

Seminar in Psychology: Molecules to Behavior

Special Topics: Behavioral Neuroscience

PSYC-6378/4345 Fall 2025

Wednesday 12:00-2:50 pm Mountain Time (Zoom)

Instructor: Sergio Iñiguez, Ph.D. **Phone:** 915-747-5769

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Structure and Goals of the Course: This class has a unique structure intended to provide graduate and upper division undergraduate students with the most up-to-date research findings within the field of behavioral neuroscience. To achieve this, a series of guest speakers (all established leaders across different subdivisions of the neural sciences) will deliver research presentations highlighting their most recent work adopting innovative experimental techniques. This course structure/approach is taken because some of the most important and impression-forming interactions with classmates and professors occur during graduate seminars. Accordingly, this class will provide you with a platform to (1) learn about new research techniques, (2) meet leading researchers who share your research interests, (3) learn about specialty topics within the field of neuroscience (i.e., chemical senses, addiction, depression, learning & memory), and (4) discover alternative career paths (outside of academia) in the field of neuroscience.

Grading (Undergraduate students): Points for this course can be earned in **three** separate ways. Specifically, (1) by attendance (100 points), (2) active participation (asking questions; 50 points), and (3) completing weekly summaries about the researcher's work (50 points); for a total of **200** possible points. **Extra Credit:** Up to 6 extra credit points (3% of the final grade) can be earned by participating in SONA research studies in the Department of Psychology. Extra credit is *DUE* on or before the last day of **regular class** (i.e., before Finals week – see schedule below for specific dates).

GENERAL GRADING SCALE (by %)

A	B	C	D	F
90-100%	80-89%	67-79%	66-60%	≤59%

The following point distribution will determine your final Grade:

UNDERGRADUATE STUDENT GRADING SCALE: TOTAL POINTS (200)

A	B	C	D	F
180-200	160-179	134-159	133-120	≤119.9

Grading (Graduate students): Points for this course will be earned in **four** separate ways. Specifically, (1) by attendance (100 points), (2) active participation (asking questions and/or introducing speakers; 50 points), (3) completing weekly summaries about the researcher's work (50 points), and (4) by submitting a Final **Reaction Paper** (100 points); for a total of **300** possible points. **Extra Credit:** Up to 9 extra credit points (3% of the final grade) can be earned by participating in SONA research studies in the Department of Psychology. Extra credit is *DUE* on or before the last day of **regular class** (i.e., before Finals week).

GRADUATE STUDENT GRADING SCALE: TOTAL POINTS (300)

A	B	C	D	F
270-300	240-269	200-239	199-180	≤179.9

Attendance: Attendance is absolutely required. Given the structure of the class (i.e., having different guest speakers each week) attendance, **via zoom**, will be taken and will count towards your final grade. You can earn up to **100 points** for attendance alone (10 points per class meeting). If you are absent (regardless of the reason), you are not participating, and thus, cannot earn participation-points toward your final grade (so please do not ask if you can make up those attendance points if you are absent – the answer is no).

Participation: It is the responsibility of every student to read the appropriate research article (authored by the guest speaker) before each class session (list of papers will be available on Blackboard). Students should attempt to be active participants (with camera on) in the presentations by asking relevant questions (at the end of the research presentation) – of course, reading about the speaker's previously published work will facilitate this process. Student

participation will be graded both in terms of *quality and quantity* (you can earn up to **50 points**). Active discussions are more interesting than passive learning. Also, keep in mind that we want to impress our speakers by asking astute and thoughtful questions (you can earn up to 10 points within a given session). Obviously, missing class means that you were neither an active or passive participant in that day's presentations, so you will not be able to earn participation points if you miss a class session. During each session, a Graduate student will have to introduce each speaker, so this is a way to earn participation points by the graduate students enrolled in the class.

Weekly Summary Papers: All undergraduate and graduate students are required to submit a 1-page summary of the work presented by the speaker (due by the Friday after each presentation; giving you 2 days to complete it). Each summary paper you submit will earn you 5 points toward your final grade (up to **50 points**). Since we are not going to be recording the sessions, you cannot make up these 5 points if you miss a class session.

***Final Reaction Paper:** Graduate students are required to do one reaction paper (**100 points**). Specifically, you will have to select one published experimental paper (not a review paper) by one of the listed speakers of the course. The paper selected must be published, ideally, within the past 5 years, and pre-approved by me (Prof. Iñiguez). To be on the safe side, you should show me the selected article at least two weeks before the paper due date (**12/03/25**). The reaction paper should be subdivided into 3 sections (about 1 page in length per section). Section 1 should provide a summary of the Introduction (problem being evaluated), highlighting the specific hypothesis postulated. Section 2 should summarize the different experimental techniques adopted, and why they are well suited to evaluate the hypothesis postulated. Section 3 should provide a summary of the Discussion section, while emphasizing how the study *links a biological marker to a specific behavior* (i.e., Molecules to Behavior approach). Reaction papers should be no longer than 4 pages (12 point with one-inch margins in Times New Roman font).

Blackboard Website: The course **syllabus**, **Zoom link** to attend lectures, **readings** (articles from our guest speakers), **announcements**, and **grades** will be posted on the course Blackboard website (<http://my.utep.edu>).

Disabled Student Policies: The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requires that all qualified persons should have equal opportunity and access to education regardless of the presence of any disabling conditions (login page is at: <http://cassportal.utep.edu>). Students with disabilities requiring academic accommodations should contact The Center for Accommodations and Support Services (CASS) office located at Union Building East Room 106 (**915-747-5148**). If you require special provisions, please notify me during the first week of classes with any supporting documentation. For more information contact cass@utep.edu or visit their webpage at: <https://www.utep.edu/student-affairs/cass/>.

Classroom/Zoom behavior is expected to be appropriate for university-level learning. Disruptive talking in class is not allowed (so mute your mic while speakers are presenting their data), as it disturbs the speaker and/or other students. Keep your **camera on** as much as possible, as it displays interest to our guest speakers, who are **donating their time** to present their work to us from other universities. Please help to create an atmosphere of **mutual respect** and commitment to learning.

Plagiarism/Cheating. Plagiarism and/or cheating on exams/assignments are violations of the Student Disciplinary code and will result in an "F" for the course. See UTEP's *Office of Student Conduct and Conflict Resolution* webpage for details: <https://www.utep.edu/student-affairs/osccr/student-conduct/academic-integrity.html>

Fall 2025 Schedule (PSYC4345; Wednesdays 12:00 pm – 2:50 pm Mountain Daylight Time)

Date	Topics/Presenters
08/27	Organizational Meeting: Sergio Iñiguez, PhD – UT El Paso
09/03	Speaker: Antigonia Martinez, PhD – The Nathan Kline Institute for Psychiatric Research
09/10	Speaker: Sergio Dominguez-Lopez, PhD – University at Buffalo Census Day
09/17	Speaker: Christian Bravo-Rivera, PhD – Universidad de Puerto Rico
09/24	Speaker: Brian Kipp, PhD – Mount Sinai School of Medicine
10/01	Speaker: Jessica Santollo, PhD – University of Kentucky
10/08	Speaker: Miguel Arenivar – NIH-Brown Graduate Partnerships Program
10/15	Speaker: Raymond Moody, PhD – University of Connecticut
10/22	Speaker: Javier Rubio Gallego, PhD – National Institute on Drug Abuse
10/29	Speaker: Yakeel Quiroz, PhD – Harvard Medical School Drop/Withdrawal Deadline
11/05	Speaker: Angelica Torres-Berrio, PhD – Harvard Medical School
11/12	Speaker: Cali Calarco, PhD – University of Maryland School of Medicine
11/19	Speaker: Society for Neuroscience (SfN)
11/26	Speaker: Nathan Pentkowski, PhD – University of New Mexico
12/03	Speaker: Alberto Corona, PhD – Mount Sinai School of Med (Extra Credit & Paper Due Date)
12/10	Finals week