

Attention!

This is a **representative** syllabus. The syllabus for the course when you enroll may be **different**.

Use the syllabus provided by **your** instructor for the most up-to-date information. Please refer to your instructor for more information for the specific requirements for a given semester.

Feel free to contact the Psychology Advising Office for any questions regarding psychology courses either by email (**psychadvising@osu.edu**) or phone (614.292.5750). Thank you!



SYLLABUS

PSYCH 2301

Psychology of Extraordinary Beliefs
Autumn 2020 – Online

COURSE OVERVIEW

Course description

Through the Internet, TV, tabloids, and pop-psychology books, we are barraged with pseudoscientific and paranormal claims of extraordinary abilities (e.g., telepathy, telekinesis, fortune telling, etc.), paranormal activity (e.g., existence of ghosts, cryptozoology, alien abduction, near death experiences, etc.), and nonscientific claims (e.g., facilitated communication, anti-vaccination movement, creation sciences, etc.).

The field of psychology has much to say about why so many of us believe in such incredible phenomena. The more we learn about the capabilities of the brain, the more we learn that our reasoning processes are fallible. We see patterns where none exist, we seek to confirm beliefs we already hold, and we value vivid experiences over statistical information.

The goal of the course is to gain an understanding of normal errors in thinking and logic and to learn how to critically analyze claims through scientific reasoning and logical treatment of evidence.

Course Goals

Upon completion of this course, students will be able to:

- Understand the characteristics of pseudoscience
- Understand the basics of logical argument and the basics of the scientific method
- Describe errors in logic and errors in thinking as a toolkit for assessing claims

- Understand how the human mind makes errors in reason and perception
- Assess and critically analyze various claims
- Differentiate between scientific and pseudoscientific claims

HOW THIS COURSE WORKS

Mode of delivery: This course is 100% online. There are no required sessions when you must be logged in to Carmen at a scheduled time.

Pace of online activities: This course is divided into **weekly modules**. Students are expected to keep pace with weekly deadlines but may schedule their efforts freely within that time frame.

Credit hours and work expectations: This is a **3-credit-hour course**. According to [Ohio State policy](#), students should expect around 3 hours per week of time spent on direct instruction (instructor content and Carmen activities, for example) in addition to 6 hours of homework (reading and assignment preparation, for example) to receive a grade of (C) average.

Attendance and participation requirements: Because this is an online course, your attendance is based on your online activity and participation. The following is a summary of everyone's expected participation:

- **Participating in online activities for attendance: AT LEAST ONCE PER WEEK**
You are expected to log in to the course in Carmen every week. (During most weeks you will probably log in many times.) If you have a situation that might cause you to miss an entire week of class, discuss it with me *as soon as possible*.
- **Office hours and live sessions: OPTIONAL**
All live, scheduled events for the course, including my office hours, are optional.
- **Participating in discussion forums: MOST WEEKS**
As part of your participation, many weeks have a required discussion. Discussions ask you to apply or think differently about a topic from the week's content. Be sure to read the instructions for each discussion carefully before submitting your post!

COURSE MATERIALS AND TECHNOLOGIES

Textbooks

REQUIRED

Ruscio, J. (2006). Critical thinking in psychology: Separating sense from nonsense (2nded.). Wadsworth: Belmont, CA. 978-0534634599

Why People Believe Weird Things: Pseudoscience, Superstition, and Other Confusions of Our Time by Michael Shermer 978-0805070897

Course technology

For help with your password, university email, Carmen, or any other technology issues, questions, or requests, contact the Ohio State IT Service Desk. Standard support hours are available at ocio.osu.edu/help/hours, and support for urgent issues is available 24/7.

- **Self-Service and Chat support:** ocio.osu.edu/help
- **Phone:** 614-688-4357(HELP)
- **Email:** servicedesk@osu.edu
- **TDD:** 614-688-8743

BASELINE TECHNICAL SKILLS FOR ONLINE COURSES

- Basic computer and web-browsing skills
- Navigating Carmen: for questions about specific functionality, see the [Canvas Student Guide](#).

REQUIRED TECHNOLOGY SKILLS SPECIFIC TO THIS COURSE

- [CarmenZoom virtual meetings](#)
- [Recording a slide presentation with audio narration](#)
- [Recording, editing, and uploading video](#)

REQUIRED EQUIPMENT

- Computer: current Mac (OS X) or PC (Windows 7+) with high-speed internet connection
- Webcam: built-in or external webcam, fully installed and tested
- Microphone: built-in laptop or tablet mic or external microphone
- Other: a mobile device (smartphone or tablet) or landline to use for BuckeyePass authentication

REQUIRED SOFTWARE

- [Microsoft Office 365](#): All Ohio State students are now eligible for free Microsoft Office 365 ProPlus through Microsoft's Student Advantage program. Full instructions for downloading and installation can be found [at go.osu.edu/office365help](https://go.osu.edu/office365help).

CARMEN ACCESS

You will need to use [BuckeyePass](#) multi-factor authentication to access your courses in Carmen. To ensure that you are able to connect to Carmen at all times, it is recommended that you take the following steps:

- Register multiple devices in case something happens to your primary device. Visit the [BuckeyePass - Adding a Device](#) help article for step-by-step instructions.
- Request passcodes to keep as a backup authentication option. When you see the Duo login screen on your computer, click **Enter a Passcode** and then click the **Text me new codes** button that appears. This will text you ten passcodes good for 365 days that can each be used once.
- Download the [Duo Mobile application](#) to all of your registered devices for the ability to generate one-time codes in the event that you lose cell, data, or Wi-Fi service.

If none of these options will meet the needs of your situation, you can contact the IT Service Desk at 614-688-4357 (HELP) and IT support staff will work out a solution with you.

GRADING AND FACULTY RESPONSE

How your grade is calculated

ASSIGNMENT CATEGORY	POINTS
Assignments	50
Final Project	150
Critical thinking Discussions	80
Total	280

**The total number of points may fluctuate somewhat during the semester. Pay attention to course updates.*

Late assignments

Late submissions will be accepted with a 5% penalty for each hour an assignment is late. Please refer to Carmen for due dates.

Grading scale

93–100: A
 90–92.9: A-
 87–89.9: B+
 83–86.9: B
 80–82.9: B-
 77–79.9: C+
 73–76.9: C
 70–72.9: C-
 67–69.9: D+
 60–66.9: D
 Below 60: E

Instructor feedback and response time

I am providing the following list to give you an idea of my intended availability throughout the course. (Remember that you can call **614-688-HELP** at any time if you have a technical problem.)

- **Grading and feedback:** For large weekly assignments, you can generally expect feedback within **7 days**.
- **Email:** I will reply to emails within **24 hours on days when class is in session at the university**.
- **Discussion board:** I will check and reply to messages in the discussion boards every **24 hours on school days**.

OTHER COURSE POLICIES

Discussion and communication guidelines

The following are my expectations for how we should communicate as a class. Above all, please remember to be respectful and thoughtful.

- **Writing style:** While there is no need to participate in class discussions as if you were writing a research paper, you should remember to write using good grammar, spelling, and punctuation. A more conversational tone is fine for non-academic topics.
- **Tone and civility:** Let's maintain a supportive learning community where everyone feels safe and where people can disagree amicably. Remember that sarcasm doesn't always come across online.
- **Citing your sources:** When we have academic discussions, please cite your sources to back up what you say. For the textbook or other course materials, list at least the title and page numbers. For online sources, include a link.
- **Backing up your work:** Consider composing your academic posts in a word processor, where you can save your work, and then copying into the Carmen discussion.

Academic integrity policy

OHIO STATE'S ACADEMIC INTEGRITY POLICY

Academic integrity is essential to maintaining an environment that fosters excellence in teaching, research, and other educational and scholarly activities. Thus, The Ohio State University and the Committee on Academic Misconduct (COAM) expect that all students have read and understand the university's [*Code of Student Conduct*](#), and that all students will complete all academic and scholarly assignments with fairness and honesty. Students must recognize that failure to follow the rules and guidelines established in the university's *Code of Student Conduct* and this syllabus may constitute "Academic Misconduct."

The Ohio State University's *Code of Student Conduct* (Section 3335-23-04) defines academic misconduct as: "Any activity that tends to compromise the academic integrity of the university or subvert the educational process." Examples of academic misconduct include (but are not limited to) plagiarism, collusion (unauthorized collaboration), copying the work of another student, and possession of unauthorized materials during an examination. Ignorance of the university's *Code of Student Conduct* is never considered an excuse for academic misconduct, so I recommend that you review the *Code of Student Conduct* and, specifically, the sections dealing with academic misconduct.

If I suspect that a student has committed academic misconduct in this course, I am obligated by university rules to report my suspicions to the Committee on Academic Misconduct. If COAM determines that you have violated the university's *Code of Student Conduct* (i.e., committed academic misconduct), the sanctions for the misconduct could include a failing grade in this course and suspension or dismissal from the university.

If you have any questions about the above policy or what constitutes academic misconduct in this course, please contact me.

Other sources of information on academic misconduct (integrity) to which you can refer include:

- The Committee on Academic Misconduct web pages ([COAM Home](#))
- *Ten Suggestions for Preserving Academic Integrity* ([Ten Suggestions](#))
- *Eight Cardinal Rules of Academic Integrity* (www.northwestern.edu/uacc/8cards.htm)

Copyright disclaimer

The materials used in connection with this course may be subject to copyright protection and are only for the use of students officially enrolled in the course for the educational purposes associated with the course. Copyright law must be considered before copying, retaining, or disseminating materials outside of the course.

Statement on Title IX

All students and employees at Ohio State have the right to work and learn in an environment free from harassment and discrimination based on sex or gender, and the university can arrange interim measures, provide support resources, and explain investigation options, including referral to confidential resources.

If you or someone you know has been harassed or discriminated against based on your sex or gender, including sexual harassment, sexual assault, relationship violence, stalking, or sexual exploitation, you may find information about your rights and options at titleix.osu.edu or by contacting the Ohio State Title IX Coordinator at titleix@osu.edu. Title IX is part of the Office of Institutional Equity (OIE) at Ohio State, which responds to all bias-motivated incidents of harassment and discrimination, such as race, religion, national origin and disability. For more information on OIE, visit equity.osu.edu or email equity@osu.edu.

Your mental health

As a student you may experience a range of issues that can cause barriers to learning, such as strained relationships, increased anxiety, alcohol/drug problems, feeling down, difficulty concentrating and/or lack of motivation. These mental health concerns or stressful events may lead to diminished academic performance or reduce a student's ability to participate in daily activities. The Ohio State University offers services to assist you with addressing these and other concerns you may be experiencing. If you find yourself feeling isolated, anxious or overwhelmed, please know that there are resources to help: ccs.osu.edu. You can reach an

on-call counselor when CCS is closed at (614) 292-5766 and 24 hour emergency help is also available through the 24/7 National Prevention Hotline at 1-(800)-273-TALK or at suicidepreventionlifeline.org. The Ohio State Wellness app is also a great resource available at go.osu.edu/wellnessapp.

ACCESSIBILITY ACCOMMODATIONS FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Requesting accommodations

The university strives to make all learning experiences as accessible as possible. If you anticipate or experience academic barriers based on your disability including mental health, chronic or temporary medical conditions, please let me know immediately so that we can privately discuss options. To establish reasonable accommodations, I may request that you register with Student Life Disability Services. After registration, make arrangements with me as soon as possible to discuss your accommodations so that they may be implemented in a timely fashion. **SLDS contact information:** slds@osu.edu; 614-292-3307; 098 Baker Hall, 113 W. 12th Avenue.

Accessibility of course technology

This online course requires use of Carmen (Ohio State's learning management system) and other online communication and multimedia tools. If you need additional services to use these technologies, please request accommodations with your instructor.

- [CarmenCanvas accessibility](#)
- Streaming audio and video
- [CarmenZoom accessibility](#)
- Collaborative course tools

COURSE SCHEDULE

Week	Dates	Topics
1	Aug 24-30	<u>Week 1 - Building your critical thinking toolbox</u>
2	Aug 31-Sept 6	<u>Week 2 - Science vs. Pseudoscience</u>

Week	Dates	Topics
3	Sept 7-13	<u>Week 3 - Multi-level Marketing</u>
4	Sept 14-20	<u>Week 4 - "Health" care beliefs</u>
5	Sept 21-27	<u>Week 5 - Final Project Work Week</u>
6	Sept 28-Oct 4	<u>Weeks 6-7 - Conspiracy Theories</u>
7	Oct 5-11	Conspiracy theories - continued
8	Oct 12-18	<u>Week 8 - Illusions of Control</u>
9	Oct 19-25	<u>Weeks 9-10 - Cults</u>
10	Oct 26-Nov 1	Cults - continued
11	Nov 2-8	<u>Week 11 - Young Earth Creationism</u>
12	Nov 9-15	<u>Week 12 - Mental Health Support Week</u>
13	Nov 16-22	<u>Week 13 - Peer Review</u>
14	Nov 23-29	<u>Week 14 - Meet with Dr. Weiss</u>
15	Nov 30-Dec 4	Final Drafts