

General Psychology I

1. **Jamie Kleinman, PhD, Assistant Professor in Residence**
2. **Jamie.kleinman@uconn.edu**
3. This is an existing course.
4. PSYC 1100, Department of Psychological Science
5. During the grant period, work will center on two major tasks. The majority of effort will go towards the creation of integrated course content that will allow students to choose between multiple assignments that link psychology to other disciplines. These assignments will allow students to explore how the study of behavior and mental processes is relevant to multiple disciplines in addition to how psychologists utilize content and processes from other fields to further their own research and practice.

The second major task will be the application of a new assessment approach called 'specifications grading' (Nilson, 2015) to this course. This is a mastery based approach in which students are given comprehensive rubrics and instructions for all work and everything submitted is judged on a pass-fail basis. This approach will hopefully lead to active and engaged learning, increased self-efficacy, opportunities for critical thinking, and production of professional and informative student work. Students will be provided with a specifications table describing all course components and an explanation of the intent of this process. To pass, all work (assignments, quizzes, papers, exams) must meet a minimum level of competence or mastery. To earn a higher grade, students will need to pass more components. This approach will provide clear expectations to students of what is expected in order for them to attain grades that are "average," "good," or "excellent". In order to pass the class, they must demonstrate a minimum level of competency on all components. Embedded within this approach is a 'token' system for resubmitting work that has not passed so that students focus as much on the process of learning and on the end product.

The success of this course will be entirely dependent on the design, so learning objectives will be clearly stated and then the content and the process will be carefully crafted to ensure these objectives are being met. The learning objectives for this course are based on those outlined by the American Psychological Association (APA) and are as follow:

1. Students will demonstrate a knowledge base in psychology.
2. Students will utilize the scientific method to engage in critical thinking exercises.
3. Students will develop an understanding of their social and ethical responsibilities in a diverse world.
4. Students will demonstrate competence communicating in oral, written, and multimedia formats.
5. Students will engage in professional development through a variety of individual and group exercises that focus on self-reflection, work habits, and cooperation.

Nilson, L. (2015). Specifications Grading: Restoring Rigor, Motivating Students, and Saving Faculty Time. Stylus Publishing: Sterling, VA.

6. Assessment will include both formative and summative measures. Knowledge base, communication, and general levels of competence and understanding will be assessed through a variety of course components that will include multiple choice questions answered in class using a polling system, weekly online quizzes, weekly written homework assignments, enhanced learning exercises, and exams. Additional instruments will be included to measure specific skills and traits such as:
 1. Student self-efficacy will be measured using the Academic Self-Efficacy Scale (ASES) (Elias & Loomis, 2002). This rating scale includes 18 specific general education questions and research suggests there is a positive relationship between self-efficacy scores and GPA.
 2. Critical thinking will be measured using the Cornell Critical Thinking Test (CCTT) (Ennis & Millman, 2005) at the beginning and the end of the semester to determine if students have improved in this skill.
 3. Student engagement will be measured using the Student Engagement Scale (SES) (Gunuc & Kuzu, 2015). Students from this course can be compared to students from other PSYC 1100 courses to determine if the integrated content and specifications approach lead to increased engagement both in class and on campus.

Elias, S. M., & Loomis, R. J. (2002). Utilizing need for cognition and perceived self-efficacy to predict academic performance. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology, 32*, 1687–1702. doi:10.1111/j.1559-1816.2002.tb02770.x

Ennis, R. H., & Millman, J. (2005a). *Cornell Critical Thinking Test, Level X*. Pacific Grove, CA: Midwest Publications.

Ennis, R. H., & Millman, J. (2005b). *Cornell Critical Thinking Test, Level Z*. Pacific Grove, CA: Midwest Publications.

Gunuc, S., & Kuzu, A. (2015). Student engagement scale: Development, reliability, and validity. *Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education, 40*, 587-610.
7. The learning objectives of this course mirror the broad GEOC goals in numerous ways. The work habits and skills needed to be successful at the college level will be clearly outlined from the first day of class and constantly reinforced by utilizing the specifications grading system. Students should learn that more engagement with course content, at multiple levels, will enhance their learning. They will learn to feel comfortable with the process of making mistakes, knowing that that is a fundamental part of the learning process, and that there is a built-in course mechanism to submit revisions of work. They will be allowed to choose from an array of assignments so that they can explore the way that psychology relates to their major or area of interest. The content covered in this course is on its face highly related to all of the other science and medical fields, but students will also see how it is related to philosophy, history, art, literature, and economics, just to name a few disciplines.

8. PSYC 1100, General Psychology I, is a CA3 course meeting the natural science, non-laboratory general education requirement.
9. This course is distinctive for two main reasons. The specifications grading approach is a relatively new and growing approach to assessing students' learning. In addition to encouraging mastery and self-efficacy through an outlined revision process, this approach is also meant to reduce grading and the workload on professors. The first few times a course is taught in this format, it will, no doubt, require substantial effort on the part of the professor to create the multiple assessments and the clear rubrics and grading policies. However, the time spent grading will be reduced, in part, as it will require the professor to simply determine whether a standard has been met or not. By the end of a semester, students should be familiar enough with the process that they can offer up their own self-evaluations, which should lead to more engagement and an overall better quality of work. This course meets this year's goal of integration. Even without a redesign, general psychology sits at the intersection of multiple disciplines. It is related to all other natural science courses through the use of the scientific method, but this course specifically overlaps with biology and chemistry in the deep exploration of genetics and neuroscience. Any of the premedical, nursing, and allied health majors would find the topics on sensation and perception especially relevant. As we cover topics related to learning and memory there is tremendous overlap with education and other social sciences. As we end the semester covering thinking and reasoning, connections to the fields of economics and communication will be made. Over the entirety of the course we focus on how people from all over the world are similar or different (nature vs. nurture) and the humanities are constantly integrated into lectures as examples are used from history, art, literature, and philosophy. For this redesign, multiple versions of assignments will be created that connect to various disciplines so that students can pick from areas of study that align with their area of study.
10. The specifications grading approach is something that could be widely applicable to anyone teaching a general education course. It seems to reinforce the importance of mastering content as well as process. It isn't enough to memorize terms and produce on an exam. Students need to have the experience of engaging with information in multiple contexts and producing work that is competent and professional in a variety of formats.
11. This proposal is not linked to any other proposal in this contest.
12. I am not aware of any proposals for this course in the past year.
13. Looking at all past winning proposals, this course has not previously received funding.
14. NA