

COURSE OUTLINE

PSYCHOLOGY

Psychology is “the study of the mind and behaviour” and the aim of the course is to familiarise students with a wide range of theories and research investigating human behaviour. The course has been developed to be as interesting and challenging as possible. The objective is to explore how psychology has contributed to an understanding of individual, social and cultural diversity. The course normally covers all the areas below, but students wishing to concentrate especially on particular topic areas may do so by agreement with the tutor.

Course Contents:

1. Theories and Systems in Psychology - The section looks briefly at the history and epistemology of psychological theories with a view to making critical comparisons of the main schools of thought: Behaviourism, Humanism and Psychoanalysis. Topics and discussion include the mind-body debate, the free will vs. determinism debate and reductionism.
2. Social Psychology - Here we focus on the experiences and behaviours of the individual in the social world of relationships, media influences, group pressures and prejudices, and cultural and gender stereotypes. Students will be introduced to major research findings in each area and are encouraged to discuss a range of explanations for social issues.
3. Psychology of Child Development - This topic explores the child's experience of the world. Major theories and issues in development are examined with a particular emphasis on the nature-nurture issue and cross-cultural studies. Topics covered include cognitive development and social development.
4. The Biological Basis of Human Behaviour - The aim here is to expose students to the relationship between biology and behaviour. Students will be expected to assess critically the extent to which biological explanations can be used to understand or explain human behaviour. Topics covered include sleep, dreams and hypnosis.
5. Abnormal Psychology - This part covers an examination of the symptoms and treatment options for a range of mental and emotional disorders, including anxiety, depression, mania and schizophrenia, raising a number of important issues for discussion. These include cultural variations in the definition and diagnosis of disordered states and criticisms of the medical model of abnormality.
6. Cognitive Psychology - In this section students become acquainted with cognitive processes by focusing on two main areas: memory and forgetting. Students will be presented with theories, models and empirical studies for critical evaluation in all of these areas.
7. Ethical Issues - We will examine the use of human participants in psychological investigations, where the emphasis will be on the importance of following ethical guidelines, such as those provided by the APA or the BPS. Students will be expected to discuss examples of research with human participants that have received more attention than most for ethical reasons.

8. Research methods - This topic looks at the nature of psychological enquiry and the uses and disadvantages of different research methods. The design and implementation of experimental and non-experimental investigations will also be investigated, by thinking about the selection, formulation and implementation of appropriate investigation designs.
9. Overview of Course and Examinations

Objectives

- To develop understanding of the breadth of different approaches to psychology.
- To gain awareness of the principles and perspectives of psychology through the study of psychological theories, concepts and research.
- To develop the ability to identify ethical concerns, and apply psychology to cultural, social and contemporary issues.
- To understand how to critically appraise concepts, theories and empirical evidence.
- To be familiar with a range of research methods.

Assessment process

Students study eight main areas of psychology by class work and regular private study assignments. During the term they are required to make two presentations on areas of their choice. The presentations are expected to be written-up in the form of short essays and handed to their tutor. A further two extended essays are chosen together with the tutor. An end of term examination must also be completed.

Percentage breakdown of grade

- 35% Presentations
- 35% Essays
- 20% Examination
- 10% Attendance and participation

Essay examples

1. Discuss the free will and determinism debate with reference to psychological theories and studies.
2. Discuss the contribution of psychological research to our understanding of the phenomenon of hypnosis.
3. Describe any one system of classification used in the diagnosis of abnormal behaviour. From a psychological viewpoint, assess some of the problems involved in classifying abnormal behaviour.
4. Critically consider some of the ethical issues raised by socially sensitive research.

Assessment Criteria

Distinction Grade A	Appropriate, accurate and well-detailed knowledge of psychology. Excellent organisation and structure of arguments, displaying substantial evidence and appropriate balance. Excellent communication skills.
Credit Grade B	Appropriate and detailed but slightly limited psychological knowledge. Arguments presented coherently, but balance not always achieved. Oral and written skills good.
Merit Grade C	Limited psychological knowledge, but generally accurate. Reasonable arguments constructed and some evidence of breadth or depth is displayed. Oral and communication skills satisfactory.
Pass Grade D	Description of issues is weak and understanding is muddled and incomplete. Basic knowledge displayed orally and in written form. Weak communication skills.
Fail	None of the criteria listed above followed.

Introductory reading list:

The following books are recommended. Please note that there is no need to purchase more than a single item and perhaps an additional research method publication.

- Atkinson, R. et al. (1999) Hilgard's Introduction to Psychology. Harcourt Publishers Ltd.
ISBN: 9780155068384
- Malim, T. & Birch, A. (1998) Introductory Psychology. Palgrave *ISBN: 9780333668528*
- Zimbardo, P., McDermott, M., Jansz, J. & Metaal, N. (1995). Psychology: A European Text. London: Harper Collins
ISBN: 0004990021
- Eysenck, M (Ed) (2008) Fundamentals of Psychology: *ISBN: 1841693723*
- Eysenck, M (2005) Psychology: The Science of Mind and Behaviour. Hodder and Stoughton
ISBN: 0340900989
- Banyard, P. & Grayson, A. (2000) Introducing Psychological Research. Palgrave
ISBN: 9780333912515
- Coolican, H (1996) Introduction to Research Methods and Statistics in Psychology (2nd edition) Hodder & Stoughton
ISBN: 9780340679371
- Gross, R (2001) Psychology: The Science of Mind and Behaviour. Hodder and Stoughton

As well as the general text books identified, it is recommended that students keep abreast of developments in the areas in the subject via the broadsheet newspapers (The Times, The Guardian, The Independent, The Daily Telegraph). Journals such as the 'New Scientist' often have articles on psychological topics that are very readable and provide a useful digest of the recent research on the topic covered.

If you are unable to obtain books locally, they may be ordered from
<http://www.bookshop.blackwell.co.uk> or www.Amazon.co.uk