

Introduction to Industrial/Organizational Psychology

PSY 461-01

Semester:	Summer (3) 2026	Instructor:	Eric Christensen, Ph.D.
Meeting day:	Asynchronous	E-mail:	ericchristensen@sfsu.edu
Meeting time:	Asynchronous	Office hours:	Zoom, By Appointment
Location:	Online		

Type of Course: Online – Asynchronous (complete assignments by specified dates)

Course Description from SFSU Bulletin: The focus of this course is on the application of psychological principles and methods in understanding human behavior at work, and to approach and solve problems in business and industry. Addresses such issues as: employee selection, training, and evaluation; working conditions; motivation, leadership, and organizational theory.

Course Materials: This is a Zero-Cost Materials Course. Reading materials and articles will be made available throughout the semester via Canvas and/or the SFSU library website. There is no textbook for this course.

Course Overview:

“Industrial/Organizational (I/O) psychology is both the study of behavior in organizational and work settings and the application of the methods, facts, and principles of psychology to individuals and groups in organizational and work settings. I/O psychologists are versatile behavioral scientists specializing in human behavior in the workplace.” (Society for Industrial Organizational Psychology, APA Division 14)

I/O psychology is an applied science. Therefore, my primary goal is to prepare you with an understanding of the theoretical principles of the field and an awareness of the challenges of practicing our specialty in organizational settings. This course is designed as a high-level overview of the field of Industrial/Organizational Psychology. Our approach will be that of reflection and participation. Together we will navigate through the foundations of our field, in both theory and practice. To that end, the course will be balanced between research and practitioner-oriented viewpoints.

Learning Objectives

By the end of the semester, you should be able to:

- Identify fundamental I/O concepts, topics, and methods;
- Explain how psychology can be applied to benefit workplace behavior;
- Prepare and deliver a business-oriented oral presentation;
- Write an I/O-focused paper in APA style; and
- Discuss issues facing organizations in the current environment.

Learning Activities

You are expected to take an active role in the learning process and engage in the course materials, exercises, activities, etc. The learning activities for this course are:

A) Discussion Posts – (24% of Course Grade)

For each of the 5 modules, you will be asked to answer a formal discussion post prompt (~250 words each) and provide two replies (~100 words each). We have these assignments to allow for student-to-student and student-to-instructor engagement while reinforcing and applying the concepts learned. The discussions can also be used to ask questions, share stories, engage in healthy disagreements, and network among peers. Posts should reference the respective module's reading(s). As the instructor, I will learn from all your contributions and will chime in frequently.

Additionally, each module requires three “experiential learning” discussion posts. These are extremely short posts that simply require logging your completion of a brief task (to connect the material to your experience).

B) Quizzes – (44% of Course Grade)

There will be four quizzes due at roughly even intervals during the term. The quizzes will be multiple-choice format and can be completed anywhere. It is acceptable to use course materials to answer the questions, but you are not allowed to collaborate with others in deriving your responses.

C) Final Paper – (16% of Course Grade)

You are required to write a final paper on a topic related to I/O psychology. The paper is designed to give you experience writing an academic paper and to provide you with the opportunity to explore a single area of I/O psychology. The paper should follow APA guidelines in citing your sources. You will be asked to structure your paper according to the following outline:

- 1) Introduction
- 2) Topic of Interest
 - a) Summary of the topic and relevance to modern organizations
 - b) Artificial intelligence (AI) analysis***
- 3) Conclusion/implications for the future

Although there is no limit as to how long the paper can be, you should write at least 5 pages (double-spaced, not including references).

***AI analysis section:** Include a section in your paper about the impact of AI on your topic. You can actually use AI to write part of this section, but if you do, you must also include a reflection in your own words about the quality of the AI content. Aside from this section, AI should not be used to write your paper. Wikipedia is not a valid academic source, but can be used to identify legitimate research sources from the citations within.

D) Oral Presentation – (16% of Course Grade)

One of the most important competencies for college graduates is the ability to communicate orally. Students of I/O psychology must possess the ability to communicate concepts to audiences who are unfamiliar with the topic at hand. By the end of the term, you will deliver a recorded 5-minute presentation on the same topic you have chosen for your paper. The goal will be to present the topic in a way that is succinct, jargon-free, and engaging. The presentation will take place via recorded video file posted to Canvas (e.g., YouTube link). By sharing your presentation on Canvas, your classmates will have the opportunity to ask questions.

E) Extra Credit (TBD) – On occasion, I may offer opportunities to earn extra credit.

Late work: Assignments submitted after the respective deadline must include written documentation of a circumstance that prevented the student from submitting on time.

Canvas: I utilize Canvas to communicate with the class, to post assignments, and to provide supplemental reading materials. Since this is an asynchronous online class, the lecture recordings will be available through Canvas. The university requires that your SFSU e-mail account be used for Canvas communications. It is your responsibility to check this account for information related to this class.

Disability Access: Students with disabilities who need reasonable accommodations are encouraged to contact the instructor. The Disability Programs and Resource Center (DPRC) is available to facilitate the reasonable accommodations process. The DPRC is located in the Student Service Building and can be reached by telephone (voice/415-338-2472, video phone/415-335-7210) or by email (dprc@sfsu.edu).

Student Disclosures of Sexual Violence: SF State fosters a campus free of sexual violence including sexual harassment, domestic violence, dating violence, stalking, and/or any form of sex or gender discrimination. If you disclose a personal experience as an SF State student, the course instructor is required to notify the Title IX Coordinator by completing the report form available at <http://titleix.sfsu.edu>, emailing vpsaem@sfsu.edu or calling 338-2032.

To disclose any such violence confidentially, contact:

- The SAFE Place - (415) 338-2208; <https://dos.sfsu.edu/safeplace>
- Counseling and Psychological Services Center: (415) 338-2208; <http://psyservs.sfsu.edu/>
- For more information on your rights and available resources: <http://titleix.sfsu.edu>

Religious Holidays: The faculty of San Francisco State University shall accommodate students wishing to observe religious holidays when such observances require students to be absent from class activities. It is the responsibility of the student to inform the instructor, in writing, about such holidays during the first two weeks of the class each semester. If such holidays occur during the first two weeks of the semester, the student must notify the instructor, in writing, at least three days before the date that he/she will be absent. It is the responsibility of the instructor to make every reasonable effort to honor the student request without penalty, and of the student to make up the work missed.

MODULE	TOPICS AND ASSIGNMENTS
1 (Due 7/12)	Introduction/Classroom Administration Issues Overview of the Field Evaluation/Measurement: Methods of Study and Research !! Discussion and Experiential Learning posts
2 (Due 7/19)	Employee Selection Training Performance Appraisal !! Discussion and Experiential Learning posts !! Quiz 1
3 (Due 7/26)	Motivation Attitudes: Job Satisfaction Attitudes: Organizational Commitment !! Discussion and Experiential Learning posts !! Quiz 2
4 (Due 8/2)	Organizational Justice Organizational Citizenship Behaviors (OCBs) Counterproductive Work Behaviors (CWBs) !! Discussion and Experiential Learning posts !! Quiz 3
5 (Due 8/7)	Leadership Organizational Culture/Climate Organizational Change !! Discussion and Experiential Learning posts !! Quiz 4 !! Final Presentation !! Final Paper

***Note – I reserve the right to add/change topics, assignments, and deadlines throughout the semester**