

School for New Learning  
DePaul University

**IN 307**  
**Psychology of Personal Change:**  
**A Biopsychosocial Approach**  
Course Syllabus  
Fall 2018

Instructor:	Joseph C. Chen, Ph.D.	Tuesdays 5:45 to 9 PM (Sept. 11 – Nov. 20)
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### **COURSE DESCRIPTION**

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Why is change so difficult? A quick walk down the aisle of a bookstore will reveal a wide assortment of texts promoting an array of viewpoints and strategies for change. From medical advice to career development to personal interest, these books aim to provide the reader with a model and process for change, usually by presenting guidelines on how to improve a situation and/or to decrease harmful practices. There are seemingly unlimited streams of solicited or unsolicited ideas for change constantly being presented to the general population. How can we be sure that the presented methodology is grounded and viable? This course will take an in-depth look at the psychology of personal change and the factors that are associated with it. To begin looking at how change occurs, we will draw on several disciplines that will provide an overview of how thoughts and behaviors become patterns and habits (i.e., how individuals get 'stuck in a rut'). From a biological perspective, we will learn how communication in our brain strengthens or weakens according to how often thoughts and behaviors occur. From a psychosocial perspective, we will observe how patterns and habits develop through processes such as learning, observation, and environmental and sociocultural influences. With the help of these perspectives, students will form a foundational understanding of how humans develop their patterns and thoughts, and construct a working model of change focusing on factors that increase the likelihood of success. Lastly, students will be able to apply their knowledge of the working model to analyze a program of change within an area of interest.

### **COMPETENCES**

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- E-1: Can understand and explain a) how humans develop habits/patterns and b) how change occurs from a broad viewpoint incorporating scientific and historical evidence from biological, psychological and social influences.
- Can trace the historical viewpoints of behavior and change that have helped and hindered our understanding of the process
  - Can identify the interconnectedness of how human behavior and thought corresponds to brain changes
  - Can articulate a perspective on the change process based on an analysis of the research

- E-2: Can evaluate a program of change of interest by incorporating key factors from biological, psychological, and social perspectives
- Can articulate the strengths and weaknesses of a current approach of change
  - Can provide recommendations to improve the efficacy of a current approach of change
  - Can apply the program to an area of personal life

## LEARNING STRATEGIES AND RESOURCES

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We will use a variety of learning methods to understand the psychology of personal change.

*Reading materials* are focused around three general perspectives on personal change: neuroscience, psychological science, and group dynamics.

### *Required Texts:*

Students will not be required to purchase textbooks for this course. All readings will be on electronic reserve. Readings assigned are to be due the day of class. There will be required readings, which will be covered in class. Recommended readings are suggested if you are interested in further study and are not required. See the class schedule below.

Students are required to either purchase or obtain a book that covers a change area of interest. This book will be used for the Final Investigative Project (FIP).

*Class discussions* will be vital as we work together as a group to understand the psychology of personal change. The extent of participation will determine the quality of the course – thus students are encouraged to come prepared and to engage.

The course has a strong emphasis on application. Therefore, students will engage in *experiential exercises* that invoke thoughts and feelings in a simulation-based setting. Students will learn practical strategies and have ample opportunities to practice and observe themselves.

*Reflective writing* will be used to facilitate synthesis and consolidation of learning. Students will gain insight into their own experience as well as the implications of their learning.

## LEARNING DELIVERABLES AND ASSESSMENT OF STUDENT LEARNING:

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*Online Discussion Posts (25 points each)* – Almost weekly online discussions will be posted on D2L on the day after each class. The online discussions can vary and will be an article or current event that relates to what we discuss in class. Students are expected to participate in these online discussions and post at least one comment with your thoughts/opinion by the designated due date every week. Students are highly advised to post early on so that an actual online discussion can occur. Students are encouraged to post more than once, as this will facilitate discussion during class as well. Online posts will be graded based mostly on quality and depth of thought. Please use decorum, etiquette, and proper grammar in your posts. There is no minimum or maximum length requirement. Due: 9/18, 9/25, 10/2, 10/9, 10/23, 10/30, 11/6, 11/13

Grammar	= 5 points
<u>Quality/Depth of thought</u>	= 20 points
Total	= 25 points

Insight Papers (50 points each) – These insight papers consist of two major components. First, students will reflect on the material covered in the previous class session. You will be asked to provide your thoughts on the material. Second, students will reflect on its application to their personal area of change. Questions will be provided to help guide your thinking. You will be evaluated on depth of thinking. Repeating what you have learned is not appropriate. Instead, explaining how you are thinking about the material as well as how you think the material applies to your topic is encouraged. Due: 9/18, 9/25, 10/2, 10/9, 10/23, 10/30, 11/6, 11/13

Grammar	= 5 points
Insights gained on course material	= 20 points
<u>Insights gained on application to self</u>	= 25 points
Total	= 50 points

Book Review (100 points) – This book review provides you the opportunity to summarize and understand the main premises of the book of interest. Vital to this review is your understanding of what the author(s) posits as 1) the reason that negative patterns happen and 2) the underlying theory or model for change. It is crucial that you read the book more than once to fully comprehend its basic tenets for in-depth analysis for the Final Investigative Project. Due: 10/16

Grammar	= 5 points
Comprehensiveness of Review	= 55 points
<u>Demonstration of Understanding Foundational Tenets</u>	= 40 points
Total	= 100 points

Final Investigative Project (300 points) – The Final Investigative Project will be due Finals Week (Week 11). Early submissions are encouraged. The Project will assess your ability to understand a program of change that is of interest to you in the form of a book, analyze and assess its utility, and provide sound recommendations to improve it. If you have consistently provided quality Insight Papers throughout the quarter, the final project should be relatively straightforward. The bulk of the assessment for the final project will be your analysis of the book and the recommendations that you provide. The paper should be APA-style or MLA-style (your choice). Page length should be around 13-15 pages; however, quality is of more importance. Due: 11/20

Grammar	= 30 points
Analysis of book	= 170 points
<u>Recommendations</u>	= 100 points
Total	= 300 points

*Attendance and Participation:*

Class attendance and participation is a necessary part of this course. Students who fail to attend more than 2 classes will receive a failing grade. If you foresee absences, please let me know ASAP, preferably at the beginning of the quarter and we will arrange for you to complete assignments. If an emergency arises, please contact me and we can discuss how to proceed.

*Late Work:*

Late submissions will be allowed two weeks past the due date. Submissions after two weeks will not be accepted and you will not receive credit for that assignment. If there are circumstances that preclude you from submitting within the two-week timeframe, please actively discuss with me.

*Overall Grading Scale:*

Online Discussion Posts (8 Total)	= 200 points (25 points each)
Insights Papers (8 Total)	= 400 points (50 points each)
Book Review	= 100 points
Final Investigative Project	= 300 points
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Total	= 1000 points

A	= ≥ 930	C+	= 775 to 794	Fail	= < 595
A-	= 895 to 929	C	= 725 to 774		
B+	= 875 to 894	C-	= 695 to 724		
B	= 825 to 874	D+	= 675 to 694		
B-	= 795 to 824	D	= 595 to 674		

**COURSE SCHEDULE**

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**Week One (September 11): Introduction to the Course**

Required Readings Due:

- Prochaska, J.O. and Norcross, J.C. (2001). Stages of Change. *Psychotherapy* 38(4), 443-448.

Recommended Readings:

- Prochaska, J.O. and Velicer, W.F. (1997). The Transtheoretical Model of Health Behavior. *American Journal of Health Promotion* 12(1), 38-48.
- Mahoney, M.J. (1991). Human change: The ultimate ethical frontier Pp. 3-21 (Chap.1). *Human Change Processes: The Scientific Foundations of Psychotherapy*. New York: Basic Books.
- Mahoney, M.J. (1991). A Brief History of Ideas Pp. 22-48 (Chap. 2). *Human Changes Processes: The Scientific Foundations of Psychotherapy*. New York: Basic Books.

Homework Due:

- None

## Week Two (September 18): Biological Factors - The Brain

### Required Readings Due:

- Garrett, Bob. (2009). The Functions of the Nervous System. Pp. 52-82. in *Brain and Behavior: An Introduction to Biological Psychology*. Sage: Los Angeles.

### Recommended Readings:

- Garrett, Bob. (2009). Learning and Memory. Pp. 363-389 in *Brain and Behavior: An Introduction to Biological Psychology*. Sage: Los Angeles.
- Van Valen, L. (1974). Brain size and intelligence in man. *American Journal of Physical Anthropology* 40, 417-424.

### Homework Due:

- Final Investigative Project Book and Topic
- Online Discussion 1
- IP 1

## Week Three (September 25): Biological Factors – Brain Plasticity

### Required Readings Due:

- Doidge, Norman. (2007). A Woman Perpetually Falling. Pp. 1-26 (Chap. 1) in *The Brain that Changes Itself*. New York: Penguin.
- Gladwell, Malcolm. (2005). Seven Seconds in the Bronx: The Delicate Art of Mind Reading. Pp. 189-244 (Chap. 6) in *Blink: The Power of Thinking without Thinking*. Back Bay Books: New York.
- Steele, C.M. and J. Aronson. (1995). Stereotype threat and the intellectual test performance of African Americans. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 69(5), 797-811.

### Recommended Readings:

- Bargh, John A., Chen, Mark, and Burrows, Lara. (1996). Automaticity of social behavior: Direct effects of trait construct and stereotype activation on action. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 71(2), 230-244.
- Galton, Francis. (1884). The Measurement of Character. *Fortnightly Review* 36: 179-185.
- Galton, Francis. Natural Abilities and the Comparative Worth of Races. Pp. 248-252 in *A History of Psychology: Original Sources and Contemporary Research*. Ed. Ludy T. Benjamin, Jr. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1988.
- Lynn, R. (1991). Race differences in intelligence: A global perspective. *Mankind Quarterly* 31, 255-296.
- Andreasen, N. C., and et al. (1993). Intelligence and brain structure in normal individuals. *American Journal of Psychiatry* 150(1), 130-134.
- Simonton, Dean Keith. (2003). Francis Galton's Hereditary Genius: Its Place in the History and Psychology of Science. Pp. 3-18 in *The Anatomy of Impact: What Makes the Great Works of Psychology Great*. Ed. Robert J. Sternberg. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

Homework Due:

- Online Discussion 2
- IP 2

**Week Four (October 2): Biological Factors - Physical Sensations**Required Readings Due:

- None

Homework Due:

- Online Discussion 3
- IP 3

**Week Five (October 9): Psychological Factors: Thoughts/Cognitions**Required Readings Due:

- Ellis, A., Schaughnessy, M.F., & Mahan, V. (2002). An interview with Albert Ellis about rational-emotive behavior therapy. *North American Journal of Psychology*, 4(3), 355-66
- Beck, A.T. (1963). Thinking and depression: I. Idiosyncratic content and cognitive distortions. *Archives of General Psychiatry*, 9(4), 324-333.
- Carol Dweck

Recommended Readings Due:

- Ellis, A. (1993). Reflections on rational-emotive therapy. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 61(2), 199-201.

Homework Due:

- Online Discussion 4
- IP 4

**Week Six (October 16): Psychological Factors: Behavior**Required Readings Due:

- Watson, John B. (1913). Psychology as the Behaviourist Views It. *Psychological Review* 20(2), 158-177.
- Skinner, B.F. (1958). Reinforcement today. *American Psychologist*, 13(3), 94-99.
- Amy Duckworth

Recommended Readings:

- [Brief Biography on John Watson](http://www.jhu.edu/~jhumag/0400web/35.html) (<http://www.jhu.edu/~jhumag/0400web/35.html>)
- Watson, John B., and Rosalie Rayner. (1920). Conditioned Emotional Reactions. *Journal of Experimental Psychology* 3(1), 1-14.

Homework Due:

- Book Review

### Week Seven (October 23): Psychological Factors: Emotions

Required Readings Due:

- Dan Segal

Recommended Readings:

- [Psychology of Emotions, Feelings, and Thoughts \(http://cnx.org/content/m14358/latest/\)](http://cnx.org/content/m14358/latest/)

Homework Due:

- Online Discussion 5
- IP 5

### Week Eight (October 30): Social Influences

Required Readings Due:

- [Social Learning Theory \(http://teachnet.edb.utexas.edu/~lynda\\_abbott/Social.html\)](http://teachnet.edb.utexas.edu/~lynda_abbott/Social.html)
- Bandura, A. and Cervone, D. (1983). Self-evaluative and self-efficacy mechanisms governing the motivational effects of goal systems. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 45(5), 1017-1028.

Recommended Readings:

- Bandura, A. (1977). Self-efficacy: Toward a unifying theory of behavioral change. *Psychological Review*, 84(2), 191-215.
- Bandura, A. (1989). Human agency in social cognitive theory. *American Psychologist*, 44(9), 1175-1184.

Homework Due:

- Online Discussion 6
- IP 6

### Week Nine (November 6): Social Influences

Required Readings Due:

- Festinger, L. (1954). Theory of social comparison processes. *Human Relations*, 7, 117-14.

Homework Due:

- Online Discussion 7
- IP 7

### Week Ten (November 13): Homeostasis and Equilibrium / Class Presentations

Required Readings Due:

- None

Homework Due:

- Online Discussion 8

- IP 8

### Week Eleven (November 20): No Class

#### Homework Due:

- Final Investigative Project Due
- All question/comments/concerns addressed by today

### COURSE POLICIES:

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Students are expected to be prepared to discuss readings and to actively participate in classroom and online dialogue and assignments. Students are expected to treat others with respect both in person and online. Students are welcome to use technology to take notes. Students are not allowed to audio- or video-record class sessions. While it is understandable that students may need to use mobile devices to deal with urgent personal situations, refrain from using mobile devices during class session.

This course includes and adheres to the college and university policies described in the links below:

[Academic Integrity Policy](#) (UGRAD)

[Academic Integrity Policy](#) (GRAD)

[Incomplete Policy](#)

[Course Withdrawal Timelines and Grade/Fee Consequences](#)

[Accommodations Based on the Impact of a Disability](#)

[Protection of Human Research Participants](#)

[APA citation format](#) (GRAD)

#### Course Resources

[University Center for Writing-based Learning](#)

[SNL Writing Guide](#)

[Dean of Students Office](#)

### INSTRUCTOR BIO

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Joseph C. Chen is a member of the DePaul University faculty, serving as an Associate Professor and Director of Student Support Services in the University's School for New Learning. He earned his B.A. in Psychology from Wheaton College (IL) and completed his doctoral degree at Virginia Commonwealth University, obtaining both a M.S. and Ph.D. in Counseling Psychology. As part of his doctoral education, he completed both a predoctoral internship and a postdoctoral clinical fellowship at the University of California, Berkeley. A licensed clinical psychologist, he maintains his own private practice and is part of a group practice. His research interests revolve around the change process, specifically focused on change within educative and acculturative contexts.