

APPROACHES TO AP (AND) PSYCHOLOGY

Purpose of this reading:

The following reading will introduce you to the basics of AP Psychology. In this reading we will:

1. Establish expected routines that all students must do to successfully engage in this course.
2. Introduce a useful definition of Psychology.
3. Introduce the EIGHT most important approaches to studying Psychology.

INTRODUCTION TO WHS AP PSYCHOLOGY

Welcome to AP Psychology! In this course you will discover a whole new way to approach your world. While this is exciting, let me warn you that you can't go back. You won't be able to unlearn what you discover about yourself and all those weird hairy humans around you. If you don't want your worldview expanded, leave now because very soon you'll start to see Psych everywhere. What you learn in this class, you'll see in the actions your friends take, in the comments your parents make, and in the motives that you drive you. This is why I am so passionately excited about teaching this class. It's made a difference in how I approach my world and I am excited to share this with you!

If that weren't enough, AP Psych will also help prepare you for academic life in a college class. From reading a syllabus to really learning to read a text, from researching a topic to engaging in authentic academic discourse, AP Psychology will make you a superstar in your next academic endeavors.

But don't take my word for it. Here are some excerpts from emails and Facebook messages I've gotten from former students during their freshmen year of college. I'm showing you these not to pump my own tires but to give you some evidentiary support for what I have come to know is the true power of this class:

"I just wanted to say thank you for everything you have done for me the past couple years at WHS. I learned so much from you and AP Psych, and it was my favorite class, by far, that I have taken. I feel so confident now going into my freshman year at college already use to the work load and what is now expected of me. My classes now seem easy compared to Psych I'm so glad I decided to take it." Class of 2014

My history prof emailed us the syllabus last night with an assignment due today on the calendar so I printed out the syllabus and did the assignment and I was the only person who did it. My history prof was so excited and he gave me extra credit. I would be dying in these classes if I hadn't taken AP psych. Thanks for being awesome. Squirrel." Class of 2014

"I continue to use all the methods you taught us, especially concept mapping! I concept map for almost all my classes! I've even taught a few of my classmates how to concept map in psychology and I showed them my portfolio too, which they were amazed by. I am pretty much the go to girl for questions that my friends have on what we are learning in psychology, which is crazy to me. I just got my first exam back today and I got a 98, so I knew the first person I needed to tell and thank was you." Class of 2013

"You always said that psych doesn't pay off until the future, but I'm not so sure I agree anymore. It's true that you don't get any tangible award for a while, but I think psych paid off every day in class. It was enjoyable, we were always laughing. It was interesting, it made us wonder and question. And most of all it made us look inwards, and analyze ourselves: our motivations and personalities and growth. I'd say that's a class that pays off every day." Class of 2012

A Course is a course of course

This word has lost its meaning in our academic culture, so let me take a minute to acquaint you with the concept. The word course is defined as the path that someone moves along to reach a destination (MW Dictionary). In our case, the path is our class syllabus and the 30 assignments listed in the syllabus are the learning events to move us along this path. Our destination is that of an expanded worldview and increased college preparedness. The vast majority of you will engage in these assignments, make progress, and reach our destination. For whatever reasons, a few of you will decide to stop doing these assignments. Some will even ask to be exempt from portions of the course. Once you do this, you have decided to stop journeying along the course with the rest of us. Should you stop DOING the course, please do not be surprised that it will result in a failing letter grade informing you that you have stopped making progress. The only failing grades I have given out in AP Psychology are those of students who stopped doing the course.

Now that you've gotten a small taste of the benefits awaiting you at the end of this course, let's dive into the three routines that I expect each student enrolled in WHS AP Psychology to do for every class.

1. Identify the Essential Task.
2. Read and create a concept map
3. Participate in class

IDENTIFY THE ESSENTIAL TASK

Starting on page 4 of our course syllabus is our course content online as required by the College Board in its *AP Psychology Course Description*. For each unit, all AP Psychology students across the nation must be able to complete a series of learning tasks. Italicized words in those tasks are key terms that you must define and be able to use. I will refer to these terms as varsity terms since they are often given starting positions in any discussion of psychology and in the AP exam in May. Each unit also has a list of important psychologists associated with the topics studied during that unit. I'll refer to these as varsity psychologist for the same reasons. The ability to apply these three things (the tasks, the terms and the psychologists) will result in a 5 on the AP exam.

Your preparation for each class must start with the essential task.

For each essential task, you are expected to create a concept map that directly addresses the instructions in the task. Therefore, if the task asks you to describe a list of terms, then make sure you define them and give real world examples. If a task asks you to describe AND compare/contrast terms, then make sure your concept map not only gives definitions but that it also shows similarities between some terms and differences between others. If a task asks you to trace the growth, well then you need to make sure that you pay attention to the order of the terms/people. Because the tasks are the single most important objective on any given day, and because they are directly from the mouth of the College Board itself, your preparation for each class must start with the essential task.

USE THE CALENDAR TO FIND THE DAY'S ESSENTIAL TASK

<i>Fri</i>
4
Approaches to Psychology Day 1 ET 1-1 (Galusha - Approaches) (Joint CM creation)

To find which essential task we are working on during any given day in AP Psych, simply go to our calendar. For example, on the calendar for Friday, September 4th it says that we are working on Approaches to Psychology and will be addressing ET 1-1. Please note that the day's agenda is what is listed on the calendar. Thus you are expected to have ALREADY read 'Galusha-Approaches' (the packet you're reading right now) PRIOR to coming to class on September 4th. If you look at the calendar for September 9th you'll notice that we are working on the Growth of Psych which is ET 1-3 and that you are expected to have read pages 13-23 in your text. If the day has a black bar across it as does September 4th this means something is due. In this case, it is your summer assignment.

Once you know which topic and essential task we will be working on for any given class, simply go to your syllabus and READ that task. It is very important that you read this task BEFORE you read the assigned pages. By reading the task you'll have a purpose and a goal. If you don't read it, then you'll get two paragraphs into the text and you'll start to mentally wander.

READ AND CREATE A CONCEPT MAP

Not only are you expected to read, but you are expected to actively engage your text. In AP Psych, this means that you'll be expected to create a concept map for each essential task. Why? Well in the 1980s Henry Novak and his team of cognitive psychologists carefully documented the relationship between concept mapping and improved student performance on science related tasks. Since then, this relationship has only been further substantiated. In short, you'll do it because it works. It will force you to see important relationships between terms. It will improve recall by building in retrieval cues and it will visually illuminate conceptual misunderstandings. While you and I could talk for an entire class period about a term, I might never be able to see how you are mentally organizing the information.

However, give me just 10 seconds with your concept map, and I can immediately see the strengths and flaws in your mental schema.

Now that we know WHY we are doing it, let's get into the details of how you should concept map.

STEP 1: READ WITH A PURPOSE!

Read the essential task for the reading assignment BEFORE you pick up the book. Make sure that you are actively trying to accomplish this task. For example, ET 1-1 asks you to, "describe, compare and contrast how different approaches to psychology explain behavior." Make sure that you are reading, not only to describe the approaches, but to also compare and contrast them.

STEP 2: PRE-READ THE ASSIGNMENT.

Strategic readers of textbooks don't just start at the beginning of the assignment, instead they use the section headings to get an overview of the reading. Use the organization of the textbook to help you pre-read first. For our textbook, the large blue titles give the section headings while the green titles give the subsections. The bold words are usually the most important but . . . they won't get you a 5 on the exam. Look at the italicized words in our syllabus for each task. They are the terms you must know from the reading. Again, in our class we call these Varsity Terms.

STEP 3: READ THE ASSIGNMENT.

Yep, you actually have to read it. There is no way around this. Don't forget to keep your purpose in mind. You are a laser. "Stay on target." Stay focused on the task.

STEP 4: MAKE YOUR MAP.

Get a blank piece of computer paper and start off by writing down the Essential Task one of the corners. Then make a graphical answer to the task using what you just read. Start with the big sections first and then work your way down to specifics. Keep it organized. If you don't know how to organize it. . . you didn't really understand what you read. Be sure to define in your own words any terms you use. Make sure that for each Varsity Term you must also include a real life example. If a Varsity Psychologist is mentioned in the reading, put him or her down on the map with the term they are responsible for researching.

As for the highlighters, you **MUST** highlight your Varsity Terms in one color, your Varsity Psychologists in another, and your examples in a third.

STEP 5: COLOR YOUR MAP.

Color aids memory and when used to group similar items it makes it easier to find things. You'll appreciate this when you use your concept maps as your study guides for the AP exam in May. You will need a few colors and at least 3 different highlighters as your concept mapping kit. Some people make all sections of a topic the same color, while others make their section headings one color, sub-topics another and terms a third. Whatever works for you is just fine, just get a system down that you use consistently. As for the highlighters, you **MUST** highlight your Varsity Terms in one color, your Varsity Psychologists in another, and your examples in a third. Why? Because our average on the AP Exam over the last 8 years is a 4.1.

PARTICIPATE IN CLASS

Your responsibilities do not end with your concept maps. Citizens of AP Psychology are expected to have their concept map draft on their desk prior to the start of class. You did your job, now make sure I know this. Trust me, it will shape my opinion of you. You are to then use class to help yourself better understand and be able to complete the essential task. Didn't understand a term? Ask. Need a real life example? Ask. Need a better real life example than the one I just gave you? Ask again. Need to discuss this term with the class to make it stick? Ask. Need help seeing how this all fits together? Ask. Use class to turn your concept map rough draft into a final copy. This way it is done by the time you leave and ready to be handed in on the test day when all concept maps from a unit are due.

Did you know our website (mrgalusha.org) has every PowerPoint organized by Essential Task? These resources are here for you to use before you read, as you read, during class or whenever it can aid you. The site is also optimized for mobile devices.

THAT'S IT! JUST THREE THINGS: IDENTIFY THE ESSENTIAL TASK, READ AND CREATE A CONCEPT MAP, AND PARTICIPATE IN CLASS. THIS IS THE ROUTINE BEHAVIOR I EXPECT TO SEE FROM EACH MEMBER OF OUR COMMUNITY. THIS IS HOW YOU ARE TO APPROACH THIS COURSE. NOW THAT YOU KNOW HOW TO APPROACH THE COURSE, LET'S TURN OUR ATTENTION TO HOW PSYCHOLOGISTS APPROACH THE STUDY OF PSYCHOLOGY. OH, AND YOU SHOULD START CONCEPT MAPPING STARTING WITH THIS NEXT SECTION BECAUSE IT IS ABOUT TO ADDRESS OUR FIRST ESSENTIAL TASK!

APPROACHES TO PSYCHOLOGY

Essential Task 1-1. Describe, compare, and contrast how different approaches to psychology explain behavior:

- psychoanalytic/psychodynamic, Gestalt, humanism and behaviorism
- cognitive, biological, evolutionary, and social as more contemporary approaches

DEFINITION OF PSYCHOLOGY

If we are going to try to describe, compare AND contrast these 8 approaches to Psychology, then we better understand what Psychology even means. **Psychology is the scientific study of human behavior and mental processes.** There are three key words in this definition: scientific, behavior and mental processes. In order to understand this definition, you'll need to be able to fluently apply each of these to any situation.

1. **Scientific:** Psychology is not just a collection of common sense wisdom or educated guesses. That's philosophy. Psychology is a science because it uses the scientific method. This is a method whereby researchers make careful observations and then research to identify relationships or experiment to test hypotheses. In fact, the scientific method is so crucial to psychology that we will spend our entire first unit studying the research methods used by psychologists. What do they research you ask? Well they apply the scientific method so that they can make claims about human behavior and mental processes.
2. **Behavior:** These are the actions that people take. They can be everything from pressing a lever, to texting a friend, to going to work, or to getting a divorce. The key thing here is that they are actions that can be seen and observed. This is good since the scientific method is based on carefully recording observations.
3. **Mental Processes:** Now you are I know, because we are both humans, that there are many things you think about that you never do . . . like summer reading. You thought you'd get around to it in July, but you never actually did the behavior until yesterday. Sometimes your mental process can be an emotion like sadness, but your behavior when someone asks "How's it going?" can be the exact opposite. "Fine, thanks." Even though on the inside you are a mushy sad jellyfish. Mental processes are the thoughts, memories, emotions and use of language that happen within someone's mind. It gets annoying to say all of that over and over again so psychologists have a term they use whenever they talk about thinking. This is term is cognition. Whenever this term is used please remember that it refers to thinking, emotions, motivation, memory, language use, problem solving and decision making. These are awesome things to study, but the problem is that they are a hard to directly observe. Therefore psychologists have to get pretty creative in their research methods if they want to catch an observable glimpse of human cognition. But just because is it hard, doesn't mean it's impossible and it is certainly worth the effort.

Now that we know what psychology is (the scientific study of both human behavior and mental processes) we can take a look at the various ways that psychologists try to explain the behavior and mental processes of humans. These various ways are called the approaches to psychology. This means there are eight different ways a psychologist can attempt to explain anything humans do or think. From eating behavior to career choice, from depression to love, from the decision to attend a certain college, to buying life insurance, Psychologists will try to explain it all through these 8 approaches. At this point, it is helpful to view the 8 approaches to the study of psychology as eight different Instagram filters. Each can be used on any situation to create slightly different edits, or interpretations, of anything a psychologist would try to explain, which is pretty much everything to do with humans. While a psychologist can use any of these filters, each of us tend to have our favorites. Like me for instance, I usually default to cognitive and behavioral filters whenever I try to explain a situation.

The College Board's essential task groups the approaches into two main categories, older and newer approaches. The older approaches include Psychoanalytic/Psychodynamic, Gestalt, Humanism, and Behaviorism. For the most part, they started in the first half of the 1900s with psychoanalytic getting its start in the late 1800s. The newer approaches, Cognitive, Biological, Evolutionary, and Social started in the second half of the 1900s. Since essential task 1-3 will have us tracing the growth of psychology I don't think this is *the* most helpful way to group these approaches. You should certainly be able to organize them into these two groups, but a more helpful way to see them is through their relation to the scientific method. Remember, Psychology is first and foremost a science. I would like you to mentally organize the approaches to psychology into two broad groups: approaches that can be easily observed made up of Behavioral, Biological and Social Psychology, and approaches that are hard to observe made up of the Psychoanalytic, and Cognitive approaches. This leaves us with three approaches left over, but those are best seen as outgrowths or reactions to other approaches. Evolutionary psychology is an outgrowth of Biological psychology while Humanism is a reaction to Psychoanalytic psychology. Gestalt psychology is best understood as a particular type of cognitive psychology.

APPROACHES THAT CAN BE EASILY OBSERVED

BEHAVIORAL PSYCHOLOGY

Behavioral psychology studies just what it says it studies, the behaviors of humans. So when you try to explain a situation from the behavioral approach you won't talk about people's brain chemistries, emotional states, or childhoods. You'll simply examine the things in the world around them that caused them to act the way they did. People do things because they have learned that those behaviors work out for them. Reacting a certain way works to keep them safe. Acting a certain way gets them rewards or helps them avoid punishments. It is all about learning from the environment. Behaviorism started in the early 1900s with the work of Ivan Pavlov. He studied how dogs learned to react to the sound of a bell because it signaled the coming of food. His work gave rise to our understanding of something called Classical Conditioning. Classical Conditioning is when someone learns to automatically respond to a signal in their environment because it is warning them that something is about to happen. B.F. Skinner is another major researcher in Behavioral psychology. His work gave rise to our understanding of Operant Conditioning. Operant conditioning is when someone decides to do a behavior in order to get a reward or avoid a punishment. Behavioral Psychology is so concerned with psychology being a science that purists of this approach want to look only study the environment and the external actions of the person. Because you cannot observe the thoughts of the person, they should not be studied. In fact, Behavioral psychologists saw the mind as a black box that could not be opened, observed and therefore studied by psychologists.

Core associations with Behaviorism: Studies behaviors of humans. Concerned with LEARNING from environment. Pavlov's Classical Conditioning and Skinner's Operant Conditioning.

BIOLOGICAL PSYCHOLOGY

Biological psychology studies how the body of a person impacts the person's psychology (remember this means their behavior and mental processes). Have you ever been hungry and then gotten really grumpy? In part this is because your stomach produces ghrelin when you are hungry to tell you to eat. The ghrelin stimulates an anxiety response in your hypothalamus, a structure in the limbic system which is the emotional center of your brain. Your brain chemistry is causing the psychological response of grumpiness. This is a biological explanation for a psychological event.

Biological psychology thus studies anything in the physical body that can impact psychological behavior which is pretty much everything. You are a biological organism thus everything psychological that is happening to you is also biologic. In specific, biological psychology studies brain chemistry, brain structures, neurons, and genetics. It is also concerned with anything that can alter the normal functioning of those systems such as legal and illegal drugs, medical illness, and injury. You'll hear many different names for this approach like neuroscience, physiological science, biopsychology or psychobiology. Don't worry they are all addressing this same approach.

Core associations with Biological Psychology: Studies how the body impacts psychology. Looks at the brain, brain chemistry, genetics, medical illnesses and drugs.

EVOLUTIONARY PSYCHOLOGY

This is a logical outgrowth of Biological psychology. Evolutionary Psychology tries to explain why humans are the way we are by looking at the adaptive benefits that our current behaviors gave us while we were evolving as a species. Let's go back to hunger induced grumpiness. Humans whose hypothalamus produced an anxiety response when hungry were more motivated to seek out food and more likely to reproduce and share this trait. Thus we can explain this modern behavior by looking at how it helped our ancestors survive. Language is another great example. Mutations in the human brain that allowed for complex language were better equipped to work together, find a mate, and pass on those genes. Thus the genes mutations that became our language processing centers exist because they gave our ancestors an adaptive edge.

Core associations with Evolutionary Psychology: Explains why humans are the way we are. Looks at the adaptive benefits to explain human behavior.

SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY

Social psychology is the study of how other people impact your behavior and mental processes and how you impact their behavior and mental processes. It also studies group behavior and dynamics. It is sometimes called Socio-Cultural Psychology as it will look at the social differences among humans. For example, Westerner cultures (the Americas and Europe) tend to be more individualistic while Eastern Cultures (Asia) tend to be more collectivistic. Two of the most famous researchers in this field of psychology are Stanley Milgram and Philip Zimbardo. They did two of the most interesting social psychology experiments ever, they also happened to be two of the most highly unethical experiments as well because they caused psychological harm to the participants. We will study both of these later, but in summary Milgram found that humans will obey an authority figure even when it means hurting others and Zimbardo found that a situation can be so powerful that it can make seemingly normal people do some pretty nasty things.

Core associations with Social Psychology: Study of people's impact on you and you on them. Studies groups. Milgram's Obedience Experiment and Zimbardo's Stanford Prison Experiment.

APPROACHES THAT ARE HARD TO OBSERVE

PSYCHOANALYTIC/PSYCHODYNAMIC

Oh, Freud. Ok, let's get a few things out of the way. You can call this approach either psychoanalytic or psychodynamic. Sigmund Freud, the father of this approach to psychology, used both. He worked in the late 1800s and his approach to psychology became so popular that he is probably the only psychologist's name you knew before taking this class. Just because he is popular, doesn't mean he is right. While modern psychology will use a lot of Freud's work, some of it is just plain wrong. In its more simplistic form, psychodynamic psychology views the human personality as an energy system fueled by sexual and aggressive desires. The personality is made up of 3 different parts: the id which wants to fulfill every last one of those desires and then go back for seconds, the super ego that wants to be perfect and is disgusted by the id, and finally the ego which needs to keep the peace. Much of this battle goes on below the surface of conscious awareness called the unconscious. In fact, the id is completely submerged in

the unconscious. So remember a few seconds ago when you said to yourself that you don't have any sexual and aggressive desires, well that was the conscious part of your super ego talking. Your id was in your unconscious making a list a mile long. Freud believed that these drives built up energy in the unconscious and, if not released, would cause mental illness. Thus your ego needs to find ways to get your id what it wants without disgusting the super ego. Freud believed that you learned how to deal with this conflict early in life and thus childhood is really important to shaping your personality. Freud's work was continued by his student Carl Jung and later on by the Neo-Freudians. One of the biggest complaints about this approach to psychology is that it is really, really hard to observe. Just think about it, not even the subject knows about their unconscious desires so how can the research observe them? Psychoanalytic psychology is not very scientific. In fact, behaviorism was a reaction to psychoanalytic psychology.

Core associations with Psychoanalytic Psychology: Unconscious sexual and aggressive desires drive our behavior. Personality is formed in childhood. Id, Ego, and Superego are the three parts of the human personality. Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung

HUMANISTIC PSYCHOLOGY

Did you notice how depressing and pessimistic psychoanalytic psychology is? You have these deep dark desires that are constantly building up negative energy and dragging you down. You are kind of nasty and perverted. Sigh. Well a reaction to psychoanalytic psychology is Humanistic Psychology. Humanistic psychology keeps the notion of the unconscious but instead of the downward pull, believes that humans have the ability to become better and reach their full potential. Humanistic psychology instead focuses on an upward pull to become better because hey, you aren't dead yet. This is the smallest of the approaches that we'll work with in our class. Key theorists in this field include Carl Rogers and his notion of a self-actualizing tendency along with Abraham Maslow and his notion of self-actualization.

Core associations with Humanistic Psychology: Humans can get better and achieve their full potential. Rogers and Maslow.

COGNITIVE

I saved the best for last, or at least that's my bias talking. Cognitive psychology is the study of the mental processes. Remember this term includes thinking, emotions, motivation, memory, language usage, problem solving and decision making. Now these things are really hard to see. The Behaviorists called the human mind the black box for a good reason. To be able to study something as a science you have to be able to observe it. In the 1960s technological advances in brain imaging allowed for a cognitive psychology revolution of sorts. Behaviorism was all the rage in the mid-1900s just like Freud had been all the rage in the late 1800s. But with the development of new brain imaging techniques that allowed psychologists to see the workings of the human brain, observations could be made about cognition and thus this field of psychology started to explode. Now we have brain imaging devices like the fMRI that can see not only the structure of the brain but we can watch it functioning. We can peer into the black box. Another way that cognitive psychologists study mental processes is to creatively craft experiments that allow us to study mental processes by looking at the behaviors they cause. Thus a cognitive psychologist might have a group of students learn with concept maps and a group just read the text and then compare the results.

Core associations with Cognitive Psychology: thinking, emotions, motivation, memory, language usage, problem solving and decision making.

GESTALT PSYCHOLOGY

From the German word meaning "the whole" this approach to psychology deals with a specific aspect of human cognition called perception. This group of psychologists wanted to understand how humans perceived the world around them so efficiently despite often lacking the necessary sensory information. Often what we perceive is greater than the sum of the sensory parts we are given. This approach to psychology evolved over time to apply to the person as well. When you look at Gestalt psychology as a therapy method it is concerned about making the person whole again by having them understand that their physical and psychological problems are linked.

Core associations with Gestalt Psychology: Perception, the whole

Well there you have it. Eight approaches to psychology that will take us a year to fully introduce. Here's how our units line up with the different approaches.

Cognitive Psychology

Unit 2: Memory

Unit 4: Perception (Gestalt Psychology) and States of Consciousness

Unit 6: Cognition

Unit 7: Intelligence and Testing

Unit 8: Motivation, Emotion and Stress

Biological Psychology

Unit 3: Biological Psychology

Unit 4: Sensation and States of Consciousness

Unit 8: Stress

Behavioral Psychology

Unit 5: Learning

Psychoanalytic and Humanistic

Unit 10: Personality

All of the Approaches at once

Unit 9: Development

Unit 11: Mental Illness and Therapies

Social Psychology

Unit 12: Social Psychology