

Online Orientation for Dr. Wegenek's Fall 09 PSYCH 1 Courses

Hello and *welcome* to your online Psychology course! For those of you taking your first online course and for others who may be familiar with online courses, here is some important information to ensure your success in this course.

If you are able to log onto the course, you will receive credit for reading this orientation document by taking the "orientation quiz" that is posted online. FYI, this first (orientation) quiz and Discussion Board Posting #1 do not require the book, and the due dates for them are posted on the class Blackboard Web site in the Course Calendar document. If you already have the book, you can start reading and working on the upcoming week's assignments to get ahead!

First of all, please make sure that you read the syllabus thoroughly once you access the course. I cannot emphasize this enough, as many of the questions students have can be answered by reading the syllabus. The syllabus is your guide to specific requirements of the course. In the online class, a "week" is considered to be Thursday morning to Wednesday evening, because all units begin on a Thursday, and end on a Wednesday. Please do not wait until Wed to post both of your discussion board topic postings in weeks that require conversations (i.e., two posts) on the discussion board for full credit. We will have much more interesting conversations if people start them earlier in the week and I will make a note of who procrastinates if it adversely affects the conversations within your groups. Please make sure you pay close attention to due dates on the Course Calendar posted on Blackboard. If you have any questions after reading the syllabus and viewing the course calendar, please make sure that you contact me for clarification.

Each week, we will have assigned reading (chapter/module in the textbook), a discussion board forum, either a quiz or exam, and an occasional online video to watch. There will also be one short written assignment meant to familiarize you with research in psychology. The chapter/module objectives posted are meant to help you pull out main concepts and theories from your readings and it may help you to look those over both before and after you read an assigned chapter/module. All quizzes and exams will be taken online with a time limit applied only to the exams, and not the quizzes. Quizzes and exams can be taken at any time before the due date (i.e., they are not "scheduled" to be taken within certain hours). You should plan on devoting 10-12 hours per week to this course, just like any other course.

Blackboard

Saddleback College online courses are offered through a Web site called Blackboard. The URL is: <http://socccd.blackboard.com>. If you are already enrolled in the class, you will be able to log in (using yourname, which is usually the same as the part of your e-mail address before the @saddleback.edu) and the last 4 digits of your PIN number (or other number used to identify you by the school) followed by two zeros.

Once you log in, you should see that this course is listed at your landing site. For further tips on how to use Blackboard, system requirements, and tutorials, see the following Web site:

<http://www.saddleback.edu/itc/user/bbclips.html>

PARTS OF OUR CLASS WEB SITE

Please take some time to view the material on Blackboard and familiarize yourself with the platform. It is a good idea to know what material can be found under each of the different sections of your course Blackboard Web site.

Main page/Announcements page

- Appears once you are in our course Web site after clicking on the link to your course title.
- Announcements- check here often, you can view them by day or week etc.
- Toolbar on the left that links you to each of the other areas on the Web site.

Main Buttons on Left

Course Calendar

A table of all due dates for course assignments is posted here. Print this out, for you to have handy for reference.

Syllabus

- Orientation information document (this document)
- Syllabus

Staff Information

- Instructor's contact information
- A link to my Web site

Exams

- Exams will be posted here. All quizzes will be placed *in their respective chapter/module folder*. You should refer to the course calendar for all due dates.

Make sure you read the sections already posted under the Exam section of the site so that you know what types of actions will kick you off of the online exam by accident. Note that you will have 1.5 hours to finish each of the exams, and that you will be presented one question at a time and not be able to back track to previous questions.

Rules for Exams and quizzes:

Once an exam is opened, you may not save it and continue it later- it must be completed. Avoid the following actions so that you do not get kicked out of the exam:

1. Do not click outside of the test window.
2. Do not click on Save, it doesn't do anything but increase the chance of the system hanging.
3. Do not click on Submit multiple times.
4. Do not use a wireless connection even if it seems to be a continuous, stable connection.
5. Do not click on backspace or try to back track to previous questions.
6. Do not allow other programs to run or have other browser windows open while taking the exam.

ANY of these actions can lead to a technical error that will kick you out of the exam.

Course Materials

-Very important!

-Posted in this area is a folder corresponding to every chapter/module of assigned reading

-Within each chapter/module folder are the following items:

-Objectives

Use this as a tool to figure out exactly what you should be getting out of the readings and slides. You will never have to turn in any of these answers, they are here as a guide to help you take out of the readings all the main points that you should be getting from the readings. You should be able to address each of these objectives in your own words in self-testing and studying for the quizzes and exams.

- Slides with Notes

These should be used as a study TOOL, not as replacement for your course readings. They provide a nice visual outline of the chapter/module to read and study before and after reading your chapter/module.

Multiple Choice Quiz

Follow the directions on your course syllabus about taking quizzes and follow all the rules necessary to avoid being kicked out of the quiz. Good luck!

Additional Links

Additional links will be present to help you study or present you with additional material including video clips and more

-There is nothing keeping you from working ahead if you so choose, however chapter/module quizzes may not be posted earlier than the week in which they are due.

Discussion Boards

Student Forum:

The two discussion boards in the class are the main source of interaction that you will have with others in the course and are a crucial component of the class. There will be a “*Student Question Forum*” in which you can ask me or your fellow students’ questions. This is also where your first discussion board topic assignment will be posted. This might be a good place to post questions that you have on the weekends if you need a quick response from a classmate who would like to help out. Although your instructor will check and respond to questions here occasionally, you should always email me with any questions directly to ensure that you receive a response.

Group Discussion Board: This is where you will be able to interact with a smaller group of students starting with Discussion Topic 2. To get there, go to the Group Discussion Board button on the left of your page and choose Group Pages. Then, you will see one group name appear that is hyperlinked. You should be assigned to only one group and see only one name that is available for you to view there by clicking on that group name. You should then be able to see forums within the group's page. Click on the forum that you would like to participate in and follow the directions. Hopefully, you should enjoy this part of the class and learn a lot through interacting with your peers. The rules and directions for Discussion Board postings are always available and remind you to be appropriate and thorough in your postings.

Note: For all discussion board topic assignments (other than the first, introductory topic), two posts are required to receive full credit. The directions clearly state that you must post one initial post and also to post a reply to another student. Both posts (initial post and reply to another student) must be posted by Wednesday at 11:55 pm for full credit.

When posting in either of the two forums, click on "start a new thread" at the top of the screen. Be sure to click on "submit" when you want to post and not to click on "save" by mistake. For some topics, it is required that you engage in a discussion with your fellow students on each topic. You should be probing them with additional questions and offering comments that go beyond a basic statement such as "good job" or "interesting." When you are adding to the discussion or responding to a specific student you will click on "reply". Please note: grammar and spelling (the discussion board has spell check) as well as comprehensive coverage of the topic will be taken into consideration for grading the discussion board assignments. Be sure to complete each discussion topic fully by answering each of the questions posted.

My Grades

-Check your grades- your grades will be posted here automatically after each Quiz or Exam has been graded. Grades are posted every week or biweekly and an email will always be sent out to let you know when grades have been updated.

External Links

Links to extra study materials available at the publishers' web site are available here and optional for students to use...

Grading of assignments

Most quizzes will automatically be graded by Blackboard, and your grade should appear immediately. Most other assignments and exams will need to be graded individually by your instructor. As such, with a large class, it may take up to a week after the due date for me to grade any particular assignment. You may receive feedback on the discussion board throughout the week or in the days following the conclusion of each discussion forum. I will not respond to each response individually but I will read (and grade) each response in its entirety.

Important note:

I will send you e-mail you via your Saddleback College e-mail account. Therefore, you need to make sure you are checking your Saddleback e-mail account frequently.

This is my only way of contacting you via emails sent from the Blackboard system, so please be sure to check this email account. It can be checked from anywhere using MySite (www.saddleback.edu).

To forward your Saddleback email to your personal email:

A document is posted under the course syllabus containing instructions on how to do this.

Contacting your instructor:

[Email](mailto:arezec@saddleback.edu) me directly at arezec@saddleback.edu rather than clicking on the link to email me from within Blackboard. Your email will reach me faster.

Make sure that the subject heading of your email says *PSYCH 1* so that my email system filters your incoming email appropriately and I can address your questions promptly. I teach several other courses that contain online components, and including your course title will help distinguish your email from my other students' emails so I know what class you are writing about. Please also include your full name in the body of the email, so I know who you are. You can expect a reply to your email within 24 hours on weekdays, and emails sent on the weekends will be replied to on Monday afternoons. Write again if you do not receive an reply within this time frame for any reason.

Additional Comments: Online classes are not meant to be easier than onsite classes...if anything, they are typically more challenging as you need to take on a proactive role in your learning and stay organized. Furthermore, psychology is not a simple subject and many of you will have to shift gears your thinking about psychology for this course. Most of us think of mainly clinical or pop psychology when we think of the field, but psychology actually consists of a broad range of over 54 defined subareas of research. We will cover research topics in all the main areas of psychology. However, I will try to emphasize how the material relates to real life whenever possible (as does the text chosen for this class). Many students write to me after the course is over to let me know how relevant the material was to them long after taking the course. I hope that you will be one of them!

Success Tips

- 1) **Print the syllabus, course schedule, and this orientation document**, and refer to them as needed.
- 2) **Set aside time every week to focus on this class.** With a regular schedule, you will be less likely to get behind or to miss an assignment. You will need time to read the textbook, examine the additional materials posted within the chapter/module folders under the Course Materials button, prepare/research for discussion topic posts, and study.
- 3) **Do not wait until the last minute.** Check in early during the week to see what needs to be done and when they need to be done.

4) **Be sure to have a secure wired internet connection (not a wireless) during quizzes and exams (or when writing long discussion posts).** Wireless connections constantly cut in and out for very brief, imperceptible moments of time. This wouldn't log you out of emails or regular websites, but Blackboard will usually kick you out of a quiz or exam when that occurs. Do not have any other windows or programs running while taking quizzes or exams. Some students have had success taking their quizzes and exams at local libraries or on Saddleback College computer centers because of their excellent internet connections.

5) **Check your grades often.** Make sure that you have credit for the quizzes/exams/assignments that you have completed. For example, because I grade and enter each discussion post by hand, please check that they have been entered correctly. Email me ASAP if you find a problem, so that I can fix it early.

6) **Similarly, check that your assignments or exams went through.** For example, check that your discussion board post was posted by clicking on your post. Or check that your paper, quiz, or exam was submitted by checking to see that you have either an exclamation point (meaning that it needs to be graded by me) or a score. A padlock symbol indicates that your item was not submitted correctly.

7) **Do not hesitate to email me if you have any questions about the course, about the course material, or about any other concerns.** I have heard students say that they feel nervous or uncomfortable asking too many questions. Because this is an online course, it is my job to respond to your emails containing questions or concerns. I want you to do well in the class and are happy to help! Just like any class, you will get out of this what you put into it. I look forward to guiding you along the way! Remember to a) take the first online quiz about the syllabus and orientation doc and b) finish the first discussion board topic posting and complete both by the due date listed in the course schedule in order to receive credit for completing the course orientation. Note that the first discussion board topic is posted in the Student Forum. The group pages will be created after the first discussion board topic is completed.

Best wishes,
Professor Rezac-Wegenek, PhD