

AP Psychology Syllabus

FY 2011-12

All courses are on an eight-block schedule with A and B days. Students alternate A and B days, and have four classes of approximately 87 minutes each day. AP Psychology class is a one-year course and will meet 86 times, with 6 of those days being after the administration of the AP Exam.

Textbook used:

Myers, David G. Myers' Psychology for AP. Worth Publishers: New York, 2011.

Supplemental Resources:

Hock, Roger R. Forty Studies That Changed Psychology: Explorations into the History of Psychological Research, 4th ed. Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 2002.

Additional outside reading may be required at the teacher's discretion.

Teacher Resources:

Teachers Edition of Myers' Psychology for AP

Membership in APA and TOPSS.

Summer Reading:

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

This is a weighted course.

Homework/In-Class Work	55%
Tests/Quizzes	25%
Attendance/Participation	5%
Final Exam	15%

Homework will vary from vocabulary activities to completing reading guides, as well as lab write-ups, article analyses, papers, presentations, and group projects.

Quizzes will vary from multiple-choice to short answer. Exams will consist of 45-50 questions and one free-response question (simulating the AP Exam.)

Extra Credit:

Extra credit can be earned by reading an article from a psychology journal or magazine and writing a summary and critique of the article. Only two articles per nine weeks can be completed for extra credit. Points for extra credit are added into the tests/quizzes portion of the overall grade.

For 10 points: Read a full-page article from the APA's Monitor on Psychology. Write a one-page summary and a one-page critique.

For 20 points: Read a full journal article from American Psychologist, the Journal of Educational Psychology, or the Journal of Social Issues. Write a two-page summary and a one-page critique of the article.

Course Outline:

First Nine Weeks (August 22 – October 21)

Unit One: History & Approaches

Objectives to be answered in Unit One:

1. How did psychologists develop from its pre-scientific roots in early understandings of mind and body to the beginnings of modern science?
2. When and how did modern psychological science begin?
3. How did psychology continue to develop from the 1920s through today?
4. What is psychology's historic biggest issue?
5. What are psychology's level of analysis and related perspectives?
6. What are psychology's main sub-fields?
7. How can psychological principles help you as a student?

Unit Two: Research Methods

Objectives to be answered in Unit Two:

1. Why are answers that flow from the scientific approach more reliable than those based on intuition and common sense?
2. What are three main components of the scientific attitude?
3. How do theories advance psychological science?
4. How do psychologists observe and describe behavior?
5. What are positive and negative correlations, and why do they enable prediction but not cause-effect explanation?
6. What are illusory correlations?
7. How do experiments, powered by random assignment, clarify cause and effect?
8. How can we describe data with measures of central tendency and variation?
9. What principles can guide our making generalizations from samples and deciding whether differences are significant?
10. Can laboratory experiments illuminate everyday life?
11. Does behavior depend on one's culture and gender?
12. Why do psychologists study animals, and is it ethical to experiment on animals?
13. Is it ethical to experiment on people?
14. Is psychology free of value judgment?

Unit Three: Biological Bases of Behavior

Objectives to be answered in Unit Three:

1. What are neurons, and how do they transmit information?
2. How do nerve cells communicate with other nerve cells?

3. How do neurotransmitters influence behavior, and how do drugs and other chemicals affect neurotransmitters?
4. What are the functions of the nervous system's main divisions?
5. How does the endocrine system-the body's slower information system-transmit its messages?
6. How do neuroscientists study the brain's connections to behavior and mind?
7. What are the functions of important lower-level brain structures?
8. What functions are served by the various cerebral cortex regions?
9. What brain areas are involved in language processing?
10. To what extent can a damaged brain reorganize itself?
11. What do split brains reveal about the function of our two brain hemispheres?
12. What is the "dual processing" being revealed by today's cognitive neuroscience?
13. What are genes, and how do behavior geneticists explain our individual differences?
14. What is heritability, and how does it relate to individuals and groups?
15. What is the promise of molecular genetics research?
16. How do evolutionary psychologists use natural selection to explain behavior tendencies?
17. How might an evolutionary psychologist explain gender differences in sexuality and mating preferences?
18. What are the key criticisms of evolutionary psychology?

Unit Four: Sensation and Perception

Objectives to be answered in Unit Four:

1. What are sensation and perception? What do we mean by bottom-up processing and top-down processing?
2. How are we affected by selective attention?
3. What are the absolute and difference thresholds, and do stimuli below the absolute threshold have any influence?
4. What is the function of sensory adaptation?
5. What is the energy that we see as visible light?
6. How does the eye transform light energy into neural messages?
7. How does the brain process visual information?
8. What theories help us understand color vision?
9. What are the characteristics of air pressure waves that we hear as sound?
10. How does the ear transform sound energy into neural messages?
11. What theories help us understand pitch perception?
12. How do we locate sounds?
13. What are the common causes of hearing loss, and why does controversy surround cochlear implants?
14. How do we sense touch and sense our body's position and movement? How do we experience pain?
15. How do we experience smell?
16. How did the Gestalt psychologists understand perceptual organization?
17. How do figure-ground and grouping principles contribute to our perceptions?
18. How do we see the world in three dimensions?

19. How do we perceive motion?
20. How do perceptual constancies help us organize our sensations into meaningful perceptions?
21. What does research on sensory deprivation and restored vision reveal about the effects of experience on perception?
22. How adaptable is our ability to perceive?
23. How do our expectations, contexts, and emotions influence our perceptions?
24. What are the claims of ESP, and what have most research psychologists concluded after putting these claims to the test?

* The course teaches ethics and research methods used in psychological science and practice.

Second Nine Weeks (October 24 – January 12)

Unit Five: States of Consciousness

Objectives to be answered in Unit Five:

1. How do our biological rhythms influence our daily functioning?
2. What is the biological rhythm of our sleep?
3. How does sleep loss affect us?
4. What is sleep's function?
5. What are the major sleep disorders?
6. What do we dream?
7. What is the function of dreams?
8. What is hypnosis, and what powers does a hypnotist have over a hypnotized subject?
9. Is hypnosis an extension of normal consciousness or an altered state?
10. What are tolerance, dependence, and addiction, and what are some common misconceptions about addiction?
11. What are depressants, and what are their effects?
12. What are stimulants, and what are their effects?
13. What are hallucinogens, and what are their effects?
14. Why do some people become regular users of consciousness-altering drugs?

Unit Six: Learning

Objectives to be answered in Unit Six:

1. What are some basic forms of learning?
2. What is classical conditioning, and how did Pavlov's work influence behaviorism?
3. How does a neutral stimulus become a conditioned stimulus?
4. In classical conditioning, what are the processes of acquisition, extinction, spontaneous recovery, generalization, and discrimination?
5. Do cognitive processes and biological constraints affect classical conditioning?
6. Why is Pavlov's work important?
7. What have been some applications of classical conditioning?
8. What is operant conditioning, and how does it differ from classical conditioning?

9. What are some basic types of reinforcers?
10. How do different reinforcement schedules affect behavior?
11. How does punishment affect behavior?
12. Do cognitive processes and biological constraints affect operant conditioning?
13. How might operant conditioning principles be applied at school, in sports, at work, at home, and for self-improvement?
14. What is observational learning, and how is it enabled by mirror neurons?
15. What is the impact of prosocial modeling and of antisocial modeling?

Unit Seven: Cognition

Objectives to be answered in Unit Seven:

1. How do psychologists describe the human memory system?
2. What information do we encode automatically? What information do we encode effortfully, and how does the distribution of practice influence retention?
3. What effortful processing methods aid in forming memories?
4. What is sensory memory?
5. What are the duration and capacity of short-term and of long-term memory?
6. How does the brain store our memories?
7. How do we get information out of memory?
8. How do external contexts and internal emotions influence memory retrieval?
9. Why do we forget?
10. How do misinformation, imagination, and source amnesia influence our memory construction? How real seeming are false memories?
11. What is the controversy related to claims of repressed and recovered memories?
12. How can an understanding of memory contribute to more effective study techniques?

Unit Eight: Testing and Individual Differences

Objectives to be answered in Unit Eight:

1. What arguments support intelligence as one general mental ability, and what arguments support the idea of multiple distinct identities?
2. How do Gardner's and Sternberg's theories of multiple intelligences differ?
3. What makes up emotional intelligence?
4. To what extent is intelligence related to brain anatomy and neural processing speed?
5. When and why were intelligence tests created?
6. What is the difference between aptitude and achievement tests, and how can we develop and evaluate them?
7. How stable are intelligence scores over the life span?
8. What are the traits of those at the low and high intelligence extremes?
9. What does evidence reveal about hereditary and environmental influences on intelligence?
10. How and why do gender and racial groups differ in mental ability scores?
11. Are intelligence tests inappropriately biased?

Third Nine Weeks (January 13 – March 16)

Unit Nine: Motivation and Emotion

Objectives to be answered in Unit Nine:

1. From what perspectives do psychologists view motivated behavior?
2. What physiological factors produce hunger?
3. What psychological and cultural factors influence hunger?
4. How do anorexia nervosa, bulimia nervosa, and binge-eating disorder demonstrate the influence of psychological forces on physiologically motivated behaviors?
5. What factors predispose some people to become and remain obese?
6. What stages mark the human sexual response cycle?
7. Do hormones influence human sexual motivation?
8. How do internal and external stimuli influence sexual motivation?
9. What factors influence teen sexuality, teen pregnancy, and risk of sexually transmitted infections?
10. What has research taught us about sexual orientation?
11. What evidence points to our human need to belong?
12. What are the components of an emotion?
13. What is the link between emotional arousal and the autonomic nervous system?
14. Do different emotions activate different physiological and brain-pattern responses?
15. To experience emotions, must we consciously interpret and label them?
16. How do we communicate nonverbally?
17. Are nonverbal expressions of emotion universally understood?
18. Do our facial expressions influence our feelings?
19. What is the function of fear, and how do we learn fears?
20. What are the causes and consequences of anger?
21. What are the causes and consequences of happiness?
22. What is stress?
23. What events provoke stress responses?
24. Why are some of us more prone than others to coronary heart disease?
25. How does stress make us more vulnerable to disease?

Unit Ten: Development Psychology

Objectives to be answered in Unit Ten:

1. How does life develop before birth?
2. What are some newborn abilities, and how do researchers explore infants' mental abilities?
3. During infancy and childhood, how do the brain and motor skills develop?
4. From the perspective of Piaget and of today's researchers, how does a child's mind develop?
5. How do parent-infant attachment bonds form?

6. How have psychologists studied attachment differences, and what have they learned about the effects of temperament and parenting?
7. Do parental neglect, family disruption, or day care affect children's attachments?
8. How do children's self-concepts develop, and how are children's traits related to parenting styles?
9. What are some ways in which males and females tend to be alike and to differ?
10. How do nature and nurture together form our gender?
11. To what extent is our development shaped by early stimulation, by parents, and by peers?
12. What physical changes mark adolescence?
13. How did Piaget, Kohlberg, and later researchers describe adolescent cognitive and moral development?
14. What are the social tasks and challenges of adolescence?
15. What is emerging adulthood?
16. What physical changes occur during middle and late adulthood?
17. How do memory and intelligence change with age?
18. What themes and influences mark our social journey from early adulthood to death?

Unit Eleven: Personality

Objectives to be answered in Unit Eleven:

1. What was Freud's view of personality and its development?
2. How did Freud think people defended themselves against anxiety?
3. Which of Freud's ideas did his followers accept or reject?
4. What are projective tests, and how are they used?
5. How do contemporary psychologists view Freud and the unconscious?
6. How did humanistic psychologists view personality, and what was their goal in studying personality?
7. How did humanistic psychologists assess a person's sense of self?
8. How has the humanistic perspective influenced psychology? What criticisms has it faced?
9. How do psychologists use traits to describe personality?
10. What are personality inventories, and what are their strengths and weaknesses as trait-assessment tools?
11. Which traits seem to provide the most useful information about personality innovation?
12. Does research support the consistency of personality traits over time and across situations?
13. In the view of social-cognitive psychologists, what mutual influences shape an individual's personality?
14. What are the causes and consequences of personal control?
15. What underlying principle guides social-cognitive psychologists in their assessment of people's behavior and beliefs?
16. What has the social-cognitive perspective contributed to the study of personality, and what criticisms has it faced?
17. Are we helped or hindered by high self-esteem?

18. How do individualist and collectivist cultural influences affect people?

Fourth Nine Weeks (March 26 – May 23)

(AP PSYCHOLOGY EXAM May 7)

Unit Twelve: Abnormal Psychology

Objectives to be answered in Unit Twelve:

1. How should we draw the line between normality and disorder?
2. What perspectives can help us understand psychological disorders?
3. How and why do clinicians classify psychological disorders?
4. Why do some psychologists criticize the use of diagnostic labels?
5. What are anxiety disorders, and how do they differ from ordinary worries and fears?
6. What produces the thoughts and feelings that mark anxiety disorders?
7. What are somatoform disorders?
8. What are dissociative disorders, and why are they controversial?
9. What are mood disorders, and what forms do they take?
10. What causes mood disorders, and what might explain the Western world's rising incidence of depression among youth and young adults?
11. What patterns of thinking, perceiving, feeling, and behaving characterize schizophrenia?
12. What causes schizophrenia?
13. What characteristics are typical of personality disorders?
14. How many people suffer, or have suffered, from a psychological disorder?

Unit Thirteen: Treatment of Psychological Disorders

Objectives to be answered in Unit Thirteen:

1. What are the aims and methods of psychoanalysis, and how have they been adapted in psychodynamic therapy?
2. What are the basic themes of humanistic therapy, such as Rogers' client-centered approach?
3. What are the assumptions and techniques of the behavior therapies?
4. What are the goals and techniques of the cognitive therapies?
5. What are the aims and benefits of group and family therapy?
6. Does psychotherapy work? Who decides?
7. Are some therapies more effective than others?
8. How do alternative therapies fare under scientific scrutiny?
9. What three elements are shared by all forms of psychotherapy?
10. How do culture and values influence the therapist-client relationship?
11. What are the drug therapies? What criticisms have been leveled against drug therapies?
12. How effective is electroconvulsive therapy, and what other brain-stimulation options may offer relief from severe depression?
13. What is psychosurgery?
14. How, by caring for their bodies with a healthy life-style, might people find some relief from depression?

15. What is the rationale for preventive mental health programs?

Unit Fourteen: Social Psychology

Objective to be answered in Unit Fourteen:

1. How do we tend to explain others' behavior and our own?
2. Does what we think affect what we do, or does what we do affect we think?
3. What do experiments on conformity and compliance reveal about the power of social influence?
4. How is our behavior affected by the presence of others or by being part of a group?
5. What are group polarization and groupthink?
6. How do cultural norms affect our behavior?
7. How much power do we have as individuals? Can a minority sway an individual?
8. What is prejudice?
9. What are the social and emotional roots of prejudice?
10. What are the cognitive roots of prejudice?
11. What biological factors make us more prone to hurt one another?
12. What psychological factors may trigger aggressive behavior?
13. Why do we befriend or fall in love with some people but not with others?
14. How does romantic love typically change as time passes?
15. When are we most – and least – likely to help?
16. How do social traps and mirror-image perceptions fuel social conflict?
17. How can we transform feelings of prejudice, aggression, and conflict into attitudes that promote peace?