

PSY 202 – Literacy in Psychology

Syllabus

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Course Information

Instructor Information

See the online course in Blackboard for instructor contact information and availability.

Textbook and Course Materials

We will be using Perusall, an online annotations system, which will be linked to the course via Blackboard. All readings will be available on Perusall and you do not need to buy a textbook. You will need to set up an account on Perusall in order to access the readings. You may click on any Perusall assignment link on Blackboard to access registration.

Perusall will be routed through Blackboard, so anytime you want to access assignments, you should log in to Blackboard, and access your work from there. If you do not access Perusall from within Blackboard, your points may not transfer over to the Blackboard grade sheet.

All other course materials will be available on Blackboard, including all assignments, learning modules and tests. At times, you will be asked to access websites outside of Blackboard for online assignments.

All coursework will be arranged in weekly modules. As long as you finish the work by the deadline you can complete it any time.

Course Description

Explores how to find, understand and evaluate scientific studies, correctly interpret data and understand key principles of the scientific method. Includes examination of ethical principles in science and how to be a critical consumer of science. Four credit hours. No prerequisites.

Credit Hours

4

Prerequisites and/or Co-requisites

None

Learning Outcomes

Students who successfully complete this course will be able to:

- Develop a working knowledge of how research is collected, analyzed, presented and disseminated.
- Learn how to differentiate and discriminate science from opinion, pseudoscience, fake science and bad science.
- Be able to critically evaluate scientific information in the mainstream and social media, as well as everyday life.
- Understand information conveyed in statistical reports and visual representations of data and identify potential limitations of data.
- Synthesize research findings and evaluate rival hypotheses.
- Analyze and evaluate common logical fallacies and perceptual biases that interfere with the ability to draw reasonable and/or correct conclusions.

Course Format and Design

The whole of science is nothing more than a refinement of everyday thinking.

Albert Einstein

In this class, we will be learning how to think. Thinking critically and scientifically is a skill that can be developed. Even if you yourself do not plan to become a scientist, the ability to understand and critique the information you come across throughout your life will make you a more informed consumer of scientific information.

Every week you will have readings/annotations, videos, and a homework set to complete. You will also be completing a final project. All work except the final project is organized under weekly modules available in the menu tab on Blackboard.

Psychology 202 is a 4-credit, semester-long course offered fully online in modular format. Therefore, you are expected to spend a total of 180 hours on the course (15 weeks X 4 credits X 3 hours of work per credit). Thus, you should plan to spend about 20 hours/module and another 40 hours of work across the course on your final project.

University Information and Policies

University Mission Statement

Prepare each student for a meaningful life and career

The mission of Virginia Wesleyan University is to engage students of diverse ages, religions, ethnic origins, and backgrounds in a rigorous liberal arts education that will prepare them to meet the challenges of life and career in a complex and rapidly

changing world. In this endeavor, the university employs a wide range of approaches to teaching and learning and provides opportunities to connect the study of the liberal arts with practical learning experiences on campus, in the Hampton Roads region, and throughout the world. In accord with our United Methodist heritage, Virginia Wesleyan aspires to be a supportive community that is committed to social responsibility, ethical conduct, higher learning, and religious freedom.

Special Needs and Accommodations

Virginia Wesleyan University is committed to giving all students the opportunity of academic success. If you are a student who is requesting accommodations based on the academic impact of a disability, speak to your instructor about your accommodations letter and specific needs. If you do not have an accommodations letter for this course, you will need to visit or call for an appointment with a disability support specialist to coordinate reasonable accommodations. Visit [Virginia Wesleyan University Disability Support Services](#) on the Web.

The course has a built-in flexibility accommodation available to all students, including students with disabilities, chronic health conditions, religious conflicts, care-giving responsibilities, unpredictable work schedules, and student athletes - everyone. The entire course, with the exception of the final, is open from the first day of class. Take advantage of the opportunity to work ahead and complete as many assignments in advance as you can. If, for example, you are a student with a chronic health condition, the work you do in advance when you are feeling well will be a buffer for the times later in the term when you might not be feeling well. If you know you will have family obligations or you have a trip planned during an important due date, you can work ahead in order to account for your plans.

Flexibility is built into this course because we know how important it is for everyone to have flexibility. We invite you to take advantage of it. Additionally, assignments are untimed. Therefore, you need not worry about accommodations for extra time.

Honor Code

As a liberal arts university, Virginia Wesleyan is committed to values of citizenship and social responsibility fundamental to a community of scholars. People who join this academic community agree to maintain academic honesty and, therefore, not to cheat, lie, falsify data, or commit plagiarism or academic theft. Refer to the [Virginia Wesleyan Honor Code](#) for definitions, rights, responsibilities, and procedures.

Cheating or plagiarism on written assignments and/or tests will lead to serious and immediate academic and disciplinary consequences. Please note that no quotes are allowed in any of the written material for the course.

Student Handbook

All students are expected to uphold the university's mission statement and abide by the university's honor code, the Virginia Wesleyan Creed, and all other standards that govern the conduct and behavior of students. For more information, refer to the [student handbook](#).

Technology Requirements

Online courses require that you have access to a computer with a reliable Internet connection (high-speed access recommended). A backup plan is recommended in the event of an Internet outage.

You will need to have access to and be able to use the following:

- A Web browser (Google Chrome or Mozilla Firefox is recommended.)
- Adobe Acrobat Reader ([Get Adobe Acrobat Reader free.](#))
- Microsoft Office 365 ([Get Office 365 free.](#))
- A Virginia Wesleyan e-mail account to use when submitting assignments

For assistance with passwords and user IDs, contact the [Virginia Wesleyan Help Desk](#).

For assistance with Blackboard, please contact [the Help Center](#).

Instructional Technology

For information, support, and training in the academic software of the university, refer to the university's department of [Instructional Technology](#).

Learning Center

Contact the [Learning Center](#) for the following services:

- Academic advocacy and communication
- Academic planning and workshops
- Academic tutoring
- Computers and assistive technology
- Disability support services
- Individualized writing assistance
- Speech lab

Hofheimer Library

The Hofheimer Library supports the Virginia Wesleyan community by providing services, resources, and facilities that advance the academic program. Visit the [Hofheimer Library](#) on the Web for information, resources, services, and hours.

Nondiscrimination Statement

Virginia Wesleyan University does not discriminate against students of any race, religion, color, creed, gender, national and ethnic origin, age, marital status, covered veteran status, handicap, sexual orientation, or any other legally protected status in administration of its educational policies, admission policies, scholarship and loan programs, and athletic and other university-administered programs and facilities.

Diversity Statement

Virginia Wesleyan University values the benefits of its diversity. We are committed to educating the campus community about issues of diversity. The campus promotes freedom of thought and opinion in the spirit of mutual respect. Our campus community is enriched through programs, activities, and interactions by celebrating our uniqueness as well as our commonalities.

This commitment to diversity links programs and services that support the distinctiveness of individuals regardless of racial and ethnic backgrounds, physical and cognitive abilities, family status, sexual orientation, gender identity, socioeconomic status, age, and religious and spiritual values.

An essential feature of this community is an environment in which all students, faculty, administrators, and staff are able to study and work free from bias and harassment. Such an environment contributes to the growth and development of each member of the community.

Course Policies

Participation

This is an online course, and thus physical participation is not a component. However, participation and interaction will help you learn the material better, do well in the course, and will make it more fun. Thus, it is critical that you are an active participant.

You are strongly encouraged to reach out to your instructor with any questions or concerns that you may have. You are also encouraged to develop a rapport with your fellow classmates. This can be accomplished via the Introduction videos, annotation activities, and discussion posts. There is great value in peer-to-peer interaction and instruction - you will learn a lot from your classmates. You will also consolidate your own knowledge by helping others.

Note as well that because of the compressed schedule, in order to stay on top of material it is essential you not fall behind. We want you to earn a good grade in the course, and to do so, you must work hard in the short time you have to learn all the material and complete all the work effectively.

Late Work

Due dates for all materials are on the syllabus and on the assignments themselves. You are responsible for monitoring due dates and submitting material on time.

I strongly encourage you to communicate with your instructor if you have issues that make it difficult or impossible for you to complete work on time. The instructor is here to help you. Accommodations are given for unexpected and documented emergencies or illness that interfere with your ability to complete work within the scheduled time.

Makeup Work

There is no makeup work.

Extra Credit

There is no extra credit for the course.

Netiquette Guide

Security

- Don't share your password with others
- Change your password if you think someone else knows it
- Log out after using the system
- Be careful with the use of personal information (yours and others')
- Do not send confidential information over email

Discussion Board and Annotations

- Before posting your question, check if anyone has asked it already and received a reply.
- Don't write anything that sounds angry or sarcastic even as a joke, because without hearing your tone of voice, your peers might not realize you're joking.
- Always remember to say "please" and "thank you" when asking for help
- Respect the opinion of your classmates. If you feel the need to disagree, do so respectfully and acknowledge the valid points in your classmate's argument.
- If you reply to a question from a classmate, make sure your answer is accurate. If someone else has already answered, don't post the same response again.
- If you refer to something your classmate said earlier, quote just a few key lines from their post so that others won't have to go back and figure out which post you're referring to.
- Before asking a question, check the class syllabus or search the Internet to see if the answer is obvious or easy to find.
- Check the most recent comments before you reply to an older comment.

Email Netiquette

- Use a descriptive email subject line
- Be brief
- Do not send assignments over email – submit assignments over Blackboard

- Sign your message with your full name and the class you are referring to
- Double check the sender before you send the email
- If you are asking about course information, check to ensure that information is not available on the syllabus

General Guidelines

- Treat classmates and your professor with respect
- Always use your professor's proper title (Dr. or Professor, not Mr. or Mrs.) and don't use their first name unless they have specifically told you that is alright
- Use correct grammar and spelling for all communications
- Don't use all caps OR YOU WILL SOUND LIKE YOU ARE SCREAMING
- Avoid the use of slang terms and texting abbreviations
- Always access Perusall from the Blackboard links; do not bookmark the pages and go directly there or your scores will not transfer to the gradebook.

Strategies for Success

1. Be sure you have access to proper computer equipment, Internet service, and software as listed above.
2. Designate certain times each week to work on your course. Plan ahead, avoid procrastination, even out your workload, and absorb material before moving on.
3. Have a specific achievement goal for each log-on session to help you accomplish what you need to get done and avoid distractions
4. Actively participate in annotations and discussions. Meaningful interchange will lead to better understanding of various aspects of the course and also contribute to the personality and warmth of the online class community.
5. Practice an informal but organized, concise, and clear writing style that aids online communication.
6. Venture beyond the classroom. The Internet medium of the online classroom gives ready access to electronic libraries and to pertinent websites that offer a significant advantage in understanding material.
7. The class uses short multimedia components to enrich the learning environment. Use them to enrich the learning experience.

Course Grades and Assignments

Grade Allocation

Assignment	Point Values [or Percentages]
7 Perusall readings/discussions @ 50 points each	350
7 Homework modules	400
Final Project	150
Final Exam	100
Total Points [or Percentage] Possible	1000

Grading Scale

A	93–100
A-	90–92
B+	88–89
B	83–87
B-	80–82
C+	78–79
C	73–77
C-	70–72
D+	68–69
D	63–67
D-	60–62
F	Below 60

Assignment Descriptions

Video Introduction

You will be asked to submit and respond to a short video discussion post. In this way, although you will likely not physically meet your classmates, you will still have the ability to “meet” them online. This is a short assignment – don’t worry about the video being perfect. Expect to spend about an hour on this assignment.

Perusall

Perusall will help you master readings faster, understand the material better, and get more out of this class. To achieve this goal, you will be collaboratively annotating (commenting, asking questions, and answering questions on) the textbook with others in the course. The help you’ll get and provide your classmates with will help you resolve confusion and will make the process more fun. While you read, you’ll receive rapid answers to your questions and help others answer their questions (which also helps you learn). You can start a new annotation thread in Perusall by highlighting text, asking a question, or posting a comment. You can also add a reply

or comment to an existing thread, and you can ask me questions directly as you read. Each thread is like a chat with one or more members of your class. Your goals in annotating each reading assignment are *to stimulate discussion by posting good questions or comments and to help others by answering their questions.*

[Research](#) shows that by annotating thoughtfully, you'll learn more and get better grades, so here's what "annotating thoughtfully" means: Effective annotations *deeply engage points in the readings, stimulate discussion, offer informative questions or comments, and help others by addressing their questions or confusions.*

To help you connect with classmates, you can "@" a classmate in a comment or question to have them notified by email (they'll also see a notification immediately if online), and you'll also be notified when your classmates respond to your questions. You can also "@" me with questions or comments for faster responses.

Based on the overall body of your annotations, you will receive a score for each assignment as follows

50 =demonstrates exceptionally thoughtful and thorough reading of the entire chapter

35 = demonstrates thoughtful and thorough reading of the entire chapter

25 =demonstrates superficial reading of the entire chapter OR thoughtful reading of only part of the chapter

5 = demonstrates superficial reading of only part of the chapter

Your annotations should reflect the effort you put in your study of the text. It is unlikely that that effort will be reflected by just one or two thoughtful annotations per chapter. On the other extreme, 30 per chapter is probably too many, unless a number of them are superficial or short comments or questions (which is fine, because it is OK to engage in chat with your peers). Somewhere in between these two extremes is about right and, thoughtful questions or comments that stimulate discussion or thoughtful and helpful answers to other students' questions will earn you a higher score for the chapter. Note, also, that you must familiarize yourself with each reading *in its entirety*. Failing to annotate the entire reading will result in a lower score. In other words, if you merely annotate material in the first few pages of the reading, you will not earn a high score. You should expect to spend about 4 hours per module on Perusall readings.

Homework

You will also have to complete homework every week. Some homework may involve watching videos or playing interactive games. Other homework will involve short writing assignments or problems to solve. Some homework assignments will take more time than others, so I would recommend you review work-to-be-done early in the week.

Final Project

Your final project will consist of a poster presentation of a psychological myth or controversy in psychology. Your poster will include components pulled from multiple homework assignments, so it is important you complete all homework during the semester. In brief, your poster will

include an overview of your topic, a synopsis of relevant evidence from empirical journal articles, the evaluation of alternative hypotheses, visual representation of data, a discussion of cognitive biases or logical fallacies relevant to your topic, and recommendations for disseminating information on your controversy or myth. Your final project will take a significant amount of time to complete.

Final Exam

The final exam will be available on Blackboard during the regularly scheduled exam time for this course. You may take the final from any computer where you have access to Blackboard. The exam is open book and contains a mix of multiple choice and short answer questions.

Course Schedule

Refer to the [academic calendar](#) for important university dates.

The instructor reserves the right to make necessary changes, additions, deletions, and revisions to the course schedule as needed.

Module	Readings and Videos	Assignments Due
1 [How to Science: Introduction to the scientific method]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Perusall 1 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Jhangiani et al., chapters 1, 2, 5, and 6 Videos <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Introduction to BS (8 min) Crash Course in Psychology (11 min) Correlations versus Causation (6 min) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Homework <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pleased to meet you (10) Investigating Claims (20) Correlation versus Causation (20)
2 [Bad Science: Unethical scientific process and bias in science]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Perusall 2 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Jhangiani et al., chapter 3 Kennedy & Hefferon, 2019 Grady, 2015 Hong & Moran, 2019 Klein et al., 2018 Roberts et al., 2020 Videos <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bad Science (20 min) Ethics in Psychology (2 min) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Homework <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Science Knowledge Quiz (5) Bad Science (20) Mock IRB Review (15) Final Project Topic (10)

Module	Readings and Videos	Assignments Due
3 [How We Think: Psychological Characteristics Leading to Errors.]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Perusall 3 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Logical fallacies Cognitive biases Videos <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Why incompetent people think they're amazing (5 min) How to think (16 min) Five Fallacies (13 min) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Homework <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cranky Uncle (10) Guess My Bias (20) Fool Me Twice (20)
4 [I read this thing on the web: Digital Literacy]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Perusall 4 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ventimiglia et al., 2016 Eshket-Alkalai (2004) Videos <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Navigating Digital Information (13 min) Lateral Reading (14 min) Click Restraint (13 min) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Homework <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Spot the Troll (10) How to Troll (10) Snope it Out (30)
5 [Be Your Own Snopes: Finding and evaluating scientific evidence]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Perusall 5 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hierarchy of scientific evidence Kossowska (2013) Huck & Sandler (1979) Videos <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evaluating Digital Evidence (13 min) Who can you trust? (15 min) How to use Google Scholar (4 min) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Homework <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Hierarchy of Scientific Evidence (30) Reading research literature (40) Synthesizing Research Literature (30)
6 [Lie to Me: Statistics and the Visual Representation of Data]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Perusall 6 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Huff (1954) Chapman & Louis, 2017 Srivastava, 2018 Silberzahn et al., 2018 Bergstrom & West (2017a, 2017b) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Homework <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A picture paints a thousand words (20) Lie to Me (30)

Module	Readings and Videos	Assignments Due
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Videos <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dataviz in the Popular Media (7 min) Simpson's Paradox (4 min) Data and Infographics (13 min) 	
7 [Believe Me: Combatting Pseudoscience and Fake News]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Perusall 7 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Harris, 2017 Vosoughi et al., 2018 Kaplan et al., 2016 Debunking Handbook You're not going to believe what I'm going to tell you Videos <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Combatting disinformation with the 4 Ds (7 minutes) How can you change someone's mind? (4 min) How to combat fake news (13 min) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Homework <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Doctor Detective (50) Final Project (150) Final Exam (100)

Collaborative Learning

Collaborative learning, through engagement of other students, is a key ingredient of participatory learning. Students can expect each online course to have some degree of collaborative learning. The type of collaboration may be minimal and take the form of weekly small group discussions.

Alternatively, the type of collaboration may be a major virtual team project that requires weekly and substantive participation from all members. Regardless of the type of collaborative learning, all students are expected to participate in a timely, substantive, on-subject, professional, and complete manner.

Hints for Success in Your Online Course

1. Be sure you have access to proper computer equipment, Internet service, and software as listed above.
2. Designate certain times each week to work on your course. Plan ahead, avoid procrastination, even out your workload, and absorb material before moving on.
3. Have a specific achievement goal for each log-on session to help you accomplish what you need to get done and avoid distractions
4. Actively participate in discussions. Meaningful interchange will lead to better understanding of various aspects of the course and also contribute to the personality and warmth of the online class community.
5. If assigned to an online team or study group, work with your team members actively from the start. Thus, team members will benefit from the other group members' ideas and experiences and can depend on one another to complete assigned tasks.
6. Practice an informal but organized, concise, and clear writing style that aids online communication.
7. Venture beyond the classroom. The Internet medium of the online classroom gives ready access to electronic libraries and to pertinent websites that offer a significant advantage in understanding graduate-level material.
8. Your class may occasionally use short multimedia components to enrich the learning environment. Follow the instructions provided.

Appendix
