

## SS1730 Introduction to Psychology

**Lecturer:** Sadhbh Byrne

### **Module Overview:**

*“It may be argued that of all the social science modules available to social workers, psychology is especially important because it offers potential explanations of complex aspects of human behaviour and development” (Ingleby, 2010, p. ix).* Psychology examines how humans think, feel, and behave. The course aims to give you insight to psychological theories and research, and how we can use psychology to understand people and their behaviour.

This 44-hour module comprises of one (two-hour) lecture each week, across Michaelmas and Hilary terms. In Michaelmas Term, the module will provide a broad introduction to the major areas of study within psychology. Throughout Hilary Term, special attention will be paid to psychological approaches to understanding social processes, such as group interaction and prejudice.

### **Learning Objectives:**

On completion of this module, students will be equipped to:

- Describe the main fields of study in contemporary psychology, and their associated theories
- Understand the psychological processes that underpin human behaviour
- Apply psychological theory to real-world situations
- Be critical consumers of psychological knowledge, in order to effectively evaluate research findings and theoretical proposals

### **Assessment:**

#### *Michaelmas Term:*

Students will take an in-class multiple choice question exam in the last lecture slot of Michaelmas Term (30% of overall module grade).

#### *Hilary Term:*

Students will submit a 500-word blog in weeks 23, 25, 27, 29, and 31 (altogether, 70% of overall module grade).

### **Outline of Module Content:**

The module will include the following topics:

#### *Michaelmas Term:*

- History of psychology as a discipline of study
- Conceptualisation and measurement of personality
- Learning and the effect of experience on behaviour
- Psychological perspectives of human development
- Diagnosis and treatment of psychological disorders
- Perceiving the external world through our sensory experiences
- The study of memory, attention, and other cognitive processes

- Understanding how psychological factors contribute to physical health and illness
- The psychology of happiness and wellbeing

*Hilary Term:*

- Attitude formation, attitude change, and the influence of attitudes on behaviour
- How we see ourselves: self-concept, self-esteem
- How we see others: impressions and attributions
- Groups, conformity, and minority/majority influence
- Language and communication
- Prosocial behaviour and the bystander effect
- Causes and effects of stereotyping, prejudice and discrimination
- The influence of choice, emotion, and identity on consumer behaviour
- Obedience to authority and compliance with norms
- Interpersonal relationships

**Key textbooks:**

*Michaelmas Term:*

- General: [Hewstone, Fincham, & Foster \(2005\). Psychology. BPS Blackwell](#)
- For lecture on Positive Psychology: [Carr \(2004\) Positive Psychology: The Science of Happiness and Human Strengths](#)

*Hilary Term:*

- [Sutton & Douglas \(2013\) Social Psychology. Palgrave MacMillan](#)

**Supplemental reading:**

- [Ingelby \(2010\) Applied Psychology for Social Work. Learning Matters e-book](#)
- [Feldman \(2010\) Psychology and your life. McGraw-Hill, Boston](#)
- [Gross \(2001\) Psychology: The science of mind and behaviour](#)
- [Hogg & Vaughan \(2008\) Social Psychology - 5th Ed](#)
- [Aronson \(2014\) Social Psychology](#)

**Relevant media:**

- [British Psychological Society Research Digest](#)
- [BPS Research Digest Podcast](#)
- [PsySociety blog from Scientific American](#)
- [The Psychology Podcast](#)
- [TED Talks Playlist: Fascinating psychology experiments](#)