

# Personality Psychology 356

## F2018 Syllabus

(September 10 draft)

### Instructor

Professor Ian McGregor 3048 PAS

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Office Hour, Wed 2-3

**TAs** (office hours by appointment)

Emily Britton

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### Staff

Konstantyn Sharpinskyi

[ksharpin@uwaterloo.ca](mailto:ksharpin@uwaterloo.ca) (online questionnaires, ELINs, data)

**Room AL 208, Mondays 2:30-5:20**

Sep 10 **Big Picture**  
Sep 17 **Freud** \*  
Sep 24 **Illusion**  
Oct 1 **Traits** *12% Test*  
Oct 15 **Biology**\*  
Oct 22 **Goals**\*  
Oct 29 **Grit**  
Nov 5 **Love** *24% Test*  
Nov 12 **Power**\*  
Nov 19 **Meaning**\*  
Nov 26 **Virtue**  
Dec 3 **Wisdom** *24% Test*  
Dec 14 **Wise Success Assignment** *20%*

### Final Grade

**60%** from MC Tests, **20%** Final Assignment, **10%** Class participation (2% from each lecture above with an \*), **10%** Experiential Participation

## Course Description and Objectives

Personality psychology is the study of how biology, environment, and intentions combine to shape enduring patterns of feeling, thinking, hoping, and acting. The academic objective of this course is to foster facility with personality science methods and findings. The pragmatic objective is to enable you to apply this knowledge for wise success in your life and in helping those you encounter along the way. Empirically rigorous personality science began less than 100 years ago. Before that, theories of personality existed only as introspectively-derived mythological, philosophical, and religious explanations. Introspection can be powerful, but can also be perilously deluded. This course will compare introspectively and empirically derived conclusions about personality in an attempt to disentangle the power from the peril. In doing so, it will reveal the basic motivational foundations of personality. It will reveal how they affect important life outcomes related to love, work, and morality; how parenting, heredity, and neurophysiology affect personality; processes by which personality remains stable and changes; how non-conscious processes related to conflict, anxiety, and desire shape personality; how they can be controlled (or not) by goals and willpower; how personality and relationships are inter-related; how abstract values and meaning can affect personality processes and inspire success; and how application of personality knowledge can help people organize their lives for wise success in love and at work.

Your key objectives will be to:

1. Understand and integrate key findings and ideas from diverse perspectives on personality.
2. Use norms and correlations among your and your classmates' anonymized personality scores to inform conclusions based on course material about personality processes and flourishing.
3. Interpret cultural phenomena through the lens of personality science.
4. Apply findings and ideas from lectures and readings to practical questions about how to wisely succeed in your own life.

## Readings and Content

Weekly readings provided on LEARN within a day after lecture. There is no textbook to buy.

## 60% Tests

The three tests will be completed in-class via LEARN on your laptop, will begin at 2:35, and will cover all course material since the previous test. Make sure you come with adequate battery power (there are no outlets in this lecture room). You may have only the test window in LEARN open on your laptop. All others and programs must be closed. Student-cards must be displayed, and attendance will be taken. You must be in class to take the test.

- **12% Test One, Oct 1.** 20 multiple choice items, 25 minutes to complete the test.
- **24% Test Two, Nov 5:** 40 multiple choice items, 50 minutes to complete the test.
- **24% Test Three, Dec 3:** 40 multiple choice items, 50 minutes to complete the test.

## **20% Wise Success Assignment (around 2500 words), Due Dec 14th at 11p**

This written assignment will give you a chance to apply knowledge and ideas from the course to your own life. It will be an expansion of your personal sketch that incorporates material and ideas from the other participation exercises and from weekly readings and lectures. Grades will be based on the extent to which you weave information related to course material and participation exercises into a coherent story that describes your personal history, personality traits, general motivational tendencies, personal goal characteristics, relationship style, and a vision for wise success in your life. Integration requires that the elements of your story relate to a guiding theme. Top marks will be awarded for assignments that demonstrate understanding of course material by skillfully applying it to your own story. Please feel free to meet with your TA or professor to discuss ideas for your final assignment if you feel stuck. Your professor will also be available for consultation after each class.

Assignments will be submitted via Turn-It-In plagiarism software and will lose 10% for each part of 24 hours late. Students who do not wish to have an assignment submitted through turn-it-in will be required instead to submit copies to their TA of rough drafts that demonstrate independent development of the ideas presented.

## **10% Class Participation**

There will be a 2% grade for participation in five of the weekly class meetings (the ones marked with asterisks beside the red-font topics, in the list above). These exercises will focus on key themes from lecture that are relevant to the final assignment. The first idea-generation part will be completed in class and the second part will be submitted in LEARN. All reasonable efforts will receive the full 2%.

## **10% Experiential Participation**

- 4% By Sep 25<sup>th</sup>, 11p, complete the five confidential surveys that include various questionnaires about aspects of your personality. Each of the five will earn 0.5%, but completing all 5 earns you the full 4%. Each of the five should take around half an hour and each must be done in a single session without interruptions. Please allow a few hours between completing each one to avoid getting numbed out by all the questions. Ideally, you'd do each on a different day. Based on your responses you will get your personality percentile scores that will tell you how much higher or lower than your classmates you are on various personality traits (neither your TAs nor your professor will be able to match your identity to your responses on these questions—responses will be anonymized by an arms-length third part administrator). Your conscientious participation in this is important because the data from all student responses will be used as an important part of class exercises and assignments.
- 2% By Oct 9<sup>th</sup>, 11p, submit an (around) 300-word “personal sketch” via Drop-Box, of “what in the world are you doing!” What inspires you? What do you want and where are you going? Give yourself a pseudonym “e.g., Wonder Woman” that captures an essential part of the way you see yourself, and go from there. It does not need to be scientifically

or formally written. Feel free to be poetic and creative in this self-portrayal. Just have fun and paint an evocative picture of “who are you, really!” It should be written from the perspective of “someone who knows you very well, perhaps better than you know yourself” (Brian Little, 1996). All reasonable efforts will receive the full 2%.

- 2% By Oct 30<sup>th</sup>, 11p, submit a summary via Drop-Box identifying 6 of your highest or lowest percentile scores from the online survey results and: a) describe how those variables relate to course material of interest to you, using correlations from the course correlation matrix to back up your points; b) describe how those scores relate (or not) to how you described yourself in your personal sketch, and what you think this means? Finally, given your current personality scores, comment on how and to what extent you might be able to change or maintain traits that relate to your capacity to thrive. (Excel sheets with your percentile scores, and with correlations among all the variables assessed will be provided in LEARN.) All reasonable efforts will receive the full 2%.
- 2% By Nov 13<sup>th</sup>, 11p, submit an (around) 300 word summary via Drop-Box of an integration of feedback from your Reflected Best Self Project. For this you will first need to solicit information in September from three family-members, friends, or peers regarding what they see as your unique personality strengths and desires. Your summary will comment on how what they say compares to how you see yourself. To get started, email each of your contacts the following questions:
  - a) *From knowing and observing me, what do you see as my most important strengths or gifts that I could contribute to the world?*
  - b) *When have you have seen me at my best, performing to my full potential. What most impressed you?*
  - c) *What makes me most passionate, alive, and engaged?*
  - d) *What activities most inspire my genuine enthusiasm and joy?*
  - e) *What kinds of career and profession could you see me thriving in, and why?*

### **Experiential Learning Identification Number (ELIN) for Completing Questionnaires**

The five experiential learning questionnaires will assess personality traits directly related to course content. The class data file will be compiled and anonymized with only numerical ratings, not containing any identifying information. A staff member not involved in grading your assignment will send you your own Experiential Learning Identification Number (ELIN), which you will use to identify yourself on the questionnaires that you participate in so that you can receive your credit for completing the survey, and so that you can access your anonymized personality scores from the class data file (i.e., to see whether you are relatively high or low on the various traits assessed as compared to your classmates).

Instructions for how to access and complete in the questionnaires will be given in the first two lecture sessions. The questionnaires will be available on LEARN. The grading TAs and your professor will have access to anonymous class-aggregated (i.e., all students’ together) responses, only. We will accordingly not be able to match student identities with specific responses or scores on the experiential learning questionnaires (i.e., neither your names nor student numbers will be stored in the data files).

The questionnaires and some longer answer responses assess traits and tendencies directly related to the main course themes each week. Only summaries of general trends in responses from these written responses, as indicated by numerical scores, will be discussed in class (the professor, TAs, and other students will have no access to what any particular student wrote—only anonymized numerical scores will be in the data set). You may skip any questions you are not comfortable answering.

This experiential participation component of the course is designed to give you hands-on experience with aspects of contemporary personality research that will be discussed in the course. This is unlike other classes in Psychology in which students can choose from a range of research participation options for credit. My hope is that completing these specific-course-related activities will give you a more interesting and personally relevant appreciation for the course material, and serve as a bridge to self-understanding, hypothesis testing, and your own research ideas. Specific instructions will be given in-class.

### **Alternate Assignment Focus for Students Not Wishing to Focus on Personal Life**

The course is set up to benefit students by allowing them to apply the course information to their own lives, and the Wise Success Assignment is set up with that goal in mind. If any student feels uncomfortable submitting elements and a final assignment that integrate personal information and reflections, however, please discuss this with the professor to arrange for a focus on integrating course information with a non-personal phenomena of interest.

### **Voluntary Consent to Use Data for Scientific Research Purposes**

You will have a chance to provide or deny consent for your anonymized experiential participation data to be used for scientific research purposes. You will use your anonymous ELIN number to indicate consent. You are completely free to allow or deny scientific use of your data for any reason and your course grade will in no way be affected by your decision either way. Your course instructor or TAs will never know of your decision. The online consent form will be administered by a staff-member with no ties to the course grading, and will be kept confidential from your TAs and instructor. Once the class is over, this arms-length individual will delete data from ELINs that chose not to give consent, so that data associated with those numbers will never be used in any scientific research publications. Your decision to grant or deny consent for scientific use of the data will have no link whatsoever to the course—it is completely voluntary and just for the good of science should you like to contribute.

### **Laptops, Phones, Devices**

Laptops are great, and we'll be using them for designated class activities and test-taking in most lectures. But...

*About Me:* I have a hard time teaching when people are multitasking on laptop and phone activities. I find it disorienting and discouraging.

*About Your Classmates:* Solid research indicates that your screen contents distract and impede the learning of classmates sitting beside and behind you. In one study, students sitting in view of others' multitasking laptop screens performed 17% worse than classmates out of view. (The multitaskers themselves performed 11% worse—study to be described in class).

*About You:* Devices in class detract from your own learning, too. All studies show this. It is partly because temptation to “multi-task” is hard to resist and multitasking often really just boils down to not paying attention. Beyond this temptation for distraction, however, solid research indicates that even though students take a higher quantity of notes on laptops, they take a lower quality of notes, which reduces learning and grades due to the shallow information processing it encourages. Conceptual information processing suffers most (study to be described in class).

*Request:* Please consider not using a laptops or devices in class except for designated activities. Consider taking breaks outside the classroom instead whenever you feel the need to use your devices. If you expect to be a frequent device user in class, consider sitting near the back to minimize distractions.

## **Uploading, Recording, and Sharing Course Content Violates Intellectual Property Rights**

Lecture content (spoken, written, electronic, or any audio/video recording), power-point slides, and the content of assignment and quiz questions are all the intellectual property of the course instructor. Sharing it online without permission is a serious academic misconduct offense that can result in academic penalties and suspension.

Audio, video, or image recordings of lectures or activities must be approved by the professor prior to the beginning of the scheduled session. Recordings may only be used for individual study of materials presented during class and may not be published or distributed without the consent of the professor. Videos or images of the professor or other students may not be published or distributed without consent of those depicted.

## **Statements and Links Mandated by the Department to be Included on All Course Outlines**

**Academic Integrity.** In order to maintain a culture of academic integrity, members of the University of Waterloo are expected to promote honesty, trust, fairness, respect and responsibility. See the [UWaterloo Academic Integrity webpage](#) and the [Arts Academic Integrity webpage](#) for more information. Discipline: A student is expected to know what constitutes academic integrity, to avoid committing academic offences, and to take responsibility for his/her actions. A student who is unsure whether an action constitutes an offence, or who needs help in learning how to avoid offences (e.g., plagiarism, cheating) or about “rules” for group work/collaboration should seek guidance from the course professor, academic advisor, or the Undergraduate Associate Dean. When misconduct has been found to have occurred, disciplinary penalties will be imposed under Policy 71 – Student Discipline. For information on categories of offenses and types of penalties, students should refer to [Policy 71 - Student Discipline](#). For typical penalties check [Guidelines for the Assessment of Penalties](#).

**Concerns About a Course Policy or Decision.** Informal Stage: We in the Psychology Department take great pride in the high quality of our program and our instructors. Though infrequent, we know that

students occasionally find themselves in situations of conflict with their instructors over course policies or grade assessments. If such a conflict arises, the Associate Chair for Undergraduate Affairs (Richard Eibach) is available for consultation and to mediate a resolution between the student and instructor: Email: [reibach@uwaterloo.ca](mailto:reibach@uwaterloo.ca); Ph 519-888-4567 ext. 38790. Grievance: A student who believes that a decision affecting some aspect of his/her university life has been unfair or unreasonable may have grounds for initiating a grievance. Read [Policy 70 - Student Petitions and Grievances](#), Section 4. When in doubt, please be certain to contact Richard Eibach, the Associate Chair for Undergraduate Affairs who will provide further assistance; [reibach@uwaterloo.ca](mailto:reibach@uwaterloo.ca). Appeals: A decision made or penalty imposed under Policy 70 - Student Petitions and Grievances (other than a petition) or Policy 71 - Student Discipline may be appealed if there is a ground. A student who believes he/she has a ground for an appeal should refer to [Policy 72 - Student Appeals](#)

**Accommodation for Students with Disabilities.** The [AccessAbility Services](#) office, located on the first floor of the Needles Hall extension (1401), collaborates with all academic departments to arrange appropriate accommodations for students with disabilities without compromising the academic integrity of the curriculum. If you require academic accommodations to lessen the impact of your disability, please register with the AS office at the beginning of each academic term.

**Turnitin.com.** Text matching software (Turnitin®) will be used to screen assignments in this course. This is being done to verify that use of all material and sources in assignments is documented. Students will be given an option if they do not want to have their assignment screened by Turnitin®. In the first week of the term, details will be provided about arrangements and alternatives for the use of Turnitin®.

**Accommodation for course requirements.** Students requesting accommodation for course requirements (assignments, midterm tests, final exams, etc.) due to illness should do the following: seek medical treatment as soon as possible and obtain a completed uWaterloo [Verification of Illness Form](#); submit that form to the instructor within 48 hours; (if possible) inform the instructor by the due date for the course requirement that you will be unable to meet the deadline and that documentation will be forthcoming. In the case of a missed final exam, the instructor and student will negotiate an extension for the final exam, which will typically be written as soon as possible, but no later than the next offering of the course. In the case of a missed assignment deadline, midterm test, or quiz, the instructor will either: waive the course component and re-weight remaining term work as he/she deems fit according to circumstances and the goals of the course, or provide an extension. In the case of bereavement, the instructor will provide similar accommodations to those for illness. Appropriate documentation to support the request will be required. Students who are experiencing extenuating circumstances should also inform their academic advisors regarding their personal difficulties. Elective arrangements such as travel plans are not acceptable grounds for granting accommodations to course requirements per the [uWaterloo Examination Regulations and Related Matters](#).

**Official version of the course outline.** If there is a discrepancy between the hard copy outline (i.e., if students were provided with a hard copy at the first class) and the outline posted on LEARN, the outline on LEARN will be deemed the official version. Outlines on LEARN may change as instructors develop a course, but they become final as of the first class meeting for the term.