

# AP PSYCHOLOGY GUIDELINES AND SYLLABUS

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## PURPOSE:

The Advanced Placement Psychology course is designed 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. Students will learn about the ethics and methods psychologists use in their science and practice.

## COURSE OBJECTIVES:

- Students will prepare to do satisfactory work on the Advanced Placement Exam in Psychology.
- Students will study the major core concepts and theories of Psychology. They will be able to define major terms and use these terms in their everyday vocabulary.
- Students will utilize their skills of research. They create psychological research projects, interpret and be able to generalize from results and evaluate the validity of research reports.
- Students will be able to apply psychological concepts to their own lives. They will be able to recognize key principles when they are encountered in everyday situations.
- Students will continue to develop critical thinking skills. They will become aware of the danger of blindly accepting or rejecting any psychological theory without careful, objective evaluation.
- Students will enhance their reading, writing and discussion skills as they apply to psychology.

## Grading Policy:

Journal entries:	10%
Homework/Classwork/Quizzes:	20%
Mid-term/Projects:	30%
Chapter Tests:	40%

- **Journals:** Students will respond to a statement, topic or recent event that is written on the board daily. Students will be required to tell what they think about the topic and explain why. All entries are confidential except when the response includes statements about illegal activity, or that the student intends to injure themselves or others. The daily journals are to be kept separately from your class notes.

- **Quizzes:** Students should expect regular quizzes. The material for each chapter test is extensive. Quizzes will help students monitor progress as new material is introduced.
- **Chapter tests:** A major test will conclude each chapter; occasionally, two small or complimentary chapters will be combined. The test will mimic the AP exam in the sense that there will be multiple-choice questions.
- **Midterm exam:** The midterm exam will cover the material covered in chapter one through eight.
- **Projects:** Students will have a project to complete during each nine week grading period. Each project will require students to apply the knowledge that has been covered in class as well as conduct additional research for the topic.

### QUESTIONS TO THINK ABOUT BEFORE WE BEGIN:

1. Why are you taking this class? Do you want to learn psychology? Are you ready for a college level course? Are you serious about the AP Exam in May?
2. What are your priorities and how much time will you need to devote to this class? This will depend on your strengths and weaknesses. A rule of thumb is that you need to review and study all material we cover in class each day while at home and read ahead to be prepared for the topics that we will cover in class the next day. Are you willing to make that kind of commitment?
3. Are you a strong reader? In terms of course assignments, nothing will occupy more of your time than reading and studying the text and your notes.

### WHAT CAN YOU DO TO HELP YOURSELF?

1. Do not miss class!
2. Don't be afraid to ask for help if you don't understand something.
3. Keep up with all reading and required work! Set a schedule and be disciplined enough to stick to it.
4. Take down complete, dated class notes and review them everyday.
5. *LEARN* the information. Don't just memorize. You must be able to **apply** the concepts we learn in psychology. You must *understand* what all of the terminology means.

### POLICIES AND PET PEEVES:

- Unless otherwise indicated, all written work must be written in bold pencil, blue or black ink or typed.
- I do not accept late assignments. They are due at the beginning of class. It is not fair to other students who are waiting for timely feedback on their work.
- Any assignment or test that is missed due to an absence must be made up no later than 2 weeks from the day of the absence.

## **COURSE OUTLINE:**

### **I. Methodology: (3-4 days)**

- Research Methods: Case study, survey, observation, experimentation
- Statistical Reasoning: measures of central tendency, measures of variation, correlation
- Ethics in Research: Human and animal subjects

### **II. Neuroscience and Behavior: (5-6 days)**

- Neural Communication: Neural and synaptic transmission, the influence of neurotransmitters
- Nervous System: Structure and functions
- The Brain: How the brain is studied, structure and functions, hemispheric specialization
- Endocrine System: structure and function

### **III. Developmental Psychology: (6-7 days)**

- Prenatal Development
- Infancy and Childhood: Physical, cognitive and social development
- Adolescence: Physical, cognitive and social development
- Adulthood: Physical, cognitive and social development
- Research Methods: Longitudinal and cross-sectional studies
- Heredity vs. Environment Issues
- Influential Theories: Piaget's cognitive stages of development, Erikson's social stages of development, Kohlberg's moral stages of development
- Dimensions of Development: self-concept

### **IV. Sensation and Perception: (5-6 days)**

- Psychophysics: Absolute thresholds, signal detection theory, difference threshold, Weber's law, sensory adaptation
- Sensory Systems Structures and Functions: 5 senses and vestibular and kinesthetic
- Visual and Auditory Theories: Young-Helmholtz and opponent-process theories of color vision, the place and frequency theories of pitch perception
- Perception: attention, processing (Gestalt psychology, and depth perception cues), visual illusions

### **V. States of Consciousness: (4-5 days)**

- Waking: Biological rhythms, daydreaming, circadian rhythm
- Sleep and Dreams: Stages of sleep (NREM and REM), content and function of dreams, dream theories, sleep disorders
- Hypnosis: behavior during hypnosis and the uses of hypnosis
- Psychoactive Drugs: Drug categories (depressants, stimulants and hallucinogens), the effects of drugs (physiological and psychological)

## **VI. Learning: (3-4 days)**

- Classical Conditioning: Pavlov's experiments
- Operant Conditioning: Skinner's experiments, types of reinforcers, schedules of reinforcement, shaping
- Conditioning Processes: acquisition, extinction, spontaneous recovery, generalization and discrimination
- Cognitive processes in Conditioning: Rescorla and Wagner experiments, Garcia's experiments, latent learning, overjustification effect, intrinsic motivation and extrinsic motivation, effects of punishment
- Biological Factors
- Observational Learning (Social Learning): Bandura's experiments

## **VII. Memory, Thinking and Language: (4-5 days)**

- Memory: Information processing, encoding (automatic and effortful) and memory systems (sensory, short-term, and long-term)
- Thinking: Problem solving (algorithm, heuristics, insight), obstacles to problem solving (confirmation bias, fixation, mental set, functional fixedness), making decisions and forming judgments (representativeness heuristic, availability heuristic, overconfidence, framing, belief bias, and belief perseverance)
- Language: components of language (phonemes, morpheme, grammar, semantics, and syntax), language development, Chomsky and Skinner

## **VIII. Intelligence and Individual Differences: (5-6 days)**

- Intelligence: Defining intelligence, history of intelligence testing (Binet, Terman, intelligence quotient, Spearman, Sternberg, Gardner's multiple intelligences, emotional intelligence)
- Creativity: Factors associated with creativity
- Extremes of Intelligence: Mental retardation and superior intelligence
- Types of Tests: Aptitude and achievement
- Components of Testing: standardization, reliability, validity, normal curve
- Genetic and Environmental Influences:

## **IX. Motivation and Emotion: (6-7days)**

- Motivational Concepts: Instincts, drives, optimal arousal, Maslow's hierarchy of needs
- Types of Motivators: Hunger, thirst, sex, achievement, social acceptance and work
- Eating Disorders: Anorexia nervosa and bulimia nervosa
- Emotion: Physiology (fear, anger and happiness) and expression of emotion
- Theories of Emotion: James-Lange, Cannon-Bard and Schachter-Singer

## **X. Personality: (6-7 days)**

- Psychodynamic Perspective: Freud, Jung, Adler and Horney
- Trait Perspective: Allport, Cattell, Eysenck, the five-factor model

- Humanistic Perspective: Rogers and Maslow
- Social-Cognitive Perspective: Bandura
- Personality tests: projective tests, MMPI and the Myers-Briggs)

#### **XI. Psychological Disorders: (9-10 days)**

- Criteria for behavior to be defined as abnormal
- Models: Medical and bio-psycho-social perspective
- Classifications: DSM-IV
- Anxiety Disorders: Generalized anxiety disorder, panic disorder, phobias, obsessive-compulsive disorder and post-traumatic stress disorder
- Dissociative Disorders: Dissociative amnesia, dissociative fugue and dissociative identity disorder
- Mood Disorders: Major depressive disorder, dysthymic disorder, seasonal affective disorder and bipolar
- Schizophrenia: Paranoid schizophrenia, disorganized schizophrenia, catatonic schizophrenia and undifferentiated schizophrenia
- Personality Disorders: Histrionic personality, narcissistic personality, borderline personality, antisocial personality
- Somatoform Disorders: Hypochondrias and conversion hysteria
- Possible Causes of Psychological Disorders: Biological and environmental

#### **XII. Treatment of Psychological Disorders: (5-6 days)**

- Psychoanalysis: Goals and methods
- Humanistic Therapies: Goals and methods
- Behavior Therapies: Goals and methods
- Cognitive Therapies: Goals and methods
- Group and Family Therapy: Goals and methods
- Biomedical Therapies: Drug therapies (antipsychotic, antianxiety and antidepressant), ECT, psychosurgery

#### **XIII. Social Psychology: (5-6 days)**

- Attitudes and Behavior: Fundamental attribution error, foot-in-the-door phenomenon, attitudes and actions, roles, cognitive dissonance
- Social Influence: Asch and conformity, Milgram and obedience, social facilitation social loafing, deindividuation, group polarization and group-think
- Social Relations: prejudice, stereotypes, scape-goating, aggression, conflict, social traps, attraction, altruism, peacemaking

**Resources for Teaching AP Psychology:**

- Text: David Myers, *Psychology*, 7<sup>th</sup> edition (New York: Worth Publishers, 2004)  
Hockenbury and Hockenbury, *Discovering Psychology*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (New York: Worth Publishers, 2001).
- Numerous articles and non-fiction accounts drawn from books, newspapers, magazines and journals.
- Support materials provided by the College Board.

**PARENTS ARE TO SIGN THIS SECTION OF THE FORM INDICATING THAT BOTH YOU AND YOUR STUDENT HAVE READ AND UNDERSTAND THE GUIDELINES.**

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Parent signature

Date

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Student signature

Date