

MCC PSYCHOLOGY SYLLABUS

MR. BOSCHETTO

Course Description. An introduction to the study of how people behave and function. Topics covered include: physiology of the brain, memory, learning, language, perception, life span changes, normality and abnormality, social interactions, group influence on individuals, and therapies.

CREDIT HOUR POLICY: Middlesex Community College follows the Carnegie Unit for credit. Students are expected to spend a minimum of 45 hours of work for each credit. The most common breakdown for one credit is one hour of class instruction and two hours of homework for 15 weeks each semester. A three credit course demands nine hours each week.

THEMES AND ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

The following seven themes present fundamental questions about life that we will explore in this course. Each Content Unit will focus on one or more themes, but these questions apply to all of Psychology (and to many other disciplines, as well).

Nature and Nurture

Both genes (the “nature” – present at birth) and environment (“nurture” – our life experiences) make us who we are. But genes operate in a complex interplay with life experiences.

Are we who we are because of our genes or experiences?

The Conscious and Unconscious

From its beginning, psychology has focused on our thoughts and on what lies under them.

To what extent is behavior controlled by conscious forces we understand and to what extent by subconscious forces outside our awareness?

Self and Situation

Each of us has a sense of who we are and how that affects what we do. However, when observing others' behavior we often imagine that we would behave better under the same circumstances. *To what extent does behavior result from who we are as individuals (the self) and to what extent from our immediate circumstances (the situation)?*

Change and Stability

Recent research has shown that the human brain demonstrates remarkable plasticity – an ability to adapt to changing circumstances. *To what extent does each of us remain the same person over a lifetime? How and why do we change?*

Specialization and Association

The human brain is specialized, with different sections adapted for different purposes. But it also creates a single continuous experience. *How do the specialized regions of our brain give rise to our behaviors? How do we integrate those behaviors into a continuous experience?*

The Unusual and the “Normal”

There is a great range of human experience. Psychology presents us with numerous examples of unusual, rare and bizarre instances – from brain injuries to disorders to perception puzzles to paranormal experiences. *What is “normal”? How do phenomena at the edge of human experience demonstrate how the “normal” brain works?*

The Owner’s Manual

Psychology like no other discipline can give you practical advice for using your brain more effectively. *How can psychology help you solve life’s problems?*

PSYCHOLOGICAL APPROACHES

These perspectives are schools of thought that attempt to answer the thematic essential questions described above. They developed historically in response to each other. Most modern practitioners and thinkers borrow from a number of approaches.

Psychodynamic Psychology

Also known as Freudian or psychoanalytic psychology. Emphasizes hidden and unconscious impulses and defense mechanisms like denial and repression. (1895 – Present)

Behaviorism

Focuses on stimulus and response learning, and effect of rewards and punishments on behavior. De-emphasizes internal mental experiences and thoughts. (1906 – Present)

Social Psychology

Analyzes how behavior is affected by social relationships and circumstances. (1940s – Present)

Cognitive Psychology

Focuses on internal mental events including thinking, language, perception, consciousness, and memory.
(1950s – Present)

Neuroscience

Also known as bio-psychology. Explains behavior through analysis of physical processes in the brain and nervous system. (1950s – Present)

Humanistic Psychology

Sometimes called Positive Psychology. Emphasizes self-concept and free will and sees people as positive and growth-seeking. (1950s – Present)

Evolutionary Psychology

Explains how behaviors developed through natural selection in the environment and lifestyle – a hunter-gatherer tribal life – in which humans spent most of their evolutionary history.
(1980s – Present)

Socio-Cultural Psychology

Studies the way in which culture affects behavior by analyzing different cultures. (1980s – Present)

SCIENTIFIC METHOD

The scientific method provides tools for discovering, describing, analyzing and evaluating ideas about what people do and why they do it.

The Research Cycle

Psychological research involves six steps: 1. Review the literature (what has been written about the topic), 2. Develop hypothesis, 3. Design study and collect data, 4. Analyze data and accept or reject hypothesis, 5. Publish and review, and 6. Build theories.

Experimental Research

An experimenter changes elements of a situation and then measures results systematically.

Descriptive Research

Describing behavior in the real world through naturalistic observations, surveys, and case studies.

Correlational Research

Analyzing the relationship between variables using statistics.

Biological Research

Psychologists use tools, such as MRI, PET scans, and EEGs to explore the brain and nervous system.

TENTATIVE COURSE SCHEDULE

The Content Units address aspects of human experience, providing examples that together with life experiences will help you evaluate and construct various theories of life. Listed below is a tentative schedule week-by-week of content and large assignments.

Term 1

Introduction: Methods and Approaches - Sept 1-18

Week 1 - Themes

Week 2 - Scientific Method

Week 3 - Psychological Approaches and Review, Test

Development - Sept 19 - Oct 16

Week 4 - Brain, Social-Emotional and Cognitive Development Daily Quizzes

Week 5 - Language, Culture, Gender Daily Quizzes

Week 6 - Adolescence, Moral Development Daily Quizzes, Development Reading

Week 7 - Personality Development and Aging Daily Quizzes, Unit Test

Social Psychology - Oct 19 - Nov 6

Week 8 - Begin Fall Research Project, Social Influence Quiz

Week 9 - Peer Relations, Helping Quizzes

Week 10 - Groups, Prejudice, Unit Test

Term 2

The Brain - Nov 9 - 25

Week 11 - Neurons, Neurotransmitters and the Nervous System, Witty Ticky Ray Reading

Week 12 - Gross Anatomy, Brain Reading, Fall Research Project due.
Week 13 - Plasticity case studies, Unit Test
Consciousness - Dec 1-18
Week 14 - Consciousness and Sleep, Dream Log
Week 15 - Alternate States, Unit Test
Perception - Dec 21 - Jan 14
Week 16 - The senses, Oliver Sacks Readings
Week 17 - ESP and Subliminal demos
Midyear Exam 1/19-1/22

Term 3

Learning Jan 25 - Feb 5
Week 18 - Intro Lit Review, Classical Conditioning
Week 19 - Operant Conditioning, Unit Test
Memory Feb 8 - 29
Week 20 - Systems and Anatomy
Week 21 - Special Problems - Eyewitness, Flashbulbs
Week 22 - Memory Improvement, Unit Test
Intelligence March 1-21
Week 23 - Lit Review due, Creativity and Problem Solving
Week 24 - Spring Research Projects, Intelligence Testing
Week 25 - Savants, Unit Test

Term 4

Motivation and Emotion Mar 22- Apr 8
Week 26 - Motivation
Week 27 - Theories of Emotion, Positive Psychology debate, Spring Research Project due.
Personality and Gender Apr 11 - 15
Week 28 - Personality Theories and Application
Week 29 - Personality Assessment, Unit Quiz
Mental Health Apr 25 - May 27
Week 30 - Disorders and the DSM
Week 31 - Therapies, Unit Quiz
Week 32 - Group Therapy role play

Finals 5/31-6/3

OBJECTIVES

Students will be able to answer the following questions in a way that shows an understanding of the themes and approaches described above.

Introduction: History, Methods and Approaches

1. What is psychology? What are its goals?
2. How do the Themes of the course relate to each other?
3. What are the most significant elements of the Scientific Method? What are

strengths and potential problems with different research methods? What are the ethical limits on psychological research?

4. Describe and evaluate the eight modern approaches to psychology.

Development

1. Describe the processes of early brain, physical and motor development.
2. How do attachment, parenting styles and family structure effect social and emotional development?
3. How do children learn to think about the world? What are the most important attributes of Piaget's four-stage theory of cognitive development? What alternatives are there to Piaget's theory?
4. How does the process of language acquisition proceed?
5. How does culture effect development?
6. What are the major determinants of gender development?
7. What particular problems are posed by adolescence?
8. How do children learn right from wrong? Describe elements of, alternatives to, and criticisms of Kohlberg's theory of moral development.
9. Which of the major theories of personality development is most convincing?
10. What are the most significant physical, intellectual and social problems posed by aging?

Social Psychology

1. Describe and explain factors of social influence including research on conformity, persuasion (compliance), authority and indoctrination. How can one resist the power of social influence?
2. What are the most significant determinants of peer relations? What leads to and results from friendship, shyness, social status, and victimization?
3. Under what circumstance do people help others? What kinds of people are more likely to help? What theories explain helping?
4. Describe the functioning of groups in task completion, decision-making and leadership.
5. How do our thoughts affect how we judge others and ourselves (attribution)? What are the causes of conscious and subconscious prejudice and discrimination? How can prejudice and discrimination be reduced?

The Brain

1. How is the nervous system organized?
2. What are neurons and how do they communicate information throughout the body?
3. Describe the effects of the major neurotransmitters and explain how they are related to diseases, disorders, poisons and drugs.
4. How is the brain organized?
5. Describe the functions of the lobes of the cortex and the other brain structures listed below.
6. What are the functions of the brain's left and right hemispheres? How does split-brain research demonstrate lateralization?
7. Describe research on the ability of the brain to change (plasticity).
8. Describe how evolutionary psychology explains human behaviors using examples.

Consciousness

1. What is consciousness? To what extent is consciousness a uniquely human experience?
2. What is the effect of the circadian rhythm on levels of consciousness?
3. What is the purpose of sleep? Describe the stages of sleep.
4. Describe and apply the three major theories of dreaming using examples.
5. What strategies should be used to stay awake when necessary or to sleep better? Describe causes and elements of major sleep disorders.

6. Describe the effects of alternate states of consciousness. What do alternate states of consciousness reveal about consciousness and the modern approaches to psychology described above?

Perception

1. How do our sensory organs select, organize and interpret information to create meaningful perceptions of the world?
2. How do we perceive sounds, including music and language?
3. What is the purpose of the chemical senses – taste and smell? How do they work?
4. How do the body senses – touch, balance and body position – function?
5. Explain the processes of visual perception, including form, depth and color. How do visual illusions and disorders help us understand those processes?
6. Evaluate research regarding subliminal messages and extra-sensory perception.

Learning

1. Explain the process of classical conditioning. What are some examples of classical conditioning?
2. What is operant conditioning and how is it different from classical conditioning? Under what circumstances is operant conditioning most effective?
3. What effects do the four schedules of reinforcement have on response rate and extinction? What are examples of each of the schedules?
4. What are some possible problems with punishment?
5. How should conditioning be used by society?
6. How does cognitive-social learning theory differ from behaviorism?

Memory

1. Describe the purpose, duration and capacity of the traditional three-stage memory model (sensory, short-term, long-term and subsystems). How do the systems function together to encode, store and retrieve memories?
2. What brain structures and processes are involved in memory and how do they relate to the three-stage model? Explain how memory disorders demonstrate the biology of memory.
3. Why do we forget (five theories and seven sins)?
4. How do problems with eyewitness testimony, flashbulb memories and repressed memories demonstrate that meaning sometimes helps to support and sometimes disrupts memory?
5. Name and describe methods that can be used to improve memory.

Intelligence

1. What is thought?
2. Explain the three stages of problem solving. Describe major barriers to effective problem solving and how to overcome them.
3. What is creativity and how is it measured? What causes creativity?
4. What is intelligence? Describe and evaluate Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences and Sternberg's 3 elements of intelligence. How does the theory of emotional intelligence relate to Gardner's theory?
5. How is IQ determined? How are differences in IQ caused and what do they mean?
6. How do cases of savants and prodigies help us understand thinking, creativity, problem-solving and intelligence?
7. How does animal intelligence differ from human intelligence?

Motivation and Emotion

1. Describe and evaluate the major theories and concepts of motivation. What are the characteristics of those with high achievement motivation?
2. What are the cognitive, biological and behavioral components of emotion? How do theories of emotion explain the relationships between these elements? What are the evolutionary purposes of emotions?
3. How can we be happier?
4. How and why do cultures express emotions similarly and differently?
5. How do people and machines detect deception?

6. Describe and evaluate theories of love and attraction. What are the characteristics of successful long-term relationships? How are differences in relationships between men and women explained by evolutionary psychology?

Personality and Gender

1. What are the strengths and weaknesses of **trait theories** of personality?
2. Describe and evaluate the most significant elements of **psychodynamic** theories of personality. Compare Freud's theory to those of neo-Freudian psychodynamic theorists.
3. Analyze and evaluate how **humanistic** theories explain the relationship between personality and the self.
4. What are the relative strengths and weaknesses of the **social-cognitive** approach to personality?
5. Analyze and evaluate biological and **neuroscientific** theories of personality.
6. How do **gender and sexuality** relate to personality characteristics and the self? (See Text Chapter 11.)
7. Evaluate the ways that psychologists **measure** personality.

Mental Health

1. How do psychologists identify, explain and classify abnormal behavior? How should society, our medical system and the law deal with mental illness?
2. What are the symptoms, causes and prognoses for psychological disorders (anxiety, schizophrenia, mood, dissociative disorders, personality disorders and others)? Give examples of thoughts and behaviors associated with each disorder.
3. Discuss the goals of therapy. Differentiate between the five types of therapeutic professions. What are some of the major issues in therapy?
4. Compare how the psychological approaches result in different approaches to treatment. How effective are the major therapies in treating disorders?

Schedule. Psychology meets two out of three days in a rotating day schedule for 70-minute blocks throughout the school year -- so (given exam weeks) approximately 100+ 70 minute classes.

Materials. The text for the course is Huffman, Karen. *Psychology in Action, 10th ed.* Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons. It is supplemented by numerous primary and secondary readings from a variety of sources, and feature-length documentaries and clips.

Assessments. Students will sit for unit tests and quizzes, Midyear and Final Exams. Writing includes four unit essays, six reflection papers, and a Literature Review. Students complete two student-driven [research projects](#) in which they propose, execute and write up the results of an experiment, survey, naturalistic observation or case studies. Grades are calculated on a total points system, with major tests and projects worth 100 points and daily homework worth around 10 points.

Materials for the course and unit outlines are available at this [link](#).

EXPECTATIONS AND POLICIES

1. **Expectations.** In this class, we will be studying ourselves and our ideas as well as the course material, so it is very important that people feel comfortable sharing about themselves and their opinions, some very personal, in class discussions. Members of the class will treat each other with integrity, respect, dignity and humanity. We will listen to each other; respect opinions and views that we may not agree with, share with the class and allow the

rest of the class to share as well. The course expects members to work independently and cooperatively. We will behave like we want to be here and want to learn.

2. **Learning Experiences.** I have been working on what I hope will be interesting, challenging, entertaining, creative and humorous opportunities for all of us to learn, explore, understand, apply, and evaluate. You will work by yourself and with others on projects, presentations, reading, papers, posters, debates, simulations, discussions, experiments and videos. Students will rely on each other to learn from each other, so it is important that you take your responsibilities seriously.

3. **Grades.** All of this will “count” in one way or another. Grades will be calculated under a point system. Each assignment, of whatever type, will be assigned a maximum point value. All written work - Thinkwrits, Essays, the Lit Review (research paper) and research projects will be graded under rubrics with the following categories: *Active Learning: Effort and Initiative; Resourceful Thinking: Knowledge and Comprehension; Analysis and Application. Synthesis and Evaluation; and Effective Communication: Writing and Creativity.* Term Grades at Bedford High are calculated on a 100-point scale. At the end of the term, grades will be calculated based on each student’s earned percentage of the total points for the term. Anything that is not specifically awarded a point value will be assessed as part of class participation, which will be assessed most days on a 10-point scale. Each test is 100 points while quizzes will range in points depending on the amount of material covered. Each term there will be roughly 700 points -- approximately 200 from class participation, 200 from projects, papers, readings and homeworks and 300 from quizzes and tests. Midterm and Final exams will count towards 10% of your final year grade, with each term counting 20%.

4. **Leveling and AP.** This is a split Honors / High Honors – AP course, meaning that students can choose to take the course as either Honors or High Honors. Students in the High Honors course will complete additional (or different) homework assignments, writing, and tests (including more writing and more difficult vocabulary). Students taking High Honors should possess the academic skills and commitment to do substantial independent reading, research and study. High Honors work will be assessed with higher expectations. Students are encouraged to take the Psychology AP test, offered in May. Students have done well on the test with additional individual preparation (get a “prep” book).

5. **Late work.** The policy is simple: generally, late work will not be accepted.

6. **Preparation, Beginnings and Endings.** Students will come to class on time prepared to work and will focus from bell to bell. There is a reason for this: Research shows that, in learning new things, beginnings and endings are the most important time. If those are lost in yammering, you will learn less easily and less efficiently. At the beginning of class we will warm up and introduce, and at the end of class we will sum up, organize, and synthesize. Also – you are in this class because you chose to be in this class. In many cases, that prevented others from taking it. Act like you want to be here and want to learn.

7. **Absences.** When you are absent it is your responsibility to attempt to find out what the class covered, assignments, and expectations for the next class. Use google drive and/or the class website.

- If you are absent unexcused (no parent call-in), assignments due that day are 0s (including class participation).
- If you are absent after a long-term assignment is given and before it is due, the due date does not change.
- If you are absent on the date an assignment is due, get the assignment to me when you return.
- If you miss a test or quiz it must be made up by the end of the next week, during an X-block or after school.

8. **Notebook and iPad.** While we are moving towards a paperless world, there will be some pencil and paper used in this class. You will need a small binder to store current work, tests, and other things done on paper. “Your” iPad will be used in class productively for school-related purposes. You will shut down non-school aps and notifications. Nearly everything will be distributed and collected through Google Drive (and Docs, etc.), so make sure those aps are working properly.

9. **Writing.** You will do a lot of writing in this course, all of which will be typed in single-spaced 12-point Times font in Google Drive. That will save you the hassle of figuring out how to format your stuff and will save me from reading anything in **14-point Monotype Corsiva Bold Italic**. Individual writing will be added to your writing journal in google drive. All group work will be produced in Google Drive so that I can track changes.

10. **Student Handbook.** You must comply with all laws, rules, policies, regulations, details, schedules, calendars, included in the Bedford High School Student Handbook™, including tardy and class cut policies.