
PETERS TOWNSHIP HIGH SCHOOL

COURSE SYLLABUS: AP PSYCHOLOGY

Course Overview and Essential Skills

The goal of this rigorous course will be to promote a greater understanding of the methodology, theory, and research of psychology. This course will provide an introduction to the principle subject areas that make up the scientific study of human behavior. Students will have extensive required reading, many analytic writing assignments, and formal assessments in a seminar classroom setting. Students who successfully complete the course are encouraged to take the Advanced Placement Examination (at their own expense), administered in May of each school year.

Course Textbook and Required Materials

- Textbook: *Psychology: Themes and Variations, 9th Edition*, Weiten, Wayne, c. 2013; ISBN: 978-1-111-83750-1
- Supplemental Series: *Discovering Psychology: Updated Edition*, Annenberg Media, c.2001 ISBN: 1-57680-880-7
- Writing Utensils and Preferred Organizational Tools
- *Discovering Psychology*, Updated Edition. Annenberg Media

Course Outline of Material Covered:

Unit or Topic	Concepts/Skills/Resources	Timeframe
<u>Chapter 1:</u> The Evolution of Psychology	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Contemporary perspectives used by psychologists to understand behavior and mental processes in context▪ Major sub-fields and career opportunities that comprise psychology	2 weeks
<u>Chapter 2:</u> The Research Enterprise in Psychology	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Research strategies used by psychologists to explore behavior and mental processes• Purpose and basic concepts of statistics• Ethical issues in research with human and other animals that are important to psychologists• Development of psychology as an empirical science	2 weeks
<u>Chapter 3:</u> The Biological Bases of Behavior	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Structure and function of the neuron• Organization of the nervous system• Hierarchical organization of the structure and function of the brain• Technologies and clinical methods for studying the brain• Specialized functions of the brain's hemispheres• Structure and function of the endocrine system• How heredity interacts with the environment to influence behavior• How psychological mechanisms are influenced by evolution	2-3 weeks
<u>Chapter 4:</u> Sensation & Perception	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Basic concepts explaining the capabilities and limitations of sensory processes• Interaction of the person and the environment in determining perception• Nature of attention	2 weeks

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Understanding the Senses, The Science Channel</i> 	
<u>Chapter 5:</u> Variations in Consciousness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Characteristics of sleep and theories that explain why we sleep • Theories used to explain and interpret dreams • Basic phenomena and uses of hypnosis • Categories of psychoactive drugs and their effects 	2 weeks
<u>Chapter 6:</u> Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Characteristics of learning • Principles of classical conditioning • Principles of operant conditioning • Components of cognitive learning • Roles of biology and culture in determining learning • <i>Sniffy The Virtual Rat – Lite Edition Software</i> 	3 weeks
<u>Chapter 7:</u> Human Memory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Encoding, or getting information into memory ▪ Short-term and long-term memory systems ▪ Retrieval, or getting information out of memory ▪ Biological bases of memory ▪ Methods for improving memory ▪ <i>Understanding the Mysteries of Memory, The Science Channel</i> 	2 weeks
<u>Chapter 8:</u> Language & Thought	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Basic elements comprising thought • Strategies and obstacles involved in problem solving and decision making • Structural features of language • Theories and developmental stages of language acquisition • Links between thinking and language 	2 weeks
<u>Chapter 9:</u> Intelligence & Psychological Testing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concepts related to measurement of individual differences • Influence and interaction of heredity and environment on individual differences • Nature of intelligence • Nature of intelligence testing 	2 weeks
<u>Chapter 10:</u> Motivation & Emotion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Motivational concepts • Biological and environmental cues instigating basic drives or motives • Major theories of motivation • Interaction of biological and cultural factors in the development of motives • Role of values and expectancies in determining choice and strength of motivation • Physiological, affective, cognitive, and behavioral aspects of emotions and the interactions among these aspects • Effects of motivation and emotion on perception, cognition, and behavior • <i>Discovering Psychology, Updated Edition. Annenberg Media</i> 	2 weeks
<u>Chapter 11:</u> Human Development Across the Lifespan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development as a lifelong process • Research techniques used to gather data on the developmental process • Stage theories of development • Issues surrounding the developmental process (nature/nurture, continuity/discontinuity, stability/instability, critical periods) • Impact of technology on aspects of the lifespan 	3 weeks

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Everybody Rides the Carousel</i>, Pyramid Media 	
<u>Chapter 12:</u> Personality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is meant by personality and personality constructs • Personality approaches and theories • Assessment tools used in personality 	2 weeks
<u>Chapter 13:</u> Social Behavior	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social judgment and attitudes • Social and cultural categories • Group processes • Social influence 	2 weeks
<u>Chapter 15:</u> Psychological Disorders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Characteristics and origins of abnormal behavior • Methods used in exploring abnormal behavior • Major categories of abnormal behavior • Impact of mental disorders • <i>The Shaping of the Western World: Freud – The Hidden Nature of Man</i>, Learning Corp. of America 	2-3 weeks
<u>Chapter 16:</u> Treatment of Psychological Disorders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prominent methods used to treat people with disorders • Types of practitioners who implement treatment • Legal and ethical challenges involved in delivery of treatment • <i>After AP Exam, students will view and have projects associated with the following films: The Caine Mutiny, The Three Faces of Eve, A Beautiful Mind</i> 	2-3 weeks

****Depending on the needs of the class or changes in the school year, the course outline is subject to change.***