**SOSC1960-L1: Introduction to Psychology (Fall 2026)**
**Course Syllabus**

**The Teaching Team**

**Instructor**

**Name:** Prof. HSIAO Janet Hui-wen
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**Consultation:** By appointment

**Teaching Assistants**

- Ms. YANG Alice Yumeng (yyangib@connect.ust.hk), book a session here
- Ms. HUNG Jennifer (jenniferhsy@ust.hk)

**Consultation:** By appointment

**Lecture Information**

**Lecture Time:** Mon, Wed 12:00-1:20pm
**Venue:** Rm 2464, Lift 25-26
*Note: When contacting us by email, please prefix the subject line with [SOSC1960-L1]. Use your university email account only. Do not send messages via Canvas. Lectures will not be recorded.*

**Course Description**

This course introduces the fundamental scientific knowledge about human thinking and behavior processes and illustrates the relevance of this knowledge to the betterment of human performance and well-being in a wide variety of settings in society.

**Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs)**

Upon completion of this course, students are expected to:

1. Recognize some fundamental scientific concepts about human mind and behavior
2. Analyze human performance and wellbeing in various social settings with reference to these concepts
3. Explain how scientific research on human mind and behavior is conducted

**Assessment and Grading**

This course will be assessed using criterion-referencing, and grades will not be assigned using a curve. For late assignment submissions, there will be a deduction of 5% for every hour they are overdue.

**Assessment Components**

**1. Discussion Presentation & Participation (18%)**

The marks for discussion presentation and participation will be assessed according to intellectual contribution of the sticky notes on the lucid board, quality of the presentation, and communication of ideas.

**2. Research Experience (2%)**

To gain first-hand experience in psychological research, you are required to participate in a psychological research study as a participant or read research articles and write reflections

on them. To receive full marks, you may participate in any psychology-related experiments and accumulate at least 2-hours accumulated participation time. Please submit the proof of your participation/acknowledgement from the labs to the TAs on or before **Dec 31, 23:59**. Alternatively, you can write 2 brief reports (400 words each) on articles from psychology journals or a combination of both (i.e., 1-hour experiment and 1 brief report). You must be 18 or older to participate in psychological studies. If you are under 18, you must complete the brief reports instead.

**3. Group Project (40%)**

This group project centers on a specific set of psychological myths and common beliefs. Each group, consisting of 3-4 students, is required to submit a video-recorded presentation (20%. Maximum 5 minutes. Due **Oct 26, Noon)**. The teaching team will select the best 3 or more presentations for the Group Project Showcase on **28 Oct** and each selected and presented group will get 1 bonus point towards the final mark.

In addition, each group member will submit an individual essay separately (20%. Due 23:59, **Dec 19**). Please refer to Group Project Info for more details.

**4. Midterm (20%)**

- **Format:** Multiple-choice questions only, non-cumulative; 60 minutes
- **Date: Oct 14**
- **Coverage:** Lectures from Week 1 to 7

**5. Final (20%)**

- **Format:** Multiple-choice questions only, non-cumulative; 60 minutes
- **Date: Dec 7-19 (To be announced by ARO)**
- **Coverage:** Lectures from Week 8 to 13

**6. In-class Kahoot (Bonus Points)**

Starting from Week 5, we will have a Kahoot review session with 10 multiple choice questions every week (Please refer to the Course Schedule), including a revision Kahoot for the Midterm. For each Kahoot quiz, the top 3 highest-scoring students on the quiz will receive 1 bonus point, while all other kahoot participants who score in the top 10% will receive 0.5 bonus points. A practice Kahoot with only 5 questions will be provided in Week 4.

**Assessment Summary Table**

| Assessment Task | Contribution (%) | Course ILOs |
|---|---|---|
| Discussion Presentation & Participation | 18% | ILO1, ILO2, ILO3 |
| Research Experience | 2% | ILO1, ILO2, ILO3 |
| Group Project – Presentation | 20% | ILO1, ILO2, ILO3 |
| Group Project – Individual Essay | 20% | ILO1, ILO2, ILO3 |
| Midterm | 20% | ILO1, ILO2, ILO3 |
| Final | 20% | ILO1, ILO2, ILO3 |

**Final Grade Descriptors**

Each assessment is designed to assess students' knowledge of a combination of different course objectives. Students' final grade will be given according to the following criteria:

| Grades | Short Description | Elaboration on subject grading description |
|---|---|---|
| **A** | Excellent Performance (total mark 80+) | Students demonstrate consistent evidence of achieving the course objectives and substantial originality in identifying issues and in generating, analyzing, and communicating arguments. |
| **B** | Good Performance (total mark 70~79) | Students demonstrate frequent evidence of achieving the course objectives and originality in defining and analyzing issues and in creating solutions. |
| **C** | Satisfactory Performance (total mark 60~69) | Students demonstrate evidence of achieving the course objectives, but some important parts are omitted, e.g., misunderstanding of the materials, or lack of critical thinking, etc. |
| **D** | Marginal Pass (total mark 50~59) | Students barely demonstrate evidence of achieving the course objectives; have assembled the bare minimum of information, poorly digested, and not well organized in presentation. |
| **F** | Fail (total mark < 50) | Students fail to achieve the course objectives and demonstrate faulty understanding of the fundamental concepts. |

**Course AI Policy**

We will be in line with the university policy on the use of GenAI tools such as ChatGPT. Such tools should be used with care, ensuring sufficient student input, to achieve the best learning experience and outcomes. Moreover, usage of these tools needs to be explicitly acknowledged in the References sections of assignments, whenever they have been used. Failure to do so will count as improper referencing or may even constitute plagiarism.

**Communication and Feedback**

Please note that we will not return any submitted reports or exam papers. Students can get individual feedback about the exams and reports by arrangement with the instructor/tutor. Students will be notified when marks are available online.

**Resubmission Policy**

All written assignments must be submitted online on Canvas; **no email submission will be accepted**. For late submissions, for whatever reason, there will be a deduction of 5% for every hour they are overdue. No resubmission is allowed after the deadline. Note that medical conditions do not warrant an extension of the deadline. Technical issues will be considered only if there is an official announcement from Canvas saying that the system is unavailable at the deadline. Thus, please try to finish and submit the coursework as early as possible.

Any dispute on marks you receive on a written assignment or quiz must be made within one week after the marks are available. A review meeting will be arranged among the teaching team, and the decision from the review meeting will be final.

**Make-up Policy**
No make-up will be given for any assignment/quiz missed. However, if a medical certificate is provided for the absence within 24 hours, a make-up quiz may be considered.

**Academic Integrity**
Students are expected to adhere to HKUST's academic integrity policy and maintain the highest standards of academic integrity. The University has zero tolerance for academic misconduct. Please refer to Academic Integrity | HKUST – Academic Registry for the University's definition of plagiarism and ways to avoid cheating and plagiarism.

**Required Texts and Materials**
- Noba Project. (2023). *Introduction to Psychology*. http://noba.to/7hymnvpc
- O'Toole, A.J. and Ludvig, E.A. (2026), The use of AI in psychology: A historical perspective. Br J Psychol. https://browzine.com/libraries/230/articles/696576121

**Student Feedback**
Your opinions about the course are valuable for improvement. Feel free to discuss course content with the instructor. A course evaluation will be held at the end of the course.

**Course Schedule and Assessments Details**

**Course Schedule (Subject to minor change)**

| Week | Date | Topic | Reading | Assignment |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Sept 2 | Introduction (by TA) | | |
| 2 | Sept 7 | Why Science? | Unit 1 | |
| | Sept 9 | Special Session: Writing Workshop (by TA) | | |
| 3 | Sept 14 | Research Methods in Psychology: Research Designs | Unit 2 (Research Designs) | |
| | Sept 16 | Research Methods in Psychology: Research Designs – Discussion | | |
| 4 | Sept 21 | Psychology of Learning<br>**Practice Kahoot (Unit 2)* | Unit 3 (Conditioning & Learning) | |
| | Sept 23 | Psychology of Learning Discussion | | ** Determining Group project membership* |
| 5 | Sept 28 | Memory<br>** Kahoot (Unit 3)* | Unit 4 (Memory – Encoding, Storage, Retrieval) | |
| | Sept 30 | Memory – Discussion | | **Deciding the Group Project Topic* |
| 6 | Oct 5 | The Brain<br>** Kahoot (Unit 4)* | Unit 5 (The Brain) | |
| | Oct 7 | The Brain – Discussion | | |
| 7 | Oct 12 | Review & Consultation Session (by TA)<br>** Kahoot (Unit 5) + (revision for Midterm)* | | |
| | Oct 14 | **Midterm** | | |
| 8 | Oct 19 | Holiday | | |
| | Oct 21 | Sensation and Perception: Vision | Unit 6 (Vision) | |
| 9 | Oct 26 | Sensation and Perception: Vision – Discussion | | Project Presentation Video Due |
| | Oct 28 | *Best Group Project Showcase (by TA)* | | |

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|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | ** Kahoot (Unit 6)* | | |
| 10 | Nov 2 | Developmental Psychology: Cognitive Development in Childhood | Unit 7 (Cognitive Development in Childhood) | |
| | Nov 4 | Developmental Psychology: Cognitive Development in Childhood – Discussion | | |
| 11 | Nov 9 | Social Psychology: Social Cognition and Attitudes<br>** Kahoot (Unit 7)* | Unit 9 (Social Cognition and Attitudes) | |
| | Nov 11 | Social Psychology: Social Cognition and Attitudes – Discussion | | |
| 12 | Nov 16 | Health Psychology: The Healthy Life<br>** Kahoot (Unit 9)* | Unit 10 (Health Psychology) | |
| | Nov 18 | Health Psychology: The Healthy Life – Discussion | | |
| 13 | Nov 23 | AI and Psychology<br>** Kahoot (Unit 10)* | "The use of AI in Psychology: A Historical Perspective" by Alice O'Toole & Elliot Ludvig, *British Journal of Psychology* | |
| | Nov 25 | AI and Psychology – Discussion | | |
| 14 | Nov 30 | Consultation Session<br>** Kahoot (AI and Psychology)* | | |
| | Dec 1-5 | Study Break | | |
| 15-16 | Dec 19 | **Individual Essay Submission Due Dec 19** | | Individual Essay Submission Due Dec 19 |
| 15-16 | Dec 7-19 | **Final Exam (To be announced by ARO)** | | |
| 17-18 | Dec 31 | **No more class** | | Research Experience Evidence Due Dec 31 |

**Discussion Presentation & Participation**

Presenters will receive 1 pt for each discussion session, while the quality of discussion participation will be graded based on your lucid sticky notes according to the following criteria:

Intellectual Contribution

- Consistently demonstrates a thorough understanding of, and engages constructively with, course material (assigned readings, issues, concepts), provides insightful analyses, raises critical points, and deepens and advances group discussion.

Group Discussion Skills

- Participates actively and constructively all the time.
- Consistently appreciates others' contribution and engages with their ideas sensitively.
- Plays an active role in moving discussion forward.

Communication of Ideas

- Ideas are clearly and fluently articulated at all times.

Please ensure that both your name and Student ID are clearly shown on your contributed sticky notes. Submissions that cannot be properly identified will not be graded. Please also ensure that presentation opportunities are distributed evenly among group members.

**Group Project Info**

Topic and content

This group project centers on a specific set of psychological myths and common beliefs. Each group, consisting of 3-4 students, will examine one topic related to brain, mind, and behavior with scientific methods and evidence. Each group is required to submit a video recorded presentation, lasting a maximum of 5 minutes, and each group member should submit an individual essay. The group membership should be determined by Sep 23, whereas the group project topic should be finalized by Sep 30.

Potential topics include (but not limited to):

1. Handedness: Left-handers are better in math and art than right-handers.
2. Sex differences: Males are better in math and sciences whereas females are better in language.
3. Development: Face recognition ability is innate. See, e.g., https://psmag.com/environment/facial-recognition-learned-behavior
4. The right brain is dominant in music perception and understanding. See, e.g. https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5618809/
5. The right brain is more creative whereas the left brain is better at logical thinking/planning. See, e.g. https://drsarahmckay.com/left-brain-right-brain-myth/
6. Is the spinning dancer test a real right brain-left brain test? See, e.g., https://archive.nytimes.com/well.blogs.nytimes.com/2008/04/28/the-truth-about-the-spinning-dancer/)

7. Do we learn more effectively when taught via our preferred "learning style"? See, e.g. https://www.wired.com/2015/01/need-know-learning-styles-myth-two-minutes/ and https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1041608006000331)
8. Do crowds turn people stupid and dangerous? See, e.g. https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/03033910.2009.10446298
9. Will you become an expert after 10,000 hours of practice? See, e.g. https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC4662388/ and https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/0956797614535810
10. Is it true that most people use only 10% of their brain power? See, e.g. https://mcgovern.mit.edu/2024/01/26/do-we-use-only-10-percent-of-our-brain/
11. Is hypnosis useful for retrieving memories of forgotten events? See, e.g. https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC11832514/ and https://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/health/wellness-and-prevention/hypnosis
12. If you're unsure of your answer when taking a test, it's best to stick with your initial hunch. Is it true? See, e.g. https://www.apa.org/monitor/apr05/instincts and https://psycnet.apa.org/record/2005-04675-001
13. Is it always good to express your anger than to hold it in? See, e.g. https://psycnet.apa.org/record/2007-16921-007
14. Are most autistic people highly intelligent? See, e.g. https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC6127767/ and https://www.advancedautism.com/post/are-autistic-people-smart
15. Do listening to music help you study? See, e.g. https://liberalarts.tamu.edu/blog/does-listening-to-music-really-help-you-study/ and https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0001691821001670
16. Do people need less sleep as they get older? See, e.g. https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s40675-017-0086-z and https://www.nia.nih.gov/health/sleep/sleep-and-older-adults
17. Is our memory getting worse as we age? See, e.g. https://link.springer.com/article/10.3758/s13421-023-01488-2 and https://med.stanford.edu/news/insights/2024/03/memory-age-dementia-healthy-brain.html
18. Whose values prevail in large language models? See, e.g. https://escholarship.org/uc/item/87d9k3tg and https://mitsloan.mit.edu/ideas-made-to-matter/generative-ai-isnt-culturally-neutral-research-finds

Students are also encouraged to explore other potential topics and discuss with the instructor/tutors. Any topic that is not listed above has to be approved by the instructor **by Sept 30**. The project groups will determine the topic **by Sept 30**.

The assessment of the group project consists of 2 parts:

1. Individual essay (20% of the final mark) due on **19 Dec, 2026, 23:59.**
2. Group oral presentation (20% of the final mark) due on **26 Oct, Noon.**

**Individual Essay**

The individual essay is due on **Dec 19 at 23:59**. Please submit an electronic copy of your report online on Canvas before the deadline. No email submission will be accepted.

The topic of the individual essay does not have to be exactly the same as the group report; however, it should be related. In addition to the group materials, students are encouraged to look for additional information. The purpose of the individual essay is to reflect what students have learned from the group project and the course materials. The essay should consist of the following sections:

[1] Introduction: What is the topic about? Why is it important/interesting? (Word limit: 200 words)
[2] Scientific evaluation and discussion: What are the related scientific studies on this topic? What do their results suggest? What are the implications of the scientific findings? (Word limit: 600 words)
[3] Reflection: What is your point of view on the topic? What did you learn from the group project and discussion? What else can be done in order to further understand the phenomenon/answer the question? (Word limit: 700 words)
[4] References

The individual essay will be assessed by the following criteria:

- Addressing the task (20%): Clearly identifies and addresses the main issues and approaches.
- Intellectual engagement with concepts, theories or issues (40%): Consistently demonstrates thoughtful and critical intellectual engagement with relevant concepts, theories or issues, with clearly articulated argumentation.
- Personal development and reflection (30%): Demonstrates willingness and abilities to reflect on own beliefs and experiences and develops highly perceptive self-understandings.
- Writing mechanics (10%): Uses accurate language with no or very few errors in grammar or vocabulary.

**Formatting requirements**

1. For the report, the actual word count should be noted at the end of each section. If your report is longer than the maximal length, your grade will be based on the text within the word limit.
2. Use 12-point Times New Roman font, make it single spaced, and maintain at least a 1 inch margin at the top, bottom, left, and right edges of the paper.
3. Use APA-style formatting for references (For more information, see http://www.apastyle.org/).
    a. For example, the basic format for referring to journal articles is: Author, A. A., Author, B. B., & Author, C. C. (Year). Title of article. Title of Periodical, volume number (issue number), pages.
        i. Example: Hsiao, J. H., & Cottrell, G. W. (2008). Two fixations suffice in face recognition. Psychological Science, 9(10), 998-1006.
    b. The basic format for referring to a chapter in a book is: Author, A., & Author, B. (Year). Chapter title. In A. Editor, B. Editor, & C. Editor (Eds.), Title of the book (pp. xx-xx). Place name: Publisher.

i. Example: Cottrell, G. W., & Hsiao, J. H. (2011). Neurocomputational models of face processing. In Calder, A. J., Rhodes, G., Haxby, J. V., & Johnson, M. H. (Eds.), Oxford Handbook of Face Perception (pp. 401-424). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

c. When referring to the articles in the text, use " … (Hsiao & Cottrell, 2008; Cottrell & Hsiao, 2011)."
d. For referring to other types of references, please see: http://www.apastyle.org/learn/quick-guide-on-references.aspx

Be sure to properly cite any references and sources you use in the reports, such as images, explanations, histories, etc. The reports have to be written in English; be sure to spell-check and proofread your reports. You may use bold headings and subheadings, and you may center titles and headings if you wish. You may use left-justified or fully justified alignment for the body of your paper.

**Grading**

Please submit an electronic copy of your report online on Canvas before the deadline. No email submission will be accepted. You are being graded on the content of your reports and also on the clarity of your writing and the structure of your reports. If you make your writing clear, proofread for clarity and grammar, spell-check your paper, and follow the format guideline, you are likely to get a high grade.

**Online resources:**

PsycInfo: http://www.apa.org/psycinfo/
Google Scholar: http://scholar.google.com/
HKUST Library: https://library.hkust.edu.hk/
Scientific American: http://www.scientificamerican.com/

Be sure to properly cite any references and sources you use in the reports, such as images, explanations, histories, etc. The reports have to be written in English; be sure to spell-check and proofread your reports. You may use bold headings and subheadings, and you may center titles and headings if you wish. You may use left-justified or fully-justified alignment for the body of your paper.

**Group Oral presentation**

The oral presentation should be less than 5 minutes long. The best ones will be selected for the student presentation showcase on **Oct 28**. Student groups who are invited and present their projects in the showcase will receive a 1 extra mark towards their final mark.

The oral presentation will be assessed according to the following criteria:

- Addressing the task (10%): Clearly identifies and addresses the main issues and approaches.
- Understanding, analysis, synthesis, and application of knowledge (20%): Critically engages with issues based on comprehensive understanding of relevant concepts and theories with effective analysis, synthesis, and application of knowledge.
- Argumentation (20%): Examines the issues from all important perspectives with clear logic and evidence, and addresses counter-evidence or rival positions.

- Structure/organization (20%): Provides a clear outline of the structure of the presentation with clear transitions.
- Delivery (20%): Engages the audience and adheres to the time limit strictly.
- Presentation mechanics (10%): Delivers the presentation with accurate language, clear pronunciation, and fluent speech without noticeable grammatical errors.

Each group member should contribute equally to the group presentation.

Each student will evaluate the contribution of their group members by 9 Nov on Group Member Evaluation (GME). Your evaluation submission can only be accessed by the teaching team. Your presentation marks can possibly be adjusted based on the GME ratings.