Advanced and Honors Levels Psychology Syllabus

Course Description

This course introduces students to the systematic and scientific study of human behavior and mental processes. Students explore and apply psychological theories, key concepts, and phenomena associated with such topics as the biological bases of behavior, sensation and perception, learning and cognition, motivation, developmental psychology, testing and individual differences, treatments of psychological disorders, and social psychology. *This syllabus is written for both the advanced and honors levels of study. Specific notations are made throughout the document to indicate when content is unique to the honors level. Reading materials and assessments are also based upon the course level.* This course aligns with the ***Portrait of the Crusader*** in that students employ psychological research methods, including ethical considerations, as they use the scientific method, evaluate claims and evidence, and effectively communicate ideas.

Course Essential Questions

- How does the methodology of the research affect the outcome of a study?
- How do ethical guidelines impact psychological research?
- How do biological and environmental factors influence our behaviors and mental processes?
- How do we perceive and understand ourselves?
- What motivates us to think and act the way we do?
- How does the bias of a researcher affect their conclusions?

Course Curriculum

Unit 1: Scientific Foundations of Psychology (2 weeks)

Focus Questions:

- How do different types of psychologists attempt to define, explain, predict, and control human behavior?
- Why is it important to take different perspectives when attempting to explain complex behaviors?
- How do psychologists use research to explore behavior and mental processes?
- How do psychologists apply descriptive statistics to organize and analyze information?

Concepts/Skills:

- Recognize the major figures and theoretical approaches for explaining behavior.
- Define the different domains of psychology.
- Differentiate types of research with regard to purpose, strengths, and weaknesses.
- Discuss the value of operational definitions and measurement in behavioral research. *H*
- Identify independent, dependent, confounding, and control variables in experimental designs.
- Describe how research design drives the reasonable conclusions that can be drawn. *H*
- Distinguish between random assignment and random selection of participants.
- Predict the validity of behavioral explanations based on the quality of research design. *H*
- Define descriptive and inferential statistics. Apply basic descriptive statistical concepts to interpret and construct graphs and calculate simple descriptive statistics.
- Recognize ethical and legal guidelines to protect research participants and promote sound ethical practice.

Assessments:

- Historical Figures Social Media Project; Research Ethics Project; or, Naturalistic Observation Project
- Unit Test: Terminology, short answer and constructed response questions. (Honors includes more complex questions and requirements for response)

Unit 2: Biological Bases of Behavior (3 weeks)

Focus Questions:

- How has research and technology provided new methods to analyze brain behavior and disease?
- How does the interaction between our different biological processes influence our thought and behavior?
- How are our perceptions influenced by environmental variables, motivation, past experiences, culture, and expectations?

Concepts/Skills:

- Recognize research contributions of specific scientists in the area of heredity and environment.
- Describe the nervous system and its subdivisions and functions, including on the brain.
- Explain basic processes and systems in the biological bases of behavior, including parts of the neuron.
- Identify basic processes of transmission of a signal between neurons.
- Discuss the influence of drugs on neurotransmitters. *H*
- Recognize the contributions of key researchers to the study of the brain, the development of tools for examining the brain, and to the study of neuroplasticity.
- Analyze the role of neuroplasticity in traumatic brain injury. *H*

Assessments:

- Case studies analysis
- Unit Test: Terminology, short answer and constructed response questions (Honors includes more complex scenarios, questions and requirements for response)

Unit 3: Sensation and Perception (3 weeks)

Focus Questions:

- How do we process the information we receive from our environments?
- How does our interpretation of the information we receive from the environment influence our behaviors and mental processes?
- How do experience and culture influence perceptual processes?

Concepts/Skills:

- Define the processes of sensation and perception and explain how they interact.
- Explain the concepts of threshold and adaptation.
- List forms of physical energy for which humans /nonhuman animals do and do not have sensory receptors. *H*
- Describe the sensory systems.
- Explain Gestalt principles of perception.
- Describe binocular and monocular depth cues.
- Explain and analyze the importance of perceptual constancies; give examples of their applications in daily life.
- Describe perceptual illusions and the nature of attention.

- Analyze how experiences and expectations influence perception. *H*

Assessments:

- Sensation and Perception Labs
- Optical Illusion project
- Unit Test: Terminology, short answer and constructed response questions (Honors includes more complex scenarios, questions and requirements for response.)

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Unit 4: States of Consciousness (2 weeks)

Focus Questions:

- How do different theories explain why we sleep and dream?
- How do culture and expectations influence the use and experience of drugs?

Concepts/Skills:

- Analyze the various states of consciousness and their impact on behavior. *H*
- Identify the major psychoactive drug categories and classify specific drugs, including their psychological and physiological effects.
- Discuss drug dependence, addiction, tolerance, and withdrawal.
- Trace the contributions of major figures in consciousness research.
- Investigate aspects of sleep and dreaming.
- Investigate meditation and relaxation and their effects on behavior. *H*

Assessments:

- Sleep and dream analysis project
- Unit Test: Terminology, short answer and constructed response questions. (Honors includes more complex questions and requirements for response)

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Unit 5: Motivation, Emotion, and Stress (2 weeks)

Focus Questions:

- Why do some people respond to stress in a healthier way than others?
- How do cultural influences shape emotional expression (including variations in body language)?
- How does stress influence people both physiologically and psychologically, and how do we appropriately cope with stress?

Concepts/Skills:

- Explain basic motivational concepts to understand the behavior of humans and other animals.
- Compare and contrast motivational theories, including the strengths and weaknesses of each. *H*
- Summarize classic research findings in specific motivations.
- Recognize contributions of key researchers in the psychological field of motivation and emotion.
- Analyze the biological underpinnings of motivation, including needs, drives, and homeostasis.
- Investigate, compare and contrast major theories of emotion.
- Discuss theories of stress and the effects of stress on psychological and physical well-being. *H*

Assessments:

- Motivation Playlists
- Gratitude letters
- Emotion theories digital media project
- Unit Test: Terminology, short answer and constructed response questions. (Honors includes more complex questions and requirements for response)

Unit 6: Learning (3 weeks)

Focus Questions:

- How do we learn?
- How do our experiences influence our behaviors and mental processes?
- How is our language and our thought processes related?

Concepts/Skills:

- Recognize the contributions of key researchers in the psychology of learning.
- Describe the essential characteristics of insight learning, latent learning, and social learning.
- Explain emotional learning, taste aversion, superstitious behavior, and learned helplessness.
- Provide examples of how biological constraints create learning predispositions. *H*
- Explain basic classical conditioning phenomena.
- Distinguish between principles of classical conditioning, operant conditioning, and observational learning.
- Predict the effects of operant conditioning. *H*
- Predict how practice, schedules of reinforcement, other aspects of reinforcement, and motivation will influence quality of learning.
- Determine how behavior modification, biofeedback, coping strategies, and self-control can be used to address behavioral problems. *H*

Assessments:

- Video analysis of animal behavior
- Unit Test: Terminology, short answer and constructed response questions. (Honors includes more complex questions and requirements for response)

Unit 7: Cognitive Psychology (3 weeks)

Focus Questions:

- What roles do memory and thinking play in our behaviors?
- How do our sensory, short-term, and long-term memory systems differ?
- What is intelligence and how can we study it to understand it?
- How does culture influence the definition of intelligence? What are the best practices for creating culture-fair tests?

Concepts/Skills:

- Describe psychological and physiological systems of memory, including short and long-term memory.
- Compare and contrast cognitive processes. *H*

- Trace the contributions of key researchers in cognitive psychology and contemporary theories of intelligence.
- Outline the principles that underlie the construction and encoding of memories.
- Outline the principles that underlie effective storage of memories. *H*
- Describe strategies for retrieving memories, memory improvement, and typical memory errors.
- Explain problem-solving strategies, factors that influence effectiveness, and that create bias and errors in thinking.
- List the characteristics of creative thought and creative thinkers.
- Define intelligence and list characteristics of how psychologists measure intelligence.
- Explain how psychologists design tests, including standardization strategies, to establish reliability/validity. *H*
- Interpret the meaning of scores in terms of the normal curve. Explain relevant labels related to testing.
- Synthesize how biological, cognitive, and cultural factors converge to facilitate acquisition, development, and use of language. *H*

Assessments:

- Cognition lab stations
- Intelligence tests
- Unit Test: Terminology, short answer and constructed response questions. (Honors includes more complex questions and requirements for response)

Unit 8: Developmental Psychology (2 weeks)

Focus Questions:

- What influence do temperament and other social factors have on attachment and appropriate socialization?
- How does the interaction of nature and nurture (including cultural variations) affect physical development and determination of behavior?

Concepts/Skills:

- Discuss maturation of motor skills.
- Identify the contributions of researchers in developmental psychology.
- Discuss the interaction of nature and nurture on social development and determination of behavior.
- Explain how parenting styles influence development.
- Explain the maturation of cognitive abilities (Piaget's stages, informational process).
- Discuss the maturational challenges in adolescence, including related family conflicts.
- Characterize the development of decisions related to intimacy as people mature. *H*
- Trace the physical and cognitive changes that emerge through the lifespan, including steps that can be taken to maximize function. *H*
- Compare and contrast models of moral development. *H*
- Describe how sex and gender influence socialization and other aspects of development.

Assessments:

- Gender role analysis in movies and varied advertising
- Developmental soundtracks project
- Unit Test: Terminology, short answer and constructed response questions. (Honors includes more complex questions and requirements for response)

Unit 9: Personality Psychology (2 weeks)

Focus Questions:

- How can culture facilitate or constrain personality development and self-concept?
- How do theorists differ in regard to understanding our personality development?
- How do we use defense mechanisms to help alleviate some negative effects of stress and promote health?
- How do psychologists distinguish between personality types, and what are the different techniques of personality assessment?

Concepts/Skills:

- Describe and compare research methods that psychologists use to investigate personality.
- Identify the contributions of major researchers in personality theory.
- Compare and contrast the theories of personality: psychoanalytic, behaviorist, social cognitive, humanistic.
- Identify frequently used assessment strategies, and evaluate relative test quality based on reliability and validity of the instruments.
- Discuss biological and situational influences on personality. *H*

Assessments:

- Personality collage
- Unit Test: Terminology, short answer and constructed response questions. (Honors includes more complex questions and requirements for response)

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Unit 10: Clinical Psychology (3 weeks)

Focus Questions:

- Why is a psychological perspective necessary in the treatment of disorders?
- How are psychological disorders treated?

Concepts/Skills:

- Recognize the form and function of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM).
- Recognize varied conceptions of what constitutes psychological disorders. Consider the pros and cons of diagnostic labels.
- Evaluate the strengths and limitations of various approaches to explaining psychological disorders. *H*
- Discuss the major diagnostic categories (DSM) and primary corresponding symptoms.
- Describe the central characteristics of psychotherapeutic intervention.
- Identify the contributions of major figures in psychological treatment.
- Explain how psychological treatments have changed over time and among cultures. *H*
- Describe major treatment orientations used in therapy and how they influence therapeutic planning.
- Compare and contrast different treatment methods. *H*
- Describe the intersection between psychology and the law.

Summative Assessments:

- Episode analysis project
- Personality disorders case studies analysis

- Unit Test: Terminology, short answer and constructed response questions. (Honors includes more complex questions and requirements for response)

Unit 11: Social Psychology (2 weeks)

Focus Questions:

- How can attribution theory explain motives?
- What impact do social-cultural influences have on self-concept and relationships with others?
- How do socio-cultural factors influence thought processes and behavior?
- Why do prosocial and antisocial behaviors occur?

Concepts/Skills:

- Explain the concept of self-fulfilling prophecy.
- Discuss the impact of self-fulfilling prophecy on behavior. *H*
- Identify the contributions of key researchers in social psychology.
- Discuss attitude formation and change, including persuasion strategies and cognitive dissonance.
- Explain how individuals respond to expectations of others, including groupthink, conformity, and authority.
- Describe the structure and function of different kinds of group behavior.
- Predict the impact of the presence of others on individual behavior. *H*
- Describe processes that contribute to differential treatment of group members.
- Describe the variables that contribute to altruism, aggression and attraction.

Assessments:

- Media and consumer behavior project; or, social norms project
- Social reactions case studies
- Unit Test: Terminology, short answer and constructed response questions. (Honors includes more complex questions and requirements for response)

Resources

Hockenbury, Sandra E. Discovering Psychology, New York: Worth Publishers.

Additional resources:

- Halonen, Jane and Gray, Cynthia. The Critical Thinking Companion for Introductory Psychology (2nd edition). New York: Worth Publishers, 2001.
- Hock, Roger R. Forty Studies That Changed Psychology (6th edition). Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Pearson/Prentice Hall, 2009.
- Membership in the American Psychological Association (APA) and the Teachers of Psychology in Secondary Schools (TOPPS): http://www.apa.org, Journals, publications, and specialty divisions.
- The American Psychological Society (APS): http://www.psychologicalscience.org

Grading Policy

- Tests: 35 - 45 %
- Quizzes: 15 - 25 %
- Labs: 15 - 25 %
- Classwork: 10 - 20 %
- Student Preparation: 15 - 25 %