

Course Syllabus: Particular Topics in Psychology

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Course Description:

This purpose of Particular Topics in Psychology is to help students understand their behavior and the behavior of others in order to strengthen them as individuals and as members of groups. Topics such as the history of psychology, personality development, social psychology, psychological disorders, memory, and philosophy will be explored. 1/2 Credit

Assessment and Grading:

Your grade in this class will be based on the level of proficiency that you demonstrate on summative assessments throughout the year. Your performance on formative assessments will be recorded in PowerSchool but will not be averaged into your final proficiency score. All traditional types of assignments (homework/classwork, essays, presentations, quizzes, tests, participation, etc.) will still be utilized. Assessments under any of these categories may be either formative or summative.

Reassessment:

If you do not demonstrate proficiency on a summative assessment, you may see me to discuss your options in regards to starting the learning process over for the learning targets in that assessment.¹ We will devise an action plan consisting of self reflection on your preparation and habits of learning (and a behavior plan if necessary) as well as various tasks and further practice work (if necessary) designed to prepare you for reassessment. The action plan that we devise will be drawn up in a contract that will be signed by you, your parent or guardian, and myself. You will need to complete all the activities described in the contract before earning the opportunity for a reassessment of your proficiency.

Reassessment Criteria:

In order to maintain rigor in the new proficiency based grading system, the following criteria must be met (based on my professional opinion) before a reassessment will be granted:

- A student must make a genuine effort at achieving proficiency on the first attempt. I will not allow anyone to use the opportunity for reassessment as an excuse to forego preparation and effort on any initial summative assessment.
- Reassessment will not be allowed to serve as an excuse to ignore deadlines or serve as an advance preview of the test.
- Certain assessments can be difficult or impossible to recreate while maintaining the integrity of the assessment. Therefore, retakes may sometimes take the form of alternative assessments (for example, an oral quiz or a writing assessment may be used to evaluate your proficiency, even though the original assessment was in multiple choice format)
- A student must show evidence of corrective actions between the initial attempt and the reassessment (you must have completed the 3 specified formative assessments related to that summative assessment in addition to any new learning tasks designed to improve your performance). These actions and tasks will be outlined in the contract.
- Students who meet the reassessment criteria must schedule and complete the reassessment process within 2 weeks of the initial assessment date and within the same marking period (unless due to an excused absence from school).

¹ During our discussion, we will review not only your completion of (and performance on) all homework, classwork, and formative assessments leading up to the summative assessment but also your participation, preparedness, decorum in class, etc., as these affect your ability to learn the targeted material and skills as well.

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- The date and time of the reassessment will be scheduled at my discretion.

A variety of methods will be used to determine to what extent you have achieved proficiency in the objectives and targeted standards of the course.

- **Assignments (homework and classwork)**
- **Binder organization**
- **Formative and summative assessments**
- **Essays/papers**
- **Projects/presentations**
- **Class participation**

Binder:

It is important that you have a notebook/binder for class. We do not have a textbook for this class so your notes will be very important. Therefore, in order to be successful, you will need to keep a binder containing accurate notes from lectures and class discussions and all handouts distributed in class in order to be completely prepared for assessments.

Your binder will be assessed for proficiency in regards to the ARSU Transferable Skill #2 (*Self-Direction: Students demonstrate initiative and responsibility for learning*²). The binder should have 5 parts (I will give you a scoring guide):

- 1) Daily notes and vocabulary from lectures and class discussions (must be dated)
- 2) A labeled section for your journal of class openers and free-writes (must be dated)
- 3) A labeled section for handouts
- 4) A labeled section for assessments (formative and summative)
- 5) A labeled section for assignments

Summative assessments will be announced ahead of time. I will always inform you of the material that you will be expected to know so that you can study effectively. In addition to traditional tests/quizzes, there will also be weekly readings and assignments and at least one major paper/presentation or project each marking period.

Online Material:

I maintain two blogs that will be utilized throughout the year. One is a homework blog where you can find all assignments and materials distributed in class. You can also use the blog to discuss assignments, and any questions or thoughts you have concerning them, with me and your classmates. These blogs can be accessed through the links on the school website, the links in Google Classroom, or by going directly to the following web addresses:

<http://bruceshomeworkblog.blogspot.com/>

<http://lifeexamined-teacher.blogspot.com/>

² Note: Your score for this transferable skill now affects your eligibility for extracurricular activities.

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General Content Outline: (* = central questions that show how psychology applies to your life)

I. Unit One: History and development

A. Introduction to Psychology

- The origins of psychology
- History of the discipline
- Important figures in psychology
- Philosophical roots

****What is the mind body connection?***

II. Unit Two: Nature, Nurture and Human Development

A. The Biological Foundations of Behavior

- Communication throughout the body
- A guided tour of the brain

****Is human behavior more the product of nature or nurture?***

B. The Development of the Self/Personality

- Competing perspectives on personality
- Personality traits and genetics
- Psychological tests/assessing personality

****What's it like to be you?***

III. Unit Three: Basic Psychological Processes

A. Learning

- Classical conditioning
- Operant conditioning
- Observational learning

****Do we all have savant-like potential?***

B. Memory

- The Stage Model
- Types of memory
- Retrieval of memories
- Reconstructing memories
- The biological basis of memory
- Amnesia

****What factors cause us to forget?***

C. Sensation and Perception

- Vision
- Hearing
- The chemical and body senses
- Perception
- Illusions
- The effects of experience on perception

****Why do individual perceptions of the world differ?***

IV. Unit Four: Psychological Problems, Disorders, and Treatment

A. Psychological Disorders

- Anxiety disorders
- Mood disorders
- Personality disorders

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- Dissociative disorders
 - Schizophrenia
- * Why are our brains wired for fear?*

B. Consciousness and Its Variations

- Sleep & sleep disorders
 - Dreams
 - Hypnosis
 - Meditation
 - Psychoactive drugs
- * What meaning do our dreams hold (if any)?*

V. Unit Five: The Individual in Social Context

A. Social Psychology

- Forming impressions of others
 - Physical attractiveness
 - Attribution
 - Attitudes
 - Stereotypes and prejudice
 - Conformity
 - Obedience
 - Altruism (coming to the aid of strangers)
 - The influence of groups on individual behavior
- * Are you looking at me (The eyes as the window to the soul)?!*