research Methods) or substitutes
- Students must be in an Honours program in Psychology and have completed at least 84 credits

Course Credit Exclusions

Please refer to [York Courses Website](#) for a listing of any course credit exclusions.

Course Description

The course presents critical thinking as a rhetorical strategy for persuading oneself and others of the accuracy or utility of ideas, positions, actions *etc.* The strategy is highly favoured in Psychology, in science, and in academia generally; thus, we will examine the concepts and skills that are valued for critically gathering, interpreting, and evaluating scholarly work. Emphasis will be placed on the concept of argument and on Psychology's contributions to understanding both the obstacles to critical thinking and the means by which it can be facilitated. We will consider multiple examples of critical thinking in Psychology and critical thinking about Psychology. Students will practice thinking critically themselves in various contexts - Psychology research articles, popular accounts of psychological research, and applied settings.

Program Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of this course, students should be able to:

1. Demonstrate ability to think critically about applications of psychological findings reported in the media.
2. Demonstrate knowledge of variety of ways to express psychological findings in everyday life.
3. Critically identify myths or stereotypes in common discourse.
4. Recognize limits of conclusions based on inferential statistics.

Specific Learning Objectives

Skills emphasized in the course include:

- Locating research articles on psychological issues of interest and demonstrating critical thinking about the articles and issues,
- Critically assessing and communicating the value of media reports about psychological concepts and studies.
- Critically assessing the methodology used to address specific research questions,
- Critically interpreting results from reported research,
- Critically evaluating the credibility of scientific evidence and differentiating argument from conjecture,
- Communicating with the lay public about professional psychologists' scholarship.

Course Requirements and Assessment:

- Attendance in weekly Thursday Zoom discussion groups (10%)
- Submission of weekly reflection papers and peer reviews (10%)
- Project 1 (10%), October 22. Critical analysis of a popular press article and its academic source.
- Project 2 (15%), December 10. Critical analysis of a Psychology research article
- Project 3 (20%), February 25. Critical review of a set of related Psychology articles
- Project 4 (15%), April 15. Portfolio of eight reflection papers
- Project 5 (20%), April 22. Plain-language recommendation paper regarding an issue of applied psychology

Description of Assignments

See course Moodle site for reflection paper, peer review, and project assignment descriptions.

Grading as per Senate Policy

The grading scheme for the course conforms to the 9-point grading system used in undergraduate programs at York (e.g., A+ = 9, A = 8, B+ = 7, C+ = 5, etc.). Assignments and tests* will bear either a letter grade designation or a corresponding number grade (e.g. A+ = 90 to 100, A = 80 to 89, B+ = 75 to 79, etc.)

For a full description of York grading system see the York University Undergraduate Calendar - [Grading Scheme for 2020-21](#)

Missed Tests/Midterm Exams/Late Assignment:

For any missed quiz or late assignment, students MUST complete the following online form which will be received and reviewed in the Psychology undergraduate office. At this time, due to COVID-19 an Attending Physician's Statement (APS) is not required, however, a reason for missing an evaluated component in the course must be provided.

[HH PSYC: Missed Tests/Exams Form](#). Failure to complete the form within 48 hours of the original deadline will result in a grade of zero for the missed quiz or late assignment.

Add/Drop Deadlines

For a list of all important dates please refer to: [Fall/Winter 2020-21 Important Dates](#)

	Fall (F)	Year (Y)	Winter (W)
Last date to add a course without permission of instructor (also see Financial Deadlines)	Sept 22.	Sept 22.	Jan. 25
Last date to add a course with permission of instructor (also see Financial Deadlines)	Oct. 6	Oct. 27	Feb. 8
Drop deadline: Last date to drop a course without receiving a grade (also see Financial Deadlines)	Nov. 6	Feb. 5	March 12

Course Withdrawal Period (withdraw from a course and receive a grade of "W" on transcript – see note below)	Nov. 7- Dec. 8	Feb. 6 – April 12	March 13- April 12
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Add and Drop Deadline Information

There are deadlines for adding and dropping courses, both academic and financial. Since, for the most part, the dates are **different**, be sure to read the information carefully so that you understand the differences between the sessional dates below and the [Refund Tables](#).

You are strongly advised to pay close attention to the "Last date to enrol without permission of course instructor" deadlines. These deadlines represent the last date students have unrestricted access to the registration and enrolment system.

After that date, you must contact the professor/department offering the course to arrange permission.

You can drop courses using the registration and enrolment system up until the last date to drop a course without receiving a grade (drop deadline).

You may [withdraw from a course](#) using the registration and enrolment system after the drop deadline until the last day of class for the term associated with the course. When you withdraw from a course, the course remains on your transcript without a grade and is notated as 'W'. The withdrawal will not affect your grade point average or count towards the credits required for your degree.

Information on Plagiarism Detection

Turn It In (or similar software) will be used to detect plagiarism or assignments that are similar to other students.

Electronic Device Policy

This course will be delivered in an online format and therefore electronic devices (e.g., tablets, laptops) are permitted during class time for course-related purposes. It is expected that you would complete tests/exams in a manner that does not require consulting an unauthorised source during an examination unless the tests/exams are open-book.

Academic Integrity for Students

York University takes academic integrity very seriously; please familiarize yourself with [Information about the Senate Policy on Academic Honesty](#).

It is recommended that you review Academic Integrity by completing the [Academic Integrity Tutorial](#) and [Academic Honesty Quiz](#)

Test Banks

The offering for sale of, buying of, and attempting to sell or buy test banks (banks of test questions and/or answers), or any course specific test questions/answers is not permitted in the Faculty of Health. Any student found to be doing this may be considered to have breached the Senate Policy on Academic Honesty. In particular, buying and attempting to sell banks of test questions and/or answers may be considered as “Cheating in an attempt to gain an improper advantage in an academic evaluation” (article 2.1.1 from the Senate Policy) and/or “encouraging, enabling or causing others” (article 2.1.10 from the Senate Policy) to cheat.

Academic Accommodation for Students with Disabilities

While all individuals are expected to satisfy the requirements of their program of study and to aspire to do so at a level of excellence, the university recognizes that persons with disabilities may require reasonable accommodation to enable them to do so. The university encourages students with disabilities to register with ***Student Accessibility Services (SAS)*** to discuss their accommodation needs as early as possible in the term to establish the recommended academic accommodations that will be communicated to Course Directors as necessary. **Please let me know as early as possible in the term if you anticipate requiring academic accommodation so that we can discuss how to consider your accommodation needs within the context of this course.**

<https://accessibility.students.yorku.ca/>

Excerpt from Senate Policy on Academic Accommodation for Students with Disabilities:

1. Pursuant to its commitment to sustaining an inclusive, equitable community in which all members are treated with respect and dignity, and consistent with applicable accessibility legislation, York University shall make reasonable and appropriate accommodations in order to promote the ability of students with disabilities to fulfill the academic requirements of their programs. This policy aims to eliminate systemic barriers to participation in academic activities by students with disabilities.

All students are expected to satisfy the essential learning outcomes of courses. Accommodations shall be consistent with, support and preserve the academic integrity of the curriculum and the academic standards of courses and programs. For further information please refer to: [York University Academic Accommodation for Students with Disabilities Policy](#).

Course Materials Copyright Information

These course materials are designed for use as part of the PSYC 4180 6.0 C course at York University and are the property of the instructor unless otherwise stated. Third party copyrighted materials (such as book chapters, journal articles, music, videos, etc.) have either been licensed for use in this course or fall under an exception or limitation in Canadian Copyright law.

Copying this material for distribution (e.g. uploading material to a commercial third-party website) may lead to a violation of Copyright law. [Intellectual Property Rights Statement](#).

Course Schedule

Topics and Reading Assignments

- **September 10**
 - Reynolds, G. (August 16, 2017). [How exercise could help you learn a new language](#). *New York Times*.
- **September 17** — *The world begins with the victory of persuasion over force.*
 - Elgin, C. (2016). Education reform: Confucius, Dewey, and Beyond. Excerpts from a presentation at Capital Normal University, Beijing, China. (link available on course Moodle site)
 - hooks, b. (2009). [Teaching Critical Thinking: Practical Wisdom](#). New York: Routledge. (Chapter 1)
 - Larsen, P. (2001). Rhetorical Analysis. In N. J. Smelser & P. B. Baltes (Eds.) [International Encyclopedia of the Social and Behavioral Sciences](#). Amsterdam: Elsevier, 13323 - 13327.
 - Liu, F., Sulpizio, S., Kompetanee, S., & Job, R. (2017). [It takes biking to learn: Physical activity improves learning a second language](#). *PLoS ONE* 12, e0177624.
 - Swanwick, R., Kitchen, R., Jarvis, J., McCracken, W., O’Neil, R., & Powers, S. (2014). [Following Alice: Theories of critical thinking and reflective practice in action at postgraduate level](#). *Teaching in Higher Education*, 19(2), 156-169. (pages 158-162)
- **September 24** — *There are many tools of persuasion; psychology and culture are factors in their use.*
 - Billig, M. (1996). *Arguing and Thinking*, 2nd edition. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. (Chapter 4) (link available on course Moodle site)
 - Meyer, M. (2017). [What is Rhetoric?](#) Oxford: Oxford University Press. (Introduction)
 - Landis, K. (2008). [Start Talking: A Handbook for Engaging Difficult Dialogues](#). Anchorage: University of Alaska (pages 38-39, 47-49)
 - Riddell, J. (January 7, 2020). [Helping our students to develop rhetorical literacy](#). *University Affairs*.
 - Tafarella, S. (April 18, 2017). [Rhetoric, Critical Thinking, and Checking Our Premises](#). *Prometheus Unbound*.
- **October 1** — *What people find persuasive differs from culture to culture.*
 - Frank, J. D. & Frank, J. B. (1991). *Persuasion and Healing: A Comparative Study of Psychotherapy*, (3rd ed.). Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press. (pages 65-70) (link available on course Moodle site)
 - Kinney, A. (2014). [Exemplary Women of Early China: the Lienü zhuan of Liu Xiang](#). New York: Columbia University Press. (Chapter 6).

- Shapin, S. (2010). *Never Pure: Historical Studies of Science as if It Was Produced by People with Bodies, Situated in Time, Space, Culture, and Society, and Struggling for Credibility and Authority*. Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press. (Chapter 13) (link available on course Moodle site)
- Stroud, S. R. (2016). [Pragmatism and the pursuit of social justice in India: Bhimrao Ambedkar and the rhetoric of religious orientation](#). *Rhetoric Society Quarterly*, 46(1), 5-27.
- **October 8** — *Scientists and Psychologists find some tools more persuasive than others in their professional work.*
 - Adams, S. (June 23, 2020). [How to identify good ideas](#). *dilbert.com*
 - Carroll, A. E. (May 29, 2017). [Science needs a solution for the temptation of positive results](#). *New York Times*.
 - Eisen, M. B., & Tibshirani, R. (July 20, 2020). [How to identify flawed research before it becomes dangerous](#). *New York Times*.
 - Fahnestock, J. (2005). [Rhetoric of science: Enriching the discipline](#). *Technical Communication Quarterly*, 14(3), 277-286. (pages 277, 283, 284)
 - Feynman, R. (1964). [Feynman on Scientific Method](#). Cornell University physics lecture.
 - Roediger, H. L., & McCabe, D. P. (2006). [Evaluating experimental research: Critical issues](#). In R. J. Sternberg, H. L. Roediger, & D. F. Halpern (Eds.), *Critical Thinking in Psychology* (pp. 15 – 36). Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
 - Thon, J. (January 21, 2020). [What science should look like in practice](#). *universityaffairs.ca*.
 - Wieser, M. (2016). [Psychology’s “crisis” and the need for reflection: A plea for modesty in psychological thinking](#). *Integrative Psychological and Behavioral Science*, 50, 359-367.
- **October 22** — *Philosophers debate what characteristics make an attempt at persuasion logical.*
 - Almosawi, A. (2013). [An Illustrated Book of Bad Arguments](#), 2nd ed. New York: The Experiment. (selections)
 - Arp, R., Barbone, S., & Bruce, M. (2019). *Bad Arguments: 100 of the Most Important Fallacies in Western Philosophy*. Hoboken NJ: Wiley Blackwell. (Introduction) (link available on course Moodle site)

Readings for each class will be added to the website week-by-week as course progresses.

- October 29 — *Many situations involving persuasion warrant very careful examination.*
- November 5 — *Psychologists have proposed many techniques for the careful examination of rhetorical situations.*
- November 12 — *Rhetorical situations can be usefully conceptualized in terms of argument*
- November 19 — *Arguments can be mapped, and those who argue will improve with frequent practice in mapping.*
- November 26 — *The Toulmin model of argument emphasizes an argument’s content; dialogic models emphasize its participants, context, process, and evolution.*

- December 3 — *Argument is the essence of academic culture.*
- January 14 — *Academic writing requires understanding and using argument.*
- January 21 — *Psychologists know a lot about obstacles that stand in the way of forming good arguments and thinking critically.*
- January 28 — *And emotion is often more persuasive than cognition.*
- February 4 — *Fear is a particularly difficult obstacle in the path of critical thinking.*
- February 11 — *Belief systems (personal networks of beliefs) are often highly resistant to critical thinking and attempts at persuasion.*
- February 25 — *Social construction theory offers suggestions for enhancing the use and effectiveness of critical thinking.*
- March 4 — *Formal education and parenting have the potential to facilitate the development and use of critical thinking.*
- March 11 — *But sometimes parents, teachers, and/or governments purposefully mislead students and seek to inhibit critical thinking.*
- March 18 — *Psychologists have attempted to measure the ability to think critically.*
- March 25 — *Psychologists have also attempted to draw relationships between critical thinking, ability, and various psychological traits, states, needs, attitudes.*
- April 1 — *Some Psychologists are thinking critically about the standard methods of the discipline.*
- April 8 — *Some Psychologists are thinking critically about the purposes of psychological study and the standard concepts used in psychological study.*
- April 8 — *So, let's summarize what we have learned.*