

**SUMMER
2024
WEEKS 4-6**



Topical Conversations in Psychology

IEEL023

Credit Value	Delivery	Contact Hours Per module	Self-Directed Hours Per module	Total Hours Per module
5 UoL credit, 2.5 ECTS	On-campus	12-16	34-38	50

Module Leader: Ian Schermbrucker

Ian has taught at the University of Liverpool for 13 years. his area of interest is social psychology, and his PhD was on intergroup relations in Northern Ireland. He has also been involved in organising interdisciplinary international conferences with the School of English and has published books looking at the fruitful ways that psychology and literature can combine in the exploration of human nature.

Module Description

The module will explore both theory and research of current and topical aspects of psychology. Students will discuss recent research papers and consider how the various topics explored relate to 'real world' lives and contemporary events.

Module Aims:

- To develop confidence in understanding and communicating complex ideas.
- To develop skills in research and collaborative learning.
- To introduce students to research and theory of topical issues current in psychology.

Content

The following topics will be considered on the module:

Politics and the media

Sex specific research (a review of research identifying differences between the sexes)

Effective Learning Strategies for students

The Obesity Crisis and the food environment

Different approaches to leadership and their relative merits

Current research on aggression. How conflict might be reduced and can we build a peaceful society?

Module Structure

The module will be delivered over a three week period. There will be six two hour blocks (four hours per week).

It is expected that students will also spend 38 study hours outside of the classroom contact hours on activities including assigned reading, optional reading of areas of personal interest, homework tasks, web research, and preparation for assessment.

The assessment will be a reflective written essay, allowing for evaluation of both knowledge and understanding across the range of topics covered, along with in-depth understanding.

Teaching Methods

The teaching approach will include the following:

Taught sessions

Online learning

Student preparation

Small group working

Group discussions

Assessment:

Assessment will be by:

Written essay/reflection of 1000-1200 words (worth 100% of the overall mark)

Standard University policies apply with regard to late submission of assessments

Course Structure:

The indicative schedule is as follows:

Session One:

Obesity

This session will look at the suggested aetiology of the obesity epidemic. In particular changes to the food environment, and how this might have influenced the rise in obesity, will be discussed. We will explore changes in the portion sizes and energy density of foods in our eating environment, as well as changes in snacking behaviors and eating outside of the home. The pervasive influence of television advertising on what we eat will be discussed, as well as more recent, evolving problems of online advertising and celebrity endorsement. Students will discuss potential solutions, as well as barriers to those solutions, to help reduce obesity.

Session Two:

Psychology of Politics

How do politicians and political campaigns attract our attention? Do they influence the way we think or behave? This session will explore a range of political issues including political bias, propaganda, and political engagement by the general public. We will also look at specific political campaigns (e.g., the Obama campaign) to understand why they have been so successful and popular political narratives in the media.

Session Three:

How do we learn and what are effective learning strategies?

Why is it that sometimes we find it easy to recall information and at other times, it just does not seem to stick? One reason could be the ways in which you are trying to learn the information. This session will cover some of the strategies students use to help them learn and help you understand why some of these strategies work better than others. You will discuss what learning strategies you currently use and learn some tactics you can use for your next exam or piece of coursework. The session will cover six strategies proven by research to be make your learning more effective.

Session Four:

Sex-specific research in Psychology

This session will highlight the importance of sex-specific research in Psychology, with examples of areas that have and have not considered such differences and the implications of these. We will explore in-depth how sex-specific research within the field of addiction is becoming increasingly popular since the highlighted differences between males and females has been evidenced. The real-world impact of such differences will be discussed with reference to treatment and treatment outcomes for individuals who are addicted to substances.

Session Five:

The Psychology of Aggression

This session will explore different explanations for why people are aggressive, including evolutionary theories, the impact of the media and violent computer games and cultural

factors. The module will look at research on warfare and how ordinary people drafted into the army have reacted during past wars. We will also explore whether any very peaceful societies exist in the world and if so what kinds of common factors they share. Building on this the module will look at ways in which peace between factions in a state of conflict might be promoted. All of these approaches will be discussed by students in the light of contemporary conflicts and sources of aggression in the world.

Session Six:

Leadership

Are great leaders born or are they made? Should great leaders lead from the front and direct their followers, or listen to and respond to the wishes of their followers? This session will look at which factors promote effective leadership. The session will include practical advice from psychology on how to be a more effective leader. The session will also explore the topic of how important leaders actually are for effective group functioning. Students will also discuss their own experiences of effective leadership as well as discussing the success or failure of different leaders in the media spotlight.

Learning Outcomes:

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

Learning outcome	Assessment component which assesses this learning outcome
Display confidence in understanding and communicating complex ideas in written language.	Written essay
Research a topic within the subject area, be better able to work collaboratively in this research and to produce a piece of work based on that research.	Written essay
Demonstrate insight and understanding about research approaches and theory of a topical issue current in psychology.	Written essay

Skills:

Key skills that will be developed:

Skill	How this skill is developed	Mode of assessment
Collaboration and Teamwork	Group discussions, activities and case studies in class	Class group discussion

Communication	Orally in group discussions, activities and tasks in class, in writing by production of assessed assignment	Written essay/reflection
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Books, ebooks and websites:

The University Website at www.liv.ac.uk/library provides access to many relevant books and electronic books, as well as academic journals and databases.

Reading lists will be provided for each session.

Example material:

Blasiman R.N., Dunlosky J. & Rawson K.A. (2017). The what, how much, and when of study strategies: comparing intended versus actual study behaviour, *Memory*, 25:6, 784-792
<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/09658211.2016.1221974>

Erol, A., & Karpyak, V. M. (2015). Sex and gender-related differences in alcohol use and its consequences: Contemporary knowledge and future research considerations. *Drug and alcohol dependence*, 156, 1-13. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/282036422_Sex_and_gender-related_differences_in_alcohol_use_and_its_consequences_Contemporary_knowledge_and_future_research_considerations