

Fontbonne University Course Syllabus  
**Controversial Issues In Psychology**  
PSY 370 (3 credit hours)— Fall 2018

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**Class time and location:**

Thursday 3:30-4:45pm

**Room: AB Building 110**

Important Dates:

Sept 2: Last day to add/drop course, change from credit to audit

Oct 19: Last day to withdraw from course, change between credit and pass/fail

**Professor:** Dr. Jason Finley

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*phone:* (314)-719-3610

*office:* East Building 310A

*office hours:* Tuesdays, Wednesdays, & Thursdays 2:00 – 3:00pm

Also by appointment (just email me and we'll schedule a time to meet)

**Website:** fontbonne.schoolology.com

readings, assignments, etc. will be posted on here.

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**Required course text:**

Readings will be provided on course website.

**Course Description:**

This is a seminar class on controversial issues in psychology, past and present. We will explore fascinating topics that are controversial for a variety of reasons. There will rarely be clear-cut black-and-white answers. There will be many facets. The goal is for you to build and exercise your critical and creative thinking skills—to both stretch your thinking and formalize it—as you evaluate arguments and evidence in current and past issues in psychology. You will see how debates play out in the published literature, and you will read different types of articles. You will also think about what hypothetical research could be done next to address unanswered questions.

Each week there will be an assigned set of readings and a written response assignment to prepare you for group discussion in class. You must complete the readings and assignment before class. **YOU MUST DO THE READINGS!** I can't stress this enough. There's no point in being in class if you haven't done the reading. We've made this a "blended" course, which means there is less weekly meeting time in order to give you plenty of time to do the reading and prepare your written responses. I want everyone to come in excited to talk about all angles of the issue that we read about. This will model the kinds of classes you might take in a PhD program, or lab meetings or journal club meetings you might attend in grad school.

Note: this course this semester will not be a writing intensive course.

**Tips for reading:**

Start reading the assignment prompts **before** reading the articles themselves. Sometimes the assignment prompt might ask you to write some things down before you read the article(s). Sometimes the prompt will tell you what order to read/write things in.

When reading the article(s), remember to look up the definition of a word you don't know, if it's being used repeatedly or if a key point hinges on that word. But don't get bogged down trying to understand every minute detail, especially in data analyses of empirical articles. Take notes as you go. You should bring to class either a print out of the readings, or a computer or other device you can use to refer to the readings.

**Course Outcomes:**

The learning activities, assignments and exams in this course assess your mastery of these learning outcomes.

- **Critical thinking skills**

You will improve your ability to critically evaluate arguments and evidence in current and past issues in psychology. You will learn to be more aware of bias and become better at avoiding bias in interpreting evidence. You will learn to differentiate between conclusions made based on scientific evidence versus those based on personal experience or opinion. You will learn to recognize logical fallacies. You will learn to become more comfortable with ambiguity and uncertainty.

- **Creative thinking skills**

You will improve your ability to creatively think of ways to test theories.

- **Reading skills**

You will improve your ability to extract meaning from a variety of types of sources (e.g., empirical research articles, review articles, popular press articles).

- **Interaction skills**

You will improve your ability to listen to others, to articulate their ideas and your own, to engage in a lively and respectful intellectual discussion, and to include all participants.

**Classroom Etiquette/Logistics:**

Computers are okay for note-taking and referring to the readings, *not* for YouTube, Facebook, etc. **Put your phone away and keep it away. DO NOT USE YOUR PHONE DURING CLASS. Everyone can see you doing it.**

We will rearrange the seats so we are all facing each other and can have a discussion in the style of the Socratic Seminar. (Side note, Socrates famously thought that written language would erode peoples' memories and ability to think. What do you think?) Everyone should contribute to discussion in class. EVERYONE. I might randomly call on people if needed. I might use random assignment to put students in different pairs each week, so we can talk in

dyads before reconvening as a group. This class is a good chance for you to practice awareness of group dynamics. Whether you are a student who tends to talk frequently and at length, or a student who tends to rarely talk, be mindful in each class of the contributions you are making and the time you are taking relative to others. Be respectful, open-minded, and critical. Freely be critical of ideas; do not be critical of people.

**BRING TO CLASS EVERY WEEK:**

- The readings. You can either print them out (if you do, please help the environment by printing double-sided), or bring a computer or other device on which to read them. We'll want to be able to refer to the readings if needed while having our discussion.
- A copy of your written response for the week. Written responses will be officially submitted on the course website; don't turn in a hard copy to me. But you should bring a way to refer to your response (either printed out or on a computer or other device), so you can refer to it during discussion.
- Some way to take notes. You can make audio recordings if you wish.

**Evaluation and Grading:**

Your grade in this course will be based on:

Attendance/Participation	5.5%
Written Responses to Readings 13 worth 4% each	52%
After-class Posts 13 worth 2.5% each	32.5%
Final paper	10%
Total:	100%

Final letter grades will be based on the following scale:

92.5	≤	A	≤	100
89.5	≤	A-	<	92.5
87.5	≤	B+	<	89.5
82.5	≤	B	<	87.5
79.5	≤	B-	<	82.5
77.5	≤	C+	<	79.5
72.5	≤	C	<	77.5
69.5	≤	C-	<	72.5
59.5	≤	D	<	69.5
0	≤	F	<	59.5

**Attendance/Participation (5.5%):**

A big part of this class will be our interactions with each other as a group. You have to be there for that. Attendance will be taken at every class. Here's how attendance figures into your grade: Every class you attend will earn you 0.5% toward your final grade, up to a maximum of 5.5%. Oh, also you have to be awake and participate or it doesn't count!

**Written Responses to Readings (13 x 4% = 52%):**

Each week there will be a written response assignment with multiple prompts for you to respond to. They will all be posted on the course website, where you will also submit them. Read the assignment prompts **before** reading the articles themselves. Sometimes the assignment prompt might ask you to write some things down before you read the article(s).

*Written responses are due at 11:59pm the night before class each week.* Each one is worth 4% of your grade. Half credit will be given to late responses submitted within one week of their due date.

**After-class Posts (13 x 2.5% = 32.5%):**

After our in-class discussion each week, you will need to make a post on the course website with TWO NEW THINGS you got out of the discussion. New insights, perspectives, questions, ideas, dilemmas, or any combination of those.

*After-class posts are due by 11:59pm two days after class (Saturday).* It's best to do them soon after class. Each weekly post is worth 2.5% of your grade. Half credit will be given to late posts submitted within one week of their due date. If you miss a class (and thus are unable to write an after-class post because you weren't there for the discussion), you can make up the points by doing an extra reading related to the week's topic and posting 2 things from that reading, or by responding thoughtfully to other students' posts.

**Final Paper (10%):**

There will be a final paper due on the course website by Thurs Dec 15<sup>th</sup> at 5:20pm. The paper will be written using APA style and will involve revisiting a previous issue in greater depth or exploring a new issue. Further instructions will be given partway through the semester.

**Hypothetical bonus assignment (?%):**

I reserve the right to *potentially* offer a bonus assignment. Any such assignment would be equally available to all students, and would be worth 2% at most.

### **Kinkel Center for Academic Resources:**

offers free tutoring and writing help to all students!

<http://www.fontbonne.edu/academics/academic-resources/>

### **Accommodation of Students with Disabilities**

Fontbonne University offers accommodations to students with documented physical, visual, hearing, learning, or psychiatric disabilities. Any Fontbonne student is eligible for special services or accommodations if: 1. The student self-identifies that he or she has a disability and needs accommodation. 2. The student provides appropriate and verifiable documentation of the disability. 3. The student provides notification in a timely fashion. For academic accommodations, contact the Academic and Disabilities Resources Coordinator at (314) 719-3627.

### **Academic Integrity/Honesty**

Seriously, DON'T CHEAT. I take academic honesty very seriously, and you should too. The Fontbonne University Catalog has a section on "Academic Integrity/Honesty" that you should read. I'll excerpt from it here.

"According to its mission, Fontbonne University is committed to graduating students who are prepared to think critically, to act ethically, and to assume responsibility as citizens and leaders. Fontbonne University expects the highest standards of integrity from its students. Violations of academic integrity have a broad impact on the University and will result in University review and action.

A violation of academic integrity includes, but is not limited to, any act of cheating, plagiarism, fabrication, and dissimulation and any act of aiding and abetting academic dishonesty. The Fontbonne statement on academic integrity may be found in the catalog, in *The Griffin Scratch Student Handbook*, and in Policy Manual VI, Section 6.1.11.

- Plagiarism is the representation of the words and ideas of another as one's own in any academic exercise. Plagiarism includes failing to give a citation for using work from another person or source. Modifications and rephrasing do not reduce the requirement for giving a citation. This also applies to information obtained electronically, such as from the Internet."

Here are some tips to avoid plagiarism:

- DON'T COPY/PASTE unless you put quotes around the copied text and cite the source of the text.
- If you've paraphrased text from somewhere, cite the source.
- If you're using ideas from somewhere, cite the source.
- If you're ever unsure, just check with me.

Engaging in any of the above academic dishonesty will result in the student receiving a score of zero on the exam/assignment/quiz and being reported to the Office of Academic Affairs. More than one offense will result in an automatic F grade.

**Nondiscrimination**

Fontbonne University does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, age, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, national origin, disability, genetic information, or any other characteristic protected by applicable law. If you have concerns that you or someone else has been discriminated against, it is your right to bring those concerns to the attention of the University's Title IX coordinator, Associate Vice President for Student Affairs, Medaille Hall 85-99, (314) 889-1416 or Vice President and Chief Financial Officer, Ryan Hall 210, (314) 719-8017. Other types of concerns (i.e., concerns of an academic nature) should be discussed directly with your instructor and can also be brought to the attention of your instructor's Department Chair. Additional information on Fontbonne's policy of nondiscrimination is available in the catalog, in *The Griffin Scratch Student Handbook*, and in Policy Manual II, Section 2.1.2.

**Subject-to-Change Clause:**

This syllabus is subject to change at the discretion of the instructor to accommodate instructional and/or student needs. Any changes will be posted on the course website. It is the student's responsibility to keep informed of such changes.

**Course Content Schedule:**

Some of the topics below haven't been filled in yet. We'll vote on which topics to cover those weeks.

<b>Date</b>	<b>Topic</b>
Thurs Aug 30	Critical Thinking, etc. [NO READINGS OR ASSIGNMENTS DUE]
Thurs Sept 6	The Replication Crisis
Thurs Sept 13	Mind vs. Brain (& the Ship of Theseus?)
Thurs Sept 20	Generations: really a thing?
Thurs Sept 27	Baloney on the internet, and also real psychological debates
Thurs Oct 4	Ethics: Physician-assisted suicide
Thurs Oct 11	VERY long-term communication
Thurs Oct 18	Ethics: Facebook experiment
Thurs Oct 25	Avian cognition
Thurs Nov 1	Memory vs. Parallel Universes
Thurs Nov 8	Facilitated communication: applied clinical issue
Thurs Nov 15	Two disciplines of psychology: a classic issue
Thurs Nov 22	<b>NO CLASS, THANKSGIVING</b>
Thurs Nov 29	??
Thurs Dec 6	??
Thurs Dec 13	<b>Finals week: no class meeting. Final paper due by 5:20pm.</b>