AP Psychology- Senior Year
Class Syllabus

Textbook

Teacher Resources


  Jarvis, Mary. *Stress & Health Promotion; A Unit Plan for High School Psychology*. American Psychological Association, 2005

Student Supplements


The AP Psychology course will cover the following 8 units.

1. **Unit 1- Introduction, Chapter 1 and Appendix A-** History, methods, approaches, & measurement

2. **Unit 2- Chapters 2, The Nature/Nurture Issue, 5, & 6-** Brain, body, & awareness

3. **Unit 3- Chapters 7, 14 & 17-** Consciousness, conflict, and stress & coping

4. **Unit 4- Chapters 12, 13, & 8-** Motivation, emotion, & learning

5. **Unit 5- Chapters 15 & 16-** Psychological disorders & treatment
6. **Unit 6- Chapters 18 & 19-** Socio-cultural influences and self

7. **Unit 7- Chapters 3 & 4-** Stage theorists & Development

8. **Unit 8- Chapters 9, 10, & 11-** Cognitive Processes: Information processing, memory, intelligence & creativity

For each unit, you will have 1 major unit test and several quizzes. Additionally, you will have several group projects in varying point values, per 9 week grading period. For each unit, you will have **AT LEAST** 2-3 supplemental readings. We may or may not make specific reference to these. These are, however, relevant to the topics. Finally, you will be expected to do some minor research projects that will be explained in more detail at a later date.

The following is a syllabus of what we will cover in the AP Psychology course.

**Unit 1- History, methods, approaches & measurement**

A. Defining psychology  
B. Research vs. applied psychology  
C. History of Psychology  
   1. Wilhelm Wundt  
   2. Sigmund Freud  
   3. William James  
   4. John B. Watson  
D. Approaches in present day psychology  
   1. Bio-psychological approach  
   2. Behavioral approach  
   3. Psychoanalytic approach  
   4. Humanistic approach  
   5. Cognitive approach  
   6. Socio-cultural approach  
E. Analysis of approaches  
F. Scientific methods  
G. Procedures in experimentation  
   1. Hypothesis  
   2. Choosing subjects  
   3. Variables: Independent & dependent  
   4. Correlation  
H. Field studies  
I. Methods of studying behavior  
   1. Survey method  
   2. Naturalistic observation
3. Interviews
4. Case-study method
5. Psychological tests
6. Longitudinal and cross-sectional studies

J. Ethics of Experimentation
   1. Principles
   2. Experimentation with animals

K. Why psychological tests are used
L. Making a personality test
   1. Standardization
   2. Establishing norms
   3. Establishing validity
   4. Establishing reliability

M. Personality inventories
N. Projective tests
   1. The ink blot tests
   2. The TAT
   3. The principle of projection

O. Aptitude tests
P. Achievement tests
Q. A second look a test validity
R. Alternatives to testing
   1. Interviews
   2. Situational assessments

S. Ethics of testing

OBJECTIVES:
1. Define psychology and trace it’s historical development.
2. Compare and contrast contemporary psychological perspectives.
3. Explain the difference between clinical psychology and psychiatry.
4. Identify the subfields of psychology and explore different career options for people who earn degrees in psychology.
5. Describe hindsight bias and it’s effect on research findings.
6. Describe how overconfidence can contaminate our everyday judgments.
7. Describe the different methods psychologists can use to guide their research (i.e. case study, surveys, naturalistic observation, etc…)
8. Evaluate why correlational research does not yield causal conclusions.
9. Analyze the elements of sound psychological research design.
10. Describe the three measures of central tendency and measures in variation.
11. Evaluate the importance of ethics in research.
12. Analyze the ethical considerations in experimentation using the case of Genie as an example.
13. Describe projective tests used to assess personality and discuss some criticisms of them.
14. Define intelligence test and discuss the history of intelligence testing.
15. Distinguish between aptitude and achievement tests, and describe modern tests of mental abilities.
16. Describe the distribution of scores in a normal curve and discuss the importance of standardizing psychological tests.
17. Explain the differences between reliability and validity.

Unit 2 - Brain, body, awareness, and the Nature/Nurture debate

A. The nervous system
   1. CNS
   2. PNS
B. Brain communication
   1. The neuron
   2. The synapse
   3. Neurotransmitters
C. Examining the brain
   1. Cerebral cortex
   2. Hemispheres
   3. Lobes
   4. Frontal lobe
   5. Hemispheres and handedness
D. Phineas Gage’s contribution to neuroscience
E. Hemisphere inventories
F. The lower brain
   1. Thalamus
   2. Hypothalamus
   3. Limbic system
   4. Cerebellum
   5. Reticular Activating system
G. Split-brain surgeries
H. Brain games activities
I. Awakenings analysis
J. Reading of *The Man Who Mistook His Wife for a Hat*
K. Critical Periods and the case of Genie
L. Nature vs. Nurture debate
   1. Twin studies
      a. Monozygotic twins
      b. Dizygotic twins
   2. The case of the Hensel Twins
   3. An analysis of genetics
M. Sensation
   1. The power of our senses
   2. Energy senses
      a. Vision
         i. Parts of the eye
         ii. Photoreceptors
         iii. The blind spot
         iv. Afterimages
      b. Hearing
         i. Pitch
ii. Frequency
iii. Intensity
iv. Timbre
v. Parts of the ear
c. Touch

3. Chemical Senses
   a. Smell
   b. Taste
      i. Taste vs. flavor
      ii. Taste sensations

N. Perception
   1. Absolute threshold
   2. Difference threshold
   3. Signal-detection theory
   4. Sensory adaptation

O. Synesthesia
P. Subliminal perception
Q. Rules of perception
R. Illusion activity
S. Ames Room construction
T. Disability activity

OBJECTIVES:
1. Explain the process of neural communication.
2. Explain how neurotransmitters affect behavior, describing the functions of specific neurotransmitters.
3. Describe the contrasting effects of agonists and antagonists.
4. Classify and explain the major divisions of the nervous system.
5. Analyze several techniques for studying the brain.
6. Describe the functions of the major brain structures.
7. Describe split-brain research, and explain how it helps us understand the functions of our left and right hemispheres.
8. Explain the significance of twin studies and cite ways that behavior geneticist use twin studies to understand the effects of environment and heredity.
9. Discuss the impact that temperament illustrates the influence of heredity on our environment.
10. Discuss heritability and the application to individuals and groups.
11. Describe how experience can modify the brain.
12. Explain the role that culture has on behaviors like child-rearing practices.
14. Discuss Skinner’s and Chomsky’s contribution to the nature-nurture debate over how children acquire language.
15. Compare and contrast sensation and perception, by explaining and giving examples of bottom-up and top-down processing.
16. Distinguish between absolute and difference thresholds.
17. Explain subliminal perception.
18. Explain current applications of signal-detection theory on our behavior.
19. Describe real-life applications of sensory adaptation.
20. Define transduction and explain areas within the body where transduction takes place.
21. Describe the major structures of the eye & ear.
22. Explain how the Young-Helmholtz and opponent-process theories help us understand color vision.
23. Explain the importance of color constancy.
24. Compare and contrast the two types of hearing loss and describe some of their causes.
25. Explain how cochlear implants function.
26. Compare and contrast differences of taste and flavor.
27. Describe the sense of smell, and explain why specific odors easily trigger memories.
28. Distinguish between kinesthesia and the vestibular sense.
29. Explain the concepts of selective attention, cocktail party effect & inattentional blindness & how they influence our perception.
30. Analyze the effect of perceptual set on sensory experience.
31. Describe Gestalt psychology’s contribution to our understanding of perception.
32. Explain figure-ground relationship and identify principles of perceptual grouping in form perception.
33. Explain the importance of depth perception, and how it influences our behavior.
34. Describe binocular cues for depth and explain how they help the brain compute distance.
35. Compare and contrast monocular and binocular cues.
36. Explain the factors that allow for the adaptability of perception.

**Unit 3- Consciousness, conflict, stress & coping**

A. The consciousness conundrum
B. Consciousness as a construct
C. The 3 meanings of consciousness
   1. Sensory awareness
   2. Direct inner awareness
   3. Sense of self
D. The 3 levels of consciousness
   1. Pre-conscious
   2. Unconscious
   3. Non-conscious
E. Circadian rhythms
F. Sleep & dreams
   1. REM sleep
   2. Brain changes during sleep
   3. NREM sleep
   4. Purpose of dreaming
   5. EEG and measuring brain waves
   6. Sleep stages
   7. The sleep cycle
   8. Purpose of dreaming
G. Psychology of dreams
   1. Freudian view
   2. Bio-psychological view
   3. Dream content
H. Sleep problems
   1. Insomnia
   2. Nightmares
   3. Night terrors
   4. Sleep walking
   5. Sleep apnea
   6. Narcolepsy

I. States of consciousness
   1. Meditation
   2. Hypnosis
      a. Myths of hypnosis
      b. Post-hypnotic suggestion
      c. Theories of hypnosis
   3. Video presentation on hypnosis

J. Conflict
   1. Approach-approach conflict
   2. Approach-avoidance conflict
   3. Avoidance-avoidance conflict
   4. Double approach-avoidance conflict

K. Coping Mechanisms
   1. Internal vs. External Locus of Control

L. Anxiety

M. Stress
   1. Good stress (eustress)
   2. Bad stress
   3. Physical changes with stress
   4. Examining stress
   5. Stress and personality

N. Coping with stress using defense mechanisms

O. Coping mechanisms using behavioral and cognitive strategies

P. Substance abuse
   1. The psychology of drug abuse
   2. Stimulants
   3. Depressants
   4. Hallucinogens

OBJECTIVES:
1. Discuss the history of psychology’s study of consciousness and contrast conscious and unconscious information processing.
2. Discuss Freud’s view of the mind as an iceberg, and explain how he used this image to represent conscious & unconscious regions of the mind.
3. Explain the impact of circadian rhythms on our behavior.
4. Analyze the stages of the sleep cycle and explain what they indicate about behavior.
5. Identify theories about why we sleep.
6. Explain the effects of the major sleep disorders.
7. Compare the major perspectives on why we dream.
8. Define hypnosis and explain the similarities between behavior of individuals under hypnosis.
9. Explain the characteristics of individuals who are susceptible to hypnosis.
10. Evaluate claims of hypnosis.
11. Explain arguments of hypnosis as an altered state of consciousness.
12. Describe the effects of psychoactive drugs.
13. Analyze the consequences of addiction, tolerance, and withdrawal.
14. Describe the phases of the general adaptation syndrome.
15. Compare and contrast Type A and Type B personalities.
16. Describe the effect of stress on immune system functioning.
18. Describe how a perceived lack of control can affect health.
19. Explain the benefits of biofeedback and relaxation training as stress-management techniques.
20. Discuss the correlation between religiosity and longevity, and offer possible suggestions for this link.
21. Explain different types of conflict.
22. Describe examples of Hans Selye’s General Adaptation Syndrome.
23. Explain cultural differences in responses to stress.

**Unit 4- Motivation, emotion, and learning**

A. Non-survival needs
   1. Curiosity motive
   2. Manipulation motive
B. Intrinsic vs. extrinsic motivation
C. Characteristics of highly motivated people
D. The power of motivation
E. The need for stimulation
   1. Harry Harlow monkey study
   2. “Contact comfort”
F. Motives, needs, & drives
G. Biological vs. psychological needs
H. Abraham Maslow’s hierarchy of needs
   1. Need for Affiliation
   2. Need for Achievement
   3. Need for approval
I. Birth order and motivation
J. Emotions
   1. Facial expressions and emotions
   2. The research of Paul Ekman
   3. Theories of emotions
      a. Opponent-process theory
      b. Cannon-Bard theory
      c. James Lange theory
      d. Schacter’s cognitive theory
      e. Arousal theory
K. Daniel Goleman’s theory of emotional intelligence
L. Habituation
M. Classical conditioning
   1. Ivan Pavlov and the Pavlov experiment
   2. Classical conditioning terminology
   3. Taste aversion
   4. The Garcia effect
   5. Classical conditioning activities
   6. Watson’s Little Albert study
   7. Extinction
   8. Spontaneous recovery
   9. Generalization
   10. Discrimination
   11. Spray bottle activity
   12. The bell & pad method

N. Operant conditioning
   1. B.F. Skinner
   2. The principles of reinforcement
   3. Token economies
   4. Operant conditioning activities
   5. Shaping activities
   6. Types of reinforcement
      a. Primary
      b. Secondary
   7. Learned helplessness
   8. The consequence matrix
      a. Positive reinforcement
      b. Negative reinforcement
      c. Positive punishment
      d. Negative punishment
   9. Drawbacks of punishment
   10. The difference between punishment and negative reinforcement
   11. Alternatives to punishment
   12. Schedules of reinforcement
      a. Fixed ratio
      b. Fixed interval
      c. Variable ratio
      d. Variable interval
   13. Observational learning
      a. Albert Bandura
      b. The bobo doll study
   14. Cartoon analysis

OBJECTIVES:
   1. Define motivation.
   2. Discuss the similarities and differences between instinct theory and the evolutionary perspective.
   4. Discuss the contribution of arousal theory to the study of motivation
5. Describe Maslow’s Hierarchy of needs.
6. Discuss psychological and cultural influences on hunger.
7. Analyze the effect of set point on behavior.
8. Discuss the difference between drive theory and homeostasis.
9. Define achievement motivation and explain the application of David McClelland’s research.
10. Explain reasons why intrinsic motivation is more beneficial than extrinsic motivation.
11. Identify theories of emotion.
12. Discuss the relationship between arousal and performance.
13. Describe Paul Ekman’s research and how it affects our ability to decipher non-verbal cues.
15. Describe the elements of classical conditioning.
16. Apply classical conditioning to various situations.
17. Summarize the process of extinction, spontaneous recovery, generalization and discrimination.
18. Analyze Robert Rescorla’s research as it applies to classical conditioning.
19. Explain how the research of John Garcia applies to classical conditioning.
20. Summarize Ivan Pavlov’s contribution to our understanding of learning.
21. Identify the major characteristics that distinguish classical conditioning from operant conditioning.
22. Explain how Edward Thorndike’s law of effect applies to BF Skinner’s research on operant conditioning.
23. Apply elements of operant conditioning to different situations.
24. Apply the consequence matrix to differentiate the forms of reinforcements and punishment.
25. Describe the process of shaping.
26. Explain the benefits of each of the schedules of reinforcement.
27. Explain how biological predispositions place limits on what can be achieved through operant conditioning.
28. Describe observational learning and compare and contrast this with vicarious learning.
29. Explain the application of Albert Bandura’s research on social learning theory.

Unit 5 - Psychological disorders and treatment

A. Defining abnormal behavior
B. Abnormal vs. normal behavior
C. Culture-bound syndromes and the body ritual of the Nacirema
D. Four criteria to determine the presence of a psychological disorder
   1. Typicality
   2. Maladaptivity
   3. Emotional discomfort
   4. Socially unacceptable behavior
E. Insanity and the legal system
   1. The case of Todd Ice
   2. The M’Naughten rule
F. The DSM- IV
G. Disorders of childhood
   1. ADHD
   2. Autism
   3. Asperger’s Syndrome
H. Anxiety Disorders
   1. Panic disorders
2. Phobias
3. OCD
4. GAD
5. Stress
6. Post Traumatic Stress Disorder
7. Anxiety disorders explained

I. Dissociative disorders
1. Amnesia
2. Fugue
3. DID & the case of Dr. Cameron West
4. Depersonalization
5. Dissociative disorders explained

J. Somatoform disorders
1. Conversion disorders
2. Hypochondria
3. Somatoform disorders explained

K. Mood disorders
1. Bipolar disorder
2. Major depression
3. Mood disorders explained
4. Cognitive thought patterns

L. Schizophrenia
1. Paranoid schizophrenia
2. Catatonic schizophrenia
3. Disorganized schizophrenia
4. *A Beautiful Mind* and the Case of John Nash
5. Schizophrenia explained

M. Diagnosis of individuals with psychological disorders
N. Song Lyric analysis of psychological disorders
O. Methods of therapy and treatment of psychological disorders
1. Free Association
2. Transference
3. Person-centered therapy
4. Unconditional positive regard
5. Systematic desensitization
6. Aversive conditioning
7. Token economies
8. Group therapy
9. Drug therapy

**OBJECTIVES:**
1. Identify the criteria psychologists use to diagnose psychological disorders.
2. Describe the purpose of the DSM-IV.
3. Discuss the potential dangers and benefits of using diagnostic labels.
4. Describe the characteristics of anxiety disorders.
5. Describe the characteristics of dissociative disorders.
6. Describe the characteristics of mood disorders.
7. Describe the characteristics of schizophrenia.
8. Describe the characteristics of personality disorders.
9. Explain the different perspectives psychologists can use to explain psychological disorders.
10. Describe the treatment options for each of the categories of psychological disorders.

Unit 6- Socio-cultural Influences & Self
   A. The case of Kitty Genovese
   B. Deindividuation
   C. Darley & Latane studies
   D. Stanley Milgram experiments
   E. Conformity
   F. The Jericho Experiment
   G. Social Facilitation vs. Social Loafing
   H. Evaluation Apprehension
   I. Diffusion of Responsibility
   J. Polarization
   K. Styles of Leadership
   L. Attribution theories

OBJECTIVES:
1. Compare and contrast dispositional and situational attributions.
2. Define the Fundamental Attribution Error and explain how this can affect our behavior.
3. Define the Foot-in-the-Door phenomenon and Cognitive Dissonance and explain how this illustrates our actions on our attitudes.
4. Discuss Solomon Asch’s experiments on conformity and explain the conditions in which people are more likely to conform.
5. Describe Stanley Milgram’s experiments on obedience, and explain the conditions in which people are more likely to obey.
6. Describe the conditions in which the presence of others influences our behavior.
7. Define social facilitation, social loafing, and deindividuation.
8. Discuss the effects that groups have on our behaviors.
9. Define group polarization and groupthink.
10. Compare and contrast prejudice, stereotypes, and discrimination.
11. Discuss the social factors that contribute the prejudice.
12. Define altruism and give examples of altruistic behavior.
13. Describe the steps in the decision-making process involved in bystander intervention.

Unit 7- Stage theorists & Development
   A. Developmental psychology
   B. The myth of Tabula Rasa
   C. Motor development
      1. Rooting reflex
      2. Grasping reflex
      3. Moro reflex
4. Babinski reflex
5. Sucking reflex

D. Methods of studying development
   1. Longitudinal method
   2. Cross-sectional method

E. Critical periods of development
   1. The process of imprinting
   2. *Fly Away Home* Analysis

F. Jean Piaget & Cognitive Development
   1. Schema
   2. Assimilation
   3. Accommodation
   4. Four stages of cognitive development
      a. Sensory motor
         i. Object permanence
         ii. Separation anxiety
      b. Preoperational
         i. Law of conservation
         ii. Egocentric thought
         iii. Animistic thought
         iv. Artificialistic thought
      c. Concrete operational
         i. Reversibility
         ii. Conservation skills
      d. Formal operational

G. Sigmund Freud’s Psychosexual theory
   1. Stages
      a. Oral stage
      b. Anal stage
      c. Phallic stage
      d. Latency stage
      e. Genital stage
   2. Free Association
   3. Libido
      a. Id
      b. Ego
      c. Superego
   4. Freud’s balancing act

H. Erik Erikson’s social psychoanalytic theories
   1. Trust vs. Mistrust
   2. Autonomy vs. Shame
   3. Initiative vs. Guilt
   4. Industry vs. Inferiority
   5. Identity vs. Role diffusion
   6. Intimacy vs. Isolation
   7. Generativity vs. Stagnation
8. Integrity vs. Despair

I. Kohlberg’s theory of moral development
   1. Pre-conventional
   2. Conventional
   3. Post-conventional

OBJECTIVES:
1. Identify the three major issues in developmental psychology.
2. Explain the research of Jean Piaget and identify the stages of Piaget’s research.
3. Describe the differences between assimilation and accommodation.
4. Describe three parenting styles and explain the benefits of authoritarian styles.
5. Define adolescence and describe the changes that take place as a result.
6. Describe the research of Lawrence Kohlberg and the application to the development of morality.
7. Identify Erik Erikson’s eight stages of psychosocial development.
8. Define personality.
9. Describe Freud’s view of personality structure and discuss the interaction of the id, ego and superego.
10. Identify Freud’s psychosexual stages of development.
11. Summarize the current views on continuity versus stages and stability versus change in development.

Unit 8- Cognitive Processes: Information Processing, Memory, Intelligence & Creativity

A. Acquiring Information
   1. Learning Curves
   2. Chemical influences on learning
   3. Transfer of Training

B. Information Processing
   1. Elaboration
   2. Mnemonic devices
   3. Pegwords
   4. Principle Learning
   5. Chunking

C. Retaining Information
   1. Forgetting
   2. Over learning
   3. Recognition vs. recall
   4. Interference theory
   5. Encoding
   6. STM vs. LTM
   7. Sensory memory system
   8. Iconic memory
   9. Acoustic memory
   10. Eidetic memory
   11. Eyewitness memory
   12. Flashbulb memory
   13. Serial position effect
   14. Retroactive interference
15. Proactive interference

D. Intelligence
   1. Intelligence defined
   2. Stanford-Binet Intelligence Scale
      a. Direction
      b. Adaptability
      c. Comprehension
      d. Self-evaluation
   3. Mental Age
   4. IQ
   5. Wechsler Intelligence Tests

E. What is Intelligence?
   1. Gardner’s Theory of Multiple Intelligences
   2. Environment and intelligence

F. Issues in Intelligence Testing
   1. Individual vs. group testing
   2. Limits of IQ scores
   3. Cultural bias

G. Mental Retardation
   1. Borderline mental retardation
   2. Mild mental retardation
   3. Moderate mental retardation
   4. Severe mental retardation
   5. Profound mental retardation
   6. Physical factors
   7. Environmental factors
   8. Savant syndrome

H. Creativity
   1. Testing creativity
   2. Breaking set

I. Language

OBJECTIVES:
1. Define memory and compare it to flashbulb memory.
2. Describe how humans encode, store and retrieve information in memory.
3. Compare the benefits of visual, acoustic, and semantic encoding in remembering information.
4. Discuss the use of chunking in processing information.
5. Describe the capacity of short-term memory and long-term memory.
6. Contrast the recall, recognition and relearning in memory.
7. Describe the process of priming.
8. Cite ways that context can affect retrieval.
9. Discuss the concept of storage decay and describe Ebbinghaus’ forgetting curve.
10. Compare and contrast proactive and retroactive interference & explain failure to retrieve information.
11. Define cognition.
12. Compare algorithms and heuristics as problem-solving techniques.
13. Analyze how confirmation bias and fixation can influence our ability to solve problems.
14. Contrast representativeness & availability heuristics & explain their effects on our behaviors/beliefs.
15. Define intelligence.
17. Describe the aspects of emotional intelligence.