

Science and Scientists (Psychology BC 1099)
Spring 2005 Points: 1

Time: Tuesdays 4:10-6:00pm **Location:** Milbank 501

Professor: Prof. Eshkol Rafaeli

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Office: Milbank 415-J **Office hours:** Tuesdays, T,Th 10:30-11:30

Course objectives and overview:

The purpose of this course is to allow students to gain exposure to the science of psychology. A different guest speaker will join us each week of the semester. The guest speakers will discuss the personal history of their research interests in their particular areas of psychology, and will summarize their current research programs. Usually, the speakers will submit an article or chapter for your consideration. This will be done at least one week prior to their presentation date. You are expected to read this material and participate actively in the discussion.

Several issues will be woven into this sequence of meetings with both seasoned and young behavioral scientists. Some of these are:

- The scientific method: What is it?
- The development of broad theories and of narrower hypotheses
- Ethics in research
- Specific methods: Lab/field, animal/human, quantitative/qualitative
- The secret life of academics: Reviewing, getting funded, presenting your work
- Rewards and challenges in scientific careers: The balance of work/life

If you are curious about any other particular topic, or want us to go into greater depth about any of these, please bring it up in class or in my office hours and we'll find ways to further address it.

Course grading and requirements:

The course is offered on a P/F basis only. Attendance is mandatory, and active involvement is expected from everyone attending. Additionally, students are required to hand in a summary following each speaker's visit (see below). This summary is due by the beginning of class, on the week following the speaker's visit. Students with more than two unexcused absences, and/or more than two missed research summaries, will receive a grade of F.

Format of research summaries:

Each summary should begin with identifying the major research question(s) presented by the speaker, and continue with some combination of the following: (A) Why the topic is important or relevant; (B) How the researcher's methods address the hypotheses under investigation; (C) How this work has advanced our understanding of the issue; and (D) What important questions still remain to be addressed. You may find it useful to search for other relevant articles by the speaker, in order to adequately discuss their research program.

Summaries are to be typed, not emailed; you can leave these in my box by Monday of the following week (i.e., a day before class). That way, I can hand you back comments or thoughts I have about your response. Please read these and, when relevant, follow-up on my comments (e.g., by expanding or being more detailed in your future summaries).

The scientific method requires a healthy amount of skepticism. Therefore, you are invited to take the opportunity to question, criticize, or offer challenges. Your comments in class, as well as your research summaries, may certainly include thoughtful criticism of the research program or of particular methods used within it.