

# AP Psychology Syllabus

The purpose of the Advanced Placement course in Psychology is to introduce students to the systematic and scientific study of the behavior and mental processes of human beings and other animals. Students are exposed to the psychological facts, principles and phenomena associated with each of the major subfields within psychology. They also learn about the methods psychologists use in their science and practice.

## TIME ALLOTMENT/PERIODS PER WEEK:

5 periods a week, approximately 45 minutes each period

## TEXT:

Morris, Charles G. and Albert A. Maisto, *Psychology: An Introduction 11<sup>th</sup> Ed.* Prentice Hall, Upper saddle River, NJ. 2002.

## ADDITIONAL SUPPORT MATERIALS:

*Forty Studies That Changed Psychology*, Roger R. Hock, Prentice Hall

Literature Selections

*Discovering Psychology* and other videotapes

*Annual Editions*: Psychology articles

*Neuroscience for Kids*; *DANA Brain Alliance* and other Internet sites

## COURSE OUTLINE/ CURRICULUM MAP:

This course outline/curriculum map is organized as a full year course, consisting of 12 units of study lasting from 2 to 4 weeks each unit.

## HOMEWORK/ASSIGNMENTS

Assignments and homework will be given as needed. The amount of work depends on the unit being covered in class. There are assigned pages to read in the textbook every night. Vocabulary terms are also given for each unit. Quizzes are administered frequently, at least once a unit. The quizzes range from using fill-in-the-blank, short answer, and/or multiple-choice questions. Exams will be given at the end of each unit and will consist of 45 multiple-choice questions and one free-response question (simulating the AP Exam). Other assignments given to students are class presentations, group projects, and papers. These assignments vary with the unit being covered.

## **The units of study are:**

### **I. History, Major Approaches and Methodology (CR1, CR2, CR16)**

**Description:** *How did the science of psychology develop? What attitudes characterize scientific inquiry? How do psychologists use the scientific method and conduct research to answer questions about human behavior? The interpretations of the research allow us to make assumptions about behavior, establish theories and share the conclusions of the research with others.*

**CR1—Evidence of Curricular Requirement: The course provides instruction in history and approaches**

**CR2—The course provides instruction in research methods.**

**CR16—The course provides instruction in ethics and research methods used in psychological science and practice.**

- A. Logic, Philosophy, and History of Science**
- B. Approaches/Perspectives**
- C. Experimental, Correlation, and Clinical Research**
- D. Statistics**
- E. Research Methods and Ethics**

### **Unit Objectives:**

1. Describe various statistical techniques used in psychological research

2. Describe and compare the biological, behavioral, cognitive and sociocultural perspectives.

3. List and explain the major subfields of psychology.

4. Examine the role of ethics in research and professional practice.

5. Describe the research strategies used by psychologists to explore behavior.

6. Define the purposes and basic concepts of statistics and recognize how inferential statistics are used in psychological research.

**Materials:**

1. Text

2. Activities/Case Studies/Supplemental Readings

3. Video – *Discovering Psychology*

**Assessments:**

1. Homework

2. Chapter Reviews and Progress Tests

3. Essay and Multiple Choice practice tests

4. Article Review

**II. Biological Basis of Behavior: The Brain and Nervous System (CR3)**

**Description:** How do psychologists examine the biological roots of how we think, feel and act? Neural communication, neural and hormonal systems and the functions of the brain help us to understand human behavior.

**CR3—The course provides instruction in biological bases of behavior.**

**A. Physiological Techniques**

**B. Neuroanatomy**

**C. Functional Organization of Nervous System**

**D. Neural Transmission**

**E. Endocrine System**

**F. Genetics**

**Unit Objectives:**

The students will be able to:

1. Identify the structure and function of the neuron and explain the process of neurotransmission.

2. Classify the major divisions and subdivisions of the nervous systems, and explain their functions.

3. Identify the structure and function of the major regions of the brain; recognize the specific functions of the lobes as well as the influence on brain functions by the left and right hemispheres.
4. Explain how research and technology have provided methods to analyze brain behavior and disease.
5. Describe how endocrine glands are linked to the nervous system.
6. Assess the effects of heredity and environment on behavior.

**Materials:**

1. Text
2. Activities/Case Studies/Supplemental Readings
3. Video – *Discovering Psychology*

**Assessments:**

1. Homework
2. Chapter Reviews and Progress Tests
3. Essay and Multiple Choice practice tests
4. Article Reviews
5. Superhero Short Story
6. Create a Brain Project
7. Neurological Disorder Paper

**III. Sensation and Perception (CR4)**

**Description:** Understanding the senses (bottom-up processing) and how we perceive the stimuli in our environment (top-down processing). Students will understand how this helps us to interpret our world, adapt and understand the world around us.

**CR4—The course provides instruction in sensation and perception.**

**A. Thresholds**

**B. Sensory Mechanisms**

### **C. Sensory Adaptation**

### **D. Attention**

### **E. Perceptual Processes**

#### **Unit Objectives:**

The Students will be able to:

1. Describe the operation of the sensory systems and label diagrams of each system.
2. Explain Gestalt principles and concepts, such as figure-ground, continuity, similarity proximity, closure and so on.
3. Describe binocular and monocular depth cues.
4. Describe the influence on perception of environmental variables, motivation, past experiences, culture, and expectations.
5. Explain the concepts of threshold, adaptation, habituation and constancy.

#### **Materials:**

1. Text
2. Activities/Case Studies/Supplemental Readings
3. Video – *Discovering Psychology*

#### **Assessments:**

1. Homework
2. Chapter Reviews and Progress Tests
3. Essay and Multiple Choice practice tests
4. Article Reviews

## **IV. Life Span Development (CR9)**

**Description:** Growth is a continuous process. What are the major issues in developmental psychology? Development psychologists examine our physical, mental and social development throughout the lifespan.

**CR9—The course provides instruction in developmental psychology.**

### **A. Life-Span Approach**

### **B. Research Methods**

### **C. Heredity–Environment Issues**

### **D. Developmental Theories**

### **E. Dimensions of Development**

### **F. Sex Roles, Sex Differences**

**Unit Objectives:**

The students will be able to:

1. Describe physical, social and cognitive changes from the prenatal period throughout the lifespan.
2. Examine the nature of change over the lifespan.
3. Identify the complex cognitive structures found in the early development of infants and young children.
4. Apply lifespan principles to personal experiences.
5. Explain the distinguishing characteristics of the longitudinal and cross-sectional methods of study.
6. Outline the stages of a developmental theory by theorists such as Piaget, Eriksson, Kohlberg, Gilligan, Cross, Helms, etc.
7. Recognize how biological and environmental factors linked to societal conceptions of gender shape the experiences of males and females.
8. Examine the development of ethnic identity and explore development theories as they relate to cultural bias.
9. Describe the role of critical periods and sensitive periods in development.

**Materials:**

1. Text
2. Activities/Case Studies/Supplemental Readings
3. Video – *Discovering Psychology*
4. Book: I'm Glad I'm a Girl, I'm Glad I'm a Boy

**Assessments:**

1. Homework
2. Chapter Reviews and Progress Tests
3. Essay and Multiple Choice practice tests
4. Article Reviews
5. Photographic comparison/contrast of Piaget/Eriksson/Freud
6. Adolescent Identity Paper

**V. States of Consciousness (CR5)**

**Description:** What is consciousness? How do we attend to and process information in different states of consciousness? What do we know about sleep and dreams, the effects of drugs and other factors on our states of mind?

**CR5—The course provides instruction in states of consciousness.**

- A. Sleep and Dreaming**
- B. Hypnosis**
- C. Psychoactive Drug Effects**

**Unit Objectives:**

The students will be able to:

1. Describe the characteristics of sleep and theories that explain why we sleep.
2. List the symptoms of various sleep disorders and provide possible solutions.
3. Demonstrate an understanding of individual differences in dream content and recall.
4. Compare different theories about the use and meaning of dreams.
5. Describe the basic phenomena and uses of hypnosis.
6. Characterize the major categories of psychoactive drugs and their effects.
7. Evaluate the effects of narcotic, depressant, stimulant and hallucinogenic drugs.

**Materials:**

1. Text
2. Activities/Case Studies/Supplemental Readings
3. Video – *Discovering Psychology*

**Assessments:**

1. Homework
2. Chapter Reviews and Progress Tests
3. Essay and Multiple Choice practice tests
4. Article Reviews

**VI. Memory, Thinking and Language (CR7)**

**Description:** How do we learn, remember, process new information and relate what we know to others? Language enables us to communicate complex ideas – it is that which makes us human?

**CR7—The course provides instruction in cognition.**

- A. Memory**
- B. Language**
- C. Thinking**
- D. Problem Solving and Creativity**

**Unit Objectives:**

The students will be able to:

- 1.Characterize the difference between surface and deep processing and identify other factors that influence encoding.
- 2.Describe the operations of short-term memory and long-term memory.
- 3.Analyze the importance of retrieval cues and explain the role of interference in the process of retrieval.
- 4.Identify brain structures most important to memory and situations/illnesses that affect memory.
- 5.Define thinking and recognize how information is classified into categories.
- 6.Identify strategies and obstacles involved in problem solving and decision-making, such as representativeness and heuristics.
- 7.Define language, explain its structure (phonemes, morphemes, grammar) and discuss the theories of language acquisition.
- 8.Examine the influence of language on thought and behavior.

**Materials:**

- 1.Text
- 2.Activities/Case Studies/Supplemental Readings
- 3.Video – *Discovering Psychology*

**Assessments:**

- 1.Homework
- 2.Chapter Reviews and Progress Tests
- 3.Essay and Multiple Choice practice tests
- 4.Article Reviews

**VII. Learning (CR6)**

**Description:** By definition, experience is the key to learning. What are the key components to learning and influencing behavior?

**CR6—The course provides instruction in learning.**

**A. Classical Conditioning**



- B. Operant Conditioning**
- C. Cognitive Processes in Learning**
- D. Biological Factors**
- E. Social Learning (Observational Learning)**

**Unit Objectives:**

The students will be able to:

1. Recognize learning as a vehicle to promote adaptation through experience.
2. Describe the operant conditioning paradigm and apply operant conditioning to parenting of children, teachers' behaviors relating to students and other experiences.
3. Explain how observational learning works, and identify everyday examples.
4. Describe cognitive learning approaches and describe how it differs from classical and operant conditioning.
5. Compare and contrast classical and operant conditioning.
6. Identify biological contributions to learning and speculate on the role of culture.

**Materials:**

1. Text
2. Activities/Case Studies/Supplemental Readings
3. Video – *Discovering Psychology*

**Assessments:**

1. Homework
2. Chapter Reviews and Progress Tests
3. Essay and Multiple Choice practice tests
4. Article Reviews

**VIII. Personality and Assessment (CR10)**

**Description:** Personality is your characteristic pattern of thinking, feeling and acting – how does it develop? What are the four major perspectives on personality? How do psychologists assess and interpret personality traits?

**CR10—Evidence of Curricular Requirement: The course provides instruction in personality.**

**A. Personality Theories and Approaches**

- B. Assessment Techniques**
- C. Self-concept/Self-esteem**
- D. Growth and Adjustment**

**Unit Objectives:**

The students will be able to:

- 1.Explain how personality may be influence by heredity and environment.
- 2.Describe personality and explain the role of personality constructs as a framework for organizing behavioral phenomena.
- 3.Explain the characteristics of the psychoanalytic, cognitive-behavioral, humanistic, and trait approaches.
- 4.Distinguish between objective and projective techniques of personality assessment; describe tests used in personality assessment.

**Materials:**

- 1.Text
- 2.Activities/Case Studies/Supplemental Readings
- 3.Video – *Discovering Psychology*

**Assessments:**

- 1.Homework
- 2.Chapter Reviews and Progress Tests
- 3.Essay and Multiple Choice practice tests
- 4.Article Reviews

**IX. Motivation and Emotions (CR8)**

**Description:** Motivation is a need or desire that serves to energize behavior and to direct it toward a goal. What are the theoretical perspectives that have helped psychologists understand motivation? Emotions involve both physiological and cognitive changes in the human that often affect our behavior. What is the relationship between thinking and feeling and acting?

**CR8—The course provides instruction in motivation and emotion.**

- A. Biological Bases**
- B. Theories of Motivation**
- C. Hunger, Thirst, Sex, and Pain**
- D. Social Motives**
- E. Theories of Emotion**

## F. Stress

### Unit Objectives:

The students will be able to:

1. Apply motivational concepts to the behavior of humans and other animals.
2. Describe the interaction of internal cues and environmental cues determining motivation derived from basic drives.
3. Describe the situational cues giving rise to anger and fear.
4. Describe the situational cues and individual characteristics giving rise to curiosity and anxiety.
5. Describe the theories of motivation, including expectancy value, cognitive dissonance, arousal, Maslow's hierarchy of needs and drive reduction.
6. Explain the interaction of biological and cultural factors in the development of motives.
7. Describe the theories of emotion, such as James-Lange, Cannon-Bard or Schacter.
8. Explain how learning, memory, problem solving, and decision-making are influenced by motivation and emotion.

### Materials:

1. Text
2. Activities/Case Studies/Supplemental Readings
3. Video – *Discovering Psychology*

### Assessments:

1. Homework
2. Chapter Reviews and Progress Tests
3. Essay and Multiple Choice practice tests
4. Article Reviews

## X. Psychological Disorders and Treatment (CR12, CR13)

**Description:** What are the perspectives by which psychologists study abnormal behavior? Classifying, identifying and explaining psychological disorders are the focus of this unit. How disorders are diagnosed and the methods by which psychologists treat them fall into two main categories: psychological therapies and biomedical therapies.

**CR12—Evidence of Curricular Requirement: The course provides instruction in abnormal psychology.**

**CR13—Evidence of Curricular Requirement: The course provides instruction in treatment of psychological disorders.**

### A. Definitions of Abnormality

- B. Theories of Psychopathology**
- C. Diagnosis of Psychopathology**
- D. Anxiety Disorders**
- E. Somatoform Disorders**
- F. Mood Disorders**
- G. Schizophrenic Disorders**
- H. Organic Disorders**
- I. Personality Disorders**
- J. Dissociative Disorders**
- K. Treatment Approaches**
- L. Modes of Therapy (e.g., individual, group)**
- M. Community and Preventive Approaches**

**Unit Objectives:**

The students will be able to:

1. Distinguish the common characteristics of abnormal behavior.
2. Cite examples of abnormal behavior.
3. Relate judgments of abnormality to contexts in which those judgments occur.
4. Describe major explanations for the origins of abnormality.
5. Identify the purpose of different research methods in exploring abnormal behavior.
6. Discuss the major categories of abnormal behavior, explaining the causes, symptoms and challenges associated with anxiety disorders, mood disorders, dissociative disorders, somatoform disorders, schizophrenic disorders, sleep disorders, and other “personality” disorders.
7. Determine the challenges associated with accurate diagnosis.
8. Discuss the impact of mental disorders, identifying the stigmas associated with them and the need for a greater understanding of abnormal behavior.
9. Describe the availability and appropriateness of various modes of treatment for people with psychological disorders.
10. Describe characteristics of effective treatment and prevention.
11. Identify therapists according to training, describing strategies for locating therapists and other challenges relating to mental health services.

**Materials:**

1. Text
2. Activities/Case Studies/Supplemental Readings
3. Video – *Discovering Psychology*

**Assessments:**

1. Homework

- 2.Chapter Reviews and Progress Tests
- 3.Essay and Multiple Choice practice tests
- 4.Article Reviews

## **XI. Social Psychology (CR14)**

**Description:** Social psychologists explore the connections of individuals and groups by scientifically studying how we think about, influence and relate to one another. This unit will examine cultural norms, leadership styles, persuasive techniques, altruistic behavior and prejudices and stereotypes.

**CR14—Evidence of Curricular Requirement: The course provides instruction in social psychology.**

- A. Group Dynamics**
- B. Attribution Process**
- C. Interpersonal Perception**
- D. Conformity, Compliance, Obedience**
- E. Attitudes and Attitude Change**
- F. Organizational Behavior**
- G. Aggression/Antisocial Behavior**

### **Unit Objectives:**

The students will be able to:

- 1.Demonstrate an understanding of how schemas are developed, and how attributions affect explanations of behavior.
- 2.Describe the sources of attitude formations and assess some methods used to change attitudes.
- 3.Identify basic social and cultural categories and explain how they affect behavior.
- 4.Explain how social situations affect individual behavior, providing examples of bystander effect, group polarization, and groupthink.
- 5.Discuss the research of Asch, Milgram and Zimbardo.

### **Materials:**

- 1.Text
- 2.Activities/Case Studies/Supplemental Readings
- 3.Video – *Discovering Psychology*

### **Assessments:**

- 1.Homework

- 2.Chapter Reviews and Progress Tests
- 3.Essay and Multiple Choice practice tests
- 4.Article Reviews

## **XII: Testing and Individual Differences (CR11)**

Description: What is the history of testing an individual's intelligence level? Are these tests still valid today? Psychologists use testing to determine the abilities and aptitudes of individuals and have to determine the appropriateness of each testing method per situation.

**CR11—The course provides instruction in testing and individual differences.**

- A. Standardization and Norms**
- B. Reliability and Validity**
- C. Types of Tests**
- D. Ethics and Standards in Testing**
- E. Intelligence**
- F. Heredity/Environment and Intelligence**
- G. Human Diversity**

### **Objectives:**

- 1.Trace the origins of intelligence testing.
- 2.Describe the nature of intelligence.
- 3.Identify the factors associated with creativity.
- 4.Distinguish between aptitude and achievement tests.
- 5.Describe test standardization.
- 6.Distinguish between the reliability and validity of intelligence tests.
- 7.Describe the two extremes of the normal distribution of intelligence.
- 8.Discuss evidence for both genetic and environmental influences on intelligence.
- 9.Discuss whether intelligence tests are culturally biased.

### **Materials:**

- 1.Text
- 2.Activities/Case Studies/Supplemental Readings
- 3.Video – *Discovering Psychology*

### **Assessments:**

- 1.Homework
- 2.Chapter Reviews and Progress Tests
- 3.Essay and Multiple Choice practice tests
- 4.Article Reviews