

PSY 816 Current Topics in Work and Organizational Psychology

Instructor

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Course Description

This course is an introduction to industrial and organizational psychology which will provide a critical examination of people at work. It is designed to be a survey class and covers a wide range of traditional and contemporary topics in the field. Traditionally, industrial psychology is concerned with human resource functions such as analyzing jobs, and recruiting, selecting, training, and appraising employees. Organizational psychology explores topics such as employee attitudes, work behaviors, motivation, and leadership. Contemporary developments in the I-O field include issues related to employee diversity, affect and emotions, and justice perceptions.

Course Objectives

By the end of this course, students should be able to:

1. Discuss the roles of I-O psychologists play in industry, government, and academia;
2. Explain and evaluate major concepts and theories in the I-O psychology field;
3. Perform basic human resource functions for an organization; and
4. Apply principles of I-O psychology to understand people's behaviors at work.

Course Materials

- 1) Weekly assigned readings (see schedule)
- 2) Optional textbook: I list two optional textbook for additional reference – but any of the I-O psychology textbook will be acceptable to provide you with additional background information for the course.
 - a. Levy, P. E., O'Malley, A., & Riordan, B. (2025). *Industrial/Organizational Psychology: Understanding the Workplace* (7th edition). New York: Macmillan.
 - b. Spector, P. E. (2017). *Industrial-Organizational Psychology: Research and Practice* (7th edition).

Time Zones

All times and due dates listed in this syllabus are for Eastern Time. If you are taking this course in a different time zone, you will want to be aware of this and change your time zone to Eastern Time so that you don't miss any due dates/times.

Course Credit Hours

2

Course Website: D2L

This offering of PSY816 will be held entirely online through the Desire 2 Learn (D2L) course management system (<https://d2l.msu.edu/>). All lectures, discussion posts, and quizzes will be administered online on

D2L. Due to the online nature of this class, you will need to have a high-quality computer with consistent access to a high-speed internet connection. **You need to have access to high-speed internet when all of the course assignments are due.** If your internet connection is down when you need to turn in a homework assignment or take a quiz, it is your responsibility to get access to the internet ASAP! **In the case of missing deadlines because of internet connectivity problems, I will not give extensions on quizzes and homework assignments.** Access to a printer is also strongly recommended.

Please follow these suggestions to prevent problems during your participation in this course:

1. Use a recommended browser, like Chrome or Firefox.
2. Clear your cache and cookies before starting a quiz, homework assignment, or test/exam.
3. Have D2L open only to the quiz/homework/test/exam browser. If you have the course open in a second browser then you may have guest status in the exam browser and be logged in with your NETID in the other. Your quiz could end up with blank sections even after you enter data or it can skip questions.

Technical Assistance

If you need technical assistance at any time during the course or to report a problem, you can:

- Visit the Distance Learning Services Support Site at <https://lib.msu.edu/dls/>
- Visit the Desire2Learn Help Site at <http://help.d2l.msu.edu/>
- Or call Distance Learning Services (D2L Help Line) at (800) 500-1554 or (517) 355-2345
- If you experience other technological issues, including D2L outside of business hours EST, call the MSU Help Line at (844) 678-6200 or (517) 432-6200. Help is available 24 hours / 7 days a week! The help line can also help troubleshoot issues with your computer. **Time differences will not be an acceptable excuse for not reporting problems to the help line; they are available 24/7 throughout the course.**

Many professors and instructors have found the Help Line very useful. It is my recommendation to take advantage of the Help Line or MSU Help Line before emailing me with any questions or concerns about D2L or other technical issues.

Course Components

The course will consist of the following components and activities: (1) Online lectures; (2) Weekly discussion post and reactions; (3) Weekly live session participation; (4) Weekly quiz; and (5) Weekly project papers.

Course Grading

Assignments	Number	Points each	Total points
Discussion post	5	15	75 points
Discussion reactions	10	5	50 points
Weekly lecture quizzes	5	10	50 points
Weekly project papers	5	25	125 points
Total			300 points

Final Course Grade Scale (based on a percentage system)

Percentage	Points	Grade
90–100	270-300	4.0
85–89.9	255-269	3.5
80–84.9	240-254	3.0
75–79.9	225-239	2.5
70–74.9	210-224	2.0
65–69.9	195-209	1.5
60–64.9	180-194	1.0
0–59.9	< 180	0.0

Make-up Policy

All assignments, quizzes, and posts must be completed when scheduled. Unless *prior permission* has been obtained, **NO** late or makeup assignments or tests will be accepted or given. Permission may be granted for those who contact the instructor *prior* to the scheduled date, and provide the instructor with valid documentation related to the absence either before or after the absence.

Limits to Confidentiality

Essays, discussion posts, and other materials submitted for this class are generally considered confidential pursuant to the University's student record policies. However, students should be aware that University employees, including instructors, may not be able to maintain confidentiality when it conflicts with their responsibility to report certain issues to protect the health and safety of MSU community members and others. As the instructor, I must report the following information to other University offices (including the MSU Police Department) if you share it with me:

- Suspected child abuse/neglect, even if this maltreatment happened when you were a child,
- Allegations of sexual assault or sexual harassment when they involve MSU students, faculty, or staff, and
- Credible threats of harm to oneself or to others.

These reports may trigger contact from a campus official who will want to talk with you about the incident that you have shared. In almost all cases, it will be your decision whether you wish to speak with that individual. If you would like to talk about these events in a more confidential setting you are encouraged to make an appointment with the MSU Counseling Center.

Inclusive Environment

MSU is committed to creating and maintaining an inclusive community in which students, faculty, and staff can work together in an atmosphere free from all forms of discrimination. The Office of Institutional Equity (OIE) reviews concerns related to discrimination and harassment based on sex, gender, gender identity, race, national origin, religion, disability status, and any other protected categories under the University Anti-Discrimination Policy (https://www.hr.msu.edu/policies-procedures/university-wide/ADP_policy.html) and Policy on Relationship Violence and Sexual Misconduct (<https://civilrights.msu.edu/policies/rvsm.html>). If you experience or witness acts of bias, discrimination, or harassment, please report these to OIE: <http://oie.msu.edu/>.

Religious Holiday

The official university policy is as follows:

It has always been the policy of the University to permit students and faculty to observe those holidays set aside by their chosen religious faith.

The faculty and staff should be sensitive to the observance of these holidays so that students who absent themselves from classes on these days are not seriously disadvantaged. It is the responsibility of those students who wish to be absent to make arrangements in advance with their instructors. It is also the responsibility of those faculty who wish to be absent to make arrangements in advance with their chairpersons, who shall assume the responsibility for covering their classes.

As Michigan State University has become increasingly multicultural, the incidence of conflicts between mandatory academic requirements and religious observances has increased. In the absence of a simple and dignified way to determine the validity of individual claims, the claim of a religious conflict should be accepted at face value. Be aware that some degrees of observance may have a more extensive period of observance. Instructors may expect a reasonable limit to the number of requests by any one student. Some instructors attempt to cover all reasons for student absences from required academic events such as quizzes or exams with a blanket policy, e.g., allowing the student to drop one grade or two quizzes without penalty. If this is meant to extend to religious observances, the instructor should state this clearly at the beginning of the term. If instructors require make-up exams, they retain the right to determine the content of the exams and the conditions of administration, giving due consideration to equitable treatment.

Misconduct

Cheating, plagiarism, or other forms of academic dishonesty will result in failure of the course.

The official university policy is as follows:

The principles of truth and honesty are fundamental to the educational process and the academic integrity of the University; therefore, no student shall:

- 1. claim or submit the academic work of another as one's own.*
- 2. procure, provide, accept or use any materials containing questions or answers to any examination or assignment without proper authorization.*
- 3. complete or attempt to complete any assignment or examination for another individual without proper authorization.*
- 4. allow any examination or assignment to be completed for oneself, in part or in total, by another without proper authorization.*
- 5. alter, tamper with, appropriate, destroy or otherwise interfere with the research, resources, or other academic work of another person.*
- 6. fabricate or falsify data or results.*

Disruptive Behavior

Article 2.III.B.4 of the Student Rights and Responsibilities (SRR) for students at Michigan State University states: "The student's behavior in the classroom shall be conducive to the teaching and learning process for all concerned." Article 2.III.B.10 of the SRR states that "The student and the faculty share the responsibility for maintaining professional relationships based on mutual trust and civility." General Student Regulation 5.02 states: "No student shall . . . interfere with the functions and services of the University (for example, but not limited to, classes . . .) such that the function or service is obstructed or disrupted. Students whose conduct adversely affects the learning environment in this classroom may be subject to disciplinary action."

Incomplete Policy

The official university policy is as follows:

The I-Incomplete may be given only when: the student (a) has completed at least 6/7 of the term of instruction, but is unable to complete the class work and/or take the final examination because of illness or other compelling reason; and (b) has done satisfactory work in the course; and (c) in the instructor's judgment can complete the required work without repeating the course.

Provided these conditions are met, the instructor electing to give an I-Incomplete files an Agreement for Completion of (I) Incomplete at the time course grades are due. This agreement specifies what the student must do, and when, to remove the I-Incomplete. The department or school office gives a copy to the student, and retains a copy for at least one year.

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

Michigan State University is committed to providing equal opportunity for participation in all programs, services and activities. Requests for accommodations by persons with disabilities may be made by contacting the Resource Center for Persons with Disabilities at 517-884-RCPD or on the web at rcpd.msu.edu. Once your eligibility for an accommodation has been determined, you will be issued a Verified Individual Services Accommodation ("VISA") form. Please present this form to me **at the start of the term and/or one week prior to the accommodation date** (test, project, etc.). Requests received without sufficient lead time will not be honored.

Attendance

Attendance to the live lecture session is not mandatory but strongly encouraged. The live lecture will be recorded so if you have a conflict, you can still watch the recorded session. You are expected to be aware of any changes to the course schedule and dates when assignments are due. Communication will occur via your MSU email and through D2L course announcement.

Generative AI policy

MSU has general recommendations for use of generative AI tools (<https://tech.msu.edu/about/guidelines-policies/generative-ai/>) and allows faculty members to set our own policy regarding the use of ChatGPT and other generative AI tools for coursework. For this course, please note that students are expected to generate your own work, particularly in terms of the content. If you use ChatGPT or other generative AI tools to edit, change, rephrase, or expand your work, you must make it clear by providing a description of what tool was used, how you used the tool, and how it changed the document or discussion posts that you submit for grading.

Course Schedule

Week 1: The field of work and organizational psychology

We will introduce the field of work and organizational psychology, research methods, and ethics.

Online lectures:

1. Work and organizational psychology: A brief history
2. Research methods
3. Ethical conduct of research: please complete the following CITI training modules (see the orientation on D2L, Module 3, CITI training for more information on how to access the training)
 - a. Introduction to the Responsible Conduct of Research
 - b. Authorship
 - c. Plagiarism
 - d. Research Misconduct
4. Research ethics in organization – live lecture

Required reading assignment:

1. Kozlowski, S. W. J. (2012). The nature of organizational psychology. In S. W. J. Kozlowski (Ed.), *The Oxford handbook of organizational psychology* (Vol. 1, pp. 3-21). New York: Oxford University Press. [Focus on the front end of this chapter: you don't have to go through the overview of the handbook starting from pp. 13 of the chapter.]
2. Latham, G. P. (2001). The reciprocal transfer of learning from journals to practice. *Applied Psychology: An International Review*, 50, 201-211.
3. One research method chapter from any one of the three textbooks:
 - a. Chapter 2 from Levy et al.'s book;
 - b. Chapter 2 from Spector's book; or
 - c. Chapter 2 from Conte and Landy's book

Discussion posts:

As a student in this program, your primary interest is likely to be seeking an applied career after getting your degree. However, the work and organizational psychology emphasizes the scientist-practitioner model in the training. Reflect on the following question and post your answers on the discussion board: How do you think you can best embody or achieve the Scientist-Practitioner model of work and organizational psychology as you progress through the degree?

In addition to your own post, you should also respond to 2 other students' posts. Your responses can focus on how you may learn from each other for developing your scientist and/or practitioner skills.

Weekly Project

Take a look at the 3 example pairs of the "scientific" journal publication, and their "in-brief" summary that is published in a popular press outlet. Search and identify a journal article that interests you (see the library guide for additional information), and write up an "in-brief" summary of the article's main findings. The additional resource for library search will be helpful to familiarize yourself with the MSU library resources.

When you submit your project, please include both the original journal article along with your summary.

Week 2: Future of occupations

We will start with the fundamental building block of I-O psychology and discuss job analysis, and how this tool can help us forecast the future of work and occupations.

Online lectures:

1. Job analysis: Overview
2. Work-oriented job analysis
3. Worker-oriented job analysis
4. Preparing for future of work – live session

Required reading assignment:

1. Brannick, M. T., Levine, E. L., & Morgeson, F. P. (2002). Chapter 2: Work-oriented methods. *Job and work analysis: Methods, research, and applications for human resource management* (pp. 23-60).
 - a. Focus only on functional job analysis, task inventory, and critical incident techniques
2. Brannick, M. T., Levine, E. L., & Morgeson, F. P. (2002). Chapter 3: Worker-oriented methods. *Job and work analysis: Methods, research, and applications for human resource management* (pp. 61-90).
 - a. Focus only on job element method, position analysis questionnaire, and cognitive task analysis
3. Whitehouse, T. (2024). Tight job market? Maybe it's time for a new talent approach. *Wall Street Journal*.
4. Kinder, (2024). The AI revolution is coming for your non-union job. *Time*.

Discussion posts:

Conduct a mini job analysis of **your current job** and identify five key tasks that you currently perform, and five KSAs that are necessarily to perform your job effectively. Based on your job analysis results and the readings, prepare your answers to the following questions:

1. How do you think your job tasks and the KSAs required to perform your job will change in 5 years, and what makes you make this specific prediction?
2. How do you prepare yourself for the change?

Post a short description of the job tasks/KSAs that you focused on, and your forecasts about them on the discussion board.

In addition to your own post, you should also respond to 2 other students' posts. For example, you may want to comment on:

1. Any additional changes that you can see to their job tasks/KSAs and why you make such predictions;
2. Any comparisons between your own experiences and the other students' experiences; or
3. Any additional suggestions for how the other students' may prepare for the changes.

Weekly Project

Please submit the writeup of your mini job analysis for your current job. Please be sure to include a job title, a summary statement of what your job entails, and the five key tasks and five KSAs.

Week 3: Managing performance in the changing workplace

We will discuss critical concepts and processes in performance management, and how the changing work design and technology may create challenges for how performance is managed in the changing workplace.

Online lectures:

1. Performance management: An overview
2. Performance management: Measuring performance
3. Performance management: Contextual considerations
4. Performance management in the changing workplace – live lecture

Reading assignment:

1. Ford, D. & Hunt, S. T. (2018). A critical evaluation of performance management trends. SIOP White paper series. Bowling Green, OH: SIOP.
2. Liebler, K. (2025). Words beat numbers in employee performance reviews. AOM insights.
3. Bloom, N., Liang, J., & Han, R. (2024). One company A/B tested hybrid work. Here's what they found. HBR.
4. Cappelli, P. & Nehmeh, R. (2024). Hybrid still isn't working. HBR.
5. Hamrick, A. B., Thiel, C., Zafar, S., LePine, J., & Wesson, M. (2025). Research: A better way to keep tabs on your remote workforce. HBR.
6. Fernandez, J. (2024). How to talk to an employee who isn't meeting expectations. HBR.
7. Howard, R. (2024). High performers need feedback, too. HBR.

Discussion posts:

Think back to your mini job analysis results and think about how your performance is evaluated in your current job. Reflect on how you may apply the materials from this week to improve your current performance management system both from the design and the implementation aspects. For example, some questions you may want to answer include:

1. What aspects or dimensions of performance are measured in your current appraisal system?
2. How is performance measured and how can the measurement of performance be improved?
3. What are some contextual considerations that may affect the results of the performance evaluation and whether workers use the feedback?

Post your reflection in the discussion board. In addition, you should also respond to 2 other students' posts. Your responses can focus on any directions, as long as they link back to the materials that we covered this week.

Weekly Project

Based on the results of your mini job analysis from last week, pick two major job tasks and build a performance management system around these two tasks by completing the following steps.

1. Please provide the job title and the two major job tasks that you will focus on for this project.
2. For each job task, build a BARS measure by generating 1 example of highly effective behavior, 1 example of moderately effective behavior, and 1 example of highly ineffective behavior for the task. Repeat that for the second task of your choice. If you feel that you need more than one BARS item to fully capture the performance on that task, please feel free to generate a second BARS item for the task.
3. Now you have the measurement tool (i.e., anchors for the BARS for measuring performance on these two tasks), describe how your system will utilize the tool to assess performance. Be sure

to describe the purpose of your performance evaluation system, how often the measurement will occur, who will perform the rating, how will feedback be communicated, and any other potential contextual facilitators and barriers that may influence how well this performance evaluation system works.

Week 4: Interpersonal relations

This week will provide an overview of different types of dyadic relationships (e.g., coworkers; leader-subordinate), and teams within the organization.

Online lectures:

1. Dyadic peer relationships
2. Leadership and followership
3. Teams
4. Diversity and inclusion
5. Working in teams – live lecture

Reading assignment:

1. Petriglieri, G. (2024). How to make better friends at work. MIT Sloan Management Review.
2. Bratsis, (2016). Top 10 pitfalls of workplace friendships. AoM Insights.
3. Knight, R. (2025). How to tell your boss they're wrong – tactfully. HBR.
4. Coleman, P. T. (2025). The conflict-intelligent leader. HBR.
5. Fisher (2021). Employees prefer leaders who learn from, not avoid, errors. AoM Insights.
6. Gallo, A. (2025). How to encourage the right kind of conflict on your team. HBR.
7. Gonzales, M. (2023). Why belonging matters. HR magazine.
8. Roberson, Q. (2024). How integrating DEI into strategy lifts performance. MIT Sloan Management Review.

Discussion posts:

What are the new challenges at a broader, societal level that are faced by today's leaders in organizations? To what extent is the current knowledge about effective leadership and/or followership still applicable? What are some pressing topics we need to understand to help leaders to adapt to fit today's world?

Post your reflection in the discussion board. In addition, you should also respond to 2 other students' posts. Your responses can focus on any direction, as long as they link back to the materials that we covered this week.

Weekly Project

Below is a description of someone's experience working on a team:

Chris has been assigned to lead a team of 10 people to plan a major customer appreciation event. The team has been working together for over a month now and members just haven't really come together as a team. Chris was trying to start off well: Chris contacted each individual on the team and let them know their responsibilities on the project.

Each of the members would usually get the tasks completed, but doesn't seem concerned with the others on the team. If someone needs help, no one pitches in to assist. If a team member has a problem, no one helps them to solve that problem. Just yesterday one of the team members had an emergency and asked if someone on the team could have a call with the sales team so she could leave early. No one offered to help, and the call ended up being rescheduled, which would cause some delay to the project. This was a bad experience for everyone frankly and some folks already were talking about getting off the project. Chris felt the event won't be as good as it could if they just came together as a team.

You are assigned to help Chris and this team to come together so that they can deliver on the customer appreciation event. Based on what you know about interpersonal dynamics, teams, and leadership, describe how you would go about helping the team. What information would you collect to help you diagnose the issue and how would you collect the information? What patterns are you looking for from the information you collect? What recommendations would you make to Chris to better lead the team? What recommendations would you make to the team members to facilitate teamwork? How would the information inform your recommendations?

Week 5: Building an engaging and healthy workplace

This week will provide an overview of employee attitudes, engagement, and well-being in the organization.

Online lectures:

1. Employee attitudes and engagement
2. Employee motivation
3. Employee stress and well-being
4. Employee engagement and well-being in a changing world of work – live lecture

Reading assignment:

1. Bratsis (2018). Keep calm and carry on: Five tips about anger at work. AOM insights.
2. Crain, T. L., & Barber, L. K. (2018). Sick, unsafe, and unproductive: Poor employee sleep is bad for business. SIOP white paper series.
3. Pendell, R. (2025). The remote work paradox: Higher engagement, lower wellbeing. Gallup.
4. Camilleri, A. R., & Neelim, A. (2025). How gamification can boost employee engagement. HBR.
5. Parker, S. & Knight, C. (2024). Design work to prevent burnout. MIT Sloan Management Review.
6. Fritz, C. & Ellis, A. M. (2015). A marathon, not a sprint: The benefits of taking time to recover from work demands. SIOP white paper series.
7. Bauer, H. (2025). HBR's best practices for supporting employee mental health. HBR.

Discussion posts:

Can organizations implement policies that can simultaneously improve employee engagement, motivation and performance, and well-being all at the same time? What are some tradeoffs that we should consider and how do we manage these tradeoffs?

Post your reflection in the discussion board. In addition, you should also respond to 2 other students' posts.

Weekly Project

Complete an analysis of worker stress using an inductive approach and report your findings.

1. Ask five people you know (acquaintances, family members, or friends) to tell you a stressful event at work that occurred to them in the past 30 days. Ask them to describe what led up to it, what happened, and how they responded.
2. Ask them about the characteristics of their jobs. What type of organization do they work for? What is their position? What are their major job duties? What are some key features of their work environment?
3. When you have both the stressful event and the job information from your participants, look them over and see what patterns you can extract regarding the stressful work events and their reactions. For example, you may want to see if any of them fit with our discussion of the different stressors. You may want to identify some patterns of their responses and whether these responses were effective or not effective. Finally, see if you can identify links between their job characteristics and their stress experience.