PSYCHOLOGICAL EFFECTS OF THE INTERNET

SYLLABUS *** PSYCH 532 *** SPRING 2026

Why should I take this course?

Google the question, "How is the Internet changing us?," and you will find no shortage of opinions – or fears. In this course, you will critically examine empirical evidence for how the Internet is changing the way we learn, educate, broadcast, communicate, socialize, make decisions, emote, attend, develop, age, and receive psychological therapy.

IMPORTANT:
THIS COURSE IS COMPLETELY ONLINE.

You MUST have access to high-speed Internet THROUGHOUT the ENTIRE COURSE.

What will I learn?

Upon completing the course, along with having acquired Internet-based skills, you will be able to ...

(1) Identify nine previous technologies or past-times that were previously feared — and appraise how those fears parallel fears about the Internet.
(2) Assess five principles of learning on which Internet-based higher education capitalizes.
(3) Evaluate five challenges that college students face today and how Internet-based education can tackle each challenge.
(4) Critique the claim that the Internet is making interpersonal communication briefer and less formal.
(5) Illustrate four intentional and four unintentional incidents in which the Internet has amplified mass communication.
(6) Connect the social psychological principle of similarity attraction to the popularity of online dating apps; connect interpersonal aggression to the phenomena of online bullying and trolling.
(7) Interpret how and why emotional contagion spreads through the Internet; hypothesize why there are so many photos, gifs, and videos of cats on the Internet.
(8) Identify how each of six sources of motivation can affect Internet use; describe five reasons why people binge watch (TV shows or movies).
(9) Adjudicate four reasons why the Internet is not changing our attention spans.
(10) Discriminate three primary decision-making heuristics and generate an example of how each applies to Internet use.
(11) Relate two positive effects of Internet use on aging and two on child development.
(12) Explain how much variance in Internet activities is accounted for by personality factors; describe four famous selfies made prior to the Internet.
(13) Evaluate whether Internet-based psychological therapy works as well as in-person therapy.
(14) Formulate two ways that secondary Internet-data (Facebook likes, Tweets, Wikipedia clicks, etc) can answer psychological research questions.

How will I learn?

You will read and synthesize original research literature, augmented with readings and videos from the popular press (e.g., WiRED magazine, TED talks).

Your course grade will be based on your completing six assignments per unit, including interactive discussions conducted asynchronously and **synchronously (through synchronous text-based chat**).

You will be expected to engage frequently with the course and with your peers throughout the entire term. At the end of the course, you will produce a Term Project, demonstrating your mastery of the course content.

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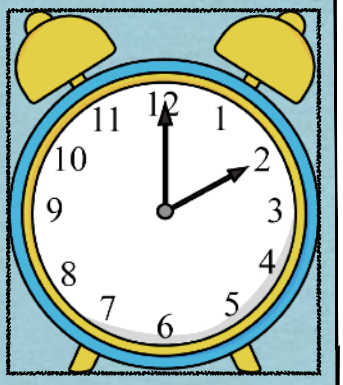

HOW MUCH TIME DO I NEED TO SPEND ON THIS COURSE?

"Psychological Effects of the Internet" is a **4-credit,** L&S Social Science Breadth, Intermediate Level, Psychology Dept. Depth Course, with the prerequisite of Intro Psychology.

Therefore, you're expected to spend **a total of 180 work hours on this course** (4 course credits x 45 work hours per credit).

You **must** spend **12 hours of work during each of the 14 Units on assignments** plus another **12 hours of work across the term on your Term Project.**

IMPORTANT NOTE!

This is a completely online course. You are required to have access to high-speed Internet. Not having access to the Internet (because you forgot to pay your cable bill or you are traveling or your roommate is hogging all the bandwidth playing video games) will NOT be a valid excuse for not completing your work.

WHAT BOOKS DO I NEED TO BUY?

None!

(zero)

All course materials, including Assignments and instructions for the Term Project, are at https://internet.psych.wisc.edu.

WHAT EXAMS DO I HAVE TO TAKE?

None!

(zero)

There will be no quizzes, no tests, and no final exam. Instead, your grade will be based on 84 Assignments and a Term Project.

How can I do well in this course?

First, **work on the course two hours a day, six days a week**. The best way to acquire any skill – be it playing acoustic guitar or speaking Portuguese – is to practice frequently. Similarly, the best way to do well in this course is to practice frequently.

The University recommends working on an online course every day, but for this course, you can work on the course only six days a week, meaning **distribute your 12 hours per Unit as two hours per day, six days a week**.

If you've taken other online courses, you might be surprised by how this online course works. In other online courses, you might have been able to hang back and then cram in a lot of work at the end of the term. A hang-back strategy will NOT work in this course.

Therefore, **the second way to do well in this course is to keep up**. You'll always have at least two weeks to complete each assignment, as well as a one-week reasonable extension after each assignment is due to complete the assignment late or to correct any errors you made in your initial assignment. But after two weeks of lead time and after a one-week reasonable extension, you will no longer be able to complete or correct the assignment.

The opportunity will be gone, just like in real life.

Thus, **the third way to do well in this course is to work ahead**. Your working ahead is the absolute best way to protect yourself against any unexpected mishap, and we all know that mishaps happen.

HOW WILL I EARN POINTS IN THIS CLASS?

On each of the 84 assignments, you can earn the following final score:

A	95.00 - 100%
AB	90.00 - 94.99%
B	85.00 - 89.99%
BC	80.00 - 84.99%
C	70.00 - 79.99%
D	60.00 - 69.99%
F	Less than 60%

3 points: If your initially submitted assignment was submitted BEFORE one week after the assignment's due date AND your initially submitted assignment **fulfilled ALL** the assignment's requirements.

2 points: If your initially submitted assignment was submitted BEFORE one week after the assignment's due date AND your initially submitted assignment fulfilled **MOST** BUT NOT ALL the assignment's requirements AND you **CORRECTED** your initially submitted assignment to fulfill ALL the assignment's requirements ANYTIME before one week after the due date.

1 point: If your initially submitted assignment was submitted BEFORE one week after the assignment's due date AND your initially submitted assignment fulfilled **MOST** BUT NOT ALL the assignment's requirements AND you **DID NOT CORRECT** your initially submitted assignment to fulfill ALL requirements ANYTIME before one week after the due date.

0 points: If your assignment was NOT submitted ANYTIME before one week after the assignment's due date **OR** if your assignment **DID NOT fulfill MOST or ALL** the assignment's requirements ANYTIME before one week after the assignment's due date.

FINAL COURSE GRADE: The points you earn on your 84 assignments (maximum points=252) will be added to the points you earn on your Term Project (maximum points=12). Your final course grade will be the percentage of points you earn (**of the maximum possible 264 points**), using the grading scale to the left.

What are the important dates to know?

Course Opens: January 6 * * * **Begin Working Ahead If You Can!** * * *

Unit 1: January 20 to **January 25** * Welcome to the Internet *

Unit 2: **January 26** to **February 1** * Learning via the Internet *

January 28: Last day to drop this course or withdraw from all courses without getting a grade of DR or W on your transcript

Unit 3: **February 2** to **February 8** * Educating via the Internet *

Unit 4: **February 9** to **February 15** * Communicating via the Internet *

Unit 5: **February 16** to **February 22** * Broadcasting via the Internet *

Unit 6: **February 23** to **March 1** * Socializing on the Internet *

Unit 7: **March 2** to **March 8** * Emotion and the Internet *

Unit 8: **March 9** to **March 15** * Motivation and the Internet *

Unit 9: **March 16** to **March 22** * Perception & Attention to the Internet *

Unit 10: **March 23** to **March 29** * Decision Making on the Internet *

NOTE: March 30 to April 5 is Spring Break.

Unit 11: **April 6** to **April 12** * Development & Aging on the Internet *

Unit 12: **April 13** to **April 19** * Personality on the Internet *

April 20: Last day to drop this course or any other Spring course without a dean's approval

Unit 13: **April 20** to **April 26** * Clinical Psychology on the Internet *

Unit 14: **April 27** to **May 3** * Looking Forward on the Internet *

May 1: Term Project due!

HOW DO I RECEIVE REASONABLE INSTRUCTIONAL ACCOMMODATIONS FOR DISABILITIES?

UW-Madison supports the right of all enrolled students to a full and equal educational opportunity. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), Wisconsin State Statute (36.12), and UW-Madison policy (Faculty Document 1071) require that students with disabilities be reasonably accommodated in instruction and campus life. Reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities is a shared faculty and student responsibility.

Students are expected to inform the instructor of their need for instructional accommodations by the end of the third week of the semester, or as soon as possible after a disability has been incurred or recognized. The instructor will work either directly with the student or in coordination with the McBurney Center to identify and provide reasonable instructional accommodations. Disability information, including instructional accommodations, as part of a student's educational record is confidential and protected under FERPA.

FROM YOUR INSTRUCTOR

I am genuinely interested in each and every student succeeding in this course. If you encounter any barriers to your success, please let me know. I'm always available by email at **Andrews7@wisc.edu**.

WHERE DO I TAKE CONCERNS ABOUT A TEACHING ASSISTANT OR COURSE INSTRUCTOR?

Occasionally, a student may have a concern about a TA or course instructor. If that happens, you should feel free to discuss the matter directly with the TA or instructor. If the concern is about the TA and you do not feel comfortable discussing it with them, you should discuss it with the course instructor.

Concerns about mistakes in grading should be resolved with the instructor or TA in the great majority of cases. If the concern is about the instructor (other than ordinary grading questions), and you don't feel comfortable discussing it with them, make an appointment to speak to the Associate Chair for Undergraduate Studies, Professor Karen Schloss.

If you have a concern about sexual harassment, you may also take your concern to Dr. Linnea Burk, Clinical Associate Professor and Director, Psychology Research and Training Clinic, Room 315 Psychology (262-9079; burk@wisc.edu).

If you have concerns about climate or bias in this class, or if you wish to report an incident of bias or hate that has occurred in class, you may contact the Chair of the Department, Professor Shawn Green or the Chair of the Psychology Department Climate Committee, Professor Martha Alibali.

You may also use the University's bias incident reporting system, which you can reach at this link.

WHAT'S THE BEST WAY TO RESPOND TO ANOTHER STUDENT'S DISCUSSION BOARD POST?

*YOUR RESPONSES TO OTHER STUDENTS' DISCUSSION POSTS **MUST** ALWAYS CONTAIN AT LEAST **TWO (OR MORE)** OF THE FOLLOWING:*

★A COMPLIMENT

I like how ...
OR I like that ...

★A COMMENT

I agree that ... because ...
OR I disagree that ... because ...

★A CONNECTION

I have also read that ...
OR I have also seen that ...
OR I have also heard that ...
OR I have also thought that ...

★A QUESTION

I wonder why ...
OR I wonder how ...
OR I wonder who ...
OR I wonder what ...
OR I wonder when ...
OR I wonder where ...

WHAT ARE THE ETHICS OF BEING A STUDENT IN THE DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY?

THE FACULTY OF THE DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY AT UW-MADISON EXPECT THEIR STUDENTS TO UPHOLD THE HIGHEST STANDARDS OF ETHICAL CONDUCT. BY REGISTERING FOR THIS COURSE, YOU ARE IMPLICITLY AGREEING TO CONDUCT YOURSELF WITH THE UTMOST INTEGRITY THROUGHOUT THE COURSE.

In the Department of Psychology, acts of academic misconduct are taken very seriously. Such acts diminish the educational experience for all involved – students who commit the acts, classmates who would never consider engaging in such behaviors, and instructors.

Academic misconduct includes, but is not limited to, cheating on assignments, sabotaging the work of classmates, plagiarizing the work of classmates or published sources, and assisting fellow students in acts of misconduct. Here is information on how to avoid plagiarism. Students who have knowledge that classmates have engaged in academic misconduct should report this to the instructor.

HOW DOES UW-MADISON SUPPORT INCLUSIVE EXCELLENCE?

UW-Madison's goals are to advance success for all students; connect every student with the best support for them; ensure pathways to belonging for all students; strategically organize campus-level student support; engage in continuous assessment and improvement; and responsibly steward university resources.

UW-Madison values the contributions of each person and respects the profound ways their background, experience, status, abilities, and opinion enrich the university community. We commit ourselves to the pursuit of excellence in teaching, research, and outreach.

HOW CAN I TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THE FLEXIBILITY ACCOMMODATION THAT IS BUILT INTO THIS COURSE?

THIS COURSE IS BASED ON THE PRINCIPLE OF UNIVERSAL DESIGN, WHICH PRESCRIBES THAT INSTRUCTIONAL ACCOMMODATIONS SHOULD BE BUILT INTO THE ENVIRONMENT AND AVAILABLE TO ALL STUDENTS (JUST LIKE ELEVATORS AND CURB CUTS) RATHER THAN NEEDING TO BE REQUESTED EX POST FACTO OR AVAILABLE TO ONLY SOME STUDENTS.

Therefore, in this course, all lecture videos are captioned and accompanied by written transcripts; all PDFs are screen-readable (and voiceable with text-to-speech software, as well as searchable and highlightable). There are no timed tests, no in-person lectures or in-person labs, and no in-person attendance requirements.

The course offers nearly a hundred grading opportunities, rather than only two or three across the entire semester. The course is highly structured with explicit due dates. All these accommodations are built into this course to facilitate all students' success.

Importantly, the course has a built-in flexibility accommodation available to all students. All students have the opportunity to work ahead; to use a one-week reasonable extension on all assignments' due dates; and to miss occasional assignments and still earn a good grade.

Flexibility is built into this course to aid all students, including students with disabilities, students with chronic health conditions, students with religious conflicts, students with care-giving responsibilities and unpredictable work schedules, student athletes — everyone.

To take advantage of the flexibility accommodation, you must do three things. First, take advantage of the opportunity to work ahead. The entire course is available during course registration; each Discussion Board opens two weeks before it's due. Complete as many assignments in advance as you can. If, for example, you're a student with a chronic health condition, the work you do in advance when you're feeling well will be like money in the bank for the times later in the term when you might not be feeling well.

Second, take advantage of the opportunity to turn in work up to one week late. Every student can turn in any assignment, including the Term Project, up to one week after its due date without penalty. **It is unnecessary to ask for an extension on any assignment's due date because all students have a one-week reasonable extension on every assignment's due date, including the Term Project.** However, it's important that you NOT treat the end of the one-week reasonable extension as the assignment's due date. It's not a due date. Each assignment's due date is its due date; the one-week reasonable extension is the extension, and for pedagogical and practical reasons it's the only possible extension. Here is why the one-week reasonable extension must be restricted to one week.

Third, take advantage of the opportunity to miss an assignment if needed. Experiment with Canvas's "What If" grades, and you'll see that all students can miss an assignment and still earn a good final grade. However, keep in mind that "What If" grades still need to be earned!

Flexibility is built into this course because we know how important it is for everyone to have a built-in flexibility accommodation. Take advantage of it.

WHEN ARE MY ASSIGNMENTS DUE?

On **MONDAY**s, that Unit's **ASSIGNMENT #1** is due.

On **TUESDAY**s, that Unit's **ASSIGNMENT #2** is due.

On **WEDNESDAY**s, that Unit's **ASSIGNMENT #3** is due.

On **FRIDAY**s, that Unit's **ASSIGNMENT #4** is due.

On **SUNDAY**s, that Unit's **ASSIGNMENTS #5 and #6** are due.

No Assignments are due on Thursdays or Saturdays.

Use those two days to work ahead!

NOTE: For Spring 2026, two assignments will be due on TUESDAY JANUARY 20.

AM I ALLOWED TO SELL OR SHARE MATERIALS FROM THIS COURSE TO COMMERCIAL SITES SUCH AS TO COURSE HERO, CHEGG, SLADER, OR SIMILAR WEBSITES?

All materials in this course are governed by a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License.

Because of the course's Non-Commercial License, materials from this course **CANNOT** be shared with commercial entities such as Course Hero, Chegg, Slader, or similar commercial websites.

In addition, as noted above, academic integrity means not enabling other students to commit academic misconduct, as well as ensuring the integrity of your own work.

WHAT SHOULD I DO IF I AM IMPACTED BY COVID-19?

Students should continually monitor themselves for COVID-19 symptoms and get tested for the virus if they have symptoms or have been in close contact with someone with COVID-19.

Because we believe it is unnecessary for students to be required to share their trauma with their instructors or TAs, if you are impacted by COVID-19 due to isolation, quarantine, or other factors, there is no need to contact Dr. Andrews or the TAs.

Instead, take advantage of the course's built-in Flexibility Accommodation, including working ahead, which is your best safety net for COVID-19 related problems and other unpredictable events in your life!

What can I expect from Dr. Andrews?

Dr. Andrews and her Teaching Assistants abide by the "Seven Principles of Good Practice in Undergraduate Education."

1. She will educate using the methods of active learning.
2. She will emphasize your spending time on task.
3. She will provide rapid feedback to you.
4. She will encourage you to cooperate and reciprocate with other students.
5. She will communicate high expectations.
6. She will respond to your email within 24 hours.
7. She will respect your individual talents.

WHO DO I CONTACT IF I HAVE A QUESTION, COMMENT, OR CONCERN?

Whenever you have a question, comment, or concern, feel free to email Dr. Andrews at Andrews7@wisc.edu

For the subject heading of your email message, use **PSY 532: Question** and be sure to use your wisc.edu email account.

If you want to meet with Dr. Andrews synchronously (via phone, video conference, or text chat), simply email her to set up a time!

Please do NOT directly email the TAs although you can communicate with them through Canvas Gradebook Comments.