

AP Psychology: Course Overview and Suggested Resources

Summer 2020

Course Overview:

The AP Psychology course introduces students to the systematic and scientific study of human behavior and mental processes. While considering the psychologists and studies that have shaped the field, students explore and apply psychological theories, key concepts, and phenomena associated with such topics as the biological bases of behavior, sensation and perception, learning and cognition, motivation, developmental psychology, testing and individual differences, treatments of psychological disorders, and social psychology. Throughout the course, students employ psychological research methods, including ethical considerations, as they use the scientific method, evaluate claims and evidence, and effectively communicate ideas ~ *Collegeboard, AP Psychology Course Description 2019*

Throughout the course, students work on skills such as concept understanding, data analysis, and scientific investigation of case studies. Students will be focused on applying concepts, creating connections, and understanding the various perspectives of psychology.

Unit Overview:

(Order of units subject to change. Percentages refer to weight on AP Exam)

Unit 1: Scientific Foundations of Psychology (10-14 %)

Unit 2: Biological Bases of Behavior (8-10%)

Unit 3: Sensation and Perception (6-8%)

Unit 4: Learning (7-9%)

Unit 5: Cognitive Psychology (13-17%)

Unit 6: Developmental Psychology (7-9 %)

Unit 7: Motivation, Emotion, and Personality (11-15%)

Unit 8: Clinical Psychology (12-16%)

Unit 9: Social Psychology (8-10%)

Major Course Concepts and Questions:

Questions (Adapted from Collegeboard's AP Psychology Course and Exam Description, Fall 2019):

- What are the primary psychological approaches for the explanation of human behavior?
- How do psychologists use research methods to understand and explain human behavior?
- How do ethical guidelines impact psychological research?

- How can biology influence our behavior and mental processes?
- How do biological and environmental factors interact to influence our behaviors and mental processes?
- How do we process the information we receive from our environments?
- How do we perceive and understand ourselves?
- What motivates us to think and act the way we do?
- Why is psychological perspective necessary in the treatment of disorders?

Big Concepts:

Nature V Nurture

BioPsychoSocial Approach

Scientific Research: Methods and Studies

Suggested Resources:

Use the following resources to begin your exploration into the content of Psychology. ***These optional resources and you will not have a traditional summer work submission in the fall.*** This said, these sources provide an introduction and glimpse into key concepts and themes of psychology that we will be studying throughout the school year. Reviewing these resources can enrich your understanding of content and connections throughout our study of psychology.

Articles:

Why do We Need Sleep? by Veronique Greenwood

<https://www.theatlantic.com/science/archive/2018/01/the-mystery-of-sleep-pressure/549473/>

Corona Virus Takes Toll on Mental Health by Ruth Bender in Berlin and Rachel Pannet in Sydney

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1Ex-TbqECu29eVAk_anMJa2VOTC4vB9ccYRmF90A5Tbs/edit?usp=sharing

Video Clips:

Overview on the Brain:

<https://www.nationalgeographic.org/video/science-101-brain/>

Crash Course: <https://thecrashcourse.com/courses/psychology>

Where Joy Hides and How to Find it:

https://www.ted.com/talks/ingrid_fetell_lee_where_joy_hides_and_how_to_find_it

How Stress Affects your Brain:

https://www.ted.com/talks/madhumita_murgia_how_stress_affects_your_brain

Brain Games Seasons (1-6): Available through Classroom Video database from the Library Learning Commons

Podcasts:

“The Psychology Podcast” with Dr. Scott Barry Kaufman - This episode review Maslow’s hierarchy of needs in a new light

<https://scottbarrykaufman.com/podcast/transcend-with-scott-barry-kaufman/>

Fiction and nonfiction books: These books can be found in the Fairfield Public Library, on Amazon and some within the Fairfield Warde Learning Commons’s catalog.

<i>Icy Sparks</i>	Gwyn Hyman Rubio (fiction)	A ten year orphan in rural Kentucky begins to reveal the secrets of her life with Tourette’s syndrome.	Tourett’s Syndrome
<i>The Glass Castle: A Memoir</i>	Jeannette Wells (nonfiction)	A young woman comes to grips with her extremely dysfunctional family life.	Alcoholism Bipolar disorder Poverty
Life of Pi	Y. Martel (fiction)	A 16 year old boy from India finds himself in a lifeboat with a Bengal tiger	Positive Psychology, Spirituality, Hope, Survival
Set This House in Order	M. Ruff (fiction)	A fascinating and creative look into the life of multiple personalities.	Dissociative Identity Disorder (multiple personality disorder).
<i>Born on a Blue Day: Inside the Extraordinary Mind of an Autistic Savant</i>	Daniel Tammet (nonfiction)	A boy with Autism Spectrum Disorder has intellect beyond his own understanding and his journey through life.	Autistic Savant Autism
<i>Opening Skinner’s Box: Great Psychological Experiments of the 20th Century</i>	Lauren Slater (2005) nonfiction	A modern interpretation of experiments and a debunking of myths related to the psychologists and their experiments.	Variety of psychological concepts
<i>Forty Studies that Changed Psychology</i>	Roger Hock (nonfiction)	Description of studies that were considered turning points in psychological research	Variety of psychological concepts
<i>Prozac Diary</i>	Lauren Slater (nonfiction)	The author describes what it was like to spend most of her life feeling “crazy”—and then to wake up one day and find herself in the strange state of feeling well.	Psychological Disorders and Treatment

General Websites:

<https://apcentral.collegeboard.org/courses/ap-psychology/course>

<https://www.nimh.nih.gov/index.shtml>

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us>

<https://www.simplypsychology.org/>

Gale Psychology Research Databases (accessible through Classlink)

Overview of Psychological Perspectives:

Psychology's Three Main Levels of Analysis



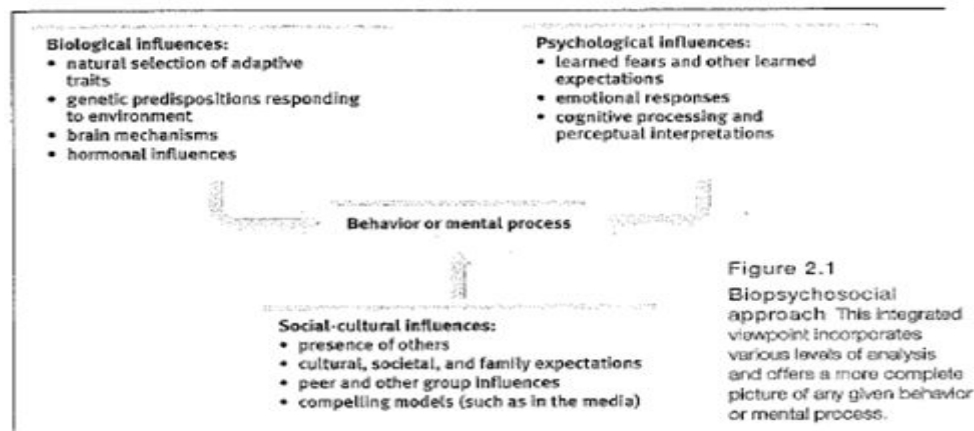
What are psychology's levels of analysis and related perspectives?

Each of us is a complex system that is part of a larger social system. But each of us is also composed of smaller systems, such as our nervous system and body organs, which are composed of still smaller systems—cells, molecules, and atoms.

These tiered systems suggest different **levels of analysis**, which offer complementary outlooks. It's like explaining why horrific school shootings have occurred. Is it because the shooters have brain disorders or genetic tendencies that cause them to be violent? Because they have been rewarded for violent behavior? Because we, in the United States, live in a gun-promoting society that accepts violence? Such perspectives are complementary because "everything is related to everything else" (Brewer, 1996). Together, different levels of analysis form an integrated **biopsychosocial approach**, which considers the influences of biological, psychological, and social-cultural factors (FIGURE 2.1).

levels of analysis the differing complementary views, from biological to psychological to social-cultural, for analyzing any given phenomenon.

biopsychosocial approach an integrated approach that incorporates biological, psychological, and social-cultural levels of analysis.



AP® Exam Tip

You will see versions of Figure 2.1 throughout the text. Spend some time right now familiarizing yourself with how the figure's three corners might contribute to behavior or mental processes, the very stuff of psychology.

Figure 2.1
Biopsychosocial approach This integrated viewpoint incorporates various levels of analysis and offers a more complete picture of any given behavior or mental process.

Each level provides a valuable vantage point for looking at a behavior or mental process, yet each by itself is incomplete. Like different academic disciplines, psychology's varied approaches, or perspectives, ask different questions and have their own limits. One perspective may stress the biological, psychological, or social-cultural level more than another, but the different perspectives described in **TABLE 2.1** on the next page complement one another. Consider, for example, how they shed light on anger.



Views of anger How would each of psychology's levels of analysis explain what's going on here?

Table 2.1 Psychology's Approaches

Perspective	Focus	Sample Questions
<i>Behavioral</i>	How we learn observable responses	How do we learn to fear particular objects or situations? What is the most effective way to alter our behavior, say, to lose weight?
<i>Biological</i>	How the body and brain enable emotions, memories, and sensory experiences; how genes combine with environment to influence individual differences	How do pain messages travel from the hand to the brain? How is blood chemistry linked with moods and motives? To what extent are traits such as intelligence, personality, sexual orientation, and depression attributable to our genes? To our environment?
<i>Cognitive</i>	How we encode, process, store, and retrieve information	How do we use information in remembering? Reasoning? Solving problems?
<i>Evolutionary</i>	How the natural selection of traits has promoted the survival of genes	How does evolution influence behavior tendencies?
<i>Humanistic</i>	How we meet our needs for love and acceptance and achieve self-fulfillment	How can we work toward fulfilling our potential? How can we overcome barriers to our personal growth?
<i>Psychodynamic</i>	How behavior springs from unconscious drives and conflicts	How can someone's personality traits and disorders be explained by unfulfilled wishes and childhood traumas?
<i>Social-cultural</i>	How behavior and thinking vary across situations and cultures	How are we alike as members of one human family? How do we differ as products of our environment?

AP® Exam Tip

These perspectives will come up again and again throughout your AP® Psychology course, and they will be on the exam. You need to become very comfortable with the meaning of terms like cognitive, behavioral, and psychodynamic. Ask your teacher for clarification if you are the least bit unclear about what the perspectives mean.

behavioral psychology the scientific study of observable behavior, and its explanation by principles of learning.

biological psychology the scientific study of the links between biological (genetic, neural, hormonal) and psychological processes. (Some biological psychologists call themselves *behavioral neuroscientists*, *neuropsychologists*, *behavior geneticists*, *physiological psychologists*, or *biopsychologists*.)

- Someone working from the **behavioral** perspective might attempt to determine which external stimuli trigger angry responses or aggressive acts.
- Someone working from a **biological** perspective might study brain circuits that cause us to be “red in the face” and “hot under the collar,” or how heredity and experience influence our individual differences in temperament.
- Someone working from the **cognitive** perspective might study how our interpretation of a situation affects our anger and how our anger affects our thinking.
- Someone working from the **evolutionary** perspective might analyze how anger facilitated the survival of our ancestors’ genes.
- Someone working from the **humanistic** perspective (a historically important approach) might have been interested in understanding how angry feelings affect a person’s potential for growth. As we will see, modern-day *positive psychology* incorporates humanistic psychology’s emphasis on human flourishing.
- Someone working from the **psychodynamic** perspective (which evolved from Freud’s psychoanalysis) might view an outburst as an outlet for unconscious hostility.
- Someone working from the **social-cultural** perspective might explore how expressions of anger vary across cultural contexts.

The point to remember: Like two-dimensional views of a three-dimensional object, each of psychology’s perspectives is helpful. But each by itself fails to reveal the whole picture.