PSYCHOLOGY 150

INTRODUCTION TO PSYCHOLOGY

Spring Semester Monday 5:45-8:25 P.M.

Instructor: Virginia Lee
Mailbox: Phillips Suite 310
Classroom: White 71
Office Hours: Before or after class or by appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION

In this course you are going to explore aspects of yourself that you probably take completely for granted: how you perceive the world, how you think, and how you behave. To do this, you will draw upon your very rich and varied experience of what it means to be a human being. At the same time, together we will need to do two things that will be quite difficult, because we are so familiar to ourselves:

Imagine ourselves as strange and unfamiliar creatures whom we are trying to study and understand in the same way an anthropologist might travel deep into the Amazon rain forest and live with an indigenous tribe to study their habits and customs or a zoologist like Jane Goodall might live alone for years and years with extended families of chimpanzees to examine their behavior

Explore our behavior and thoughts scientifically. Psychology is a science and has borrowed methods from disciplines like chemistry and physics and created and adopted some of its own to study human beings. However, in many ways our thoughts and behaviors are not like atoms, molecules, mass, gravity, and other phenomena studied by the hard sciences (nor do we experience ourselves this way), but we often use the same methods to study them. The scientific study of human behavior and thought has yielded many important findings, but continues to raise many questions as well.

By the end of this course, you will be able to

- explain fundamental concepts in psychology and appreciate their significance in our understanding of human behavior
- think like a psychologist through reading original psychological research and doing it yourself
- apply psychological theory and principles in order to understand yourself and others better
- understand yourself better as a human being and learner

REQUIRED TEXT AND READINGS: The main text for this course is **Psychology: A Biopsychosocial Approach** by Christopher Peterson. In addition, from time to time I may put on reserve or pass out in class supplementary readings. You can ask for reserve items at the Reference Desk in the Library.

WHAT THIS CLASS WILL BE LIKE. This class may be different from other courses you have taken in a couple of ways: what we do in class and the types of assignments you will have. In class I will spend very little time lecturing, and you will spend little time taking notes. There will be no midterm or final containing mostly multiple choice, short answer and essay questions. Consequently, some of you may feel initially that I'm not really teaching, and as a result you're not really learning.

In some senses this class may be more like an art studio in which you do art or an aerobics class or gym in which you exercise or lift weights. In the same way that you can't learn how to paint without painting or get in shape without exercising, you can't learn psychology without doing psychology. Further you wouldn't show someone you could paint by defining "color," "shade," "volume," "contour," or "perspective." Instead you would paint a picture. You wouldn't show someone you were in shape by defining "bicep," "tricep," "pectoral," and "aerobic." You would benchpress two-hundred pounds. And you won't show me and prove to yourself that you know how to do psychology by defining "operant conditioning," "self-actualization," and "superego." You'll do psychology.

Throughout the semester, we will explore ourselves as learners: how we learn and what it means to learn something. For now, I'll say only that knowledge is more than facts, and learning is more than memorization. If you turn back to the first page of the syllabus and look at the goals for this course, you'll see that only one of them—the first—has to do with factual information. The rest require you to do, think, apply, and reflect using psychological concepts only as a springboard or starting point. In this class you will really work with psychological concepts, using class time to do exercises, conduct experiments, work on problems in groups, discuss psychological concepts and their implications, and apply these concepts to real world situations. In the process, you're going to both do and make psychology. In this semester, I hope you will come to believe that you cannot only read and understand what other psychologists have discovered about human behavior and thinking, but also think like a psychologist and add to our existing knowledge about psychology yourself as a novice psychologist.

CLASS ASSIGNMENTS. Throughout the semester you will have an opportunity to demonstrate both to yourself and me your understanding of fundamental psychological concepts, your developing ability to think like a psychologist and to apply psychological concepts to real world problems, and your ability to reflect upon yourself as a learner through a variety of projects. A brief description of each project follows. As each project is assigned I will give you detailed descriptions of these assignments as well as the criteria I will use to evaluate them.

Chapter Concept Maps. For each assigned reading, you will prepare your own concept map in which you organize the key concepts and their interrelationships with one another in a chart/diagram, which you will hand in on the day the reading is due. We will discuss this in class, and I will provide you a model for the first chapter.

Personal Learning Diary. Throughout the semester you will keep a diary/journal in which you will record your reflections on in-class assignments, readings, and your own learning. The diary will be a valuable resource as you complete assignments and reflect upon your progress throughout the semester. I hope the diary will help you think differently about how you learn in a variety of settings—in other classes, at work, and in pursuing personal interests.

Vision Exercise. In our unit on sensation and perception, we will explore the visual system in some depth, examining a variety of fascinating evidence about how we see and what vision really is. In this exercise, you will have an opportunity to pull all this evidence together and think about what seeing really is.

Behavioral Modification Intervention. Using one model of learning from behavioral psychology—operant conditioning, you will develop a program for yourself to change an undesirable behavior/habit or to encourage a new, desirable behavior/habit.

Memory Experiment Write-Up. We will conduct an in-class memory experiment, and you will write up the results in standard psychological report format.

Intelligence Test Position Paper. After completing a largely self-directed unit on intelligence, you will write a short position paper in which you either support or criticize the use of intelligence testing.

Child Development Group Project. In this semester-long group project, you will conduct an observational study in which you interview children and study how they think, using exercises

developed by Jean Piaget, the famous Swiss psychologist. You will write up your study in standard psychological report format.

Final Exercise. Drawing upon your Personal Learning Journal, you will have an opportunity to reflect upon what you've learned during the semester both about psychology and yourself as a learner.

Your final grade will be based on the following:

Chapter Concept Maps (6 @ 5 pts each)	30
Personal Learning Journal (15 @ 5 pts each)	75
Vision Exercise	40
Behavioral Modification Intervention	40
Memory Experiment Write-Up	40
Intelligence Test Position Paper	40
Development Project (Group)	75
Final Exercise	50
Total	390 points

Point ranges with their corresponding letter grades appear below:

390-349 A
348-320 B
319-271 C
270-252 D
< 252 F

CLASS ATTENDANCE, TARDINESS, AND DROPPING THE CLASS: Because of the nature of this class, your attendance in class is very important. Reading the textbook will not replace coming to class. As stated above, we will use class sessions to **do** psychology, to **discuss**, to **reflect**, and to **work together**. Yes, assignments will hold you accountable for what we do in class, but more importantly I hope you will find class sessions engaging and interesting. I know how busy you are and the number of commitments you have; so during the first
couple of weeks of the semester, ask yourself and try to answer honestly whether you have
the time and desire to participate fully in this class.

More than two absences for whatever reason will really jeopardize your chances of benefiting from this class. If I notice a developing pattern of absence or tardiness, I will speak to you and try to find out what is going on. After more than two absences or repeated tardiness, I will suggest that you drop the class. Despite good attendance, if for some reason you wish to drop the class, Durham Tech requires you do so before _____. If you drop before that date, you will receive a grade of "W." If you drop after that date, you will receive the grade that you have earned in the class including zeros for any work not turned in.

ASSIGNMENT DEADLINES: I feel that it's important to get assignments in when they are due. Unless you make prior arrangements with me, I will penalize late assignments by taking 10% of the total possible points off your earned grade. In any event, late assignments will be accepted no later than ONE WEEK after they were originally due.

ACADEMIC HONESTY: While Durham Tech does not have a formal academic honor system, certain standards are expected of all students. Any individual work you hand in should be your work only. If I discover cheating, you will receive a failing grade for the class and will be reported to the Dean.

STATEMENT OF DISABILITIES: Students needing special assistance or accommodations due to physical, emotional, mental, or learning disabilities should contact Counseling Services within the first two weeks of class. They can either call Counseling Services at 686-3652 or visit Counseling Services in Room 23 of the White Building.

CLASS SCHEDULE & UNIT OBJECTIVES

Unit I: Psychology: What It Is and How Psychologists Study It

January 11, 1999 — **Course Overview**

January 18 — **No Class; Martin Luther King's Birthday**

January 25 — **Psychology as a Science**

- to formulate good research questions & hypotheses
- to identify various research methods & the types of problems they might best investigate
- to distinguish between independent & dependent variables, to explain the function of control in experimental studies, and to explain the term "operationalize" as in "to operationalize variables"

Assignment: Chapter 2 (pp. 31-47)

Unit II. What Human Beings Have in Common

February 1 — **Development**

- to identify the major questions psychologists ask about human development
- to explain the nature-nurture controversy
- to explain the Piagetian terms schema, assimilation, accommodation, and equilibration
- to identify the four major Piagetian stages of child development and the characteristics of children at each stage
- in a group, to investigate how children at a given stage of cognitive development think
- to report the findings orally & in standard psychological report format

Assignment: Chapter 10 (pp. 351-357, 365-373)
Note: In today's class we will discuss and begin to organize the group project on development. This semester there will be two exercises related to this project which we will discuss in class. The project will culminate in your final group presentations and the submission of your written projects on March 3.

February 8, 15, 22 — **Sensation & Perception**

- to distinguish between sensation & perception
- to explain how interaction with the environment develops the capacity to interpret visual stimuli
- to explain how we translate & interpret visual stimuli from the environment
- to develop a definition of vision
- to read & discuss a piece of original psychological research on perception

Assignments: **February 8:** Chapter 5 (pp. 137-141, 146-154, 164-175)
February 22: Vision Exercise assigned
Schedule first individual meeting

March 1, 8, 15, 22 — Learning, Memory, & Cognition

- to define what psychologists mean by learning
- to list the three major principles of behaviorism
- to explain & identify classical & operating conditioning including the following terms: conditioned & unconditioned stimulus, neutral stimulus, conditioned & unconditioned response; antecedent, consequence, positive & negative reinforcement, punishment, extinction, generalization, shaping (or successive approximations)
- to design a behavioral modification intervention for oneself
- to evaluate the strengths & limitations of the behaviorist view of learning
- to draw & explain the information processing model of memory
- to explain how learning occurs according to the information processing model
- to participate in a memory experiment. Following the experiment to:
  --state the research question
  --state a probable hypothesis
  --organize, describe, & interpret the results of the experiment
  --write up the experiment in standard psychological report format

Assignments:

March 1:	Chapter 8 (pp. 263-290)
	Vision Assignment due
March 8:	**Behavioral Modification Exercise Assigned**
March 15:	Chapter 9 (pp. 307-335)
March 22:	**Behavior Modification Exercise Due**
	Memory Experiment Assigned

Unit III: How Human Beings Differ (or "Individual Differences")

March 29, April 12 — Intelligence

****April 5 No Class; Spring Holidays**

- to critique an instrument designed to measure human intelligence
- given selected evidence, develop an argument for or against the use of intelligence tests

Assignment:

March 29:	Chapter 11
	Memory Experiment Due
	Intelligence Test Position Paper Assigned
April 12:	**Intelligence Test Position Paper Due**
	Schedule second individual meeting

April 19, 26 — Personality

- to critique an instrument designed to describe personality
- to design a personality assessment instrument

Assignment: Chapter 12

May 3 — Final Project Reports & Discussion

Assignment: **Child Development Group Project due**

May 10 — Final Exercise & Review

Assignment: **Final Exercise due**