



# AP<sup>®</sup> Psychology

## Syllabus

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### Course Description

The AP Psychology course introduces students to the scientific study of the behaviors and mental processes of human beings. Students will study a wide range of topics, including the history and approaches of psychology, research methods, behavior and learning, personality, and abnormal behavior and its treatment. Over the course of study, students will create a biography book detailing the contributions of important figures in the field. In addition, students will be exposed to a wide variety of activities, readings, and research studies during the course.

### Course Materials

In addition to the online materials, students will need copies of both books listed below.

#### Course Textbook and Resources:

- Myers, David G. *Myer's Psychology for AP<sup>®</sup>*, 2nd ed. New York: Worth Publishers, 2014
- Hock, Roger R. *Forty Studies That Changed Psychology*, 7th ed. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson, 2012.

# Unit 1 - History and Approaches

**Reading: Modules 1–3 in *Myer's Psychology for AP*<sup>®</sup>**

Topics include: The history of psychology, psychology's approaches, and fields and occupations in psychology

Biography book: Students will detail the contributions of Mary Whiton Calkins, Charles Darwin, Dorothea Dix, Sigmund Freud, G. Stanley Hall, William James, Ivan Pavlov, Jean Piaget, Carl Rogers, B. F. Skinner, Margaret Floy Washburn, John B. Watson, and Wilhelm Wundt.

## Essential questions:

- What is psychology? What are its goals?
- How did psychology develop from its prescientific roots in early understandings of mind and body to the current, more empirical approaches?
- How have biology and philosophy shaped the development of psychology?
- What are the major trends and specialties in psychology?
- In examining behavior, how have the varying perspectives from structuralism and functionalism to the major current views impacted the field?
- What are the distinguishing features of the major domains and subfields of psychology?
- What are the contributions of the major figures in early psychology?

# Unit 2 – Psychological Research Methods

**Reading: Modules 4–8 in *Myer's Psychology for AP*<sup>®</sup>**

Topics include: The scientific method, experimental design, statistics, and ethics in research

## Essential questions:

- How do psychologists collect information?
- How is an experiment performed? What are the major components? What research methods do psychologists use and for what purposes? How does psychology differ from false explanations of behavior?
- How dependable is psychological information in the popular media? What is the role of critical thinking in the scientific process?
- What ethical questions does psychological research raise?

# Unit 3 – Biological Bases of Behavior

**Reading: Modules 9–15 in *Myer's Psychology for AP*<sup>®</sup>**

Topics include: The structure and functions of the brain and nervous system, and genetics

Biography book: Students will detail the contributions of Paul Broca, Charles Darwin, Michael Gazzaniga, Roger Sperry, and Carl Wernicke.

## Essential questions:

- How do nerve cells operate and communicate?
- What are the functions of the major parts of the nervous system?
- How do we know how the brain works (e.g., brain scan methods, surgery, case studies)? How is the brain organized? What are the functions of its higher structures?
- Why are the brain's association areas important? What happens when they are injured? What kinds of behaviors are controlled by the subcortex?
- How does the endocrine system affect behavior? How do drugs impact the functioning of the brain?
- Are injuries that create brain damage always permanent?
- How do genetics, brain function, and environment work together to change behavior?

# Unit 4 – Sensation and Perception

## Reading: Modules 16–21 in *Myer's Psychology for AP®*

Topics include: Influences on sensation and perception, vision and hearing, touch, smell, and pain

Biography book: Students will detail the contributions of Gustav Fechner, David Hubel, Ernst Weber, and Torsten Wiesel.

## Essential questions:

- In general, how do sensory systems function?
- What are the limits of our sensory sensitivity? How is vision accomplished?
- How do we perceive colors?
- What are the mechanisms of hearing? How do the chemical senses operate?
- What are the somesthetic senses, and why are they important? Why are people more aware of some sensations than others? How can pain be reduced in everyday situations?
- What is synesthesia, and what does it reveal about sensory systems? What are perceptual constancies, and what is their role in perception?
- What basic principles do people use to group sensations into meaningful patterns, depth, and distance? How does attention impact perception?
- What effects do learning and expectation have on perception?
- How is perception altered by attention, motives, values, and expectations? What evidence is there to support extrasensory perception?

# Unit 5 – States of Consciousness

## Reading: Modules 22–25 in *Myer's Psychology for AP®*

Topics include: Sleep, dreams, sleep disorders, hypnosis, and psychoactive drugs

Biography book: Students will detail the contributions of William James, Sigmund Freud, and Ernest Hilgard.

## Essential questions:

- What is an altered state of consciousness?
- What are the effects of sleep loss or changes in sleep patterns? What are the different stages of sleep?
- How does dream sleep differ from dreamless sleep?
- What are the causes of sleep disorders and unusual sleep events? How is hypnosis done, and what are its limitations?
- How does sensory deprivation affect consciousness?
- What are the effects of the more commonly used psychoactive drugs? How are dreams used to promote personal understanding?
- Why is drug abuse so widespread?

# Unit 6 – Learning

## Reading: Modules 26–30 in *Myer's Psychology for AP®*

Topics include: Theories of learning, classical and operant conditioning, influences on learning

Biography book: Students will detail the contributions of Albert Bandura, John Garcia, Ivan Pavlov, Robert Rescorla, B. F. Skinner, Edward Thorndike, Edward Tolman, and John B. Watson.

## Essential questions:

- What is learning?
- How does classical conditioning occur? Does conditioning affect emotions? How does operant conditioning occur?
- What are the different kinds of operant reinforcement? How are we influenced by patterns of reward?
- What does punishment do to behavior? What is cognitive learning?
- Does learning occur by imitation?
- How does conditioning apply to practical problems? How does biology influence learning?
- What factors and conditions influence the different kinds of learning?
- How can the types of learning help people address behavioral problems?

# Unit 7 – Cognition and Memory

## Reading: Modules 31–36 in *Myer's Psychology for AP®*

Topics include: The brain and memory, processing, problem solving, decision making, problems with memory, and language

Biography book: Students will detail the contributions of Noam Chomsky, Hermann Ebbinghaus, Wolfgang Köhler, Elizabeth Loftus, and George A. Miller.

## Essential questions:

- Is there more than one type of memory?
- What are the features of each type of memory?
- Is there more than one type of long-term memory? How is memory measured?
- What are “photographic” memories? What causes forgetting?
- How accurate are everyday memories?
- What happens in the brain when memories are formed? How can memory be improved?
- How has evolution shaped human memory? What is the nature of thought?
- In what ways are images related to thinking?
- How are concepts learned? Are there different kinds of concepts? What is the role of language in thinking?
- Can animals be taught to use language? What do we know about problem solving? What is artificial intelligence?
- What is the nature of creative thinking? How accurate is intuition?
- What can be done to promote creativity?
- Do animals think?

# Unit 8 – Motivation and Emotion

## Reading: Modules 37–44 in *Myer's Psychology for AP*<sup>®</sup>

Topics include: Theories and factors of motivation and emotion, and stress and its effects

Biography book: Students will detail the contributions of William James, Alfred Kinsey, Abraham Maslow, Stanley Schachter, and Hans Selye

## Essential questions:

- What is motivation? Are there different types of motives?
- What causes hunger and overeating?
- What factors contribute to eating disorders?
- In what ways are pain avoidance and sex drive unusual? How does arousal relate to motivation?
- What are social motives? Why are they important? Are some motives more basic than others?
- What happens during emotion?
- Can “lie detectors” really detect lies?
- How accurately are emotions expressed by “body language” and the face? How do psychologists explain emotions?
- What does it mean to have emotional intelligence? What is the nature of love?
- What is health psychology? How does behavior affect health? What is stress? What factors determine its severity?
- What causes frustration, and what are typical reactions to it?

- Are there different types of conflict? How do people react to conflict? What are defense mechanisms?
- What do we know about coping with feelings of helplessness and depression? How is stress related to health and disease?
- What are the best strategies for managing stress? What are the basic dimensions of sex?
- How does one's sense of maleness or femaleness develop? What is psychological androgyny, and is it contagious?
- What are the most typical patterns of human sexual behavior? To what extent do females and males differ in sexual response? What are the most common sexual disorders?
- Have recent changes in attitudes affected sexual behavior?
- What impacts have sexually transmitted diseases had on sexual behavior?
- What are the most common sexual adjustment problems? How are they treated?

## Unit 9 – Developmental Psychology

**Reading: Modules 45–54 in *Myer's Psychology for AP*<sup>®</sup>**

Topics include: The nature vs. nurture debate; developmental factors in newborns, children, and adolescents; gender and sexual development; and development in adulthood

Biography book: Students will detail the contributions of Mary Ainsworth, Albert Bandura, Diana Baumrind, Erik Erikson, Sigmund Freud, Carol Gilligan, Harry Harlow, Lawrence Kohlberg, Konrad Lorenz, Jean Piaget, and Lev Vygotsky

### Essential questions:

- How do heredity and environment affect development?
- What can newborn babies do?
- What influences does maturation have on early development? How significant is a child's emotional bond with parents? How important are parenting styles?
- How do children acquire language? How do children learn to think?
- How do effective parents discipline their children?
- How has new knowledge about genetics affected parenthood? What are the typical tasks and dilemmas through the life span? What are some of the more serious childhood problems?
- Why is adolescent development especially challenging? How do people develop morals and values?
- What happens psychologically during adulthood? What are the psychological challenges of aging?
- How do people typically react to death and bereavement? What factors contribute most to a happy and fulfilling life?
- In what ways are attitudes toward death changing?

## Unit 10 – Personality

**Reading: Modules 55–59 in *Myer's Psychology for AP*<sup>®</sup>**

Topics include: Influences on personality development and theories of personality

Biography book: Students will detail the contributions of Alfred Adler, Albert Bandura, Paul Costa and Robert McCrae, Sigmund Freud, Carl Jung, Abraham Maslow, and Carl Rogers.

## Essential questions:

- How do psychologists use the term personality?
- What core concepts make up the psychology of personality?
- Are some personality traits more basic or important than others? How do psychodynamic theories explain personality?
- What do behaviorists emphasize in their approach to personality? How do humanistic theories differ from other perspectives?
- How do psychologists measure personality?
- What causes shyness, and what can be done about it?

# Unit 11 – Testing and Individual Differences

## Reading: Modules 60–64 in *Myer's Psychology for AP*<sup>®</sup>

Topics include: Intelligence testing, theories of intelligence, and influences on intelligence

Biography book: Students will detail the contributions of Alfred Binet, Francis Galton, Howard Gardner, Charles Spearman, Robert Stern- berg, Louis Terman, and David Wechsler.

## Essential questions:

- How do psychologists define intelligence?
- What are the qualities of a good psychological test? What are typical IQ tests like?
- How do IQ scores relate to gender, age, and occupation? What does IQ tell us about genius?
- What causes mental retardation?
- How do heredity and environment affect intelligence? How have views of intelligence changed in recent years?
- Are IQ tests fair to all racial and cultural groups?

# Unit 12 – Abnormal Behaviors

## Reading: Modules 65–69 in *Myer's Psychology for AP*<sup>®</sup>

Topics include: Psychological disorders and their characteristics

## Essential questions:

- How is normality defined? What are the major psychological disorders, as defined in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, 5th Edition (DSM-5)? What is a personality disorder?
- What problems result when a person suffers from high levels of anxiety? How do psychologists explain anxiety-based disorders?
- What are the general characteristics of psychotic disorders?
- How do delusional disorders differ from other psychotic disorders? What forms does schizophrenia take? What causes it?
- What are mood disorders? What causes depression?

- Why do people commit suicide? Can suicide be prevented? What does it mean to be “crazy”? What should be done about it?

## Unit 13 – Treatment

**Reading: Modules 70–73 in *Myer’s Psychology for AP*®**

Topics include: Treatment for psychological disorders, therapy, biomedical approaches, and ethics in psychological practice

Biography book: Students will detail the contributions of Aaron Beck, Albert Ellis, Sigmund Freud, Mary Cover Jones, Carl Rogers, B. F. Skinner, and Joseph Wolpe

### Essential questions:

- How do psychotherapies differ? How did psychotherapy originate?
- To what extent is Freudian psychoanalysis still used?
- What are the characteristics of the major humanistic therapies? What is behavior therapy and how does it work?
- How is behavior therapy used to treat phobias, fears, and anxieties? What role does reinforcement play in behavior therapy?
- Can therapy change thoughts and emotions?
- Can psychotherapy be done with groups of people? What do various therapies have in common?
- How do psychiatrists treat psychological disorders?
- How are behavioral principles applied to everyday problems? How could a person find professional help?

## Unit 14 – Social Psychology

**Reading: Modules 74–80 in *Myer’s Psychology for AP*®**

Topics include: Conformity and obedience, aggression, attraction, altruism, and group behavior

Biography book: Students will detail the contributions of Solomon Asch, Leon Festinger, Stanley Milgram, and Philip Zimbardo.

### Essential questions:

- How does group membership affect individual behavior?
- What unspoken rules govern the use of personal space?
- How do we perceive the motives of others and the causes of our own behavior? Why do people affiliate?
- What factors influence interpersonal attraction?
- What have social psychologists learned about conformity, social power, obedience, and compliance? How does self-assertion differ from aggression?
- What are attitudes, and how are they acquired? How are attitudes measured and changed?
- Under what conditions is persuasion most effective?
- What is cognitive dissonance, and how does it relate to attitudes and behavior? How does brainwashing work?
- How are people converted to cult membership? What causes prejudice and intergroup conflict?
- What can be done about prejudice and intergroup conflict?



- How do psychologists explain human aggression?
- Why are bystanders so often unwilling to help in an emergency?
- What can be done to lower prejudice and promote social harmony?

## Unit 15 – Exam Preparation and Review

This unit will help students prepare for the AP® Psychology exam.

Students review content from each of the previous units and complete two practice exams.