

# PSY-255: Personality

S. Mason Garrison

December 15, 2020

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Section: A  
Medium: Blended  
Class Room: GREENE 160  
Class Hours: M or W or F @ 9:00a-9:50a

Section: B  
Medium: Asynchronous  
Class Room: Canvas

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Web: [wakeforest.instructure.com/courses/17546](http://wakeforest.instructure.com/courses/17546)

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Teaching Assistant: Lindley Slipetz  
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## Course Description

This class provides a survey of theory and research on the structure and function of human personality, with attention to the relationship to cognition, emotion, motivation, and behavior. It requires P-PSY 151. In addition, we will discuss other individual differences, such as intelligence.

To do well in the course, you should read the assigned material before class and re-read previously assigned material as the course progresses. By reading the text before class you will be better prepared to ask questions and integrate the content of lectures with what was presented in the text. For synchronous classes, be sure to attend all lectures and arrive on time. For asynchronous classes be sure to watch all the video lectures and don't leave them until the last minute. Each topic builds directly on the previous one. Thus, if you miss one lecture or zip through a video, you run the risk of being completely lost in the next lecture.

## Important Information for College and This Course:

In addition, many professors have implicit (*i.e.*, unspoken) expectations for college classes. I'm going to explicitly state some of those unspoken expectations. I suspect that your other professors have similar expectations – so this information will help you in your other classes.

Asynchronous courses put the onus on **YOU** to keep up with the work. You are not guaranteed any reminders throughout the semester. Go to the schedule included here and put it in your calendar. You should also:

1. check course announcements on Canvas often, and

2. check your email tied to Canvas often.

Email and canvas is how I communicate with you, and I will not continually repeat myself in emails after I have already posted or sent the information.

High school and college are different. In high school, you may have been permitted to turn in work as late as you like, to redo assignments or quizzes until you were satisfied, and to complete extra credit work. This is not the case in this college-level course. Unless explicitly stated, there are no late assignments, make-up work, redoing of assignments, or extra credit. These are course policies; they are not opportunities for negotiation. Although I am always happy to explain the reasoning and calculus behind my policies, they are not negotiable.

There is also a prevalent attitude of, “it doesn’t hurt to ask.” Yes, it does. If I have already made clear my policies and expectations, asking me to violate them damages your credibility as a student. One day you may ask for something that is truly reasonable given an emergency situation, but by then your reputation will precede you. Do not be “the boy who cried wolf;” it is not a respected position.

Finally, you should understand that college is not a fee-for-service arrangement. You are not paying me. You are paying tuition to a University for all kinds of things, very little of which actually “pays my salary.” Salaries are more commonly paid out of government funds, including grants. You start with a zero in college courses and earn your points from there. I am not “giving” you grades or “taking away” points. You have nothing to begin with and earn your own score based on what you do and how well you do it (not simply on effort). What I offer you is an opportunity for education, not a grade.

### **Broad goals for the course:**

- 1. The first is for you to understand what personality psychologists think. We will cover classic and current theories, research, and applications of Personality psychology.
- 2. The second is for you to learn how personality psychologists study their field scientifically. We will discuss the procedures used to test theories and to study issues related to personality.
- 3. The third is to (hopefully) recognize some relevance of personality psychology for your personal and/or professional life.

### **Required Materials**

[1] D. C. Funder. *The personality puzzle*. Seventh. OCLC: 935283402. New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2016. ISBN: 978-0-393-60042-1.

*How to use the required text:*

The text (Funder 2016) is intended to supplement the lectures. The lectures don’t follow the order of chapters in the text and the text covers some material that won’t be covered in the lectures, i.e., not all the information in each chapter is perfectly pertinent to the course requirements.

## Course Assignments

### Exams

There will be 3 exams in this course. The best 2 out of 3 exam grades will be used to determine your total exam grade. You can drop any of the exams for any reason BUT YOU MUST PASS THE LAST EXAM (held at TBD on Dec TBD). If you do not pass the final exam, your score on that exam will count as one of your 2 grades. If you do pass the final exam, then the best 2 grades will be used (irrespective of your score on the final exam).

#### *Test Dates*

- Test 1: Friday, 09/25
- Test 2: Friday, 10/30
- Test 3: During Finals Week

### Short Assignments

There will be three (3) short assignments in this course. These assignments will allow you to incorporate some of your own interests into the course. Such interests could be related to your career, another class you're taking, a hobby you're exploring, or some other random fancy. They will typically be approximately two (2) pages. I will provide more specific written guidelines at least two weeks before each assignment is due.

The best two (2) out of three (3) short assignments will be used to determine your total short assignments. You can skip one of the assignments for any reason.

#### *Short Assignment Dates*

- Assignment 1: Friday, 09/18: Critique of an online personality test.
- Assignment 2: Friday, 11/13: Critique of a personality-related media article.
- Assignment 3: Friday, 12/04: Critique of a personality-related YouTube video.

### Engagement Activities

There will be multiple engagement activities in this course. These activities will allow you engage with the material for each module. Details about the specific activities will be provided on canvas. Students must complete two activities per module. For students in the blended section, they can attend their weekly in-person session and count it as an engagement activity.

### Grading Policy

Typically, an A- is defined as 90% of the highest point total in the class, B- as 80% of that total, C- as 70 and D- as 60%. I may shift these values down to provide a better fit to the actual point distribution. By scaling to a percentage of the highest point total in the class, each student has a much better chance of receiving higher grades than if no re-scaling were done. This curve can only help your grade.

The full table is provided below:

Table 1: Full Table

Letter	Cutoff
A	0.95
A-	0.90
B+	0.87
B	0.82
B-	0.80
C+	0.77
C	0.72
C-	0.70
D+	0.67
D	0.62
D-	0.60

### *Curve Projections*

Unsurprisingly, students have many questions about the curve in this class. For tests and other assignments, I try to provide a projected letter grade. This projected letter grade is there to give you a sense of what your score *would* be if I implemented the class curve on this particular assignment. It is a projection. It is not a guarantee. These projected letter grades are not incorporated into your final grade. Trust me, you do not want me to curve by assignment.

### *Late Work*

Be sure to pay close attention to deadlines. Unless you have a compelling reason and instructor pre-approval, there will be no make-up assignments, quizzes, tests, or late work accepted. See the policy on excused absences for specifics on instructor pre-approval.

It is the responsibility of the student to ensure that the instructor has received the assignment by the established due date and to ensure that the assignment submitted is the complete and correct version. Unless otherwise specified, all work must be submitted through Canvas.

- 200 points of your grade will be determined by your best two exams.
  - The final is not optional.
- 50 points of your grade will be determined by completing engagement activities.
- 100 points of your grade will be determined by your best two short assignments.

## **Course Policies**

### **Class Presence and Participation.**

In previous semesters, I have had a deliberately hardline attendance policy. In the light of the public health crisis, I have done away with this policy, as it doesn't align with my general philosophy of treating students as junior colleagues. The student who misses a class meeting is responsible for any assignments and/or announcements made.

Class presence and participation points are given to encourage your active engagement with the material. Specific instructions for engagement, can be found on Canvas. In general, you will

be rewarded with a perfect score as long as you engage meaningfully and intentionally with the material and your peers.

### **Excused absences and extension policy**

As a reasonable and empathetic human, I recognize that life happens. There will be times when your outside life conflicts with scheduled class events. These life events can be any of the obvious things (sports, religious holidays, illness, interviews, etc), but they can also be the less obvious, like spending the entire night looking for your lost pet. My general approach is to work with you. You just need to let me know ahead of time. Conflicts arising from personal travel plans or social obligations do not qualify as excused absences, unless those commitments were set before this course began. If that is the case, please let me know within the first **two weeks** of class.

Except in the case of *true* emergencies, a possible excused absence should be discussed with me as far in advance as possible and *must* occur beforehand. You should not assume that an excused absence will automatically be granted – but you may assume that I am a reasonable, empathetic person. This discussion should occur via email. If you also discuss your situation verbally, please send a summary of the discussion via email to me.

An unexcused absence will result in a zero for any graded work that should have been performed for or during the missed class.

### **Academic Dishonesty Policy**

All work submitted for credit must be the student's own and is subject to the provisions of the Wake Forest Honor Code. Details can be found at the Student Conduct web site: [studentconduct.wfu.edu/honor-system-wfu](http://studentconduct.wfu.edu/honor-system-wfu).

Unless I have explicitly stated otherwise, every assessment is closed to outside resources (including, but not limited to books, notes, phones, people). Ignorance of the honor code and assignment instructions is not an acceptable explanation and/or defense.

It is *ALWAYS* academic dishonesty to share test questions, post course materials on any third-party websites, or to work together on tests. And frankly, it is really obvious in Canvas when you work together. I literally wrote a R program that checks for working together, using a non-parametric statistic method.

Violations of this policy result in a zero for the assignment and possible additional penalties, including, but not limited to a referral to honor council, failing the class, a ban from all extra-credit assignments, and no longer being able to drop assignments.

### **Accommodations Policy**

If you are (or become) disabled (in any capacity, permanently, or temporarily), and need accommodations in class, reading, or any other work in this course, please contact me to discuss your specific needs as soon as possible. Under the Americans with Disabilities Act, you are legally entitled to reasonable accommodations for disabilities. I will do everything in my capacity as your Professor to ensure that you receive those accommodations.

Students who need reasonable accommodations for disabilities also should contact the Learning Assistance Center & Disability Services [lac.wfu.edu](http://lac.wfu.edu). These accommodations are not retroactive. Therefore, I strongly encourage you to use those accommodations. You rightfully deserve them, both in the legal, moral, and ethical sense.

## Communication

You are expected to read every LMS announcement, message, and email; as well as view the media embedded within those communications. Students are expected to check e-mail on a frequent and regular basis in order to stay current with University-related communications, recognizing that certain communications may be time-critical. At minimum, you should be checking your communications within 48 hours. Ignorance of a class communication is not grounds for an excused absence or extension.

### *Self Advocacy*

If you are struggling in this class, please talk to me. Do not assume that I know what is going on in your life. Talk to me and tell me what you need.

### *Grading Questions*

Please send any questions about grades in writing via email within *two* weeks after the assignment is returned. If I erred in scoring or in calculating the grade, I will happily update the record. Otherwise, I will be most receptive toward questions framed in terms of your learning (rather than simply your performance), as research has shown that focusing overly on extrinsic rewards (like grades) is likely to lead to all sorts of outcomes that I don't wish for you (lower interest in the course material, lower learning, lower enjoyment).

## Instructor Availability

I am readily accessible during business hours (9:00AM-5:30PM; Monday-Friday) via email/ LMS/ zoom/ carrier pigeon. Outside those hours, I do not typically respond to messages, in order to devote time to my family, rest, and living my life. Messages received during these times will receive attention once I am back online. Otherwise you can expect to receive a response to your message within 12 to 24 hours, often much sooner. If you do not hear back after 24 hours, please follow-up with me.

I have given out my cell-phone number, in the case of *true* emergencies. Please be mindful that poor planning on your part does not constitute an emergency for me.

### *Is it an true emergency?*

How do you know if it is a true emergency?

- Ask yourself, would a reasonable person consider this situation an emergency?
- How would the situation change if you waited until morning?
- Could this situation have been prevented by starting earlier?
- Would Professor Mason really want to know about this situation *right now*?
- If you were in Professor Mason's shoes, would you consider this an emergency?

## Public Health in the age of COVID-19

Each of us shares responsibility for the health and safety of all in a learning space. Maintaining a consistent six feet of distance; wearing a face covering; limiting our gathering sizes; and isolating or quarantining when ill or exposed to someone with the virus are Wake Forest University

directives and policies we all must follow. Students are encouraged to visit the Our Way Forward website ([ourwayforward.wfu.edu](http://ourwayforward.wfu.edu)) to stay informed about the latest guidance and review the [Public Health Emergency Addendum to the Student Code of Conduct](#).

Specifically, in this room, we will mitigate the risks of virus transfer and take care of our community by abiding by the following safety directives:

- maintain six feet of distance at all times when feasible.
- wear a face covering for the entirety of class. This face covering should cover your mouth and your nose, and adhere to [our University face covering policy](#) (no face shields without masks; no neck gaiters; no bandanas; and no masks, including N95, with a one-way valve).
- stay out of class when sick or after being exposed to someone who is sick.

In this class, any student who does not follow these requirements will be asked once to follow the safety directives. I will offer you a mask or ask you to find one. If you do not comply, I will ask you to leave the class for that day. [I will also refer the matter to the COVID-19 compliance reporting system](#). Possible disciplinary actions may follow as described in the Wake Forest University Undergraduate Student Conduct Code Public Health Emergency Addendum.

## Classroom Climate

I aim to create a learning environment for my students that supports a diversity of thoughts, perspectives, and experiences, and honors your identities (including race, ethnicity, sex, gender, gender-identify, class, sexual orientation, religion, ability, political affiliation, etc.) To help accomplish this:

- If you have a name and/or set of pronouns that differ from those that appear in your official records, please let me know!
- If you feel like your performance in the class is being impacted by your experiences outside of class, please don't hesitate to come and talk with me. I want to be a resource for you.
- I (like many people) am still in the process of learning about diverse perspectives and identities. If something was said in class (by anyone) that made you feel uncomfortable, please talk to me about it.
- If you reached here in the syllabus, e-mail me a picture of a cat. If you do it before the end of the first week, you get a small bonus.

## Department Statement

The Psychology Department values, respects, and celebrates the experiences, beliefs, and practices stemming from varied cultures and circumstances (emphasizing, but not limited to, those from historically underrepresented groups), and our deep commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion plays out through coursework, programming by majors, and research.

## To do well in the course

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### **Tentative Class Schedule**

This syllabus is intended to give the student guidance in what may be covered during the semester and will be followed as closely as possible. Dates for tests and assignments won't change, barring extraordinary events. However, I reserve the right to modify, supplement and make changes as the course needs arise. I try to avoid changes to the syllabus. Nevertheless, if changes occur, I will only make changes that are less burdensome and more advantageous to the students.



**Week 01, 08/24 - 08/28 : Introduction and What is Personality**

**Week 02, 08/31 - 09/04 : Research Design in Personality**

**Week 03, 09/07 - 09/11 : Personality Assessment and Testing Controversies**

**Week 04, 09/14 - 09/18 : How do people differ? Trait Approach (Assignment 1)**

**Week 05, 09/21 - 09/25 : Big Five (Test 1)**

**Week 06, 09/28 - 10/02 : Personality over the Lifespan**

**Week 07, 10/05 - 10/09 : Biological and Genetic Approaches to Psychology**

**Week 08, 10/12 - 10/16 : Evolutionary Psychology**

**Week 09, 10/19 - 10/23 : Personality Processes**

**Week 10, 10/26 - 10/30 : The Self (Test 2)**

**Week 11, 11/02 - 11/06 : Freud**

**Week 12, 11/09 - 11/13 : Positive Psychology (Assignment 2)**

**Week 13, 11/16 - 11/20 : Cross-Cultural Psychology**

**Week 14, 11/23 - 11/27 : Personality and Health**

**Week 15, 11/30 - 12/04 : Special Topics (Assignment 3)**

**Final Exam**

- TBD on DEC TBD

## **References**

Funder, David Charles. 2016. *The Personality Puzzle*. Seventh. New York: W.W. Norton & Co.