

Visiting Student Modules Semester 1 2025-2026

PS214 Developmental Psychology 1 (5 ECTS)

Module Coordinator: Dr Kate Dawson

Description: The history of developmental psychology is reviewed and the main theoretical perspectives and special methodologies employed in the area are examined. The content also includes the psychology of infant development, with particular reference to cognitive development; social and emotional development; moral development and gender development.

Module objectives

- To highlight the importance of a life-span perspective on development
- To encourage awareness of change and growth as ongoing processes
- To acquire familiarity with the ecology of development
- To understand and explain the interaction of biological and environmental influences on development
- To understand factors that contribute to developmental change
- To appreciate and appraise competing perspectives on cognitive and psychosocial development

Basic Reading

- Shaffer, D. & Kipp, K. (2007). *Developmental Psychology, Childhood and Adolescence*. Wadsworth.

Additional, topic-related reading lists are provided during the course.

Evaluation

One two-hour examination at the end of Semester.

PS220 Psychology of Learning (5 ECTS)

Module Coordinator: Dr. Ian Stewart

Description: This module introduces students to theory and empirical research on key processes of learning as understood from a behaviour analytic perspective. It provides definitions of basic behavioural terminology and describes experiments from the history of the experimental analysis of behaviour that illustrate basic behavioural principles. In doing so it traces the evolution of behavioural research, starting with laboratory work with animals using simple classical and operant conditioning paradigms, progressing through increasingly complex behavioural processes and finishing with an examination of modern behaviour analytic investigations into language and higher cognition in humans. The strong scientific tradition of behaviour analysis is emphasized, as evidenced by rigorous measurement of behaviour, precise specification of methods and careful interpretation of outcomes.

Module objectives

Upon completion of this module students should be able to:

- Discuss the differences between a behaviour analytic and a cognitive approach to psychology
- Define basic learning processes and empirical procedures including classical conditioning, operant conditioning, discrimination, generalization, extinction, spontaneous recovery, habituation, reinforcement, punishment, avoidance, shaping, fading, matching-to-sample, schedules of reinforcement
- List and describe key studies demonstrating learning processes and principles
- Describe modern behaviour analytic theory and research on language and cognition in humans including rule governed behaviour, stimulus equivalence and relational frame theory

Basic Reading

- Chance, P. (1998). *First Course in Applied Behavior Analysis*. Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks/Cole. [ISBN-10: 0534339360]
- Torneke, N. (2010). *Learning RFT*. Oakland, CA: New Harbinger. [ISBN-10: 1572249064; ISBN-13: 978-1572249066]

Additional Reading

- Catania A. C. (2002). *Learning (Interim) 4th Edition*. Sloan Publishing. [ISBN-10: 1597380075; ISBN-13: 978-1597380072]
- Baldwin, J.D. & Baldwin, J.I. (2001). *Behavior Principles in Everyday Life (4th Edition)*. NJ: Prentice Hall. [ISBN-10: 0130873764; ISBN-13: 978-0130873767]

Additional, topic-related reading lists of books and papers will be provided online.

Evaluation

One two-hour examination at the end of Semester 1 (85%); Web-based tutorial to be completed at any time during the semester and before the examination (15%).

PS3106 Language and Cognition: A Contextual Behavioural Approach (5 ECTS)

Module Coordinator: Dr Ian Stewart

Module Objectives: The aim of this course is to introduce students to Relational Frame Theory (RFT; Hayes, Barnes Holmes & Roche, 2001) as an approach to understanding human psychology. RFT is based on a comprehensive basic experimental research program into human language and cognition. With by now over 100 empirical studies focused on its tenets, it is arguably the most well-established comprehensive theory of human psychology ever produced. This course will first familiarize students with the philosophical and theoretical underpinning of RFT and explain the core behavioural processes implicated by this approach. It will then examine up to date RFT-based research into diverse areas of human language and cognition including cognitive development, motivation, problem-solving, analogical reasoning, rule governed behaviour, the self, psychopathology, psychotherapy, mindfulness and spirituality. The course will combine lecture based didactic teaching with active student participation in seminar discussion.

Learning Outcomes: Upon completion of this course you should be able to:

- Describe the development of relational framing as the core process involved in language
- Define key technical terms in RFT including mutual entailment, combinatorial entailment, transformation of function, contextual control, arbitrarily applicable relational responding,
- Discuss important psychological phenomena including cognitive development, motivation, problem-solving, analogy, metaphor, rule governed behaviour, the self, psychopathology and psychotherapy, mindfulness and spirituality from an RFT perspective
- Analyse an everyday language episode in terms of relational framing
- Evaluate the theoretical and philosophical basis of Relational Frame Theory as an account of language and cognition

Readings CORE: Torneke, N. (2010). Learning RFT. Oakland, CA: New Harbinger. ADDITIONAL: Hayes, S.C., Barnes-Holmes, D. & Roche, B. (2001) Relational Frame Theory: A Post Skinnerian Account of Human Language and Cognition. Plenum Press. Additional topic-related reading lists will be made available online.

Assessment: 100% Examination

PS3118 Introduction to Consumer Psychology (5 ECTS)

Module Coordinator: Dr Denis O'Hora

Description: This module introduces consumer psychology and its applications in industry and policy. Consumer psychology is the study of how we relate to the transaction of goods and services we use every day. The module provides a comprehensive overview of the major themes and trends in consumer psychology. Understanding consumers requires knowledge of consumer psychology theories, collecting and interpreting consumer data and opinions and developing meaningful interactions with consumers.

Learning Outcomes:

On successful completion of this module students should be able to:

- Understand and remember key concepts, terms, relationships in Consumer Psychology
- Understand and remember Cialdini's "Weapon's of Influence"
- Know how to use Consumer Psychology to effect change
- Understand the personal implications of Consumer Psychology
- Understand the social implications of Consumer Psychology

- Know how to learn more about Consumer Psychology activism

Indicative reading:

- Jansson-Boyd, C. V. (2010). *Consumer psychology*. New York, NY: Open University Press.
- Cialdini, R. B. (1987). *Influence*. Port Harcourt: A. Michel.

Journal articles and online resources will be recommended throughout.

Evaluation: This module will be 100% continuously assessed. A structured essay type assignment is the main assignment.

PS322 Health Psychology (5 ECTS)

Module Coordinators: Prof Molly Byrne/Dr Oonagh Meade

Description: This course draws on a variety of subfields in psychology to impart an understanding of how psychological factors contribute to and are affected by health, illness, and health care. The course is organised into the following sections: introduction to health psychology and the key models of health and illness; the role of psychology in the perception and experience of pain and its management; stress and its impact on health and illness, including moderators of the stress experience; health-related behaviour, the factors that influence it and the ability of health-behaviour models to predict it; the role of personality dimensions in health and finally, health psychology in the context of the planetary crisis.

Learning Outcomes

On completion of this module, students will be able to:

- Demonstrate the role of biological, psychological and social factors in health, illness and health care delivery contexts
- Describe and understand the role of psychological processes in the perception, experience and management of chronic pain.
- Understand the nature of stress and its psychobiological consequences in terms of health and illness.
- Describe and critically assess the ability of current theories of health related cognition to predict behaviour.
- Describe and critically assess the relationship between personality and health.
- Contemplate health psychology in the context of the planetary crisis.

Basic Reading

- Morrison, V. & Bennett, P. (2016). *Introduction to health psychology*. 4th edition, London: Pearson/Prentice Hall
- Additional, topic-related reading lists are provided during the course.

Learning materials and announcements will be on Canvas

Please contact Sinead.sheehan@universityofgalway.ie for any queries

Evaluation

One two-hour examination at the end of the semester.

PS334 Applied Behaviour Analysis (5 ECTS)

Module Coordinator: Dr Aoife McTiernan

Description: “Applied Behaviour Analysis” (ABA) is the process of systematically applying interventions based upon the principles of learning theory to improve socially significant behaviours. The effectiveness of ABA has been shown in a wide range of areas including education, special education, organizational management, parent training, occupational safety, sports psychology and clinical psychology. While ABA can be used with a wide range of human behaviours, it is often recommended as the best-practice approach for working with people with intellectual disabilities and/or pervasive developmental disorders (e.g., autism). This module provides an introduction to the field of applied behaviour analysis. It will examine the applications of applied behaviour analysis to the field of rehabilitation, education and developmental disorders.

Learning Outcomes

On successful completion of this module students should be able to:

- Understand the theoretical underpinnings of applied behavioural analysis

- Evaluate the principles and procedures of applied behavioural analysis
- Analyse the effectiveness of applied behavioural analysis in education and clinical psychology
- Appraise the effectiveness of early behavioural intervention as a treatment for autism spectrum disorder

Basic Reading

- Miltenberger, R., G. (2004). *Behaviour Modification: Principles and procedures*, 3rd ed. Belmont, CA: London.
- Cooper, J. O., Heron, T. & Heward, W. (2007). *Applied behaviour analysis*. Columbus, OH: Merrill.

Evaluation

One 2-hour examination at the end of the Semester.

PS338 Theories of Personality (5 ECTS)

Module Coordinator: Dr Jenny Groarke

Description: This course will introduce students to the classic personality theories and theorists in an in-depth manner, and will encourage critical evaluation of same. The major theories will include: psychoanalytic theory; humanistic and existentialist theories; social cognitive theory; behaviourist perspectives; and trait theory. Additionally, the course will review taxonomies such as the DSM-V.

Learning Outcomes

Students will be expected to have an in-depth understanding of each of the above theorists' key ideas about personality development, and evaluate the theories in a thoughtful and critical manner.

They will also be informed about how the personal lives and experiences of theorists may impact on the development of the individual theories of personality, and will demonstrate consideration of these backgrounds in their evaluations of the theories.

Students will also be expected to understand how the DSM-V is used in classifying personalities that present in the disordered range.

Basic Reading

- Sollod, R. N., Wilson, J. P. & Monte, C. F. (2009). *Beneath the Mask: An introduction to theories of personality*. New York: John Wiley and Sons.
- Other recommended readings will be made available during the module

Evaluation

The course will be assessed by continuous assessment with one written assignment, and MCQs.

PS342 Introduction to Positive Psychology (5 ECTS)

Module Coordinator: Dr. Michael Hogan

Module objectives: The overall objective of this course is to introduce students to key concepts in the study of well-being and human strengths, and particular applications that are relevant within the clinical, educational, and organisational domains. As a discipline psychology has offered perspectives on well-being for over a century. In this module students are introduced to the emergence of positive psychology as a distinctive field of study and practice. The module affords students the opportunity to study and discuss a number of topic areas relevant to the study of well-being and human strengths, including positive emotional states, positive traits, and positive institutions.

Basic Reading: Compton, W. C. (2005). *An Introduction to Positive Psychology*. Thompson, Wadsworth.

Evaluation: 20% CA, 80% Final Exam

PS403 Biological Psychology (5 ECTS)

Module Coordinator: TBC

Description: The aim of this course is to provide students with a good understanding of the biological bases of behaviour from a brain systems perspective. The structure, modes of communication and functions of the nervous system will be reviewed with reference to the following: the biological basis of schizophrenia, the biological rhythms of waking, sleeping and dreaming, and the neural mechanisms of higher level cognitive functions such as language, learning and memory.

Module objectives

- To introduce the relation between brain and cognition and to thus encourage a physiological perspective on psychological function
- To introduce the concept of localized or modular brain function and to then develop the contrasting but nonetheless key concept of distributed brain function with reference to complex disorders of the brain such as Parkinson's disease and schizophrenia
- To impart to students the distinct roles and contributions of the various brain systems that collectively mediate higher level cognitive functions (e.g., language, learning and memory) and also waking, sleeping and dreaming.
- To encourage students to think in a critically evaluative way about empirical research in the biological psychology field.

Basic Reading

Carlson, Neil R. (2007). *Foundations of Physiological Psychology*, 7th Edition. Boston: Pearson / Allyn & Bacon.

Additional topic-related reading lists are provided during the course.

Evaluation

One two-hour examination at the end of the Semester.

PS408 Human Sexuality (5 ECTS)

Module Coordinator: Prof Pádraig MacNeela

Description: PS408 examines topics that fall under the rubric of human sexuality (e.g., sexual variance, prostitution, and pornography). Through a series of films and interdisciplinary readings, this course details how sociocultural forces may shape individuals' experiences as sexual beings and their interpretations of various sexual practices.

Module objectives

- To enhance students' understanding of the discourses surrounding diverse aspects of human sexual experience.
- To increase students' familiarity with, and ability to examine critically, historical and contemporary sexological research.
- To expand students' awareness of the study of human sexuality as an interdisciplinary and multi-media endeavour.

Basic Reading

- Articles will be assigned throughout the course.

Evaluation Continuous assessment, based on performance on "thought question" assignments and quizzes.

PS409 Psychology, Science & Pseudoscience (5 ECTS)

Module Coordinator: Prof Brian Hughes

Description: Pseudoscience refers to a practice or body of knowledge that purports to be scientific but which diverges from the quality-standards conventionally applied to science and scientists. Examples include supposedly scientific claims surrounding telepathy, clairvoyance, psychokinesis, the abduction of humans by aliens, the treatment of diseases using crystals, communication with the dead, neurolinguistic programming, Primal Scream Therapy, reincarnation, and perpetual motion machines. This module seeks to consider: (a) the distinctions (and occasional overlaps) that exist between psychology and pseudoscientific treatments of psychological subject matter; and (b) the psychological nature and appeal of pseudoscience. After considering the nature of scientific inquiry, the module seeks to describe the history of pseudoscience as well as unsubtle (e.g., ESP) and subtle (e.g., assumptions about "normality") examples of psychology-related pseudoscience. The module then looks at the appeal of pseudoscience, the psychology of evidentiary reasoning (e.g., the unreliability of anecdotal testimony, the counter-intuitive nature of randomness, and the nature of heuristics) and methodological issues to be considered when researching extraordinary claims (e.g., blinding, placebo controls, and meta-analysis).

Module objectives

- To explore the nature and scope of pseudoscience and its demarcation from mainstream science
- To highlight areas of pseudoscience that are frequently but erroneously conflated with mainstream psychology
- To explore the psychological appeal of pseudoscience
- To examine the psychology of evidentiary reasoning
- To consider the requirements for conducting rigorously sceptical research and for evaluating extraordinary claims

Basic Reading

- Compulsory reading: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pseudoscience> (and linked entries).
- Targeted reading lists will be provided over the course of the module.

Evaluation

End-of-term written examination (2 hours). Candidates will be required to answer two questions. The first will be compulsory but broad-ranging in scope, allowing students to base their responses on the module as a whole and/or areas of their own choosing. For the second, students will be given a wide choice of several (more traditional) questions that target specific topics.

PS415 Perception, Attention & Performance (5 ECTS)

Module Coordinator: Dr Mark Elliott

Description: The course aims to provide an introduction to sensory and perceptual processes, blending classical and contemporary approaches to basic information processing. The course will outline key theoretical issues and methodological contributions in perception and cognition generally. In addition, it will demonstrate the scope for the application of knowledge of sensory and perceptual processes to other areas of cognitive psychology and neuroscience. The course aims to cover the following topics: basic sensory processes and psychophysics; pattern recognition and visual search; object recognition; colour perception; visual and auditory attention; subliminal perception; multiple task performance; perceptual mechanisms and dynamics; models of information processing; applications of cognitive psychology.

Module objectives

- Students should be able to specify the main theories, models, concepts or methods concerning the psychology of perception and human performance
- Critically evaluate each of the theories in relation to any rival theories citing research evidence to support or refute each idea
- Provide examples of experimental and modelling techniques used in perception and attention research
- Review the contributions of perception research to general psychology
- Discuss the applicability of research (data, theories, methods, concepts) on perception, attention and action to real-world problems

Basic Reading

- Styles, E.A. (1997). *The Psychology of Attention*. Hove, UK: The Psychology Press.
- Goldstein, E.B. (2001). *Sensation and Perception. (6th Edition)*. New York: Brooks/Cole.

Evaluation

Written Exam.

First Year Modules

PS122 Introduction to Psychology 1 (5 ECTS)

Module Coordinator: Dr Jenny Groarke

Description: This module provides students with an introduction to three key areas of psychology, Developmental Psychology, the Psychology of Learning, and Cognitive Psychology. The areas covered in PS122 can change slightly from year-to-year, so students are advised to check the School of Psychology website in early September of the year of study to ascertain the exact content for that year. Developmental Psychology is concerned with the development of the individual across the lifespan. Cognitive Psychology is the study of human cognition – the way we perceive, process and respond to the world around us. The Psychology of Learning deals with the processes leading to behavioural change, or the impact that learning has on our perceptions of the world and thus the way we behave. Together these three areas of psychology have made major contributions to our understanding of human behaviour.

Module Objectives:

- To provide a coherent overview of three key areas of psychological inquiry.
- To contribute to our understanding of human behaviour, cognition, motivation and emotion.
- To provide foundation knowledge that can facilitate more in-depth understanding later.
- Students will understand what Developmental Psychology, the Psychology of Learning, and Cognitive Psychology have to say about human behaviour, cognition, emotion and motivation.
- Students will have the ability to apply this understanding to an aspect of human behaviour they find particularly interesting.
- Students will be able to apply acquired knowledge to the kinds of actions they witness each day.
- Students will be able to review the literature and summarise it in essay format.

Assessment: 1 MCQ & 1 written exam **Core Text:** *Gazzaniga, M., Heatherton, T., & Halpern, D. (2016). *Psychological Science: International Student Edition* (5th ed.) Norton.

PS1103 Introduction to Research Methods and Practical Skills in Psychology Full academic year only

Module Coordinator: Dr Chris Noone

Description: This module provides students with an introduction to research methods and important related practical skills - such as critical thinking - in psychology. The goal of psychological research is to discover, describe and explain human behaviour. To do this, suitable methods need to be employed so that the results of research can be both understood by others, and generalised to other situations. This module will provide an elementary introduction to research methods in the field of psychology, and cognate skills, with the emphasis very much on introducing students to the different types of methods used to conduct research, and highlighting the importance of the scientific method within psychological science. Within the context of learning about psychological research, students will also be introduced to critical assessment and interpretation of research and claims made about research. Communication of research is also an important element here, and the module will seek to enhance students' written and oral presentation skills.

Upon completion of this module students should be able to:

- Name and identify key concepts used in research methods.
- Discuss the varying experimental methods used in psychological research
- Apply knowledge of the basic tools of statistics used in psychology to calculate such statistics as standard deviation and correlation coefficients
- Demonstrate a clear understanding of the importance of reliability, validity, and sampling to research.
- Demonstrate an awareness of the ethical principles used by psychologists.
- Understand the principles of critical thinking and major sources of critical thinking failures.

- Develop skill in analysis and evaluation of claims and scientific evidence.
- Develop skill in argument mapping and drawing inferences in light of analysis and evaluation of evidence.
- Have the ability to communicate their reasoning to others and collaborate with peers in assessing evidence and presenting same in both written and oral form.
- Acquire literature review and scientific literature assessment/ evaluation skills.

Assessment: to be confirmed

Core Text: See Canvas for a range of resources