

**Controversial Topics in Psychology**  
**Psy 3690**  
**Spring 2008**

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**Textbook Web Site:** <http://www.mhcls.com/online/get-isbn.mhtml?isbn=0073545589>

### ***Teaching Philosophy***

"The mind is not a vessel to be filled, but a fire to be kindled" --Plutarch

### ***Course Materials***

#### **Required:**

Slife, B. (2007). Taking sides: Clashing views on psychological issues, (14th ed.):  
Duskin/McGraw-Hill, Guilford, CT.

**Optional:** How to Think Straight About Psychology, 8th edition (2007), by Keith Stanovich. Get [PowerPoint Outline](#).

### ***Catalog Description***

Exploration of special interest or controversial topics in psychology as: Hypnosis, drugs, behavior, transcendental meditation, gay liberation, biofeedback, ESP, and IQ controversy

### ***Course Objectives***

- Become a wise consumer of psychological research and information that you are exposed to through the media.
- Develop your critical thinking skills by examining important historical and current research in psychology.
- Improve your writing and oral presentation skills by writing and speaking about controversial topics
- Increase your ability to understand and appreciate alternative viewpoints that differ from your own.
- Enjoy learning about a variety of topics in psychology.

### ***Course Requirements***

#### **Attendance/Issue Summary Papers:**

Because this is primarily a discussion-based course, attendance is not only important, but required to do well. As evidence of your attendance and preparation for class, you will be required to submit a 1 page summary of each issue we discuss at the beginning of class. This should be typed and double-spaced. Summarize all of the reading assignments for the topic in one page. Do not include your own feelings about the topic in your summary.

On the days that you are presenting, you do not need to turn in a 1 page summary. Instead, your evidence of preparation will be a bibliography of at least 2 sources (besides the textbook) that YOU (not other members of the debate team) used to support your side of the issue. If you wish, you may turn in hard copies of the articles, but it is not required.

You are allowed to miss up to 3 summary papers without penalty. For each summary paper beyond the minimum requirement, you can earn an additional 5 points of extra credit (up to 15 total points).

### **Formal Debates:**

For each of the topics in your book (or others I select), the class will have the opportunity to discuss and deliberate controversial issues in psychology. These are issues on which experts disagree, with reasonable arguments for both sides. Thus, there is no "correct" answer for any of these issues, although they are all important and hopefully interesting.

The formal debates will adopt a panel format. For each topic, two or three class members will take the *pro* side of an issue and an equal number will take the *con* side. The panel members are expected to clearly present the arguments for their side of the issue. After the panel members on each side of the issue have presented their arguments, the discussion will be opened up for questions, comments, and criticisms from the other members of the class. For more details about this panel discussion format, see the handout, "[Responsibilities of students](#)".

Each student will be on three different panels. Your participation on the three panels will count towards approximately 25% of your course grade. If you miss class on a day you are scheduled to be a panelist, you will be asked to help lead a discussion on a topic of my choosing at the end of the semester.

For each formal debate that we have, all students in the audience will complete the "[Issue Evaluation Form](#)" (I will bring copies) which will be the basis for a portion of the grade (30 points) given to the members of the panel. The rest of the debate grade will come from the instructor (10 points) and peer debate team members (10 points).

As an audience member, it will be helpful to know what [Questions to Ask When Examining a Position](#) and [Propaganda Techniques](#) that are used to persuade people.

### **Research Paper**

- 6-8 double-spaced typed pages (not including title page or references)
- Use [APA style formatting](#) for: Title page, Headings (up to 3-levels if you wish), Citations (Author, Year), and References
- Have a clear stance on a controversial topic in psychology that is not formally debated in class.
  - Examples:
    - Hypnosis is an effective way to facilitate repressed memories.
    - Intersexed infants should be allowed to choose their own sexual identity.
    - Placebos should be used to treat mental illness.
    - Deception should never be used in psychological research.
  - Support your ideas using original research articles published in professional journals.
    - Search online databases such as [Psychinfo](#), [Medline](#), [ERIC](#), [Infotrac](#), [WilsonSelectPlus](#) or [Google Scholar](#)
    - Of the at least 10 reliable sources you need, MOST (8) should come from scientific journal articles.
    - [Library tutorial](#) on searching for articles .
- Present scientific evidence to support your view. Comment on the reliability and validity of the research methods used to support your view, and point out any alternative interpretations of the research results.
  - Is there an obvious bias in the research? (Is it only the hypnotists who believe that hypnosis improves memory?)
  - How many people were used in the study, how many studies were done, were they correlational, experimental, etc.
- **DUE DATE:** Wednesday, April 2nd.
  - It will be reviewed by another student and returned on the following Monday. The final

draft is due on Friday April 11th.

You will submit an electronic copy of the research paper along with a printed version. The electronic copy will be submitted to a plagiarism detection web site (TurnItIn.com). This is primarily to help you learn how to properly cite your sources and to ensure that you do not quote extensively from your sources.

- “Eastern Illinois University is committed to the learning process and academic integrity that is defined in the Student Conduct Code (1.1). To encourage original and authentic written work, any written assignment created in this course may be submitted for review to Turnitin.com and will become a searchable document with the Turnitin-protected and restricted use database.”
- To submit your paper, please view the tutorial first.
  - Login to TurnItIn.com
  - Use the Class ID and password given to you in WebCT.

### **Requirements and Grading**

<b>Assignment</b>	<b>Points</b>	<b>Final Grade</b>	<b>Points</b>
Exams (4 x 50 points)	200	A (90%)	526-585
Issue Summary Papers (17 X 5 points)	85	B (80%)	468-525
Debate Presentation (3 x 50 points)	150	C (70%)	409-467
Controversial Paper	100	D (60%)	351-408
Final Exam	50		
<b>Total</b>	<b>585</b>		

### **Exams**

Multiple choice and essay items will be based on material covered in lecture and in the textbook. Make-up exams will be given for University-approved absences.

### **Academic misconduct**

Cheating, plagiarism, and other forms of academic misconduct will not be tolerated. Academic misconduct will result in failure of the course, and appropriate disciplinary action, according to university guidelines.

### **Reading Schedule, Important Dates**

Please note this schedule is subject to change. See a day-by-day outline.

<b>Lecture Topic</b>	<b>Issue</b>
<b>Research Issues</b>	
Should Animal Research in Psychology be Eliminated?	2
Was Stanley Milgram's Obedience Study Unethical?	3
<b>Biological Issues</b>	
Are Humans Naturally Violent?	4
<b>Human Development</b>	
Does Giving Praise Harm Children?	6
Does a Mother's Employment Harm Her Children?	7
Does the Divorce of Parents Harm Their Children?	8
<b>Cognitive Processes</b>	
Are Human Cognitive and Behavioral Activities Determined?	9
<b>Mental Health</b>	

Does ADHD Exist?	11
Does Taking Antidepressants Lead to Suicide?	12
Is Drug Addiction a Choice?	13
<b>Psychological Treatment</b>	
Should Psychologists Be Able to Prescribe Medicine	14
Is Treating Homosexuality Ethical?	15
<b>Social Psychology</b>	
Do Video Games Lead to Violence?	16
Does the Internet Have Psychological Benefits?	17
Is Pornography Harmful?	18
<b>Important Dates</b>	<b>Date</b>
MLK Birthday	Jan 21
Exam #1	Jan 30
Lincoln's Birthday	Feb 15
Exam #2	Feb 20
Spring Recess	Mar 10-14
Exam #3	Mar 19
Research Paper Exchange	Apr 2
Exam #4	Apr 9
Research Paper Final Draft	Apr 11
Comprehensive Final Exam	April 30, 8:00-10:00 am

If you have a documented disability and wish to receive academic accommodations, please contact the coordinator of the Office of Disability Services (581-6583) as soon as possible.