

Personality Syllabus

Department of Psychology and Neuroscience

PSYO 3280 Winter 2025

Dalhousie University acknowledges that we are in Mi'kma'ki, the ancestral and unceded territory of the Mi'kmaq People and pays respect to the Indigenous knowledges held by the Mi'kmaq People, and to the wisdom of their Elders past and present. The Mi'kmaq People signed Peace and Friendship Treaties with the Crown, and section 35 of the Constitution Act, 1982 recognizes and affirms Aboriginal and Treaty rights. We are all Treaty people.

Dalhousie University also acknowledges the histories, contributions, and legacies of African Nova Scotians, who have been here for over 400 years.

Instructor:	Dr. Sean P. Mackinnon, mackinnon.sean@dal.ca
Office Hours:	By Appointment (send an email)
Marker:	Sarah DeGrace (sarah.degrace@dal.ca)
Lectures:	Tuesday/Thursday, 1:05PM to 2:25PM, LSC P4260
Course delivery:	In-person, with recorded lectures. Workshops are in-person and not recorded.

Course Description (from university calendar)

Explores several “grand” theories intended to account for the origins and development of our views of ourselves and how we relate to each other including the psychoanalytic, trait, learning theory, biological, cognitive, and humanistic perspectives. Examples of research attempts to validate the theories will be discussed and students will complete personality assessment instruments.

Course Prerequisites/Corequisites

PSYO 2000.03 or NESC 2007.03, and one of PSYO 2080.03 or PSYO 2090.03 or PSYO 2220.03

Key knowledge or skills expected of students coming into the course

Students should have fluent written and oral English language proficiency, mathematics at a high school graduate level, and basic computer operation skills. Students should also be able to critically evaluate scholarly journal articles in psychology and understand the fundamental principles of research design (PSYO 2000 / NESC 2007). Basics of statistical inference at an introductory (e.g., PSYO 2501, which is a co-requisite with PSYO 2000) is also expected.

Course Goals and Outcomes

1. Develop a broad understanding of the theories in personality psychology and be able to compare and contrast those theories with each other.
2. Be able to describe and understand the personality of other people (both strangers and people you know) using relevant personality terms and theories.
3. Be able to describe and understand your own personality by using relevant personality terms and theories.
4. Learn to appreciate the wide variety of different personalities in the world, and that there is no “best” kind of personality. Understand that each aspect of personality comes with its own set of advantages and disadvantages.

Course Materials

There is no textbook for this course. However, there are numerous free-to-access readings that accompany the lecture component of the course. Links to articles will be posted on Brightspace. A full list is below:

- American Psychiatric Association (2013). Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders: Fifth edition (pgs 779-781 ONLY).
- Adler, J. M., Dunlop, W. L., Fivush, R., Lilgendahl, J. P., Lodi-Smith, J., McAdams, D. P., ... & Syed, M. (2017). Research methods for studying narrative identity: A primer. *Social Psychological and Personality Science*, 8(5), 519-527.
- Baumeister, R. F., Campbell, J. D., Krueger, J. I., & Vohs, K. D. (2005). Exploding the self-esteem myth. *Scientific American*, 291(1), 84-91. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2307/26060842>
- Duncan, L. E. (2023). Gloria Steinem: The childhood foundations of a feminist. *Journal of Personality*, 91(1), 193-206.
- Fraley, R. C. (2018). Adult Attachment Theory and Research: A Brief Overview. Retrieved from <http://labs.psychology.illinois.edu/~rcfraley/attachment.htm>
- John, O. P., Naumann, L. P., & Soto, C. J. (2008). Paradigm shift to the integrative Big Five trait taxonomy: History, measurement, and conceptual issues. In O. P. John, R. W. Robins, & L. A. Pervin (Eds.), *Handbook of personality: Theory and research*, 3rd ed. (pp. 114–158). New York, NY: The Guilford Press. [TABLE 1 ONLY].
- Horney, K. (1946). Chapter 2: The basic conflict. In K. Horney's *Our Inner Conflicts: A Constructive Theory of Neurosis* (pp 35-47). London, UK: Lund Humphries. Retrieved from <https://archive.org/details/in.ernet.dli.2015.97302/page/n35>
- Koehn, M. A., Okan, C., & Jonason, P. K. (2019). A primer on the Dark Triad traits. *Australian Journal of Psychology*, 71(1), 7-15. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ajpy.12198>
- Legault, L. (2017). Self-determination theory. In V. Zeigler-Hill & T. K. Shakelford (Eds.), *Encyclopedia of Personality and Individual Differences* (pp. 1-9). Retrieved from: https://link.springer.com/content/pdf/10.1007%2F978-3-319-28099-8_1162-1.pdf
- McAdams, D. P., & Pals, J. L. (2006). A new Big Five: fundamental principles for an integrative science of personality. *American Psychologist*, 61(3), 204-217.
- Salazar, C. F., & Abrams, L. P. (2005). Conceptualizing Identity Development in Members of Marginalized Groups. *Journal of Professional Counseling: Practice, Theory, & Research*, 33(1), 47–59.
- Sherry, S. B., Mackinnon, S. P., & Gautreau, C. M. (2015). Perfectionists don't play well with others: Expanding the social disconnection model. In D. Molnar & F. Sirois (Eds.), *Perfectionism, Health and Well-Being* (pp. 225-243). Springer. doi:10.1007/978-3-319-18582-8
- Saucier, G., & Srivastava, S. (2015). What makes a good structural model of personality? Evaluating the big five and alternatives. In M. Mikulincer, P. R. Shaver, M. L. Cooper, & R. J. Larsen (Eds.), *APA handbook of personality and social psychology, Volume 4: Personality processes and individual differences*. (pp. 283–305). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association. <https://doi.org/10.1037/14343-013>

Course Assessment

Component	Weight (% of final grade)	Date(s)
Mid-term Exam 1	25%	February 4
Mid-term Exam 2	25%	March 11
Final Exam	25%	TBA in Exam Period
3 Workshops or Critical Response Papers (7% each)	21%	January 21 February 13 March 27
Personality Tests	3%	Jan 23 Jan 30 Feb 25 Mar 4 Mar 6 Mar 18
End-of-Term Reflection	1%	Apr 1

Conversion of numerical grades to Final Letter Grades follows the Dalhousie Common Grade Scale

A+ (90-100)	B+ (77-79)	C+ (65-69)	D (50-54)
A (85-89)	B (73-76)	C (60-64)	F (<50)
A- (80-84)	B- (70-72)	C- (55-59)	

CLASS FORMAT

Though class time will be primarily lecture-based, it can be varied (depending on the topic) and could potentially also include small group exercises, class discussion, ungraded practice quizzes, and short, ungraded written reflections. Homework will typically consist of assigned readings and completing personality tests. Supplementary material (readings, online videos, etc.) will occasionally be placed online using Brightspace. I recommend that you attend class whenever possible. I also recommend that you complete the assigned readings each week to get the most out of the classes.

EXAMS

There will be 3 exams in this course. Mid-term exams will take place during normal class time. Mid-terms will focus more on the most recently covered material, but the final exam will be cumulative (i.e., cover material from all previously covered sections). Material from both the readings and the lecture can show up on exams. Exam format will most likely be multiple choice, fill-in-the-blank, and essay-style questions.

WORKSHOPS

There will be three in-class workshops covering various topics in personality psychology. Generally speaking, you will participate in groups of 2-5 to discuss important questions in personality psychology. After sufficient discussion, someone in the group will summarize the answers the group came up with in written form and submit those written responses at the end of the class. Usually, everyone in the group will receive the same grade. The handouts for workshops will be posted ~24hrs before the workshop. It is **strongly recommended** you read them before attending the workshop to give yourself more time to complete the activity, but you are not expected to start working on them until the workshop starts. Each workshop is worth 7% towards your final grade. These are generally designed to be short enough to be completed entirely during the 80min class period. They also cannot be done virtually – if you want to take part in the workshops, you need to show up to the live sessions while I am present (but see accommodations below for those who are not willing and/or able to show up to live sessions).

WORKSHOP ALTERNATIVES: CRITICAL RESPONSE PAPERS

Because the workshops are social activities that cannot really be done alone, it is not really feasible to schedule make-up workshops. As an alternative to workshops, students may optionally instead submit a critical response paper based on one of the assigned readings. This is an alternative for students who cannot attend the workshop (e.g., illness) or for students who do not want to (or cannot) work in groups in-person at a scheduled time for whatever reason. Full details on the grading rubric and expectations for these papers are located on Brightspace, but broadly speaking they should be a maximum of 500 words long (about two paragraphs) and involve a summary of one of class readings followed by critical analysis of that material. In general, these are due either 11:59PM the day of the workshop (if opting out of the workshop without a student declaration of absence) or 11:59pm 1 week after the workshop (if submitting a student declaration of absence). Like the workshops they replace, they are worth 7% towards your final grade each. In sum, workshop submissions can be optionally replaced by the submission of a critical response paper in place of the workshop.

PERSONALITY TESTS

Throughout the class, you will be asked to complete six personality tests around the time we are covering that topic in class. These are to promote self-understanding, and to link material to your own lives. These are worth 0.5% each towards your final grade. You will get full value (0.5%) if you complete the test by 11:59PM the day of the deadline. As proof that you took the test, please take a screenshot of the last “results” screen of the test and submit it on Brightspace for verification (alternatively, some tests require submitting a paragraph of writing on Brightspace). How you respond on these personality tests does not affect your grade. All I am interested in is that you actually took the test and filled out all the questions. Though I would encourage you to respond honestly for self-understanding, you can respond randomly on the questionnaires if you feel they are too personal. Your responses on the personality tests will not be saved once the course ends. If the process makes you feel uncomfortable in any way, please get in contact with me and we can try and work something out.

REFLECTION PAPER

Some time before the last class, you can submit a Word document on Brightspace under "Assignments" and answer the following 4 questions:

1. Can you identify one important concept, research finding, theory, or idea that you learned while taking this class?
2. Why do you believe that this concept, research finding, theory, or idea is important?
3. Apply what you have learned from this class to some aspect of your life.
4. What question(s) has the class raised for you? What are you still wondering about?

If you put an honest effort in to answer these (i.e., not just random text) you'll get 1 point towards your final grade. These four questions have been found in prior research to have educational value and have improved student performance on subsequent quizzes, so best to do it before one of the exams!

Dietz-Uhler, B., & Lanter, J. R. (2009). Using the four-questions technique to enhance learning. *Teaching of Psychology*, 36(1), 38-41.

STUDENT DECLARATION OF ABSENCE

Dalhousie University recognizes that students may experience short-term illness, distress or other extenuating circumstances (such as caregiving duties; immediate family illness, injury or death; involvement in an accident; legal proceedings or being a victim of a crime) that may affect their ability to complete required graded academic requirements. Student declaration of absence forms are a standardized way to handle student absences that interfere with the completion of graded academic requirements (exams, quizzes, presentations, papers, etc.).

Here is the procedure you should follow if you experience short-term illness, distress or other extenuating circumstances that affects your ability to complete assessment components:

- a) The Student Declaration of Absence form or alternate verification of the absence must be submitted to the course instructor, or to the instructor's designate **online through Brightspace** within three (3) calendar days following the last day of absence. I only accept forms submitted via Brightspace, not in person or by email.

- b) The Declaration may only be used a **maximum of 2 times throughout the term.**

Here are the specific rules for each assessment component:

Missed Midterm Exams: A make-up exam session will be scheduled at a time when all students who missed the exam can complete it. Usually, there is only a single make-up exam session that all students who missed the exam will attend, and the make-up will usually be within 1 week of the original exam. In the scenario where you cannot complete a make-up session due to prolonged illness, the missed exam points will be rolled into the final exam, which is cumulative (making the final exam worth 50%). In the truly worst-case scenario where you miss both midterm exams, your final exam would be worth 75%. This is to be avoided if at all possible through make-up exams.

Missed Final Exam: If you miss the final exam, you must write a make-up exam, or else take a zero on the exam. In cases of prolonged illness, you may receive an ILL or INC on your transcript until you can complete the make-up exam. Points from a missed final exam will not be rolled into midterm exams.

Missed Workshop: Because the workshops involve discussion with colleagues that cannot be adequately replicated alone, you will be asked to instead submit a short ~500 word critical response paper as a make-up assignment (see above). The new deadline will be 1 week after the workshop at 11:59PM. If you do not complete the make-up assignment with a 1-week extension, you will receive a zero on this component. You cannot complete the original in-person workshop alone at home for points.

Personality tests/Reflection: If you miss your submission due date for one of the personality test or reflection paper due dates, you can have a 1-week extension to complete it if you submit a student declaration of absence. If you don't complete it by the due date, you will get a zero. It is probably inadvisable to use one of your two student declaration of absences on an assessment worth so few points (rather than a workshop or exam), but they are yours to use as you see fit.

All of the above accommodations apply **ONLY** if you submit a student declaration of absence. If you do not, then you will instead receive a zero on the missed component.

HOW GRADES ARE ROUNDED FOR FINAL LETTER GRADES

Individual assessment components are not rounded (and are left as a decimal grade when appropriate). Final grades with a decimal value greater or equal to 0.5 (e.g., 65.60%) will be rounded up. Final grades with a decimal value less than 0.5 (e.g., 65.49%) will be rounded down.

Course Schedule

Date	General Topics	Readings	Due Dates
Tue., Jan. 7	Getting Acquainted		
Thu., Jan. 9	McAdams' Model of Personality	McAdams & Pals (2006)	
Tue., Jan. 14	History of Traits		
Thu., Jan. 16	Factor Analysis & Questionnaire Development		
Tue., Jan. 21	WORKSHOP 1: TRAITS		
Thu., Jan. 23	Big Five: Part I	Saucier & Srivastava (2015) Table 1 from John et al. (2008)	Big Five Due
Tue., Jan. 28	Big Five: Part II		
Thu., Jan. 30	"Dark" Personality Traits (Virtual Lecture)	Koehn et al. (2019) DSM 5 (Table 3)	Dark Triad Due
Tue., Feb. 4	EXAM 1		
Thu., Feb. 6	Psychodynamic Motivation	Horney (1946)	
Tue., Feb. 11	Self-Determination Theory	Legalt (2017)	
Thu., Feb. 13	WORKSHOP 2: CHARACTERISTIC ADAPTATIONS		
Tue., Feb. 18	READING WEEK		
Thu., Feb. 20	READING WEEK		
Tue., Feb. 25	Self-Concept and Self-Esteem	Baumeister et al. (2005)	Self-Esteem Due
Thu., Feb. 27	Stability of Traits and Erikson's Psychosocial Theory		
Tue., Mar. 4	Attachment Theory and Relationships	Fraley (2018)	Attachment Due
Thu., Mar. 6	Perfectionism and Mental Health	Sherry, Mackinnon & Gaultreau (2015)	Perfectionism Due
Tue., Mar. 11	EXAM 2		
Thu., Mar. 13	Personality and Addiction		
Tue., Mar. 18	Narrative Identity: Part 1	Adler et al. (2017)	High Point Due
Thu., Mar. 20	Narrative Identity: Part 2		
Tue., Mar. 25	Social Constructivist Perspectives	Salzar & Abrams (2005)	
Thu., Mar. 27	WORKSHOP 3: NARRATIVES		
Tue., Apr. 1	Psychodynamic Story Interpretation		Reflection Paper Due
Thu., Apr. 3	Personology and Psychobiography	Duncan (2023)	

Holidays: Feb 7 (Munro Day), Reading Week (Feb 17-21), Good Friday (April 18)

University Policies and Statements

(Generic statements from the university for all courses)

Recognition of Mi'kmaq Territory

Dalhousie University would like to acknowledge that the University is on Traditional Mi'kmaq Territory. The Elders in Residence program provides students with access to First Nations elders for guidance, counsel, and support. Visit or e-mail the Indigenous Student Centre at 1321 Edward St or elders@dal.ca. Additional information regarding the Indigenous Student Centre can be found at: https://www.dal.ca/campus_life/communities/indigenous.html

Internationalization

At Dalhousie, 'thinking and acting globally' enhances the quality and impact of education, supporting learning that is "interdisciplinary, cross-cultural, global in reach, and orientated toward solving problems that extend across national borders." Additional internationalization information can be found at: <https://www.dal.ca/about-dal/internationalization.html>

Academic Integrity

At Dalhousie University, we are guided in all our work by the values of academic integrity: honesty, trust, fairness, responsibility, and respect. As a student, you are required to demonstrate these values in all the work you do. The University provides policies and procedures that every member of the university community is required to follow to ensure academic integrity. Additional academic integrity information can be found at: https://www.dal.ca/dept/university_secretariat/academic-integrity.html

Accessibility

The Student Accessibility Centre is Dalhousie's centre of expertise for matters related to student accessibility and accommodation. If there are aspects of the design, instruction, and/or experiences within this course (online or in-person) that result in barriers to your inclusion, please contact the Student Accessibility Centre (https://www.dal.ca/campus_life/academic-support/accessibility.html) for all courses offered by Dalhousie with the exception of Truro. For courses offered by the Faculty of Agriculture, please contact the Student Success Centre in Truro (<https://www.dal.ca/about-dal/agricultural-campus/student-success-centre.html>)

Conduct in the Classroom – Culture of Respect

Substantial and constructive dialogue on challenging issues is an important part of academic inquiry and exchange. It requires willingness to listen and tolerance of opposing points of view. Consideration of individual differences and alternative viewpoints is required of all class members, towards each other, towards instructors, and towards guest speakers. While expressions of differing perspectives are welcome and encouraged, the words and language used should remain within acceptable bounds of civility and respect.

Diversity and Inclusion – Culture of Respect

Every person at Dalhousie has a right to be respected and safe. We believe inclusiveness is fundamental to education. We stand for equality. Dalhousie is strengthened in our diversity. We are a respectful and inclusive community. We are committed to being a place where everyone feels welcome and supported, which is why our Strategic Direction prioritizes fostering a culture of diversity and inclusiveness (Strategic Priority 5.2). Additional diversity and inclusion information can be found at: <http://www.dal.ca/cultureofrespect.html>

Student Code of Conduct

Everyone at Dalhousie is expected to treat others with dignity and respect. The Code of Student Conduct allows Dalhousie to take disciplinary action if students don't follow this community expectation. When appropriate, violations of the code can be resolved in a reasonable and informal manner - perhaps through a restorative justice process. If an informal resolution can't be reached, or would be inappropriate, procedures exist for formal dispute resolution. The full Code of Student Conduct can be found at: https://www.dal.ca/dept/university_secretariat/policies/student-life/code-of-student-conduct.html

Fair Dealing Policy

The Dalhousie University Fair Dealing Policy provides guidance for the limited use of copyright protected material without the risk of infringement and without having to seek the permission of copyright owners. It is intended to provide a balance between the rights of creators and the rights of users at Dalhousie. Additional information regarding the Fair Dealing Policy can be found at: https://www.dal.ca/dept/university_secretariat/policies/academic/fair-dealing-policy-.html

Originality Checking Software

The course instructor may use Dalhousie's approved originality checking software and Google to check the originality of any work submitted for credit, in accordance with the Student Submission of Assignments and Use of Originality Checking Software Policy. Students are free, without penalty of grade, to choose an alternative method of attesting to the authenticity of their work and must inform the instructor no later than the last day to add/drop classes of their intent to choose an alternate method. Additional information regarding Originality Checking Software can be found at: https://www.dal.ca/dept/university_secretariat/policies/academic/student-submission-of-assignments-and-use-of-originality-checking-software-policy-.html

Student Use of Course Materials

Course materials are designed for use as part of this course at Dalhousie University and are the property of the instructor unless otherwise stated. Third party copyrighted materials (such as books, journal articles, music, videos, etc.) have either been licensed for use in this course or fall under an exception or limitation in Canadian Copyright law. Copying this course material for distribution (e.g. uploading to a commercial third-party website) may lead to a violation of Copyright law.