

# INTRODUCTION TO PSYCHOLOGY

Monday/Wednesday | 8:30-9:50 AM | Zoom University + (eventually) THH 201

why are people the way that they are?

why do they do the things that they do?

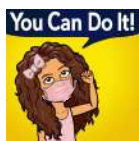
what can psychological science tell me about the world around me?

how can I use that knowledge to make the world a better place?

If these questions (especially the last two) keep you up at night, this is the perfect section of Intro Psych for you. Over the course of the semester, you'll grapple with these questions and learn how to think like budding scientists—a skill that will benefit you through college and beyond, regardless of your major or ultimate career path.

As an introduction to the scientific study of the human mind, we'll cover everything from the organization of our brain cells to the psychology of internet trolling, as well as the scientific methods that help researchers make psychological discoveries. As part of the Provost's "Sustainability Across the Curriculum" Initiative, we'll also discuss the psychology of science denialism and how climate change can impact our health and well-being. Throughout the semester, you will be highly encouraged to apply your knowledge of the material to your own lives, as well as the world around you.

## INSTRUCTIONAL TEAM



**Professor:** Leslie Berntsen, Ph.D.

**Please call me:** Leslie or Dr./Prof. Berntsen (pronouns: she/her)

**How do you pronounce that?** Like the English words "burnt" and "sin"

**Ask me about:** Real-world applications of psychology, becoming a psych major, getting involved in research, graduate school and other psych-based careers, being a first-generation college student, being a student with a disability

**E-mail:** (expect a response within 24-48 hours, except weekends)

**Virtual office hours:** Mondays and Wednesdays: 5:00-6:00 PM

**Make an appointment at:** [leslie-bern.youcanbook.me](https://leslie-bern.youcanbook.me)

**Office:** My living room (Zoom. I mean Zoom.)



**TA:** Cassie (she/her)

**Sections:** W, 12:00 PM; R, 8:00 AM

**E-mail:**

**Office hours:** Available on Blackboard



**TA:** Colin (he/him)

**Sections:** M, 12:00 PM; T, 8:00 AM

**E-mail:**

**Office hours:** Available on Blackboard



**TA:** Lucy (she/her)

**Sections:** T, 10:00 AM; R, 10:00 AM

**Sections:** F, 10:00 AM; F, 12:00 PM

**E-mail:**

**Office hours:** Available on Blackboard



**Ask your TA about:** Course logistics, grades on your assignments, they're a great first stop for pretty much anything you need

## COURSE FORMAT AND ORGANIZATION

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It's going to be quite an adventure to make it through our (good lord) fifth ~unprecedented~ semester, but here's the plan to (hopefully) make things as accessible, organized, and manageable as possible.

In-person lectures will be livestreamed via Zoom, so you'll always have the option to show up, watch in real-time from home, or watch the recording after the fact.

Whenever classes have been moved online, you'll have pre-recorded lecture videos that you're free to watch on your own time. When classes are online, I'll be hanging out on Zoom during "lecture" for extended office hours, so you can pop in if you have any questions or need help with anything, but I won't be lecturing in real time.

Everything you need to know about how class is being conducted on a given day and exactly what was covered, along with links to the videos, can be found in the Live Class Calendar Google doc posted to Blackboard under "Lectures & Quizzes."

## COURSE MATERIALS AND RESOURCES

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**OPTIONAL:** Spielman, Rosie M. (2014). Psychology. OpenStax. Freely available at [openstax.org/details/books/psychology](https://openstax.org/details/books/psychology)

In the spirit of reducing everyone's burden, the textbook is not a required component of the course this semester. If you would like certain concepts explained in more detail or using different words, you're more than welcome to use the textbook as an additional reference, but you will not be held accountable for anything that is not included in the lectures.

FYI, there is always more information in introductory psychology textbooks than could ever make it into a semester's worth of lectures. Mine will consist of the information that I think is the most important/useful/fun, but this textbook will be a great resource for those of you who need to study for the MCAT or Psych GRE at any point in the future

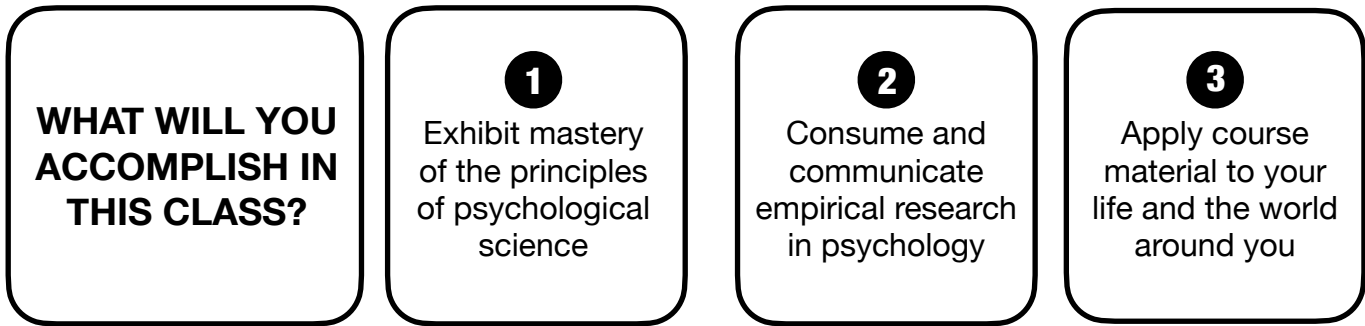


**Blackboard** (accessible through myUSC) is where you'll be able to find all the materials for this class: lecture slides and recordings, a Google doc with all of the optional extra links from lectures, online quizzes and exams, assignment descriptions and rubrics, lab materials, etc.

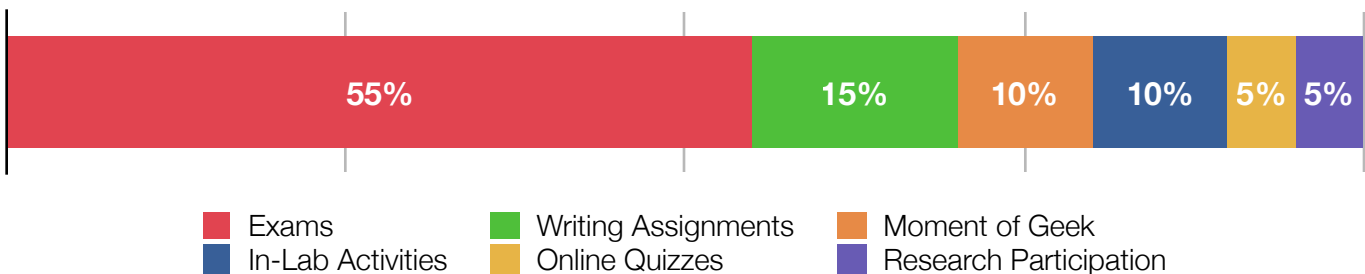
**Piazza** (linked on Blackboard under "Course Logistics") is a searchable Wiki-style website that your TAs and I will use to send announcements and reminders (via email blast). As a bonus, you can also use Piazza to crowdsource answers to any questions you may have about the class. Highly recommend using it to ask (and answer!) questions as we move through the semester.

## LEARNING OBJECTIVES AND ASSESSMENT

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### How will your success be measured?



## LATE/MISSED WORK POLICY

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Needless to say, there's (still) a lot going on. In addition to all of the free drops and the overall choose-your-own-adventure style of the class, we've got different, progressively larger safety nets that will hopefully catch you if it ever becomes necessary.

**1. Automatic 24-hour blanket extension:** For maximum flexibility, you can continue to submit assignments for full credit up to 24 hours after each due date/time listed on the course calendar on the last page, no questions asked and no permission necessary. For this to be as helpful as possible, I recommend doing everything in your power to stick to the "official" listed due dates and then use the blanket extension only when you really *need* it. Otherwise, if you just treat the extension as the new due date for every assignment, you lose the whole "safety net" aspect of the arrangement.

**2. Emergency button:** If the 24-hour blanket extension doesn't take care of you, this is the next option. Everyone starts off the semester with one (1) emergency button that you can use to submit late work for credit after the 24-hour extension period has passed. Whether your emergency button actually gets used up depends on whether the nature/timing of your request creates extra work for us as a teaching team. If you think you'd like to use your emergency button, just fill out the Google form posted to Blackboard under "Course Logistics" and it will walk you through the details/your options.

**3. "Life happened and I need help:"** If you experience any kind of life-altering emergency that impacts your ability to stay afloat in all your classes, this is for you. All you need to do is email me or your TA with those words (that's it!) and we will put you in touch with Campus Support & Intervention so they can help you however you need. Once the dust has settled, we'll work with you to get you caught up and through the finish line in one piece. Please note: You do not need to perform trauma to get our attention; you just need to let us know (very broadly) that you need help and we will make sure you get it.

## COURSE REQUIREMENTS

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### ONLINE QUIZZES

One non-cumulative online quiz at the end of each week will help you check your understanding as we progress through the course. Quiz questions will be multiple-choice and your two lowest quiz grades will be dropped before computing your final grade at the end of the term. Quizzes will be made available on Blackboard each Thursday and, most weeks, should be completed by the start of class (8:30 AM LA local time) the following Monday. (See the course calendar on the last page for a full list of due dates.)

For these online quizzes, you are free to use your notes and/or work together with a classmate. However, I highly recommend taking each quiz for the first time without any outside assistance to see how much (and what kinds of) information you retained from that unit. Then, when taking the quiz again, use your resources to help you answer the questions you got incorrect (and take note of the topics these questions addressed to help yourself identify areas of improvement). You may re-take each quiz as many times as you'd like. I will only count your highest score for each quiz and there are no penalties for additional attempts.

### EXAMS

This course will have four equally weighted exams: **three non-cumulative midterms and one cumulative final exam**. More specific details about the format of the exams will be forthcoming, depending on what this semester has in store for all of us.

No matter what, your single lowest exam grade out of the four will be dropped before computing your final grade at the end of the term.

#### SAVE THE DATES:

February 16th  
April 4th  
April 27th  
May 9th

### WRITING

Writing assignments are your chance to independently reflect on the course material and relate what we are learning to your own life and the world around you. There will be one prompt for every major topic area we cover and you should choose **three writing assignments** to complete over the course of the semester. The only requirement is that you must complete (at least) one of the first four prompts and (at least) two of the first nine prompts (to help you spread out your work). All prompts will be posted to Blackboard at the beginning of the term so you can plan ahead and select accordingly.

These 1.5-2 page (double-spaced) assignments will be due several days to a week after the corresponding topic area has been covered in lecture. (Specific due dates can be found on the course calendar on the last page and the full list of prompts.) They do not need to follow any specific format; just thoughtfully respond to your chosen prompts in a clear and organized manner. (See the rubric posted to Blackboard for more details.)

If you would like to complete more than three writing assignments (e.g., to make up for a lower-than-expected grade), only your three highest scores will be counted. (Note: If you don't meet the distribution requirements specified above, you'll get a zero (that cannot be substituted) for the missing assignment(s).

## COURSE REQUIREMENTS

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### MOMENT OF GEEK

Starting the second week of labs (January 31st), the beginning of each lab section will be reserved for Moment of Geek: an opportunity to polish your presentation skills in an informal, supportive environment, learn how to accessibly communicate scientific research, and most importantly, just geek out about something that fascinates you.

For this assignment, your job is to find an article in the popular press that summarizes the findings of a recent study in psychology or neuroscience, and then, in two minutes or less, share it with your classmates. Explain what the researchers studied, how they studied it, what they found, and why you think it's awesome. (Full assignment description available on Blackboard.)

Everyone will be responsible for completing **two Moment of Geek "presentations"** (to be scheduled in advance) over the course of the semester.

### LAB ACTIVITIES

Each week, your lab sections will consist of Moment of Geek presentations, one or more interactive activities based on recent lecture material, and some time to ask your TA any questions you might have. To accompany the activities, you'll complete a short, self-contained assignment that will be due by the end of the class period. Each week's lab assignment and participation will be graded full/half/no credit for thoughtful completion.

In other words, unless you're scheduled for Moment of Geek that week, you don't need to do anything special to prepare for your lab section, nor will you have any lab-specific homework. You won't be able to make up missed labs by attending a different section, but your three lowest lab activity grades will be dropped at the end of the semester. **Note: Please, please do not show up to lab if you are not feeling well. I promise we will work with you.**

#### LABS BEGIN THE WEEK OF:

January 24th

#### NO LABS THE WEEKS OF:

February 21st  
March 14th  
April 25th

### RESEARCH HOURS

For PSYC 100, the Department of Psychology (i.e., not me personally) requires that each student complete **five SONA research credits** over the course of the semester. More information on registering for the SONA system and signing up for studies will be provided in the first weeks of class and posted to Blackboard.

To receive your SONA points at the end of the semester, you must tell SONA to allocate your credits to this specific lecture section of PSYC 100 (not my other section and not Prof. George's section). If you don't do this (and we have to fix it for you by hand at the end of the semester), you'll only receive credit for 50% of the SONA studies that you completed.

If you would like to participate in a semester-long service-learning experience through USC's Joint Educational Project or complete an alternative assignment (two additional writing assignments) instead of participating in research, you must make this choice (and email me/CC your TA to let us know) by Friday, January 28th.

## EXTRA CREDIT

### SYLLABUS QUIZ

This syllabus is your friend! If you have a logistical question about this class (or even about all the campus resources available to you), the answer is very likely somewhere in this document. (I know it's a lot, but I wrote it all to help you, I promise.)

So, to preemptively reward all of you for your excellent syllabus-checking habits, each of you have the opportunity to earn one percentage point of extra credit (which will be added to your overall grade for the course at the end of the semester) by taking a very quick and laughably easy syllabus quiz on Blackboard (due the first week of class). But here's the catch: Every time you email with one of the specific questions that you have already answered for yourself by taking that quiz (e.g., "How many quiz grades get dropped?"), you will lose a quarter of that point, just like you might on any other quiz.

Of course, we are more than happy to answer other (non-syllabus) questions via email and any/all questions in real time during class time or office hours, so you can absolutely ask us things! Just please also try to meet us halfway and make sure the question hasn't already been answered for you before sending an email. (Pro-tip: You can always return to this syllabus quiz on Blackboard, and this document and Piazza are both fully searchable 😊)

## GRADING POLICIES

Final percentage scores will be rounded up/down to the nearest whole number from .50 and letter grades will be assigned according to the table below

A	A-	B+	B	B-	C+	C	C-	D+	D	D-	F
93-100	90-92	87-89	83-86	80-82	77-79	73-76	70-72	67-69	63-66	60-62	<60

We will not entertain individual appeals for "personalized rounding schemes" nor will we create "extra assignments" for anyone to attempt to raise their grade in the final weeks of the course. (Because it is a question on the syllabus quiz, each such request will be subject to a deduction from the extra credit syllabus quiz point described above.)

**PRO-TIP:** There is absolutely no shame in needing or seeking help. If you become concerned about (or would simply like to improve) your performance in the class at any point, please reach out (to me or your TA) as soon as you can.

## TURNING IN ASSIGNMENTS

Unless otherwise specified, assignments (e.g., online quizzes, writing assignments) should be completed or submitted through Blackboard by the start of lecture on the due date listed on the course calendar on the last page. Remember that you can continue to submit assignments for full credit up to 24 hours after each listed due date/time whenever you realize you need that extra time. (And there's no need to let us know; the 24-hour window is an automatic blanket extension.)

For Moment of Geek, you need to submit your chosen article (also through Blackboard) at least 48 hours prior to the start of the lab session when you're scheduled to present. (Please note that this is a hard 48 hours, and the aforementioned blanket extension doesn't apply here.)



## A NOTE ON COMMUNITY AND WELLNESS

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It is our goal to foster an environment of mutual respect in which everyone can feel comfortable voicing their opinions, sharing their stories, and learning about potentially heavy or personally relevant material. During your first lab session, you'll work together as a group to create community guidelines for your time together. If, at any point, you feel like information covered in this class triggers thoughts, feelings, or concerns that you would like to discuss further, please do not hesitate to reach out to me, your TA, Student Counseling Services, or the (free and anonymous) National Suicide Prevention Hotline.

### **Student Counseling Services**

Consultations: (213) 740-7711  
24/7 support: (213) 740-9355  
Location: ESHC 304

### **National Suicide Prevention Hotline**

1-800-273-8255

## ACCESSIBILITY AND ACCOMMODATIONS

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As a teaching team, we strive to create an environment in which every student is given an equal opportunity to excel. If you are in need of certain accommodations (e.g., extra time on assessments, adaptive technology, class note-taker, etc.) due to any (physical or mental) health condition, please let us know (and contact the Office of Student Accessibility Services) as soon as possible. Remember that any information you share regarding accommodations is confidential and will not be shared with other students.

### **Office of Student Accessibility Services**

Hours: M-F, 8:30 AM - 5:00 PM  
Location: GFS 120  
Phone: (213) 740-0776

This class is designed in such a way that many common accommodations are already built in, but an official letter from OSAS can help ensure that your needs will be met in all of your classes. According to university policy, professors are not obligated to grant individual accommodations without an approved accommodations letter.

### **THE MORE YOU KNOW**

Mental illnesses "count" for disability accommodations under the Americans with Disabilities Act.

For purposes of this class, if there is anything that your TAs or I can do to make our teaching more accessible and inclusive, please don't hesitate to let us know at any time.

If you feel you could benefit from accommodations, please reach out to us or OSAS.

## TECHNOLOGY POLICY: THE GOLDEN RULE

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You are more than welcome to bring laptops, tablets, or any other assistive technology to class if it will help you succeed to the best of your ability. (Laptops will be necessary for certain lab activities and can be borrowed from the Information Commons on the bottom floor of Leavey Library for up to four hours at a time.)

During structured discussions or certain in-class activities, your TA may ask that non-essential technology be set aside to allow for full engagement. Please also note that we reserve the right to revoke your individual technology privileges at any time if you appear excessively/inappropriately distracted or if your technology use appears to be distracting those around you. If you were speaking to a group of people about something you genuinely care about, you'd probably want them to pay full attention to you. Please just be kind.

## ON SEXUAL VIOLENCE, IDENTITY-BASED HARM, AND OTHER PERSONAL CRISES

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If you ask me, this is the single most important part of the syllabus and I need to know that people are aware of this information, so let's try something. If you have read this far, please email me (Dr. Leslie Berntsen) your favorite GIF of Olivia Benson (the fictional sex crimes detective from Law & Order: SVU). This is not a joke, and I am 100% serious. (You will lose half of your aforementioned syllabus quiz extra credit point if you do not brighten my inbox with an Olivia Benson GIF.) Now, the important information:

If you experience sexual violence, identity-based harm, or any other personal crisis at any point during the semester, please don't hesitate to reach out to me and/or your TA so we can (1) help you get caught up in class, (2) put you in contact with the appropriate resources and services, and (3) answer questions to the extent that we are qualified to do so. But, if you'd rather not talk to your professor or TA about these issues, we completely understand. Here are some of those resources (all hyperlinked) that we would have ended up telling you about:

[Relationship & Sexual Violence Prevention & Services](#)

[Student Counseling Services](#)

[Campus Support & Intervention](#)

[Title IX Office](#)

[Office of Equity & Diversity](#)

[Department of Public Safety](#)

[Asian Pacific American Student Services](#)

[Center for Black Cultural & Student Affairs](#)

[La CASA](#)

[LGBT Resource Center](#)

[Office of Religious Life](#)

And finally, for information about your legal rights under Title IX: [Know Your IX](#)

**THE MORE YOU KNOW:** Your TAs and I are required by university policy to report all disclosures of sexual violence to the appropriate campus authorities. But, please know that I am qualified and more than willing to support survivors throughout the process. If you have general questions (that do not reference a specific event), please ask any time.

## ON BASIC NEEDS

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If you ever find yourself struggling to afford food and/or secure a safe and stable place to live and feel like such circumstances are impacting your performance in this class, please speak to me and/or your TA (if you feel comfortable) so that we can provide whatever resources and support we can. For additional information and support, you can also contact [Campus Support & Intervention](#) at (213) 821-4710.

**THE MORE YOU KNOW:** There is an [emergency food and toiletry pantry](#) located in Parkside Apartments #135.



## ON TAKING CARE OF EACH OTHER

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Here's the thing. Wearing some material over your face is (truly) one of the lowest effort/highest impact things you can do out of care for other people. It is quite literally one of the easiest things I have done in my life. I believe in your ability to do this very easy/impactful thing in accordance with university policy.



Me looking out for the well-being of my students and TAs

If you are unwilling to keep both your nose and your mouth (this is how masks work!) covered during any in-person learning, this is not the class for you. Please do not behave in a manner that will lead you to become personally aware of what I mean when I say that. Do this one (1) simple thing and we will have a great time.

## ON EXTRACURRICULAR FAVORS AND REQUESTS

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**THE MORE YOU KNOW:** Research shows that faculty members who are perceived as approachable and dedicated to teaching receive significantly more extra requests from students and colleagues than those who might give off “other” impressions. Although I love to help, please know that if I happen to say “no” to a particular request, it’s likely because I’ve already committed myself to as many things as I (one person) can physically handle. In addition to asking as early as humanly possible, here are some tips to ensure that I can help as many people as meaningfully as possible, depending on what you’re asking me:

**To write a letter of recommendation:** Having served on many selection/review committees, I can promise that letters read much differently when they’re written by someone who can effectively advocate for you because they genuinely know you as a person (vs. someone who has just taught you in a large lecture class). Because I teach 1000 students a year and want to ensure that you receive a letter that meaningfully strengthens your application, please know that I am only able to provide letters for students with whom I have already formed a mutual, two-way mentor/mentee relationship.

Whoever you ask for your letter(s), ask at least four weeks in advance of your earliest deadline and provide all the information you can (e.g., your application materials, detailed submission instructions) to make the process as easy as possible for your letter writers. For more tips on securing strong letters of recommendation, check out [this resource](#).

**To give an interview for a class paper, article, podcast, etc:** Email me or chat with me first to see if I’m (1) the best person to provide the kinds of comments you’re looking for and (2) able to field the request within your desired timeframe.

**To speak on a panel or at another event:** My schedule and accessibility needs are going to be the limiting factors for these kinds of requests, which is all the more reason to ask as early as you can.

**To supervise a research project:** There’s no way you would know this without someone telling you, but there are actually two kinds of professors at a school like USC: those of us who focus primarily on teaching and have up to 1000 students a year (hi!) and then those who focus primarily on research, run their own labs, and maybe teach a class every now and then. Because I’m in that first group, I don’t have the resources to be able to effectively supervise undergraduate research. But, I am always more than happy to help you think through your research interests and figure out which labs in the department might be a good fit; just pop into office hours.

## ACADEMIC INTEGRITY POLICIES

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USC seeks to maintain an optimal learning environment that fosters general principles of academic honesty. These include respecting the intellectual property of others, submitting your own individual work unless otherwise allowed by an instructor, and protecting your own academic work from misuse by others. All students are expected to understand and abide by these principles and be aware of the possible sanctions, which are summarized in [Part B of SCampus](#).

For this class, specific examples of academic dishonesty include, but are not limited to: Falsifying lab attendance or completing an activity for someone who wasn't present during the lab section and submitting any graded material that has been written by another person (including yourself for a previous class) or lifted from the internet, either in part or in full.

If you have any questions about these policies or academic dishonesty in general, your TAs and I would be more than happy to answer them, so please do ask.

**PRO-TIP:** If any part of you feels even slightly tempted to engage in academic dishonesty for the sake of a better grade, come talk to me or your TA and we'll give you all sorts of tips and tricks to earn that grade you're hoping for. If you need more time to complete an assignment, we will work with you, so just let your TA know.

If you cheat, you could be putting your entire degree in jeopardy. You are also guaranteed to lose all of my trust and make me very, very aggravated that I have to deal with it/you.

Do not cheat. That's really all there is to it.

## ACADEMIC RESOURCES

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CAMPUS OFFICE	SERVICES	PHONE	EMAIL
<a href="#">Kortschak Center for Learning and Creativity</a>	General help with college coursework, including study skill tips, test-taking strategies, and stress management	(213) 740-7884	kortschakcenter@usc.edu
<a href="#">The Writing Center</a>	Specific help with writing, including free one-on-one consultations	(213) 740-3691	writing@usc.edu
<a href="#">American Language Institute</a>	Credit-granting courses, one-on-one tutoring, and free informal conversation groups for English language learners	(213) 740-0079	askali@usc.edu
<a href="#">Occupational Therapy Faculty Practice</a>	Lifestyle Redesign program to help foster time management, decrease procrastination, manage stress and anxiety, etc.	(323) 442-3340	otfp@med.usc.edu

# COURSE SCHEDULE

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The schedule on the next page details the planned topic scheduled for each day of lecture, as well as the due dates for all of your assignments.

Remember that you can find updates of exactly what was covered each day, along with links to the lecture recordings (for when classes are held in-person) and pre-recorded lecture videos (for when classes are online), in the Live Class Calendar Google doc posted to Blackboard under “Lectures & Quizzes.”

For a visual summary of what you’ll generally be responsible for each week, check the flow chart below:

