PSY 359 - FOUNDATIONS OF CYBERPSYCHOLOGY

Fall 2023 - Face to Face
Fri 1:00 PM - 3:50 PM
Central King Building CKB 215

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Office: CULM 310

Office Hours: Wed 11:30 AM - 12:30 AM

Generic Course Description
Cyberpsychology is a relatively new field within applied psychology, although the field is rapidly expanding. As an area of study, cyberpsychology assesses how we behave online. Typical questions that it attempts to answer are: How do we interact with technology? How does technology shape our behavior? How do we create our online identity? How do we interact with others? How we can develop technology to best fit our requirements? and How are our behaviors and psychological states influenced by technology? The most commonly studied technology in cyberpsychology research is the Internet, although the area considers human interactions with many devices, including mobile computing, games, consoles, virtual reality and artificial intelligence. This course assumes students are already familiar with some of the concepts and areas of research in cyberpsychology. It will give students a deeper critical analysis of the themes, research and theory in cyberpsychology. This course aims to develop critical thinking and argumentation skills through in-depth readings, group debates, and student research projects.

Textbooks
- The Oxford Handbook of Cyberpsychology (2019), Edited by A. Attrill-Smith, C. Fullwood, D. Kuss, Oxford University Press, Oxford.
- The psychology of the Internet (2016), P. Wallace, 2nd edition, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- An Introduction to Cyberpsychology (2016), edited by I. Connolly, M Palmer, H. Barton, G. Kirwan, Rutledge, New York.

Student Learning Outcomes
By the end of the course, students will be able to:

1. Understand the basic subject area of cyberpsychology and its relationship to the brain, our environment, and society. Students will be able to grasp fundamental psychological concepts, theories, and terminology related to areas such as identity, communication theory, social behavior, and addiction. Students will be able to identify and understand the major theories, principles, and research findings in the field of cyberpsychology.

2. Understand methods used in cyberpsychology to study human behavior in cyberspace. Students will understand research methodologies used in psychology, including experimental design, data collection, and statistical analysis.
3. Comprehend and critique research studies. Students will develop critical thinking and be able to analyze and evaluate information and claims encountered in media, advertising, and everyday life. Students will learn to question assumptions and develop reasoned arguments.
4. Identify common online behaviors and their psychological implications.
5. Recognize ethical issues related to cyberpsychological research and online behavior.
6. Discuss the cognitive effects of digital media on attention and information processing.
7. Understand how to apply psychological concepts to real-world scenarios, demonstrating an understanding of how psychological principles can be used in various ditigal contexts, such as education and healthcare.
8. Self-reflect and show self-awareness, and an appreciation for the personal relevance of cyberpsychological concepts to their own lives and experiences.
9. Develop strategies for maintaining digital well-being and practicing responsible technology use.
10. Apply what they have learned to conduct their own research research in cyberpsychology.

Classes

Each week, we will review different aspects of cyberpsychology and human behavior. Given that we have three hours back to back, I will give two 40 minute frontal lectures, alternated with class activities. These can include discussion of readings, live debates, reviews of homework assignments, and group presentations. Classes will always include two individual peer-assessed presentations (5% of your final score). You will be asked to read a paper of your choosing and present it back to the class.

The course is interactive, so I expect questions and contributions from students. I also expect you to have done the assigned readings *before* class. I encourage you to go back and re-read assignments after class.

There will be a reading, typically a peer-reviewed paper, to complete before class. You will be asked to present a paper to the rest of the class at least once. The readings will tend to be more thought-provoking and in-depth analyses of a topic covered during the week.

Many of the readings are challenging, and you will have to work to understand them. Often, this will require *hard work*. It will show if you have skim-read the paper half an hour before class.

The readings will help you write your final group report. Reading other people's work is key to understanding how scientific papers are structured and getting

familiar with academic language, terminology, tone of voice, and storytelling. If you read regularly, writing your final research report will feel natural. Please come see me during my office hours when you experience difficulty.

A good way to begin understanding the readings is to discuss them inside and outside of class. I will choose readings that are likely to provoke thought and discussion. For this reason, I expect regular attendance in class. I also expect everyone to show respect for the opinions of others. I encourage you, however, to find respectful ways to disagree. The point of the class is not to reach a consensus but rather to provoke thinking.

I encourage you to actively participate in the discussion. Class participation will contribute to your class participation grade described below. It is in your own interest if I know your name. There will also be opportunities for discussion (as well as writing) on the class Canvas site. The class will have its own discussion forum to which students will be expected to contribute.

I strongly encourage you to read about the topics covered in class in the textbooks provided, as they provide a deeper analysis of the contents.

Rules of behavior

1. *Respect*
   You must respect everyone. You should expect there to be disagreement. If you disagree with something you read, see, or hear, please be considerate and constructive in critiquing someone else's ideas.
2. *Criticize ideas, not people.*
   We are here to train critical thinking. It is essential that you respect people holding different beliefs, even if you think they are wrong. Instead, try to criticize the idea.
3. *Speak from your "I" voice - your own experience*
   Share experiences and feelings. Don't generalize, avoid using words like "everyone", "always", "never".
4. *Embrace global perspectives*
   Be open to other perspectives; possibilities open up when we don't all agree. Each of us has our own biased beliefs. Openly discussing ideas with others allows us to embrace a more global perspective.

Attendance Policy and Participation

I expect you to attend all classes and to have legitimate excuses for any classes missed. I also expect you to catch up on whatever you miss if you are absent for any reason.

You will receive a **class participation grade**, described in greater detail below. Failure to attend class or participate actively in course activities, including in-class debates, will negatively affect your grade for the course.

Makeup Policy

In the event of an unexcused absence, you will *not* have the opportunity to make up any graded assignments. If you show up late for an exam, you will *not* be given more time to complete the exam. All excused absences must be emailed to the Dean of Students office (doc@njit.edu). You should keep me in the loop when contacting the Dean of Students office by putting my email in CC.

Other Course Policies

Classes will be held under the Chatham House Rule. Under the Chatham House Rule, anyone who comes to class is free to use information from the discussion but cannot reveal who made any particular comment outside of the class. It is designed to increase the openness of discussion.

I expect you to arrive on time to class and keep disruptions during class to a minimum. Do *not* use phones, tablets, and other similar devices to chat/text/or talk with family and friends during class. Audio and video recording is not permitted as it invalidates the Chatham House Rule. However, please do bring a smartphone to class because there will be some interactive content.

Phone/tablet/laptop use is permitted in class only for class purposes (taking notes, Googling something I said, interacting with the live content, etc.). If you choose to use your device for purposes other than those related to the class, it is your loss. If you distract other students in doing so, it is also their loss. I expect you to respect your fellow classmates and your instructor enough not to distract yourselves and others. With this policy, I am attempting to treat you as an adult. As with all other policies, I reserve the right to change my mind or make exceptions for specific individuals.

The best way to contact me is via email. You can expect a reply within 48 hours. Notice that I do not check emails on the weekends. You are encouraged to ask questions before, during, or after class or schedule a time to meet.

NJIT Code on Academic Integrity

Academic Integrity is the cornerstone of higher education and is central to the ideals of this course and the university. Cheating is strictly prohibited and devalues the degree that you are working on. As a member of the NJIT community, it is your responsibility to protect your educational investment by knowing and following the academic code of integrity policy.

Please note that it is my professional obligation and responsibility to report any academic misconduct to the Dean of Students Office. Any student found violating the code by cheating, plagiarizing, or using any online software inappropriately will result in disciplinary action. This may include a failing grade of F and/or suspension or dismissal from the university. If you have any questions about the code of Academic Integrity, please contact the Dean of Students Office at dos@njit.edu"

You are expected to abide by the NJIT University Code on Academic Integrity at all times (for details, see: http://integrity.njit.edu/index.html). You must write and sign the following pledge on your exams:

> On my honor, I pledge that I have not violated the provisions of the NJIT University Code on Academic Integrity.

In the context of this course, unless I specifically authorize group work, all work should be completed on your own without any unauthorized aids. *All* writing and quizzes, including on your Canvas entries, are expected to represent your work, completed specifically for this course. This means you cannot copy text from other papers, websites, encyclopedias, or any other source without quoting any copied material and fully and accurately citing your sources. In addition, if you refer to, use, or build upon ideas from other work, even if you don't quote that work exactly, you should fully acknowledge your sources. When citing an online article, a link to the relevant webpage will suffice as a full citation on Canvas.

Artificial intelligence can be a great learning aid if used correctly. However, you must disclose if you use ChatGPT and other generative language models (including Grammarly or similar spell checks) to aid your writing. Failing to do so is equivalent to plagiarism. Importantly, you must disclose how much content comes from these tools. This proportion should never exceed 10% of your assignment.

I take plagiarism and citations very seriously and do not enjoy having to question whether a document constitutes plagiarism. For all our sakes, please take care to cite all referenced material. Please consult me for any questions involving these or any other Academic Integrity issues.

Students with Disabilities
NJIT offers accommodations to students with disabilities. If you need some sort of academic accommodation, please contact Scott Janz, Associate Director of the Office of Accessibility Resources and Services, Kupfrian Hall 201, to discuss your specific needs. A Letter of Accommodation Eligibility from the office authorizing student accommodations is required.

Basic Needs Security
Any student who has difficulty affording groceries or accessing sufficient food to eat every day or who lacks a safe and stable place to live and believes this may affect their performance in the course is urged to contact the Dean of Students for support. Furthermore, please notify the professor if you are comfortable in doing so.

Requirements and Grading
This course is graded according to the requirements specified and weighted below.

Class participation	25%
Quizzes (4 quizzes of 10% each)	40%

Paper presentation	5%
Group project presentation	10%
Group project report	20%

Class participation (25%): Participation includes discussion in class, occasional in-class quizzes, in-class assignments, attendance, and Canvas Discussion Forum/blog postings.

You may have noticed that class participation is 25% of your final grade. Actively participating in class has a number of advantages:

- You will get a higher grade
- You are making classes more interesting for yourself and your fellow classmates
- You are memorizing content so that exams and quizzes will be a breeze
- You develop critical thinking and learn how to be a good scientist, which means being able to criticize existing theories and propose new hypotheses

Quizzes (40%)
Monthly exams will consist of quizzes on Canvas. You have limited time to answer them, typically from Friday 00:01 AM to Monday 23:59 PM. No retakes are allowed. You will receive 0% for that quiz assignment if you miss the deadline. You have only one shot at it, so please study the material before starting the exam. There are a total of 4 quizzes. Each quiz is worth 10% of your final grade for a total of 40%. Canvas will give you immediate feedback. If you have questions about the feedback, we can discuss it in class or during office hours.

Paper presentations (5%)
As part of your final grade (5%), I will ask you to read a paper of your choice by yourself, and present it to the class (10-minute presentation + 10-minute discussion). I assume you are mature enough to choose the paper based on its exciting subject rather than its length.

Even if you are not the person presenting, you must engage with the presentation in class. Please read the papers **before** class. Come to class prepared to discuss it. If the discussion does not emerge naturally, I will actively ask questions to specific people. There are no right or wrong answers when discussing a paper. However, if you do not engage with the discussion, this will negatively affect your grade.

When reading the paper at home, think of things you like about it, things that you disagree with, how you would have done the study better, or how it relates to your personal experience.

Class may be a scary place for some students to take risks, but it is also a safe place to explore your thinking. As long as what you are saying relates to what we are discussing in class, and as long as you respect your classmates and instructor, feel free to say what you want. No single relevant statement you make in class will negatively affect your grade. So, it doesn't matter if, during class discussion, you

make a mistake. It's better to make a mistake publicly in class and understand how to correct it rather than make a mistake privately during an assignment.

Group project (30%)
Cyberpsychology is all about research studies. The best way to learn the subject is to run a study yourself. With the group project, you will team up in groups of 3-4 people and produce an original piece of research. You will be asked to:

1. *Submit* a one-page research plan where you explain what question you plan to answer and how. I will provide feedback on how to improve the design. The one-page research plan is not graded, but it is a prerequisite to get a grade in the group project and must be handed in **on time**.
2. *Run* the study. Collect data and analyze it. What does it mean? What conclusions does the evidence support?
3. *Present* your findings in class during the last week of the course (10%). This is an excellent opportunity to gain feedback from me and your classmates before submitting your final report.
4. *Write* a final report (20%). I will provide a template with the most critical sections that your report must include.

The group project written report counts for 20% of your final grade. The group project presentation counts for 10% of your final grade. Late submission of the research plan and/or of the report will discount your group project grade by 50%. Submitting *something* on time is always better than submitting something slightly better too late or not submitting anything at all. I will provide feedback via Canvas; If you have questions about the feedback, we can discuss it in class or during office hours.

N.B. – Plagiarism will be severely punished. Copying someone else's work is cheating. Allowing someone to copy your work is cheating. Googling and copying from a website without acknowledging your source is cheating. Copying from anywhere (including ChatGPT and other generative language tools) without acknowledging your source is cheating. Using other people's work and not acknowledging them is *cheating,* but using their work AND acknowledging them to make your point stronger is *science*.

Deadlines (dates are approximate)

- Quizzes (40%):
    - Quiz 1: **2nd Oct**
    - Quiz 2: **30th Oct**
    - Quiz 3: **1st Dec**
    - Quiz 4: **11th Dec**
- Group project (25%):
    - One-page research plan submitted by **November 3rd**
    - The final report should be submitted by **December 21st**
    - The group presentations will take place during the last week of the course (ending **December 13th**)
- Last Day to Withdraw from Classes: **November 13th**

Grade scale
Letter and numerical grades are translatable on the following scale:

A = 90%+
B+ = 87-89.99%
B = 80-86.99%
C+ = 77-79.99%
C = 70-76.99%
D = 60-69.99%
F = 0-59.99%

Class Schedule
Wk 1
Course Introduction and Overview of Cyberpsychology

Wk 2
Online Identity and Self-Presentation

Wk 3
Online Communication and Social Interaction

Wk 4
Internet Addiction and Online Behavior

Wk 5
Online Privacy and Digital Footprints

Wk 6
Cyberbullying and Online Harassment

Wk 7
Online Relationships and Intimacy

Wk 8
Cognitive Effects of Digital Media

Wk 9
Social Media and Mental Health

Wk 10
Digital Health and abnormal cyberpsychology

Wk 11
Digital Well-being and Self-Care

Wk 12
Online Deception and Trust

Wk 13
Gaming

Wk 14
Groups and communities

Wk 15
Group project

Wk 16
Group project presentations

N.B. – Everything on the syllabus is subject to change. When changes are made, a new version or corresponding changes will be posted on the course Canvas site.

Learning Management System - Canvas
We will use Canvas as our main LMS. The statement from Canvas can be found here.

Refer to this link from the Office of Digital Learning for further materials.