COURSE DESCRIPTION

Current trends in psychology

Academic year 2025-2026

1. Programme-related data

1.1. Higher Education Institution	Babeș-Bolyai University
1.2. Faculty	Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences
1.3. Doctoral School	Applied Cognitive Psychology
1.4. Field of study	Psychology
1.5. Level of study	Doctorate

2. Course-related data

2.1. Course title	**Current trends in psychology**			Course code	**SDPCA1**
2.2. Course coordinator	Professor Oana Benga				
2.3. Seminar coordinator	Professor Oana Benga				
2.4. Year of study	I	2.5. Semester	I	2.6. Type of assessment	Viva voce
2.7. Course status	Compulsory			2.8. Course type	Core subject

3. Total estimated time (hours per semester of teaching activities)

3.1. Number of hours per week	**3**	of which: 3.2. course	**2**	3.3. seminar/ laboratory/ project	**1**
3.4. Total of hours in the curriculum	42	of which: 3.5. course	28	3.6. seminar/ laboratory	**14**
Time allocation for individual study (IS) and self-taught activities (ST)					**hours**
Textbook, course material, recommended reading and class notes-based learning (IS)					46
Additional library research in and on electronic platforms					150
Preparing seminars/ laboratories/ projects, assignments, reports, portfolios, and essays					46
Tutoring (professional guidance)					4
Assessments					4
Other activities [i.e.: two-way communication with the course coordinator/tutor]					-
3.7. Total hours of individual study (IS) and self-taught activities (ST)				**208**	
3.8. Total hours per semester				**250**	
3.9. Number of credits				**10**	

4. Prerequisites (where applicable)

4.1. curriculum-related	Developmental psychology; Cognitive Psychology; Neuroscience; Research methods
4.2 skills-related	-

5. Specific conditions (where applicable)

5.1. course-related	Computer, projector
5.2. seminar/laboratory-related	Computer, projector

6. Subject-specific learning outcomes

Knowledge
1. Understands major contemporary trends in psychological science, including theoretical, methodological, technological, and applied developments.

2. Is familiar with current debates concerning psychological theory, research methods, open science, replicability, and the use of emerging technologies in psychology.
Skills
1. Critically analyzes recent scientific literature in psychology and identifies the theoretical and methodological implications of new research directions.
2. Applies contemporary concepts and approaches in psychology to formulate relevant research questions and interpret empirical findings.
Responsibility and autonomy
1. Critically evaluates the scientific and ethical implications of new trends in psychological research and practice.
2. Works autonomously in documenting, synthesizing, and presenting recent developments in psychology, using relevant scientific sources and professional standards.

7. Contents

7.1. Course	**Teaching and learning methods**	**Remarks[1]**
1. Introduction: how contemporary psychology is changing	Lecture, presentation, discussions	
2. From isolated variables to complex psychological systems	Lecture, presentation, discussions	
3. Network approaches to mental health and psychological functioning	Lecture, presentation, discussions	
4. Transdiagnostic models in contemporary clinical psychology	Lecture, presentation, discussions	
5. Computational psychology and formal modeling of psychological processes	Lecture, presentation, discussions	
6. Artificial intelligence and psychology: research, assessment, and intervention	Lecture, presentation, discussions	
7. Digital phenotyping and passive sensing in psychological research	Lecture, presentation, discussions	
8. Ecological assessment of behavior and experience in everyday life	Lecture, presentation, discussions	
9. Personalized psychology and idiographic approaches	Lecture, presentation, discussions	
10. Neuroscience-informed models of cognition, emotion, and behavior	Lecture, presentation, discussions	
11. Genetics, epigenetics, and developmental plasticity in psychology	Lecture, presentation, discussions	
12. Embodied, embedded, and extended approaches to cognition	Lecture, presentation, discussions	
13. Cultural and global perspectives on psychological processes	Lecture, presentation, discussions	
14. Future directions in psychology: interdisciplinarity, innovation, and societal impact	Lecture, presentation, discussions	

Bibliography

Barrett, L. F. (2017). How emotions are made: The secret life of the brain. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.

[1] For example, organisational aspects, recommendations for students, specific aspects relating to the course/seminar, such as inviting experts in the field, etc.

Borsboom, D. (2017). A network theory of mental disorders. World Psychiatry, 16(1), 5–13. https://doi.org/10.1002/wps.20375
Chemero, A. (2009). Radical embodied cognitive science. MIT Press.
Henrich, J., Heine, S. J., & Norenzayan, A. (2010). The weirdest people in the world? Behavioral and Brain Sciences, 33(2–3), 61–83. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0140525X0999152X
Huys, Q. J. M., Maia, T. V., & Frank, M. J. (2016). Computational psychiatry as a bridge from neuroscience to clinical applications. Nature Neuroscience, 19(3), 404–413. https://doi.org/10.1038/nn.4238
Insel, T., Cuthbert, B., Garvey, M., Heinssen, R., Pine, D. S., Quinn, K., Sanislow, C., & Wang, P. (2010). Research Domain Criteria: Toward a new classification framework for research on mental disorders. American Journal of Psychiatry, 167(7), 748–751. https://doi.org/10.1176/appi.ajp.2010.09091379
Kotov, R., Krueger, R. F., Watson, D., Achenbach, T. M., Althoff, R. R., Bagby, R. M., Brown, T. A., Carpenter, W. T., Caspi, A., Clark, L. A., Eaton, N. R., Forbes, M. K., et al. (2017). The Hierarchical Taxonomy of Psychopathology: A dimensional alternative to traditional nosologies. Journal of Abnormal Psychology, 126(4), 454–477. https://doi.org/10.1037/abn0000258
Miller, T. (2019). Explanation in artificial intelligence: Insights from the social sciences. Artificial Intelligence, 267, 1–38. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.artint.2018.07.007
Onnela, J.-P., & Rauch, S. L. (2016). Harnessing smartphone-based digital phenotyping to enhance behavioral and mental health. Neuropsychopharmacology, 41, 1691–1696. https://doi.org/10.1038/npp.2016.7
Shapiro, L. (2019). Embodied cognition (2nd ed.). Routledge.
Summerfield, C. (2025). These strange new minds: How AI learned to talk and what it means. Viking / Penguin.
Torous, J., Bucci, S., Bell, I. H., Kessing, L. V., Faurholt-Jepsen, M., Whelan, P., Carvalho, A. F., Keshavan, M., Linardon, J., & Firth, J. (2021). The growing field of digital psychiatry: Current evidence and the future of apps, social media, chatbots, and virtual reality. World Psychiatry, 20(3), 318–335. https://doi.org/10.1002/wps.20883

7.2. Seminar/ laboratory	**Teaching and learning methods**	**Remarks**
1. Mapping recent trends in psychology: group discussion	Debate, working in teams	
2. Case analysis: psychological phenomena as complex systems	Debate, working in teams	
3. Reading and discussion: network models of mental health	Debate, working in teams	
4. Applied debate: advantages and limits of transdiagnostic approaches	Debate, working in teams	
5. Formalizing psychological theories: examples and exercises	Debate, working in teams	
6. Practical analysis: possible uses of artificial intelligence in psychological assessment and intervention	Debate, working in teams	
7. Digital phenotyping: analysis of examples and ethical challenges	Debate, working in teams	
8. Designing an ecological assessment protocol for everyday psychological processes	Debate, working in teams	
9. Idiographic approaches: case formulation and personalized psychological profiles	Debate, working in teams	
10. Discussion of neuroscience-informed explanations of cognition, emotion, and behavior	Debate, working in teams	
11. Gene–environment interplay: analysis of contemporary examples	Debate, working in teams	
12. Embodied cognition: applications in research and practice	Debate, working in teams	

13. Cross-cultural analysis of psychological constructs and findings	Debate, working in teams	
14. Final debate: future directions and societal impact of contemporary psychology	Debate, working in teams	

8. Assessment

Type of activity	8.1 Evaluation criteria[2]	8.2 Evaluation methods[3]	8.3 Percentage in the final grade
8.4. Course	Course material-based applied project	Project	80%
8.5. Seminar/ laboratory	Seminar material-based applied project	Project	20%
8.6 Minimum standard for passing			
Demonstrates a sound understanding of the core theoretical and practical aspects of the course. Presents and discusses the required assignments			

9. SDG labels (Sustainable Development Goals)[4]

	○	Sustainable Development Generic Label
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	○	No label applies

Date of entry:
April 2026

Signature of course coordinator

Professor Oana Benga

Signature of seminar coordinator

Professor Oana Benga

[2] The evaluation criteria must directly reflect the learning outcomes targeted at the level of the degree programme respectively at the level of the subject. More specifically, the learning outcomes set out in the expected learning outcomes are assessed.

[3] Both final evaluation methods and ongoing evaluation strategies should be established.

[4] Select a single label which, according to the *Implementation of SDG labels in the academic process*, best matches the subject. If the subject addresses sustainable development in a generic manner (i.e. by presenting/introducing the general framework of sustainable development, etc.), then the Sustainable Development generic label may be applied. If none of the labels describe the subject, select the last option: *"No label applies."*

Date of approval in the department:
April 2026

Signature of the head of department

Professor Oana Benga