

AP Psychology Syllabus

Course Purpose: The AP Psychology course stresses critical thinking, reading, and writing within the context of scientific methodology and questioning. Students are introduced to the major topical areas of psychology by studying core concepts and theories and by learning the basic skills of psychological research. A thematic approach is used to provide students with tools for mastering the broad content area of an introductory course. These themes include nature vs. nurture; multiple factors influence behavior; psychology is empirical, and psychology is theoretically diverse.

Students are required to submit regular written reviews of current psychological research and to maintain a journal. In addition, students work in groups and individually to make oral presentations of research projects to the class. Students are graded on daily class participation. Quizzes, chapter tests, and midterm and final exams also assess students' mastery of the subject matter

Course Outline and Objectives

First Semester

1. History, Approaches, Methods

Chapter 1: The Evolution of Psychology

- Summarize the origins of psychology
- Summarize the contributions of the schools of psychology and prominent theorists
- List and describe seven major research areas in psychology
- List and describe four professional specialties in psychology
- Describe recent trends in psychological research
- Describe the goals of the scientific enterprise in psychology
- Outline the steps of a scientific investigation and discuss the advantages of the scientific approach
- Describe and evaluate the experimental research method
- Describe and evaluate the descriptive research method
- List and describe the key concepts in descriptive and inferential statistics as applied to psychological research
- Describe four common flaws in research
- Discuss ethical research guidelines and practices

2. Biological Bases of Behavior

Chapter 2: The Biological Bases of Behavior

- Provide an overview of neural functioning, including parts of the neuron, the neural impulse, role of neurotransmitters, and organization of the nervous system

- Describe methods of brain research
- Summarize the key structures and functions of the human brain
- Describe the workings of the endocrine system
- Describe the structures and processes of genetic transmission
- Describe the methods used to investigate the influence of heredity on behavior

3. Sensation and Perception

Chapter 3: Sensation and Perception

- Discuss Weber's law and the research of Fechner and Stevens on stimulus intensity to perceived magnitude
- Summarize signal detection theory
- Discuss the meaning and significance of sensory adaptation
- Summarize visual perception, including properties of light, parts of the eye, and pertinent brain structures
- Discuss and evaluate trichromatic and opponent process theories of color vision
- Explain the basic premise of Gestalt psychology and describe Gestalt principles of visual perception
- Summarize information on human hearing capabilities and describe auditory sensory processing
- Compare and contrast the place and frequency theories of pitch perception
- Describe the processes involved in taste, smell, and touch perception
- Explain the perceptual experiences mediated by the kinesthetic and vestibular systems

4. States of Consciousness

Chapter 4: Variations in Consciousness

- Discuss the nature of consciousness
- Describe how sleep research is conducted
- Summarize what is known about our biological clocks, the sleep cycle and stages of sleep, the neural bases of sleep, and effects of sleep deprivation
- Summarize theories of dreaming covered in the chapter
- Summarize evidence on the effects of meditation
- List and describe the major types of abused drugs and their effects

5. Learning

Chapter 5: Learning through Conditioning

- Describe classical conditioning and the key elements in this form of learning
- Describe operant conditioning and the key elements in this form of learning
- Describe and distinguish between escape learning and avoidance learning
- Discuss the key elements in observational learning
- List and discuss the five elements in a self-modification program

6. Cognition

Chapter 6: Human Memory

- List and describe the three basic human memory processes
- Compare and contrast early- and late-selection theories of attention
- Discuss information processing theories of memory
- Describe the various measures of forgetting
- Summarize evidence on the physiology of memory
- Distinguish between implicit vs. explicit memory, declarative vs. procedural memory and, episodic vs. semantic memory

Chapter 7: Language and Thought

- Describe the cognitive revolution in psychology
- Outline the key properties of language and use these to evaluate the ape-language controversy
- Compare and contrast the behaviorist, nativist, and interactionist perspectives on language acquisition
- List and describe three types of problems (Greeno), five general problem-solving strategies, and four common barriers to effective problem-solving
- Explain the factors that individuals typically consider in risky decision-making

FIRST SEMESTER FINAL EXAMINATION

- 100 Questions with 2 essays that are graded as AP Tests

7. Testing and Individual Differences

Chapter 8: Intelligence and Psychological

- List and describe the principal categories psychological tests
- Discuss standardization, test norms, reliability, and validity
- Summarize the contributions of Galton, Binet, Terman, and Wechsler to the evolution of intelligence testing
- Discuss the identification and definition of individuals at the extremes of intelligence
- Discuss heredity and environment as determinants of intelligence
- Identify and describe new trends in the assessment of intelligence

8. Motivation and Emotion

Chapter 9: Motivation and Emotion

- Compare and contrast the instinct, sociobiology, drive, and incentive theoretical perspectives on motivation
- Describe Maslow's hierarchy of needs
- Summarize the evidence on the motivation of hunger and eating
- Summarize the evidence on sexual motivation

- Describe the affiliation motive and how individual differences in the need for affiliation influence behavior
- Describe the achievement motive and how individual differences, situational factors, and fear of failure affect achievement strivings
- Compare and contrast the James-Lange, Cannon-Bard, and Schachter theories of emotion

9. Developmental Psychology

Chapter 10: Human Development Across the Life Span

- Outline the major events of the three phases of prenatal development
- Summarize evidence on the perceptual, motor, temperament, and emotional development of infants
- Outline and evaluate Erikson's stages of personality development
- Outline and evaluate Piaget's stages of cognitive development
- Outline and evaluate Kohlberg's stages of moral development
- Outline and evaluate Gilligan's contributions to theories of moral development
- Discuss the major events of adolescence
- Discuss typical work and family patterns in the adult years
- Describe physical and cognitive changes associated with aging
- Outline and evaluate Kubler-Ross's research on death and dying
- Summarize evidence on gender differences in behavior and discuss the significance of these differences

10. Personality

Chapter 12: Personality: Theory, Research, and Assessment

- Define personality in terms of consistency and distinctiveness
- Outline and evaluate trait theories of personality
- Outline and evaluate Freud's psychosexual stages of development and their theorized relations to adult personality
- Outline and evaluate Jung's and Adler's revisions of Freud's theories
- Outline and evaluate Skinner's, Bandura's, and Mischel's behavioral perspectives of personality development
- Outline and evaluate Roger's and Maslow's humanistic perspectives of personality development
- Discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the biological approach to personality
- Summarize three contemporary empirical approaches to personality
- Describe the MMPI, 16PF, Rorschach Inkblot, and TAT personality tests

Chapter 14: Stress, Coping, and Health

- Define and discuss the four principal types of stress
- Describe the key processes and factors in appraisals of stress
- Identify the four basic types of conflicts
- Identify common emotional, physiological, and behavioral responses to stress

- Summarize the relationship between stress and physical health
- Discuss individual differences in the decision to seek medical treatment and comply with medical advice

11. Abnormal Psychology

Chapter 15: Psychological Disorders

- Describe and evaluate the medical model of abnormal behavior
- Describe the most commonly used criteria of abnormality
- Explain the five major axes of the DSM-IV and discuss its controversial aspects
- Discuss four types of anxiety disorders, their symptoms, and etiology
- Discuss three somatoform disorders, their symptoms, and etiology
- Discuss the two major affective disorders, their symptoms, and etiology
- Discuss schizophrenia, its symptoms, course and outcome, and etiology
- Discuss the nature of personality disorders and describe three broad clusters of such disorders
- Distinguish between the legal concepts of insanity and incompetency

12. Treatment of Psychological Disorders

Chapter 16: Psychotherapy

- Identify the three major categories of therapy, why people seek therapy, and the various types of professional involved in the provision of therapy
- Discuss the logic, goals, techniques, and effectiveness of insight therapies
- Discuss the logic, goals, techniques, and effectiveness of behavior therapies
- Discuss the logic, goals, techniques, and effectiveness of biomedical therapies
- Describe the community health movement
- Describe the deinstitutionalization trend and evaluate its effects

13. Social Psychology

Chapter 13: Social Behavior

- Describe how physical appearance, schemas, stereotypes, and other factors contribute to our impressions of others
- Explain what attributions are, and why we make them
- Discuss internal and external attributions, attributional bias, and Kelley's Covariation model of attribution
- Summarize evidence on the four key factors of attraction
- Describe the components of attitudes and the relation between attitudes and behavior
- Discuss the key factors in persuasion
- Outline and evaluate four theories of attitude formation and change
- Describe Asch's work on conformity
- Describe Milgram's obedience research

- Discuss the dynamics of group behavior in terms of productivity, decision-making, and the bystander effect
- Relate principles of attraction, attitude formation, and group process to prejudice

Course Objectives and Goals

This course seeks to educate students to:

1. Develop an understanding of the major core concepts and theories of psychology
2. Learn the basic skills of psychological research
3. Apply psychological concepts to their own lives
4. Develop critical thinking skills
5. Build reading, writing, and discussion skills
6. Learn about the ethical standards governing the work of psychologists
7. Demonstrate an understanding of differences in individual and group behavior

I. Content Objectives – Students will be able to:

- A. Recognize psychology as the scientific study of human behavior and mental processes, by studying facts, principles, and phenomena associated with the following major subject areas:
 1. History, theoretical approaches, and research methods
 2. Biological bases of behavior
 3. Sensation and perception
 4. States of consciousness
 5. Learning
 6. Cognition
 7. Motivation and emotion
 8. Development
 9. Personality
 10. Testing and individual differences
 11. Abnormal behavior
 12. Treatment of psychological disorders
 13. Social behavior
- B. Gain a basic understanding of the theories and key terms used in the areas designated above (1-13)
- C. Compare and contrast major theories in psychology as they attempt to describe these 13 areas
- D. Understand the major methods of scientific investigation in psychology and analyze scientific research findings in the areas designated above
- E. Identify key figures in the field of psychology and their contributions
- F. Explain how psychological theories and research in the above areas apply to everyday life
- G. Appraise the evolution of psychology from a sociohistorical context
- H. Justify the need for empirical data in psychology
- I. Defend the importance of a theoretically diverse psychology

II. Skill Objectives- Students will be able to:

- A. Devise simple research projects, interpret, and generalize from results, and evaluate the general validity of research reports

- B. Reinforce critical thinking, problem-solving, and writing skills
- C. Obtain information from a variety of sources and organize data
- D. Interpret charts, graphs, statistics, and other data related to areas under study
- E. Infer interpretations from case studies

III. Affective Objectives- Students will be able to:

- A. Breakdown how their personalities have been affected by a variety of determinants
- B. Develop a greater feeling of tolerance and patience for people with problems
- C. Become aware of various community helping resources
- D. Maintain high ethical standards and sensitivity in applying the principles of psychology to themselves, other people, and other organisms
- E. Recognize and deal with their personal biases

IV. Career Objectives- Students will be able to:

- A. Identify occupations in applied and experimental psychology
- B. Understand how psychology relates to other fields such as business, law, medicine, education, etc.

V. Diversity Objectives- Students will be able to:

- A. Understand and show mutual respect for people of different races, ages, sex, religions, affectional orientations, socioeconomic situations, physical issues, and national origins, as well as those who have been traumatized
- B. Evaluate objectively the stereotypes about groups or individuals