

A.P. Psychology Syllabus

Course Description

This class will introduce students to the scientific study of human behavior and mental processes. This is a full year course that encourages independent study. Students will work towards the AP Exam in May and use the rest of the school year preparing an in depth project of their own choice and design.

Course Objectives

- Students will be exposed to the various perspectives found within Psychology including the psychodynamic, behavioral, humanistic, cognitive and socio-cultural perspectives
- Students will explore the discoveries and contributions made to create the current understanding of human behaviors and mental processes
- Students will practice critical analysis to evaluate current psychological theory
- Students will prepare to take the AP Exam

Textbook

Myers, David G. Psychology, 9th ed. New York: Worth Publishers. 2010

Resources

Straub, Richard O. Study Guide to accompany Myers Psychology 9th ed.
New York:
Worth Publishers. 2010

Summer

Students are expected to read and work through the first two sections of our text and the study guide. They are responsible for being prepared to take a multiple choice exam on the first day of school. This will be a multiple choice unit exam.

Assessments

Unit Exams are two types:

- 50 multiple choice questions completed in 30 minutes reduced to 25 in 3rd quarter
- Free response questions that are either take home or timed in class

Review Exams that cover all previous chapters and are also 50 multiple choice questions in 30 minutes reduced to 25 in 3rd quarter

Free response questions will be given in class and as take home assessments.

They will be timed at points to simulate an AP Exam

Times will change as the year progresses

Homework

- Each student is responsible for having the study guide completed on the day a chapter exam takes place
- Vocabulary from the study guide must be written on a 3 x 5 note card and your initials must be on each card
- The work book / study guide is randomly checked and each section and vocabulary must be completed to earn credit, there is no partial credit

Midterm Exam

- 100 – 150 multiple choice questions
- 2 – 3 free response questions
- Every attempt will be made to simulate an actual AP Exam

Pacing:

The goal is to complete the content by April vacation and use the time until the exam to review for the exam. The actual time spent in each class will vary depending on student progress. The remainder of the year will be spent researching and designing an in depth project focusing on an area of psychology selected by the student.

Content Summary

History and Introduction

Content:

- Definition of psychology
- Development of psychological perspectives time

Objectives:

- Explain the contributions made by the early philosophers to psychology
- Name the contributions of early psychologists
- Discuss the beliefs found in the Psychodynamic, Behavioral, Humanistic, Cross-cultural and Cognitive perspectives
- Analyze behavior through each perspective
- Explain eclecticism

Critical Thinking and Science

Content:

- Research strategies used by psychologists to explore behavior and mental processes
- Purpose and basic concepts of statistics
- Causation vs. Correlation
- Ethical issues in research with human and other animals that are important to psychologists
- Development of psychology as an empirical science
- Bias

Objectives:

- Identify the independent and dependent variables, possible sources of bias, and control and experimental groups in a description of an experiment
- Create an experiment in which the hypothesis, population, sample, independent variable, dependent variable, and experimental and control groups are properly identified
- Describe the purpose of case studies, surveys, experiments and naturalistic observations
- Distinguish between causation and correlation
- Explain how statistical analysis can with the study of psychology

Neuroscience

Content:

- Structure and function of the neuron
- Organization of the nervous system
- Structure and function of the brain
- Technologies and clinical methods for studying the brain
- Specialized functions of the brain's hemispheres
- Structure and function of the endocrine system
- How heredity interacts with the environment to influence behavior
- The influence of evolution on behavior and mental processes

Objectives:

- Identify the structure and function of different parts of a neuron
- Describe the process of synaptic transmission
- Discuss the role of neurotransmitters in behavior
- Classify the major divisions and subdivisions of the nervous system and explain the function of each
- Identify the structure and function of the major regions of the brain
- Describing the functions controlled by the frontal, parietal, occipital, and temporal lobes of the cerebral cortex
- Describe the function of the Limbic System and its parts
- Describe the function of the subcortex and its parts
- Describe how medical case studies such as Phineas Gage help us to understand the brain
- Describe how lesions and electrical stimulation in animal research provide information about brain functions
- Discuss how the use of the CAT scan, PET scan, MRI, and EEG provides information about the brain
- Identify the role of the corpus callosum in hemispheric communication
- Identify how vision, motor, language, and other functions are regulated by each hemisphere
- Explain the purpose and findings of split-brain research
- Give examples of how hormones are linked to behavior

Development

Content

- The interaction of heredity with the environment to influence behavior
- The influence of evolution on behavior

- Development as a lifelong process
- Research techniques used to gather data on the developmental process
- Stage theories of development
- Issues surrounding the developmental process such as nature/nurture, continuity/discontinuity, stability/instability, and critical periods

Objectives:

- Use twin and adoption studies to assess the influence of heredity and environment on behavior
- Describe how the environment selects traits and behaviors that increase the survival rate of species
- Outline the stages of a developmental theory by theorists such as Piaget, Erikson, and Kohlberg
- Explain the issues of continuity/discontinuity, critical periods and stability/instability in development
- Explain how gender identity develops
- Explain how Identity develops
- Provide real life examples of the concepts discussed in the stage theories

Sensation

Content:

- Basic concepts explaining the capabilities and limitations of sensory processes
- Structure and function of our senses

Objectives:

- Identify the stimuli that create sensation
- Explain the concepts of threshold, adaptation, and constancy
- Describe the operation of sensory systems
- Identify the parts of the eye and ear and explaining the function of each part
- Explain how our other sensory systems, such as taste and touch function

Perception

Content:

- Interaction of the person and the environment in determining perception
- Nature of attention
- Principles of perception
- Constancies
- ESP

Objectives:

- Explain Gestalt concepts and principles, such as figure-ground, continuity, similarity, proximity, and closure
- Finding examples of monocular depth cues, such as linear perspective and relative size, in real life
- Analyze the factors that influence the validity of eyewitness testimony
- Finding examples of selective attention in real life
- Apply the various organizational principles of perception to real life situations

States of Consciousness

Content:

- Characteristics of sleep and theories that explain why we sleep
- Theories used to explain and interpret dreams
- Basic phenomena and uses of hypnosis
- Categories of psychoactive drugs and their effects
- Drug states

Objectives:

- Define Conscious, Preconscious and Unconscious
- Describe the NREM-REM sleep cycle
- Explain the effects of sleep deprivation
- Comparing different theories about the significance of dreams
- Analyze dream content using a Freudian theory
- Explain the process of hypnosis
- Discuss the limitations and uses of hypnosis
- Explain the uses and effects of narcotic, depressant, stimulant, and hallucinogenic drugs
- Analyze research into ESP

Learning

Content:

- Characteristics of learning
- Principles of classical conditioning
- Principles of operant conditioning
- Principles of social learning
- Influence of nature – nurture on learning

Objectives:

- Name the important historical figures in learning and explain their contributions
- Describe Pavlov's experiment
- Explain how, according to Pavlov's theory, a neutral stimulus becomes capable of evoking a response through pairing with an unconditioned stimulus
- Describe Watson's experiment and identify the learning principles in it
- Discuss the ethics of Watson's experiment
- Explain the schedules of reinforcement identified by Skinner and provide real life examples of each
- Create real life examples that demonstrate the principles of classical and operant conditioning
- Describe Bandera's bobo doll study
- Identify everyday examples of observational learning
- Discuss impact of role models
- Provide examples of the role of culture plays in determining what behaviors will be learned
- Provide examples of how genetics influences learning

Memory

Content:

- Encoding, or getting information into memory
- Short-term and long-term memory systems
- Retrieval, or getting information out of memory
- Biological bases of memory
- Methods for improving memory

Objectives:

- Identify factors that influence encoding
- Explain the duration and capacity of short-term memory
- Provide examples of the use of chunking to increase the capacity of short-term memory
- Provide examples that demonstrate how memory moves from short term to long term memory
- Describe factors that impact on retrieval
- Create mnemonic devices to help learn psychological concepts and apply other cognitive principles to improving study habits

Thinking and Language

Content:

- Basic elements comprising thought
- Strategies and obstacles involved in problem solving and decision making
- Structural features of language
- Theories and developmental stages of language acquisition
- Links between thinking and language

Objectives:

- Describe the process of concept formation
- Describe the steps involved in the problem-solving process and provide examples of how algorithms, heuristics, and insight are used in problem solving
- Provide examples of how mental set and functional fixedness prevent the solving of a problem
- Provide examples of how framing and overconfidence can affect the making of decisions
- Use real life examples to demonstrate how beliefs and motives influence reasoning
- Explain how language is organized in a hierarchical structure
- Describe current theories of language acquisition
- Discuss the effect of culture on language acquisition

Intelligence

Content:

- Theories of intelligence

- Intelligence testing
- Assessing Intelligence, Validity, and Reliability
- Genetic and Environmental Influences on Intelligence

Objectives:

- Explain the origin and purpose of intelligence testing
- Discuss the contributions of Binet and Terman
- Describe current theories of intelligence such as general intelligence and multiple intelligence
- Distinguish between aptitude and achievement test and explain the differences
- Explain the principles of test construction such as standardization, reliability and validity
- Discuss how studies of identical versus fraternal twins help establish the role of heredity in determining individual differences in intelligence

Motivation

Content:

- Motivational concepts
- Biological and environmental cues instigating basic drives or motives
- Major theories of motivation
- Influence of nature – nurture

Objectives:

- Explain Maslow's hierarchy of needs
- Apply Maslow's theory to real life experiences
- Describe how biological drives such as hunger influence behavior
- Explain why one becomes hungry when one smells bread baking or hears an ice cream truck
- Explain why one person would be curious and another anxious in the same situation
- Discuss how motivation influences thought and action

Emotion

Content:

- Theories of emotion
- Interaction of emotion and motivation
- Physiology of emotion

Objectives:

- Describe theories of emotion, such as James-Lange and Cannon-Bard
- Explain how the level of arousal influences performance
- Discuss how emotion influences motivation and perception

Stress

Content:

- Stressors
- Physiological and psychological reactions to stress
- Psychological reactions to stress
- Stress management strategies

Objectives:

- Identify and explain major sources of stress
- Describe the physiological reactions to stress
- Describe how stress can influence thought and behavior
- Analyze how person versus situation attributions for real life experiences influences stress response
- Design healthy stress management techniques

Personality

Content:

- Personality Theory including Psychodynamic, Trait, and Humanistic views
- Personality assessments and inventories

Objectives

- Describe the contributions of Freud, Adler, Allport, Maslow and Rogers to personality theory
- Diagram Freud's structure of personality
- Comparing how different personality approaches address the influence of free will and determinism
- Analyzing how each approach would assess a case history
- Distinguish between objective and projective personality tests
- Explain features of personality tests, such as the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory and the Thematic Apperception Test

Disorders

Content:

- Characteristics and origins of abnormal behavior
- Major categories of abnormal behavior
- Impact of mental disorders

Objectives:

- Describe criteria that distinguish normal from disordered behavior
- Identify patterns of behavior that constitute abnormality
- Explain selected categories of abnormal behavior, such as anxiety disorders, mood disorders, substance abuse disorders, personality disorders, and schizophrenia
- Use the perspectives to discuss the causes of abnormal behavior
- Identify the symptoms of selected categories of disorders
- Use DSM to discuss labeling
- Use the perspectives to discuss the causes of abnormal behavior

Treatment and Therapy

Content:

- Methods / types of treatment to help people with disorders
- Types of professionals who implement treatment
- Legal and ethical issues involved in delivery of treatment

Objectives:

- Identify the major treatment practices used in therapy created by the behavioral, cognitive, psychoanalytic, humanistic, and biomedical perspectives
- Describe treatment within these therapy practices
- Identify criteria for evaluating successful treatment

Social Psychology

Content:

- Attitude formation
- Stereotyping and prejudice
- Group dynamics

Objectives:

- Explain the fundamental attribution error
- Create real life examples of attribution theory
- Explain cognitive dissonance
- Describe how dissonance can influence our attitudes
- Explain the contributions of Milgram, Asch and Zimbardo to social psychology
- Discuss ethical issues in Milgram's and Zimbardo's studies
- Analyze circumstances under which conformity and obedience are likely to occur and create real life examples