

AP[®] Psychology

Syllabus 1

Courses are scheduled in a rotating eight-block schedule. Each class meets for a 58-minute block on six out of every eight school days. In a 182-day school year, allowing 8 days for semester exams, classes meet approximately 66 days each semester and 132 days each year. Approximately 12 to 15 of those days occur in late May and June, after the administration of the AP[®] Exam.

Course Objectives

The central question addressed in AP Psychology is: “how do psychologists think?” The psychologist David Myers wrote that to think as a psychologist, one must learn to “restrain intuition with critical thinking, judgmentalism with compassion, and illusion with understanding.” (Sternberg, 1997). Whether students choose to pursue a career related to psychology or one in some entirely different field, this habit of mind will be of great value.

The AP Psychology course is designed to introduce students to the systematic and scientific study of the behavior and mental processes of human beings.

- Students learn about some of the explorations and discoveries made by psychologists over the past century.
- Students assess some of the differing approaches adopted by psychologists, including the biological, behavioral, cognitive, humanistic, psychodynamic, and sociocultural perspectives.
- Most important, students come to an appreciation of how psychologists think (or at least an appreciation of the kind of critical analysis that psychologists espouse and hope to model in their words and actions).

Resources for Teaching AP Psychology

1. Text: David Myers, *Psychology* (New York: Worth, 2003), with accompanying instructor’s resource manual, study guide, and test bank (on CD-ROM).
2. Membership in APA and especially in TOPSS. The quality of support provided for high school teachers is outstanding. From journals and news releases to sample unit plans, this is something a new teacher of psychology should make a priority.
3. The 1999 AP Released Exam in Psychology and other support materials provided by the College Board.

Supplemental and Summer Reading

Numerous short articles and readings drawn from books, newspapers, magazines, and journals are assigned. During the summer, students are required to read one

work of psychology of their own choosing from an approved list, to maintain a journal in dialectical form as they read, and to write a critical review upon completion of their reading.

Grading Policy

The course grade is a weighted average consisting of the following elements:

Quarterly grades	20% (each)
Final exam grade	20%

Quarterly grades are made up of the following:

Preparation (daily assignments and quizzes)	20%
Participation (attendance and class discussion)	20%
Evaluation (tests, essays, journals, projects, research paper, and oral presentations)	60%

Course Outline

I. Scope, History, and Methodology [CR1]

- Historical Schools: Functionalism vs. Structuralism
- Modern Approaches: Psychodynamic, Behaviorist, Cognitive, Humanistic, Evolutionary, Neuroscience
- Nature of Scientific Inquiry: Sources of bias and error
- Research Methods: Introspection, observation, survey, psychological testing, controlled experiments [CR2]
- Statistics: Central tendency, variance, significance, correlation
- Ethics in Research: Human participants, animal subjects [CR16]

II. Behaviorism

- Historical Background and Philosophy of Radical Behaviorism
- Classical Conditioning: Pavlov, Watson, applications, biological critique, cognitivist challenge
- Operant Conditioning: Thorndike, Skinner, Bandura, behavior modification, biological critique, cognitivist challenge [CR15]

III. Neuroscience [CR3]

- Neuron: Neuronal and synaptic transmission, psychopharmacology, drug abuse

CR1— Evidence of Curricular Requirement: The course provides instruction in psychology's history and approaches.

CR2— Evidence of Curricular Requirement: The course provides instruction in psychological research methods.

CR16— Evidence of Curricular Requirement: The course provides instruction in ethics and research methods used in psychological science and practice.

CR15—Evidence of Curricular Requirement: As relevant to each content area, the course provides instruction in empirically supported psychological facts, research findings, terminology, associated phenomena, major figures, perspectives, and psychological experiments.

CR3—Evidence of Curricular Requirement: The course provides instruction in biological bases of behavior.

- Brain: Research methodology, neuroanatomy, brain development and aging, hemispheric specialization
- Nervous System: Structural and functional organization
- Endocrine System: Anatomy, HPA-axis, and immune system
- Genetics and Heritability

IV. Sensation and Perception [CR4]

- Psychophysics: Thresholds (absolute, difference, Weber's constants), signal detection theory
- Sensory Organs and Transduction: Visual (including color vision and feature detection), auditory, olfactory, gustatory, proprioceptive (including kinesthetic and vestibular)
- Perception: Attention, processing, illusions (including Gestalt psychology), and camouflage

CR4—Evidence of Curricular Requirement: The course provides instruction in sensation and perception.

V. Developmental Psychology [CR9]

- Methodology: Longitudinal and cross-sectional studies
- Nature vs. Nurture (maturation versus learning)
- Influential Theories: Piaget and cognitive development, Freud and psychosocial development, Kohlberg and moral development, Gilligan and gender differentiation [CR6]
- Infancy, Childhood, Adolescence, and Adulthood

CR9—Evidence of Curricular Requirement: The course provides instruction in developmental psychology.

CR6—Evidence of Curricular Requirement: The course provides instruction in learning.

VI. Intelligence and Psychological Testing [CR11]

- Psychological Testing: Methodology, norms, reliability, validity
- Intelligence: Defining intelligence, history of intelligence and aptitude testing, nature-nurture issues

CR11—Evidence of Curricular Requirement: The course provides instruction in testing and individual differences.

VII. Consciousness, Memory, and Language [CR5]

- States of Consciousness: Waking, sleep and dreaming, hypnosis, altered states
- Memory: Information processing, storage, retrieval
- Accuracy of Memory: Loftus and Schacter
- Cognition: Problem solving and heuristics [CR7]
- Language: Skinner and Chomsky

CR5—Evidence of Curricular Requirement: The course provides instruction in states of consciousness.

CR7—Evidence of Curricular Requirement: The course provides instruction in cognition

VIII. Motivation and Emotions [CR8]

- Motivational Concepts: Instincts, drives, optimal arousal, Maslow's hierarchy
- Hunger and Eating Disorders
- Sexuality and Sexual Orientation
- Achievement Motivation: McClelland and the TAT, intrinsic versus extrinsic motivators
- Physiology of Emotion: Fear, anger, happiness
- Expression of Emotion: Darwin and Ekman
- Theories of Emotion: James-Lange, Cannon-Bard, Schacter-Singer

CR8—Evidence of Curricular Requirement: The course provides instruction in motivation and emotion.

IX. Personality [CR10]

- Psychodynamic Perspective: Freud, Jung, Adler
- Trait Perspective: Allport, factor analysis and the five-factor model, assessment (Myers-Briggs, MMPI)
- Humanistic Perspective: Maslow and Rogers
- Social-Cognitive Perspective: Bandura and Seligman

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

X. Stress and Health

- Stress as a Concept: Selye
- Stress and Health
- Adjustment

XI. Abnormal Psychology [CR12, CR13]

- Approaches to Abnormality: The Rosenhan study, historical approaches (deviance), the medical model, the biopsychosocial model
- Classifying Disorders: Evolution of the DSM-IV-TR
- Major Categories of Disorders: Anxiety disorders, dissociative disorders, mood disorders, schizophrenia, personality disorders
- Major Approaches to Psychotherapy: Psychoanalysis, behavioristic, humanistic, cognitive, group, pharmacological
- Does Therapy Work? Eysenck, outcome studies, and the *Consumer Reports* study

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.

XII. Social Psychology [CR14]

- **Attitudes and Behavior:** Fundamental attribution error, roles, Festinger and cognitive dissonance
- **Group Influence:** Asch and conformity, Milgram and obedience, facilitation and loafing, Janis and groupthink
- **Prejudice and Scapegoating**
- **Altruism:** Darley and Latané

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

Assessment Practices

Traditional Assessments

Unit Tests

These tests are modeled on the AP Exam, with 50 multiple-choice questions and one essay to be completed in 58 minutes.

Quizzes

These are randomly scheduled at least once each unit and use the multiple-choice format.

Midterm Exam

Students take a midterm exam covering the first six units. The exam is in the same format as the AP Exam (multiple-choice and short essays), but the number of multiple-choice questions is reduced proportionately to the time available in the exam period to maintain a similar time pressure.

Alternative Assessments

Summer Reading and Journal

Students read one book from an approved list. As they read, they write reflective responses to passages of their choice in a double-entry journal. They write a critical review upon completion of the book. The journal and review are due on the first day of classes.

Unit Journals

Students continue writing in their double-entry journals approximately twice each week throughout the course. These journals facilitate deep processing of learning and differentiation of instruction by encouraging critical thinking and independent exploration. They also provide an additional forum for the teacher to give feedback to guide individual students. Entries must be linked to the unit that is being studied and contain the following elements:

- student reflection on readings
- class discussions and activities

- personal experiences
- recent news or television broadcasts, or
- Internet research

Projects

Naturalistic Observation

Each student completes a 15-minute observation of a human participant in a naturalistic setting. The purpose is to familiarize students with this method, to improve their powers of observation, and to help them distinguish between subjective and objective records.

Experimental Design

Students are given a hypothetical research problem and told to write a proposal for a controlled experiment to solve it. The exercise serves to improve their understanding of research methodology.

Behavior Modification [CR16]

Each student designs an application of operant conditioning principles to modify a human participant's behavior. After receiving IRB (institutional review board) approval, students attempt the modification over a three-week period. The project develops firsthand experience of Skinner's theory.

CR16— Evidence of Curricular Requirement: The course provides instruction in ethics and research methods used in psychological science and practice.

Applications of Developmental Psychology

Students work in small groups to research a recent topic related to the unit on development (e.g., the benefits of Head Start programs, effectiveness of sex or drug education programs, effects of divorce on children) and then present their findings to the class in an oral report of 15 to 20 minutes. The project provides an introduction to library and online research tools in psychology as well as APA documentation.

Controlled Experiment

Students research a topic of their choice, subject to IRB approval. The final project must incorporate a review of literature, discussion of method, presentation and evaluation of results, and a conclusion.

Review of Literature

Students research a topic of their choice. The final paper must develop an original thesis on a controversial topic.

Poster Presentation (Final Exam)

In lieu of a traditional final exam, students present the results of their second-semester project to the class. Presentation is in poster form accompanied by a 30-minute lecture (including a question-and-answer time).

Extra Credit

Psychology Book Review

Students wanting to do additional work for extra credit are directed to read one of the books from the summer reading list, or another title that is satisfactory to the teacher, and complete a critical review. The book must relate to the unit under study at that time.