

Advanced Placement Psychology

Course Introduction:

Advanced Placement Psychology is the equivalent of a college introductory psychology course. This is a rigorous and demanding course, intended to provide the scope and level of accomplishment expected in a college or university setting. The curriculum for this course places a heavy emphasis on essential readings, writing assignments, independent projects, and frequent tests intended to prepare students for the AP Exam. Please understand that the most important person in the classroom is “you.” 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, you are the driving force in your educational process. The instructor’s role is to facilitate your drive and accomplishment by structuring learning situations and selecting tools to help you attain your goals: a successful score on the AP Psychology Exam, an enrichment of your life through the acquisition of psychological knowledge, and enjoyment of the course.

Course Objectives

The goal here is to help students become more sophisticated in their thinking and communication about psychology and other subjects. Critical thinking and scientific attitude are emphasized in the study of human behavior and mental processes. This course will benefit students regardless if they pursue a psychological career.

The AP Psychology course is structured to provide students an overview of the main topic areas within the domains as identified by the American Psychological Association including: Psychology and its Methods, Developmental, Biopsychological, Cognitive, Clinical and Sociocultural.

- Students define and assess approaches/perspectives which psychologists use as a lens to study human behavior and mental processes. These approaches include the biological, developmental, trait, behavioral, cognitive, humanistic, psychodynamic, evolutionary, and sociocultural.
- Students learn about the contributions of various psychologists to the field including but not limited to the following, Freud, Skinner, Pavlov, Rogers, Maslow, Jung, Zimbardo, Milgram, Bandura, Sternberg, Gardner, Piaget, Erikson and Kohlberg.
- Students will develop the critical thinking skills and scientific attitude required in the psychological study of human behavior and mental processes. These skills should serve them well in other academic areas and in life.

Critical Thinking as a Foundation of the Course

Critical thinking is an active and systematic strategy to examine, evaluate, and understand events, solve problems and make decisions on the basis of sound reasoning and valid evidence. More specifically, critical thinking involves: Maintaining an attitude that is both open minded and skeptical; recognizing the distinction between facts and theories; striving for factual accuracy and logical consistency; objectively gathering, weighing, and synthesizing information; forming reasonable inference, judgments, and conclusions; indentifying and questioning underlying assumptions and beliefs; discerning hidden or implicit values; perceiving similarities and differences between phenomena;; perceiving similarities and differences between phenomena; understanding causal relationships; reducing logical flaws and personal biases, such as avoiding oversimplifications and overgeneralizations; developing a tolerance for uncertainty and ambiguity; exploring alternative perspectives and explanations; and searching for creative solutions.

Workload Expectations

The AP Psychology curriculum is constructed to mirror that of a three credit general psychology course at the college level. One college credit is defined as equivalent to an average of three hours of learning effort per week necessary for an average student to achieve an average grade of C in the course. Thus, a student taking a three credit course that meets for three hours a week should expect to spend an additional six hours a week on coursework outside the classroom. This, of course, is a general guideline. The amount of time necessary outside of class varies greatly, and is dependent on both the individual and the letter grade sought.

Textbook: The **out-of-class** workload for this course will be heavy compared to most other courses. There will be a significant amount of required reading for this course. You are responsible for reading and studying the book (AKA your new best friend!) While much of the text will be discussed in class, significant portions of it will be covered through independent learning. You should presume that everything in the book is going to be on the AP exam, so you are expected study all of it. Failure to read the entire text will likely have a negative impact on your grade.

Note Taking: Good note taking skills are essential in an AP course. You are required to take notes on lectures and discussions.

Resources Used in Teaching AP Psychology

1. Text: Zimbardo, Philip (2010). Psychology AP edition
2. **Index cards (3x5 or 4x6) and rubber bands/binder clips/baggies (required and supplied by students)**
3. Binder- to place all notes for reading quizzes and supplemental materials/readings

Grading Policy

Since our objective will be to prepare you for the national AP exam that is administered May 1, 2017, your grade for each grading period will consist of the following: college-level multiple-choice exams, free response questions, vocabulary and reading quizzes, and other assignments.

Grades will be determined by your performance on the quizzes, exams, essays and projects. No extra credit is offered. *Whatever grade you earn at the end of the term is the grade you earn in the class. There is no negotiating.*

Grade weights are as follows:

Tests: 70%

Quizzes: 20%

All other assignments: 10%

Grading Scale:

100-90% A 89-80% B 79-70% C 69-60% D 59%-below F

The final grade will be computed as follows:

Semester: 80%

Final Exam: 20%

Advanced Placement for College Credit:

The AP grade for college credit will be determined by taking the College Board Exam on May 1. The test is two hours long and consists of 100 multiple choice questions and two free response essay questions. The exam is not required for a grade in this class.

Make Up Policy:

If you are absent it is up to you to make up the work. You have **one week** to make up the test, quiz, or assignment from the date of your return.

Failure to prepare on your part does not result in an emergency on mine. Simply not completing an assignment does not qualify you to turn it in late. If you miss a class, you are responsible for collecting the work, completing it and handing it in within the one-week time frame.

Course Outline

Unit 1: Introduction and History of Psychology

Essential Questions:

What is Psychology - and What is it NOT ?

What are Psychology's historical roots?

What are the perspectives psychologists use today?

Content:

Framework for Critical Thinking, including the scientific attitude

Development from historical perspectives : structuralism, functionalism, Gestalt

Psychology, behaviorism, and psychoanalysis

Contemporary perspectives now include : Biological, developmental, behavioral, cognitive, humanistic, psychoanalytic, sociocultural, evolutionary/sociobiological, and trait views

Unit 2: Research Methods

Essential Questions:

How do psychologists develop new knowledge ?

How do we make sense of the data ?

Content:

Five steps of the scientific method
Types psychological research include naturalistic observation, case study, surveys, correlational studies and experiments
Ethical concerns and standards in psychological research
Description and evaluation of statistical measures used in psychological research

Unit 3: Biopsychology and the Foundations of Neuroscience

Essential Questions:

How are behavior and genes linked?
How does the body communicate internally?
How does the brain produce behavior and mental processes?

Content:

Genetics and inheritance; evolution and natural selection
The neuron: building block of the nervous system, neurotransmitters
Divisions of the nervous system and the endocrine system
The brain: layers, lobes, cerebral dominance

Unit 4: Sensation and Perception

Essential Questions:

How does stimulation become sensation?
How are the senses alike? How are they different?
What is the relationship between sensation and perception?

Content :

Transduction: changing stimulation to sensation
Sensory adaptation
Thresholds and Signal Detection theory
Vision : How the nervous system process light
Hearing: the physics of sound
How other senses extract and process information
Perceptual processing, ambiguity, and distortion

Unit 5: States of Consciousness

Essential Questions:

How is consciousness related to other mental processes?
What cycles occur in everyday consciousness?
What other forms can consciousness take?

Content:

Tools for studying consciousness
The conscious and nonconscious minds
Daydreaming, sleep, and dreaming
Altered states of consciousness

Unit 6: Learning

Essential Questions:

What sort of learning does classical conditioning explain?
How do we learn new behaviors by operant conditioning?
How does cognitive psychology explain learning?

Content:

The essentials and applications of classical conditioning
B.F. Skinner and radical behaviorism
The power of reinforcement
The problem of punishment
Types of cognitive learning: insight, cognitive maps, observational learning

Unit 7: Cognition

Essential Questions:

What is memory?
How do we form and retrieve memories?
Why does memory sometimes fail us?
How do children acquire language?
What are the components of thought?
What abilities do good thinkers possess?

Content:

Memory's three basic tasks
Biological basis of memory
Three stages of memory
Memory retrieval

Memory problems such as transience, absent-mindedness, misattribution, bias
Imagery and cognitive maps
Thought and the brain
Problem solving and decision making

Unit 8: Emotion and Motivation

Essential Questions:

What do our emotions do for us?
Where do our emotions come from?
How much control do we have over our emotions?
Motivation: What makes us act as we do?
How are achievement, hunger, and sex alike ? Different?
How and why do we experience stress?

Content:

The Evolution of Emotions, Cultural Universals in Emotional Expression, and counting the emotions
The Neuroscience of Emotion, Psychological Theories of Emotion: Resolving some persistent issues
Developing Emotional Intelligence and detecting deception
How Psychologists use the concept of motivation, types of motivation, and theories of Motivation
Achievement Motivation, Hunger Motivation, Sexual Motivation, and Motives in Conflict
Stressors, ancient and modern; Traumatic Stressors; The Physical Stress Response, The General Adaptation Syndrome, and the Stress and the Immune System

Unit 9: Development

Essential Questions:

How do psychologists explain development?
What capabilities does the child possess?
What are the developmental tasks of infancy and childhood?
What changes mark the transition of adolescence?
What developmental challenges do adults face?
What are future areas of study in the field of developmental psychology ?

Content:

The Nature-Nurture Interaction and Gradual versus Abrupt Change
Periods of Development: Prenatal, Neonatal, and Infancy and Childhood
Types of Development : Cognitive, Social, and Emotional
Adolescence and Culture
Physical Maturation and Cognitive Development in Adolescence
Adolescent Issues : Social, Emotional, and Sexual
Erikson's Theory of Young Adulthood and The Challenge of Midlife
New Perspectives on Women, Men, Work, and Family

Unit 10: Personality

Essential Questions:

What forces shape our personalities?
What persistent patterns are found in personality?
What theories do people use to understand each other?
What are future areas of study in the field of personality?

Content:

Personality Theories: Psychodynamic, Humanistic, Social-Cognitive, and Current Trends
Personality and Temperament
Personality as a Composite of Traits
Implicit Personality Theories
Personality across Cultures
Future areas of research

Unit 11: Testing and Individual Differences

Essential Questions:

How do we measure individual differences?
How is intelligence measured?
What are the components of intelligence?
How do psychologists explain IQ differences among groups?

Content:

Methods of Measurement, Reliability, Validity
Standardization and Norms
Types of Tests

Ethics and Standards in Testing
The History of the Intelligence Test: Binet and Simon
IQ Testing Today
Problems with the IQ formula
Theories of Intelligence: Psychometric, Cognitive, and Cultural Definitions
Intelligence: Heredity versus Environment
Heritability and Group Differences

Unit 12: Psychological Disorders

Essential Questions:

What is a psychological disorder?
How are psychological disorders classified?
What are the consequences of labeling people?

Content:

Changing concepts of psychological disorders
Indicators of abnormality
DSM-IV classification system
Types of disorders: mood, anxiety, somatoform, dissociative, eating, schizophrenia, personality, and adjustment
Diagnostic labels as art of the problem
Cultural context of psychological disorders

Unit 13 : Therapies for Psychological Disorders

Essential Questions :

What is therapy?
How do psychologists treat psychological disorders?
How is the biomedical approach used to treat psychological disorders?

Content :

When to enter therapy
The therapeutic relationship and goals of therapy
Historical and Cultural contexts of therapy
Types of therapies: insight, behavior, cognitive
Evaluating psychological therapies
Psychopharmacology
Medical therapies for mental disorders
Hospitalization and the alternatives

Unit 14: Social Psychology

Essential Questions:

How does the social situation affect our behavior?
Constructing social reality: what influences our judgments of others?
What are the roots of violence and terrorism?

Content:

Social standards of behavior
Conformity
Obedience to authority
Bystander effect and helping behavior
Interpersonal attraction
Cognitive attributions
Prejudice and discrimination
Social Psychology of aggression, violence, and terrorism