

The Hong Kong University of Science and Technology

UG Course Syllabus

Introduction to Psychology

SOSC 1960

3 Credits

No prerequisites

Term: Fall 2026

Location: 2465 Academic Building

Time: Tuesday & Thursday 9:00 – 10:20 am

Instructor

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Office Hours: 10:30 am – 11:30 am on Thursdays or by appointment

Teaching Assistants

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Course Description

SOSC 1960 is an introductory-level course surveying basic content in several core areas of psychology. It is a prerequisite for more advanced coursework and study of the discipline. As a student in this course, you will learn scientific theory and research in psychology, and you will learn to apply principles of psychology to situations and experiences in your everyday life through in-person discussions, activities, lectures, and readings.

Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs)

By the end of this course, students should be able to:

1. Describe psychological theories, principles, and concepts relevant to the important psychological topics.

2. Analyze the key features, strengths, and limitations of different psychological research methods and critically evaluate information from psychological research.
3. Critically analyze and responsibly use psychological theories, findings, and applications made available through various forms (e.g., the internet, books, newspapers).
4. Recognize diversity and individual differences in a variety of contexts.
5. Apply basic psychological principles to human history, current events, daily human experience, and personal growth.

Assessment and Grading

This course will use criterion-referenced assessment, and grades will not be assigned using a curve. Detailed rubrics for each assignment are provided below, outlining the criteria used for evaluation.

Assessments and Mapping of Course ILOs to Assessment Tasks

Task	Percentage	Mapped ILOs	Explanation
In-class activity	10%	ILO1, ILO2, ILO3, ILO4, ILO5	The in-class activities are designed to assess students' understanding of the lecture materials [ILO1, ILO2], collect their opinions on psychology-related topics [ILO3], and share different perspectives of thinking [ILO4]. Students will be asked to apply psychological knowledge to various contexts [ILO5].
Research experience	5%	ILO1, ILO2	This task is designed to offer students first-hand experience in psychological research and facilitate their understanding and evaluation of psychological research methods and findings derived from psychological research [ILO1, ILO2].
Investigative project	20%	ILO1, ILO2, ILO5	The investigative project offers students an opportunity to conduct scientific literature search on a psychology topic related to personal well-being [ILO1, ILO5], develop academic writing skills, and apply critical-thinking skills when analyzing and integrating research findings [ILO2].
Midterm Quiz	30%	ILO1, ILO2, ILO3, ILO5	The exams are designed to assess students' comprehension of the core subject matter [ILO1]. The multiple-choice questions will be application questions, requiring students to evaluate psychological research [ILO2], analyze psychological information [ILO3], and apply psychological principles to various scenarios [ILO5].
Final exam	35%		

Final Grade Descriptors:

Grades	Short Description	Elaboration on subject grading description
A	Excellent Performance	Demonstrates a comprehensive grasp of subject matter and expertise in applying psychological knowledge and principles to everyday situations and experiences. Employs critical thinking in solving psychology-related problems. Exhibits a high capacity for scholarship, meeting all the core requirements to achieve learning goals.
B	Good Performance	Shows good knowledge and understanding of the main subject matter, ability to connect psychological knowledge with everyday situations and experiences, and competence in critical thinking. Displays high motivation to learn.
C	Satisfactory Performance	Possesses adequate knowledge of core subject matter, competence in dealing with familiar problems, and some capacity for analysis and critical thinking. Shows persistence and effort to achieve broadly defined learning goals.
D	Marginal Pass	Has threshold knowledge of core subject matter, potential to achieve key professional skills, and the ability to make basic judgments related to psychology. Benefits from the course and has the potential to develop in the discipline.
F	Fail	Demonstrates insufficient understanding of the subject matter. Shows limited ability to think critically or analytically and exhibits minimal effort toward achieving learning goals. Does not meet the threshold requirements for professional practice or development in the discipline.

Communication and Feedback

Assessment marks for individual assessed tasks will be released within two weeks of the due date. Assessment marks will be communicated. Feedback on assignments will include strengths and areas for improvement. Students who have further questions about the feedback, including marks, should consult the instructor or teaching assistant within five working days after the feedback is received.

Course Textbook

Caccioppo, J., & Freberg, L. (2022). *Discovering Psychology: The Science of Mind*, 4th ed. Publisher: Cengage, ISBN #: 978-0357363232.

Course Schedule

Week	Dates	Topic	Chapter	Pages
1	01 Sep	Course Introduction		
	03 Sep	Methods in Psychology	2	35 - 69
2	08 Sep	Methods in Psychology		
	10 Sep	Neuroscience and Behavior	4	105 - 147
3	15 Sep	Sensation and Perception	5	149 - 171
	17 Sep	Writing Workshop I		
4	22 Sep	Sensation and Perception	6	193 - 223
	24 Sep	Consciousness and sleep		
5	29 Sep	Consciousness and sleep		
	01 Oct	NO CLASS		
6	06 Oct	Memory	9	317-358
	08 Oct	Memory		
7	13 Oct	Midterm Quiz		
	15 Oct	Writing Workshop II		
8	20 Oct	Learning	8	277-315
	22 Oct	Learning		
9	27 Oct	Development	3; 11	71 – 88; 407 – 410; 416 – 456
	29 Oct	Development		
10	03 Nov	Social Psychology	13	499 – 530
	05 Nov	Social Psychology		
11	10 Nov	Individual Differences	10; 12	392-395, 399-402, 459-472
	12 Nov	Individual Differences		
12	17 Nov	Stress and Health	16	639 – 673
	19 Nov	Psychological Disorders	14; 15	549 – 584, 597 – 608, 612 – 630
13	24 Nov	Psychological Disorders		
	26 Nov	Psychological Disorders		

Late Submission and Make-up Policy

- No late submissions are allowed for in-class activities.
- For the investigative project, there is a 5-hour grace period. For submissions after the deadline and within the grace period, 1 point will be deducted (1%). For submissions after the grace period and within 24 hours of the deadline, a 10% penalty will be applied. For submissions 24 hours after the deadline, a 25% penalty will be applied. No submissions will be accepted one week after the deadline.
- Make-up exams will ONLY be arranged due to documented medical reasons. Students must contact the instructor or teaching assistants no later than 24 hours after the original exam dates to request a make-up. Make-up exams will be in the form of oral examinations (12-15 questions).

Course AI Policy

Students are encouraged to use artificial intelligence tools to facilitate effective learning. However, the use of generative artificial intelligence tools to complete any assessment tasks is NOT allowed in this course.

Academic Integrity

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

In-class Activities (10 points)

During classes, we will have activities in various forms. The activities are designed to assess your understanding of the lecture materials, collect your opinions on a topic, and share different perspectives.

- You will earn 2 points for completing one activity. The maximum number of points you can earn is 10 (2 points * 5 activities). You can expect at least 7 activities offered throughout the semester.
- Activities will not be announced in advance.

Research Experience (5 points)

To be able to analyze the strengths and weaknesses of psychology research and evaluate the validity of psychology findings, it is important to have first-hand experience in psychological research and learn how psychological research is conducted.

- You can choose to either participate in a real research study or view a video about a research study. You need to reflect on the experience and answer some questions. Details will be announced in due course.

Investigative Project (20 points)

The project will be centered around a specific problem about the human mind and behaviors. You will learn how to systematically search scientific literature for relevant materials, critically read and evaluate scientific evidence, and apply what you have learned from your literature review to develop recommendations related to the problem. The project will be broken down into manageable steps. You will receive guidance through two workshops, and your understanding will be assessed. This project is aimed at helping you develop skills that will be valuable for your continued and lifelong learning of psychology.

- Workshop 1 (introduction; literature search): 17 September
- Interim report submission deadline: 5:00 PM on 30 September
- Consultation deadline: 5:00 PM on 27 September
- Workshop 2 (reading and argumentation; writing): 15 October
- Final report submission deadline: 5:00 PM on 30 October
- Consultation deadline: 5:00 PM on 27 October

Midterm Quiz and Final Exam (30 points + 35 points)

- The midterm exam covers all the required readings and lectures from Week 1 to Week 6, and the final exam covers all the required readings and lectures from Week 7 to Week 13 (noncumulative).
- Exams are closed-book, multiple-choice tests.
- Be sure to arrive on time for each test since no additional time will be given to students who arrive late.
- The Final Exam date, time, and venue will be announced by the university; please refrain from scheduling any trips, job interviews, or other activities until the schedule for the exam is known.