A comprehensive overview of the study of personality in nonhuman animals. Discussions and readings will cover theoretical principles, methodological approaches, the range of species in which personality-like phenomena are documented, and the intersection between personality, ecology, and evolution.

---

**General Information:**

Mondays 12:10 PM – 2:00 PM  
Location: Schermerhorn Hall  
Credit: 4 pts.  
Prerequisites: At least two psychology courses and the instructor's permission.

**Instructor:**

(Kathryn) Becca Franks  
Postdoc & Lecturer  
Psychology Department  
329 Schermerhorn  
854-8464  
Office hours: tba  
krf2104@columbia.edu

**Textbook & Readings:**

There will be no textbook for this class.  
All readings will be posted on CourseWorks.
**Course Description:**

As pet owners (or friends of pet owners), we have no problem talking about the cheerful or laid-back personality of our nonhuman companions. As scientists, however, we might be skeptical of such classifications, especially in animals like guppies, sheep, or honeybees. But what is the empirical evidence of personality in nonhuman animals? For that matter, what do we mean when we talk about personality in science? What role does personality play in evolution? How can we understand personality from an ecological perspective? The study of animal personality touches on all these questions and raises several more.

In this course, we will examine the research and theory related to the study of animal personality. Readings will include selections from the current scientific literature, book chapters, and review articles. In particular, we will cover the theoretical foundations of personality, survey the range of species in which personality or personality-like phenomenon are scientifically documented, and explore the interaction between personality and environment.

Each week, students will write a response to the readings and actively participate in the discussion. Students will also create two 15-minute presentations critically examining a paper of their choice and lead class discussion on their presentation. At the end of the semester, students will submit a final paper that either identifies a promising area for future research or contributes a novel idea to the existing literature.

**Assignments and grading:**

**Grade breakdown:**
- Response papers (15%)
- Class attendance and participation (15%)
- Section B presentation (15%)
- Section D presentation (20%)
- Final paper presentation (10%)
- Final paper (25%)

**Late/absence policy**

Because so much of what students will get out of this course (including the grade) comes from the seminar discussions, students should plan to attend every class. Any missed classes must be thoroughly explained and justified (for example, serious illness or family emergencies), preferably beforehand. All assignments are due at the beginning of class. Late papers will receive one mark down per day late (for example, a B+ will drop to B, then to B-, then to C+, etc.).

**Response papers:**

[2]
Each week, students will write a one-page paper (double-spaced) in response to the readings. These papers should demonstrate active engagement with the material by raising questions, connections, confusion, problems, unexpected findings, and implications of the research. Students do not have to write a response paper on days when they are giving a presentation, so there will be 9 response papers during the semester.

Participation in class discussions:
Students will be expected to attend and actively participate in every class meeting.

Presentations:
Students will give two 15 minute presentations, one in Section B and one in Section D, on the topics they have chosen within each section. Each presentation will be related to an article they pick for the class to read. In the presentation, they should introduce the research area, critically discuss the methods and results, evaluate the conclusions, and hypothesize about future directions. To supplement their understanding of the chosen article and to contextualize it, they will be responsible for investigating the relevant background literature. After giving their presentation, students will lead a class discussion of the article and topic.

On the day students give their Section D presentations, they will also submit an outline of the final paper (see below) and will briefly discuss its relationship to the article and/or topic of their presentation.

Final paper presentation:
On the last day of class, students will present a brief, verbal summary of their final paper.

Final paper:
On the last day of class, the final paper (10-12 pages, double spaced, not counting references) will be due. The paper should build on the ideas and presentations generated throughout the term. It may take one of the following two forms: 1) A research proposal in which they identify a promising area for future research or 2) A review of the current literature that contributes a novel perspective on a body of research. Students will submit an outline of the paper on the day they give their Section D presentations and will briefly discuss its relationship to the article and/or topic of their presentation.
Weekly plan:

**Week 1 Course Introduction**
* discussion of topics, course requirements, instructions for giving a good presentation and details of what is expected for the final paper  
* go through syllabus   
* set up poll for section B&D presentations (name 1st choice for section B&D, make list of other choices)

**Week 2 Section A: Theoretical Issues**
* survey of the principles and key questions in animal personality research  
* finalize section B&D presentations (those who didn’t get 1st choice in section B will get first priority for section D)

**READINGS (subject to modification):**


**Week 3 Section A: Statistical and Methodological Approaches**
* examining the range of methodology in animal personality research

**READINGS (subject to modification):**


Week 4 Section B: Mammals
* student presentations (3-4 per class) on personality research in mammals
* each student must present once during Section B

READINGS (subject to modification):
-selected by student presenters from reference list at the end of the syllabus

Week 5 Section B: Birds and Reptiles
* student presentations (3-4 per class) on personality research in birds and reptiles
* each student must present once during Section B

READINGS (subject to modification):
-selected by student presenters from reference list at the end of the syllabus

Week 6 Section B: Fish
* student presentations (3-4 per class) on personality research in fish
* each student must present once during Section B

READINGS (subject to modification):
-selected by student presenters from reference list at the end of the syllabus

Week 7 Section B: Invertebrates
* student presentations (3-4 per class) on personality research in invertebrates
* each student must present once during Section B

READINGS (subject to modification):
-selected by student presenters from reference list at the end of the syllabus

Week 8 Section C: Ecology and Evolution
* contextualizing animal personality within evolutionary theory and ecology

READINGS (subject to modification):
Week 9 Section D: Biological Basis
* student presentations (3-4 per class) on the biological basis of personality
* each student must present once during Section D

**READINGS (subject to modification):**
- selected by student presenters from reference list at the end of the syllabus

Week 10 Section D: Development
* student presentations (3-4 per class) on the developmental origins of personality
* each student must present once during Section D

**READINGS (subject to modification):**

---


Week 11 Section D: Social Environment
* student presentations (3-4 per class) on the relationship between the social environment and animal personality
* each student must present once during Section D

**READINGS (subject to modification):**
- selected by student presenters from reference list at the end of the syllabus

Week 12 Section D: Animal Welfare
* student presentations (3-4 per class) on the relationship between animal welfare and personality
* each student must present once during Section D

**READINGS (subject to modification):**
- selected by student presenters from reference list at the end of the syllabus

Week 13 Course Summary
* review of course; presentation and discussion of final projects
* class time may be extended to accommodate all presentations
Reference list for student presentations:

Section B: Mammals


Section B: Birds/Reptiles


**Section B: Fish**


**Section B: Invertebrates**


**Section D: Biology**


**Section D: Development**


**Section D: Social Environment**


**Section D: Welfare**


PSYC 304 Comparative Animal Behavior Prerequisites: PSYC 101, 201, 202. Students taking PSYC 304L, concurrently must also have completed PSYC 300. Human behavior in comparison with other animal species within an evolutionary context, including behavior genetics, sensory systems, development, communications, parental behavior, mating strategies, aggression, and social organizations.

PSYC 331 Psychology of Personality Prerequisite: PSYC 101. Research, theory and assessment techniques in the area of personality. (This course presents a general survey of research and theory in the area of personality, including personality dynamics, methods of assessing personality, social and biological influences on personality, personality development, etc. Personality in animals has been investigated across a variety of different scientific fields including agricultural science, animal behaviour, anthropology, psychology, veterinary medicine, and zoology. Thus, the definition for animal personality may vary according to the context and scope of study. However, there is recent consensus in the literature for a broad definition that describes animal personality as individual differences in behaviour that are consistent across time and ecological context.)

PSYC2014 – Personality & Intelligence I Unit of Study Code: PSYC2014 Coordinator: Dr Niko Tiliopoulos Office: Room 448, Brennan MacCallum Building Phone: 9036 9223 E-mail: nikotiliopoulos@sydney.edu.au Webpage: http://sydney.edu.au/science/psychology/staff/nikot/ Dr Ilan Dar-Nimrod Office: Room 420, Brennan MacCallum Building Phone: 9351 2908 E-mail: ilan.dar-nimrod@sydney.edu.au Webpage: http Understand the fundamental concepts behind psychometric testing and assessment individual differences and personality.