

AP Psychology

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Course Rationale

Before you devote yourself to any task – particularly a demanding task – you need to ask, “Why am I doing this?” “Why is this worth my effort and my commitment?” In the case of the AP Psychology course, the answer to those questions should be clear and powerful. They relate to the most interesting, exciting and complex of all things worth knowing, the human being itself.

What impels us to act? How does memory work? What happens when someone is “mentally ill”? How can he or she be helped back to health? How do humans develop cognitively and emotionally? How are fears created? How was my self-concept developed? What is the interplay between my thoughts and behavior? Does my brain control me or do I control my brain? How much of me was determined genetically at birth; how much was acquired by experience and learning? Do I have freedom and control of my behavior, or does my psyche control me? How much am I in charge of my life? These and many other fascinating questions will frame the subject matter of this course.

The AP Psychology course is intended to provide the scope and level of academic accomplishment expected in a college introductory course in Psychology. This we will accomplish, along with the acquisition of a substantive amount of knowledge, skills and attitudes to apply to our own lives. We will also plan to enjoy this learning experience.

Please understand from the outset one fact of paramount importance: the least important person in this classroom is the instructor. Acting as a college student, you are expected to “charge ahead” on your own, to seek, find, and internalize knowledge on your own – in short, to be the main agent in your educational process.

The instructor’s job is to facilitate your drive and your accomplishment by structuring learning situations and selecting learning tools that will help you attain your goals: passing the AP test, enriching your life by the acquisition of psychological knowledge, and enjoying the course of study.

In the end, you will have acquired the most fundamental, important and useful of all kinds of knowledge –knowledge about yourself and other human beings. Regardless of what your future life and career choices are, your psychological knowledge will help you be a more effective and fulfilled human being –on the job, with your loved ones, in social situations, or in the quiet satisfaction of just being yourself.

Welcome to the study of human behavior!

Essential Question for the Course

In what ways can your knowledge of psychology influence your social interactions, relationships and self-perception?

Learning Outcomes for the Course

Students will be able to:

1. Describe and apply psychology’s concepts, language, and theories, understand its theoretical perspectives, empirical findings, and historical trends.
2. Differentiate research methods, evaluate the validity of research conclusions, design and conduct basic studies, and generalize research conclusions appropriately.
3. Use critical thinking skills and reasoning in arguments and persuasion.
4. Identify psychology’s major applications, articulate how it can be used toward social understanding and public policy, and recognize the ethical complexities of applying psychology.

5. Understand the need for ethical behavior, tolerance of ambiguity, demonstration of skepticism and intellectual curiosity, attentiveness to scientific evidence, civic responsibility, and respect for human diversity.
6. Demonstrate effective writing, interpersonal and oral communication skills, showing quantitative literacy and collaborating effectively with others.
7. Show sensitivity to and respect for diversity, consider and explain the role of cultural, racial, ethnic, and economic factors, and of privilege and discrimination, in people's behavior. By learning that aspects of human behavior and thinking are based on quality research designs, students will become discerning about how their actions affect others, how the actions of others affect them, and how groups and cultures interact.
8. Apply psychology to personal development, to self-regulate, and to display personal integrity.
9. Apply psychological principles to career decision-making, aim for feasible career paths, value life-long learning and ongoing professional development.
10. Demonstrate competent, ethical, and responsible use of information in academic work.

Course Outline and Topic Specific Essential Questions

The following is a description of the major content areas covered by the AP Psychology exam, the topic specific essential questions, the textbook chapters where the material can be found, and the approximate percentages of the multiple choice section that are devoted to each area.

Content Areas

I. Scientific Foundations of Psychology 10-14%

- **Essential Questions:**

- What is psychology and what makes it a science?
- How do the schools of psychology complement each other?
- Why are descriptive statistics important?
- Is it ethical to experiment on animals?
- Is it ethical to deceive participants?

- **Textbook Modules: 1-8. Pages 1-74.**

- **Topics addressed:**

- A. Introducing Psychology
- B. Research Methods in Psychology
- C. The Experimental Method
- D. Selecting a Research Method
 1. Experimental
 2. Correlational
 3. Clinical
- E. Statistical Analysis in Psychology
- F. Ethical Guidelines in Psychology

II. Biological Bases of Behavior 8–10%

- **Essential Questions:**

- Are the brain and the mind different?
- How do the structures of the brain control behavior and mental processes?
- How does the brain recover after an accident?
- How does brain damage affect functioning?
- Why do we dream?
- Is hypnosis valid and effective?
- How do drugs affect mental processing and everyday functioning?
- What is addiction?
- Do people really “see the light at the end of the tunnel” in near death experiences?

- **Textbook Modules: 9-15. Pages 75-149. Modules 22-25. Pages 217-261.**

- **Topics addressed:**
 - A. Interaction of Heredity and Environment
 - B. The Endocrine System
 - C. Overview of the Nervous System and the Neuron
 - D. Neural Firing
 - E. Influence of Drugs on Neural Firing
 - F. The Brain
 - G. Tools for Examining Brain Structure and Function
 - H. The Adaptable Brain
 - I. Sleep and Dreaming

III. Sensation and Perception 6–8%

- **Essential Questions:**
 - How is information gained from the environment?
 - How do the five sense function?
 - How do cues in the environment help perception?
 - How does experience affect perception?
 - Can we always trust our senses and perception?

- **Text book Modules: 16-21. Pages 150-216.**

- **Topics addressed:**
 - A. Principles of Sensation
 - B. Principles of Perception
 - C. Visual Anatomy
 - D. Visual Perception
 - E. Auditory Sensation and Perception
 - F. Chemical Senses
 - G. Body Senses

IV. Learning 7–9%

- **Essential Questions:**
 - What are the differences between classical and operant conditioning?
 - Is punishment effective in deterring unwanted behavior?
 - Do rewards influence behavior?

- **Textbook Modules: 26-30. Pages 262-315.**

- **Topics addressed:**
 - A. Introduction to Learning
 - B. Classical Conditioning
 - C. Operant Conditioning
 - D. Social and Cognitive Factors in Learning

V. Cognitive Psychology 13–17%

- **Essential Questions:**
 - Is memory accurate?
 - How is information stored and retrieved?
 - What is the physiology behind forgetting?
 - Can forgotten memories be recovered?
 - Are repressed memories valid?
 - How are decisions made?
 - How much do emotions interfere with decisions?
 - Is there one form of intelligence?
 - Can creativity be assessed through a test?
 - Are intelligence tests culturally biased?
 - What accounts for the group differences in intelligence scores?

Can intelligence be faked?

- **Textbook Modules 31-36. Pages 316-388. Modules 60-64 pages 606-648.**

- **Topics addressed:**

- A. Introduction to Memory
- B. Encoding
- C. Storing
- D. Retrieving
- E. Forgetting and Memory Distortion
- F. Biological Bases of memory
- G. Introduction to Thinking and Problem Solving
- H. Biases and Errors in Thinking
- I. Introduction to Intelligence
- J. Psychometric Principles and Intelligence Testing
- K. Components of Language and Language Acquisition

VI. Developmental Psychology 7–9%

- **Essential Questions:**

- Are we products of nature or nurture?
- Are gender differences a product of genetics or society?
- How are the elderly viewed and valued?

- **Textbook Modules: 45-54. Pages 460-553.**

- **Topics addressed:**

- A. The Life-Span and Physical Development in Childhood
- B. Social development in Childhood
- C. Cognitive Development in Childhood
- D. Adolescent Development
- E. Adulthood and Aging
- F. Moral Development
- G. Gender and Sexual Orientation

VII. Motivation, Emotion and Personality 11–15%

- **Essential Questions:**

- How important are emotions to our sense of self?
- What causes fear?
- Do emotions serve a purpose or do they just get in the way?
- How does society influence expressing emotions?
- What motivates people to succeed?
- Are personalities constant over time or do they change with each new experience?
- Do personality tests really assess personality?

- **Textbook Modules: 37-44. Pages 389-459. Modules 55-59. Pages 554-605.**

- **Topics addressed:**

- A. Theories of Motivation
- B. Specific Topics in Motivation
- C. Theories of Emotion
- D. Stress and Coping
- E. Introduction to Personality
- F. Psychoanalytic Theories of Personality
- G. Behaviorism and Social Cognitive Theories of Personality
- H. Humanistic Theories of Personality
- I. Trait Theories of Personality
- J. Measuring Personality

VIII. Clinical Psychology 12-16%

● **Essential Questions:**

- What is “normal” or “abnormal”?
- What is the most common disorder?
- How does society view the mentally ill?
- Is there one type of treatment that works best for most disorders?
- Why do therapists use an eclectic approach when treating patients?

● **Textbook Modules: 65-73. Pages 649-752.**

● **Topics addressed:**

- A. Introduction to Psychological Disorders
- B. Psychological Perspectives and Etiology of Disorders
- C. Neurodevelopmental and Schizophrenic Spectrum Disorders
- D. Bipolar, Depressive, Anxiety and Obsessive-Compulsive and Related Disorders
- E. Trauma and Stressor Related, Dissociative, and Somatic Symptom and Related Disorders
- F. Feeding and Eating, Substance and Addictive, and Personality Disorders
- G. Introduction to Treatment of Psychological Disorders
- H. Psychological Perspectives and treatment of Disorders
- I. Treatment of Disorders from the Biological Perspective
- J. Evaluating Strengths, Weaknesses, and Empirical Support for Treatment of Disorders

IX. Social Psychology 8–10%

● **Essential Questions:**

- How do attitudes influence actions?
- Why is conformity valued so highly in society?
- Why are people attracted to each other?
- Do opposites really attract?

● **Textbook Modules: 74-80. Pages 753-820.**

● **Topics addressed:**

- A. Attribution Theory and Person Perception
- B. Attitude Formation and Attitude Change
- C. Conformity, Compliance, Obedience
- D. Group Influences on Behavior and Mental Processes
- E. Bias, Prejudice, and Discrimination
- F. Altruism and Aggression
- G. Interpersonal Attraction

The AP Exam

The AP examination will be administered in early May. It includes a 70 minute long multiple choice section of 100 questions that accounts for two-thirds of the student's exam grade and a 50 minute free response section made up of two questions, which accounts for one-third of the student's exam grade.

Text Book

Myers, David G. & C. Nathan DeWall. Myers Psychology for AP (3rd edition). New York: Worth Publishing, 2021.

Required Materials:

Notebook

Binder or folder to keep handouts and supplemental reading materials organized.

Additional Resources

American Psychological Association (APA): <http://www.apa.org>

This is the web site of the "largest scientific and professional organization representing psychology in the U.S." It contains links to journals, publications, and specialty divisions.

American Psychological Society (APS): <http://www.psychologicalscience.org>

This is the web site of the "leading national organization dedicated solely to the science of psychology," and contains useful publications and links.

Requirements/Expectations

1. You are expected to be in class on time every day. I have found a strong correlation between class attendance and achievement in the any course.
2. Because it is necessary to follow a strict time schedule in order to complete the curriculum, you must assume the primary responsibility for mastering the material in your textbook.
3. Home assignments (reading and writing) are given not only to enhance understanding of the material, but also to promote class discussion. Written assignments that are submitted late will result in a significant reduction of grade.
4. Unit tests must be made up the day you return to class following an absence at a mutually convenient time but not during class.
5. If you miss a class for any reason, it is your responsibility to find out what material was covered that day and to make up any work the day you return. Anyone who is absent from class without a valid excuse forfeits the right to make up work.
6. Being absent on the day that an assignment is due or a test is given is not, in itself, a legitimate excuse for not having the assignment done or for not being prepared to take the test the day you return.
7. The class will view several films that pertain to psychology and psychological disorders. These films are sometimes graphic in nature.

Tips for success

1. DO THE ASSIGNED READING!!! Many students assume that because an assignment is not being handed in and graded that skipping it will not affect their grade....WRONG. To maximize learning and retention (as we will see in Unit 8) it is important that you come to class having read the material assigned. Short quizzes will be given regularly so that I may gauge how well you understand the reading.
2. Preview each reading assignment before you begin and review the material frequently. Do not hesitate to reread a particularly difficult paragraph. Pause at the end of each paragraph and summarize it mentally in your own words. (Recitation has been shown to be one of the most effective maintenance rehearsal strategies.) Pay attention to vocabulary words and quotes in the margins, picture captions, diagrams, tables, critical thinking questions and chapter summaries.
3. Review your class notes each day while they are fresh in your mind. Leave some blanks or margins on each page for additions or clarifications.
4. Stay organized, this course will move quickly, keeping your materials organized and neat will make it easier to keep up.

5. If you are absent ask a friend to pick up any handouts. If you are not able to do so, make use of the designated area for prior handouts or make arrangements to see me after school.
6. As an upper classman you will be facing many competing and conflicting demands on your time and energy this academic year. It is up to you to manage your obligations in a mature and responsible manner, and your ability to do so will have an impact on your performance in this class. The key to success is to plan ahead and give yourself enough time. When you are having a problem, feel free to ask me for help in solving it.
7. Always communicate with me so that I am aware of any trouble you are having.

What you actually derive from AP Psychology will be a function of our combined efforts. I commit to you as we begin the year my best effort and trust that I can expect the same from you.

Grading & Evaluation

- ***Overall, grades will be determined on a total point structure.***
- Chapter tests (typically 40 multiple-choice, possibly a few short answer questions, and always one AP style free-response essay) will be approximately 400 points of each quarter grade. Tests will become cumulative as the year progresses.
- Vocabulary will account for approximately 150 points of quarterly grades.
- Study guides will account for approximately 250 points of quarterly grades.
- Homework will be assigned often. When it is assigned, it is expected to be completed on time and thoroughly. Homework will account for approximately 100 points of your class grade.
- APPD – Attendance, Preparedness, Participation and Disposition will make up 100 points of your grade. As members of this class, all students are part of a learning community. The effort you put into this class will have an impact on your experience as well as your classmates' experiences. You are required to attend class daily, to be prepared for class, to be attentive and engaged, and to participate in class discussions and activities. As a member of this learning community you are always expected to be respectful and kind. Cell phones and electronic devices are a distraction to achieving your own potential, as well as to that of your classmates.
- ***The AP exam will be during the second week of May.***

Please sign and return this sheet ONLY

We have read the course syllabus for the 2020-2021 AP Psychology course and are committed to supporting the requirements and the completion of the assignments in full. Additionally, because this is a college level course, we will, periodically throughout the course, be discussing mature themes and watching films that may contain adult themes. By signing this, you are recognizing the content of the course and granting permission to fully participate in the activities associated with the course.

Student Name (Please Print): _____

Student Signature: _____

Parent Name (Please Print): _____

Parent/Guardian Signature: _____