Welcome to the 100% online edition of Psychology 101: Introduction to Psychology (Sections #17320, #17319 & #17318) at College of the Canyons. I am your instructor, Rebecca Shepherd, and I am looking forward to working with you during the Fall 2015 Semester.

Please read the entire welcome letter on the pages below before proceeding with the course. These pages will provide you with important information about required materials and required technology, the "virtual" attendance policy, and an overview of the course. Understanding more about how this particular online course is designed and of its requirements will help you get off to a strong start.

SO...

Getting Started...
Expect to hit the ground running, so to speak, as we will begin work very quickly. Since this class officially begins on Monday, August 24th, the class will be made available to students in Blackboard 9.1 by 11:00 a.m. on this date. You will not see the class in Blackboard until the first day of the Spring semester, when it is made available to the class.

Login instructions for Blackboard:
1. Open your web browser and go to http://bb.canyons.edu/
2. Click on the “Blackboard Login” button.
3. Enter your username and password.
   a. Your username is your 7-digit COC Student ID Number.
   b. The initial password for everyone is “student”. If you already have used Blackboard 9 during the past several semesters and changed your password, use that password.
4. Once logged in, you should see a link on the right hand side of the screen for this class.
   Click the link to enter the course.

Important Registration Information: You may be dropped from the class if you do not log into this course in Blackboard by 11:59p.m. (Pacific Time) on Monday, August 24th, 2015. Please note: You are responsible, though, for dropping the class by the official college deadlines if you choose not to complete the course.

If the class fills before the first day of class, I will not be able to issue add codes until after the first couple of days the class has “met.” I cannot over enroll a course and must look at how many students have not checked in by the evening of August 24th before I can begin adding any students. Even students on the official waitlist are not guaranteed spots in the class. If spots become available to distribute add codes, I must offer them to students in the order they appear on the official waitlist. Given this, if this class is full with a waitlist at the time you register, I encourage you to find an alternate section of Psych 101 that is open to ensure there is a space available for you to take the course and start it on time. While I do my best to delay due dates for a couple of days to accommodate any late additions to the class, assignments still have specific due dates and will not be accepted late.
**Required Materials and Technology**

**What materials do I need for this class?**

Despite the online nature of the class, you will need to purchase a textbook. The psychology department has adopted a customized textbook, which has been designed to correspond to student learning outcomes developed by both COC and the American Psychological Association. The required book for this class is *Psychology: Fourth Custom Edition for College of the Canyons* (ISBN 10-1269914111 or ISBN 13-9781269914116), and, since it is a new text for the department this semester, is available for purchase primarily at the COC bookstore. It can be purchased in person or online through the bookstore at [http://coc.bncollege.com/](http://coc.bncollege.com/). [A photo of the textbook cover is below.] A different textbook will not provide you with the required materials to be successful in this class.

**Having regular access to the textbook and access to Blackboard is required for this course.**

![Book Cover]

**What are the technology requirements for this course?**

If you are using a Windows PC, Blackboard recommends using the latest version of Mozilla Firefox, while Mac users are recommended to use Safari Web Browser. If you have a Windows PC, Microsoft Internet Explorer 8 or 9 may also work for you, but they have been found to be less compatible with Blackboard than Firefox. Additionally, as you get started, you will want to allow pop-ups from Blackboard so you can open assessments and work effectively within the online environment. You can find more information regarding computer and software requirements at the Blackboard support site at [http://kb.blackboard.com/pages/viewpage.action?pageId=101285989](http://kb.blackboard.com/pages/viewpage.action?pageId=101285989)

In order to participate in this class you must have access to a computer with **reliable** internet access and a valid e-mail address that you check **regularly**, and by regularly I mean daily or nearly so.
If your internet connection is dropped because of a faulty connection or you have other difficulties with your computer, it is your responsibility to troubleshoot the problem yourself. **Computer or network failures are not considered excuses for missing any assignment or quiz in this class, nor is missing important announcements because you didn’t check your e-mail.**

If you do not have a reliable computer and internet connection elsewhere, you can use the computers on the COC campus in The Learning Center (TLC) located in the library extension, room LTL 126. (Please do not use the computers in the COC Student Center as the browsers have a higher security setting and you may not be able to access portions of the course successfully.) If you are not local to the COC campus, you might try a public library for internet access, although computers at such places may not be set up in such a way that they will work properly with Blackboard and often allow users a very limited amount of time.

Toggling between screens, clicking “enter” or “submit” more than once, experiencing a disruption of your internet connection, or remaining logged in to Blackboard for an extended period of time without any activity can contribute to a quiz being recorded as “attempted” by the system whether it was completed or not. Quizzes are not typically reset for students by the instructor under these conditions, so please don’t log into a quiz until you have read the assigned materials and are prepared to complete it within a relatively short period of time with only Blackboard open &/or running.

But, because technical problems do occur on occasion in a class of this nature, I typically make at least a couple of extra credit assignments available during the class to allow students to make-up for a discussion post or quiz missed. Please complete these extra credit assignments while they are available to ensure you maximize your point total in the class.

ABOUT WIRELESS NETWORK CONNECTIONS...
Many of you may be using laptop computers with wireless internet connections. In the past couple of semesters, wireless connections have proven unreliable when completing work in Blackboard, often resulting in work not being submitted properly. If you decide to use a wireless connection, please be sure that it is reliable and will not disconnect while you are completing your work.

Are There Any Class Meetings?
That is an excellent question. All work will be done online and there are no face-to-face classroom meetings. However, you will be required to take exams online in The Learning Center (TLC) located in the library extension, room LTL 126 on the college's main campus if you live locally in the Santa Clarita, Antelope, or San Fernando Valleys. Exams are proctored in the TLC to ensure they are completed without the aid of the textbook or outside notes to maintain the academic rigor of this transferable course. It also ensures that compatible browsers are used for exams, which decreases the number of technological issues experienced while taking each test.

**This means that, even though exams are completed online in Blackboard, they are “closed-book”. NO outside resources of any kind (no textbook, notes, websites, etc.) can be used while completing each exam.** You must rely on your memory of your understanding of the material to complete each exam (much like you would when completing exams in a regular, lecture-based class).
Each of four exams will be available in the TLC on specific dates listed in the course syllabus. Please do not wait until the last minute to take each test! You will need to contact the TLC well in advance to set up an appointment online through the TLC website. The TLC requires students make an appointment at least 48 hours in advance to try to ensure there is a computer available for you use when you arrive. Appointments fill quickly, so you will want to plan to make your appointment to take each exam well in advance. Popping into the TLC at the last minute without an appointment would be taking a great risk of missing an exam, as the TLC serves many students and computer terminals can be occupied for extended periods of time, especially in the afternoons and evenings. Exams must be completed by the submission deadline to be eligible for credit.

If you do not live within the local service area listed above, or if you will be out of the area during one of the examination dates, you will need to find an authorized, alternate educational facility, such as a local community college or university to take each exam. If this applies to you, please contact a proctoring facility, obtain their contact information and contact the TLC (661-362-3349; TLCTestProctor@canyons.edu) and me at least 7-10 working days prior to the exam submission deadline to get everything set up. Since there are a large number of students taking online classes at COC, TLC staff will need some time to verify the status of the facility, complete the necessary paperwork, and send out each exam.

You can complete each quiz from the comfort of wherever you are located, but quizzes must be completed by the submission deadline to be eligible for credit. You will be allowed 20 minutes to complete each 15-16 question quiz. There will not be enough time for you to attempt to look through the textbook to find the answer on each question. In order to complete the quiz within the time allotted time frame, you must rely on your memory of your understanding of the material to complete each quiz (much like you would when completing quizzes in a regular, lecture-based class).

I have done my best to spread the material out across the 15-week semester as much as possible, but we will be moving through the material quickly. You should plan to log into the class on a regular basis a minimum of 4-5 days per week. You are always welcome to work ahead in the discussion posts and you can complete quizzes on whichever days they are available in your folder. A little bit of planning may allow you to navigate around some dates that are problematic for you.

**Are You Ready for Online Coursework?**

As noted above, your work for this class will be completed using Blackboard, an online course management system. Although not a requirement, it will be very helpful if you are familiar with using internet browser software (such as Firefox, Safari, etc.), with sending and receiving e-mail, and with attaching a file to an e-mail message. If you are unsure of your skill level and whether or not you are ready to take a class online, you can take an Online Readiness Assessment by visiting the COC Distance Learning website.
Will This Class be Easy?

If you are already familiar with taking online courses, this class will likely feel comfortable. If this is the first time you have taken an online course, I’d like to point out the differences between the online environment and the traditional classroom. Although online classes have many advantages, including added flexibility, they are unique in several ways and, therefore, may not be for everyone. First, online classes require students to utilize good time management skills and possess a high level of self-motivation, since the instructor is not visible on a daily basis, and "out of sight" can mean "out of mind." Although I make every effort to keep you apprised of deadlines, I will not be visible to you and will not be reminding you of assignment deadlines. It will be your responsibility to log into the class daily to complete assignments, check for new announcements, and review submission deadlines listed in the course syllabus. Second, online courses require students to learn by reading course material and responding in writing on examinations and assignments. If you enjoy reading and feel that you communicate well in writing, then this format may be for you.

While the field of psychology is fascinating, it involves a number of complex terms and concepts that require time and energy to understand, online classes require as much time and effort as traditional face-to-face classes. To successfully complete this online course, you must read the required textbook, complete discussions and other writing assignments, quizzes and exams at a proctoring facility. There is a significant amount of effort: discussions, writing assignments, &/or quizzes will occur weekly and an exam is scheduled each month. Each of four units will consist of an average of 4 chapters that you will need to read, practice, apply to real-life situations, and understand to perform well on quizzes, discussions and exams.

Because this is an online course, you are required to master the material outside of a classroom setting. During this 15-week semester, it will require approximately 10-12 hours per week of studying in order to complete the reading assignments and other work for this class. If you are highly motivated, then this is the course for you. This class promises to provide you with a good overview of the field of psychology, as well as the opportunity to interact with a wide variety of students from many different backgrounds.

If you have specific questions about this course, please contact me at rebecca.shepherd@canyons.edu.

If you have general questions about distance learning programs at College of the Canyons, you can visit the COC Distance Learning website.

Again, welcome to the class! I look forward to working with you during the 2015 Fall Semester!

Best Regards,

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