

8:00-9:40 AM Tuesdays and Fridays

NUflex: In person at 020 West Village F and Simulcast Online

Instructor Information:

Name: Jim Akula, PhD, but you can call me “DrAkula.”

I am an Assistant Professor at Harvard Medical School and Boston Children’s Hospital. If you’d like to learn more about my lab you can visit us at our Web site, InfantVision.org ([Links to an external site.](#)).

Contact: J.Akula@northeastern.edu or via [Teams](#) ([Links to an external site.](#)). Little things are easily handled by email, but nearly all major problems, I’ve found, can be handled better by phone or video-chat. There is also a Canvas course "inbox" but, since Canvas is new to me, I recommend trying one of the other routes, first.

Office Hours: Tuesdays and Fridays after class on Teams. Best, though, given that we are virtual, is to schedule appointments.

Teaching Assistant: This course will also have a teaching assistant whom I predict will be excellent! I recognize that sometimes a TA is easier to connect with, in many ways, than I am. Please reach out to Jacob with any concerns you may have at Gurera.J@northeastern.edu.

Course Information:

Academic Term: Fall 2020.

Credit Hours: 4.

Required Textbook: The course will be centered on Myers’ *Psychology* (11th Edition). It is available both as a printed text and as an eBook through the Northeastern bookstore (<http://tinyurl.com/y9wo9kkt> ([Links to an external site.](#))). If you are or are considering a Psychology major, I would buy the book; otherwise, you probably want to rent it.

Other Resources: All other materials, including grades, lecture notes, updates to this document, multimedia assignments, *etc.*, will be distributed through the course’s Canvas.

Course Objectives: To introduce you to the field of psychology, first among the sciences and second only to business in popularity of undergraduate study, by exploring the broad scope of psychological science, rather than any area in depth. This course has been designed to meet the learning goals of the *Understanding Societies and Institutions* and the *Engaging with the Natural and Designed World* NUPath categories. It also continues to fulfill the *Social Science Level 1* requirement in the old NU core.

Learning Outcomes: At the end of this course, you will be able to hold a dialect on psychological research, both experimental design and results, in the areas of neuroscience, development and the nature *vs.* nurture debate, sensory systems, learning and memory, intelligence and cognition, group dynamics, personality, and mental illness.

Course Format and Procedure: I will be in the classroom at the scheduled course time. NUFlex [Dynamic Scheduling \(Links to an external site.\)](#) will be used to allow students to sign up to attend in person, as space allows. The expectation is that all students will be in attendance, either physically in the room or else online.

The class will follow the schedule at the end of this document. Classes will be lecture-style with ample opportunity for discussion. I will be doing a lot of “teaching from the textbook” but a lot of teaching independently from the textbook, as well. The material presented in class *will* be tested, so attendance is strongly recommended, since I cannot guarantee that reading the textbook alone will give you all the answers you need to ace the examinations; in fact, I can guarantee the opposite.

I hope to have some lively conversations take up parts of many classes. Bring your questions and comments. There are many controversies in psychology that can be important to talk through, especially if they make you uncomfortable.

Evaluation and Grading:

The final course grading will be out of 100. The breakdown will be as follows.

Homework: There will be ten “media assignments” and six “NUPath assignments.” For the media assignments, after reviewing each of 10 assigned media, you will be expected to comment in a timely fashion on respective course discussion boards; this may be an original comment, or a response to a classmate's comment. The NUPath learning assignments will task you with writing short essays on topics related to the NUPath learning goals associated with this course. Half of these assignments will be graded by the course TA. The other half of the assignments will be graded by four of your peers. Finally, you will receive a point for emailing me a proof-of-completion for TRACE by the end of the course. You will be given plenty of time to complete each assignment, but deadlines will be strictly enforced.

Examinations: Examinations will be multiple-choice. Three midterms will encompass the information in the text, the corresponding class discussions, and the outside media I will assign to you. A final will consist half of material covered by the midterms and half of new material, graded respectively. You will need a Windows or MacOS laptop with a working webcam to take each exam.

You will be given a make-up examination only in documented cases of emergency. If one happens, you must contact me within one day of the test *via* so that I can schedule a make-up, ASAP. Multiple missed examinations will not be accommodated unless the situation is highly unusual.

The final examination schedule will be announced well before the end of the semester. If you have two final examinations scheduled at the same time, or three finals scheduled for the same day, you *must* complete a “Final Exam Conflict” form and submit it to the Registrar *by Friday, October 2nd*, or else take the exam at the scheduled time.

Attendance: Attendance will be taken by the TA and you will receive credit for being present in class. I also reserve the right to use a hidden “fudge factor” to boost the grades of those students who come to class and participate frequently throughout the semester.

Scoring Breakdown: Timely commenting on the course discussion boards about the media assignments will be worth 10% of your final grade (1% each). The NUpath assignments will be worth 30% of your final grade (3% each and 1% for each completed peer review). The midterm examinations will count for 33% of your final grade (11% each). The final examination will count for 22% of your final grade (11% each for respective cumulative and new material portions). Completing a TRACE evaluation at the end of the semester will earn you the final point.

Research Participation: In addition to your assigned coursework, all students are required by the Department of Psychology to participate in research, conducted by its faculty and graduate students, to complete Foundations of Psychology. Alternatively, an assignment is available if you are unable to consent due to age (less than 18 years and guardian will not provide) or unwilling to consent due to ethical concerns. Please speak to the administrators in 125 Nightingale Hall (psycstaff@northeastern.edu) regarding *any* questions related to this requirement. *I have no role in this process and cannot waive or otherwise help you satisfy the research requirement.*

The breakdown in scoring is summarized in the tables below:

NUpath Assignments						
Peer Review						
Media Discussions	TA Graded	Peer Graded	Peer Grading	Midterm	Attendance	TRACE
10 × 1%	3 × 3%	3 × 3%	3 × 4%	3 × 11%	4%	1%

Uncurved Cutoff: - 60% 64% 67% 70% 74% 77% 80% 84% 87% 90% 94%

Grade: F D- D D+ C- C C+ B- B B+ A- A

It is possible there won't be a curve, but if history is any guide, there will be. If there is a curve, it will be applied to the cutoffs for the course, not any specific assignment; that is, course *grades* are curved, not *scores*. If you fail to satisfy the research participation requirement, I am obliged to record a grade of "I" (incomplete) unless you are failing the course, in which case an "F" *will* be recorded. Please do your classmates a favor and remind them of this requirement regularly! I will remind you at regular intervals, as well.

Course Policies:

Academic Integrity: The University's Academic Integrity Policy, available [here \(Links to an external site.\)](#), details your responsibilities as a student. Treat these responsibilities with the highest regard. Failure to conduct yourself with integrity, including (but not limited to) cheating on examinations, fabricating or plagiarizing parts of the Interesting Issue essay, or deceiving me with respect to absences (see absenteeism, above), will result

in your referral to the Office of Student Conduct and Conflict Resolution and appropriate sanctions.

College of Science: For information on the additional standard academic course policies of the College, which hold across all courses taught therein, please see [here \(Links to an external site.\)](#).

Students with Disabilities: Students who have disabilities and who wish to receive academic services and accommodations should follow the Disabilities Resource Center's procedures detailed [here \(Links to an external site.\)](#).

Title IX: Discrimination based on gender (which now includes gender *identity*!) is strictly prohibited in all University programs, including academics, class assignments, and course grading. To report an incident of such discrimination, follow the process outlined at Northeastern's [Title IX page \(Links to an external site.\)](#).

The Golden Rule: Disagreement is a healthy and helpful aspect of education, and psychology tackles some particularly sensitive topics. In this class, we will go where the data lead us, but oftentimes the data are ambiguous and even where they are not, they are sometimes uncomfortable. Therefore, As the prophet Muhammad said, "As you would have people do to you, do to them; and what you dislike to be done to you, don't do to them." In other words: *please be respectful in class!* Given the inherent difficulty in hybrid teaching and learning, this will be especially important this semester.