

**AP PSYCHOLOGY COURSE SYLLABUS**  
**MRS. KRNICH**  
**NORTHGATE HIGH SCHOOL**

Course Description:

The purpose of the Advanced Placement course in Psychology is to introduce students to the systematic and scientific study of the behavior and mental process of human beings and other animals. Students are exposed to the psychological facts, principles, and phenomena associated with each of the major subfields of psychology. They also learn about the methods psychologists use in the practice of their science. The aim of the course is to provide the student with a rigorous learning experience, equivalent to most college introductory psychology courses and aligning to standards and practices set forth by the College Board. Students completing this course will also be prepared to take the AP Psychology exam in May.

Materials:

David Myers, *Psychology for AP* (New York: Worth, 2011).

Study Guide to accompany *Psychology for AP*; Straub.

\*Maitland, Laura Lincoln, “5 Steps to a 5 – AP Psychology 2016-2017,” McGraw Hill, New York, 2016

AP Central: [www.apcentral.collegeboard.com](http://www.apcentral.collegeboard.com)

1999, 2004, 2008, 2010, 2011, 2012 released AP Psychology Exams (as provided by the College Board)

“*Discovering Psychology*” website and video access, Annenberg Media, 2001.

A variety of materials will be provided to you by your instructor; please see me if you have questions about the validity of a resource you may want to use

\*Study aids vary by preference; see me for suggestions and alternatives.

Summer Assignment:

Upon signing Northgate’s AP Expectations Contract, you will be given your summer assignment, which includes a reading journal for two supplementary readings of your choice from the choices I provide you, and instructions for an analysis paper you will write upon completing the summer work.

## Grading Policy:

The course is run on a points-value basis for each semester, kept as a running total until the completion of the semester. Grades are made up of daily assignments, participation, projects, written work, and evaluations/assessments.

89.95-100: A

79.95-89.94: B

69.95-79.94: C

59.95-69.94: D

59.94 or below: F

Late work is accepted for half credit **AT MY DISCRETION**. There will be several assignments that have non-negotiable due dates and will not be accepted late; you will be informed of this upon their assignment. Tests and projects are to be taken/due on the day they are assigned; you receive a calendar monthly of due dates and daily work to avoid confusion in advance. **ABSENCES ARE NOT EXCUSES FOR NOT COMPLETING YOUR WORK.**

Cell phones are permitted only during supervised, assigned activities. They will be kept in a labeled envelope and locked in a cabinet during tests and quizzes. Please let me know if other arrangements need to be made.

Course Schedule/Outline (Dates are flexible at my discretion):

Unit 1: History and Approaches (2-4%)

Unit 2: Research Methods (8-10%)

Unit 3: Biological Bases of Behavior (8-10%)

Unit 4: Sensation and Perception (6-8%)

Unit 5: States of Consciousness (2-4%)

Unit 6: Learning (7-9%)

Unit 7: Cognition (8-10%)

Unit 8: Motivation and Emotion (6-8%)

Unit 9: Developmental Psychology (7-9%)

Unit 10: Personality (5-7%)

Unit 11: Testing and Individual Differences (5-7%)

Unit 12: Abnormal Behavior (7-9%)

Unit 13: Treatment and Abnormal Behavior (5-7%)

Unit 14: Social Psychology (8-10%)

Review for AP Psychology Exam and Final Exam (2-4%)

Final Research Project

### **Unit I: History and Approaches**

**AP students in psychology will be able to do the following:**

- Recognize how philosophical perspectives shaped the development of psychological thought.
  - Describe and compare different theoretical approaches in explaining behavior:
    - structuralism, functionalism, and behaviorism in the early years;
    - Gestalt, psychoanalytic/psychodynamic, and humanism emerging later;
    - evolutionary, biological, and cognitive as more contemporary approaches.
  - Recognize the strengths and limitations of applying theories to explain behavior.
  - Distinguish the different domains of psychology:
    - biological, clinical, cognitive, counseling, developmental, educational, experimental, human factors, industrial–organizational, personality, psychometric, and social.
  - Identify the major historical figures in psychology (e.g., 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, Wilhelm Wundt).
- Textbook Reading Assignments: *Myers*, Unit 1

### **Unit II: Research Methods**

**AP students in psychology will be able to do the following:**

- Differentiate types of research (e.g., experiments, correlational studies, survey research, naturalistic observations, and case studies) with regard to purpose, strengths and weaknesses.
- Describe how research design drives the reasonable conclusions that can be drawn (e.g., experiments are useful for determining cause and effect; the use of experimental controls reduce alternative explanations).
- Identify independent, dependent, confounding, and control variables in experimental designs.
- Distinguish between random assignments of participants to conditions in experiments and random selection of participants, primarily in correlational studies and surveys.

- Predict the validity of behavioral explanations based on the quality of research design (e.g., confounding variables limit confidence in research conclusions).
- Distinguish the purposes of descriptive statistics and inferential statistics.
- Apply basic descriptive statistical concepts, including interpreting and constructing graphs and calculating simple descriptive statistics (e.g., measures of central tendency, standard deviation).
- Discuss the value of reliance on operational definitions and measurement in behavioral research.
- Identify how ethical issues inform and constrain research practices.
- Describe how ethical and legal guidelines (e.g., those provided by the American Psychological Association, federal regulations, local institutional review boards) protect research participants and promote sound ethical practice.

Textbook Reading: *Myers*, Unit 2

### **Unit III: Biological Bases of Behavior**

**AP students in psychology will be able to do the following:**

- Identify basic processes and systems in the biological bases of behavior, including parts of the neuron and the process of transmission of a signal between neurons.
- Discuss the influence of drugs on neurotransmitters (e.g., reuptake mechanisms).
- Discuss the effect of the endocrine system on behavior.
- Describe the nervous system and its subdivisions and functions:
  - central and peripheral nervous systems;
  - major brain regions, lobes, and cortical areas;
  - brain lateralization and hemispheric specialization.
- Recount historic and contemporary research strategies and technologies that support research (e.g., case studies, split-brain research, imaging techniques).
- Discuss psychology's abiding interest in how heredity, environment, and evolution work together to shape behavior.
- Predict how traits and behavior can be selected for their adaptive value.
- Identify key contributors (e.g., Paul Broca, Charles Darwin, Michael Gazzaniga, Roger Sperry, Carl Wernicke)

Textbook Reading: *Myers*, Unit 3A, 3B, and 3C

## **Unit IV: Sensation and Perception**

**AP students in psychology will be able to do the following:**

- Discuss basic principles of sensory transduction, including absolute threshold, difference threshold, signal detection, and sensory adaptation.
- Describe sensory processes (e.g., hearing, vision, touch, taste, smell, vestibular, kinesthesia, pain), including the specific nature of energy transduction, relevant anatomical structures, and specialized pathways in the brain for each of the senses.
- Explain common sensory disorders (e.g., visual and hearing impairments).
- Describe general principles of organizing and integrating sensation to promote stable awareness of the external world (e.g., Gestalt principles, depth perception).
- Discuss how experience and culture can influence perceptual processes (e.g., perceptual set, context effects).
- Explain the role of top-down processing in producing vulnerability to illusion.
- Discuss the role of attention in behavior.
- Challenge common beliefs in parapsychological phenomena.
- Identify the major historical figures in sensation and perception (e.g., Gustav Fechner, David Hubel, Ernst Weber, Torsten Wiesel).

Textbook Reading: *Myers*, Unit 4

## **Unit V: States of Consciousness**

**AP students in psychology will be able to do the following:**

- Describe various states of consciousness and their impact on behavior.
- Discuss aspects of sleep and dreaming:
  - stages and characteristics of the sleep cycle;
  - theories of sleep and dreaming;
  - symptoms and treatments of sleep disorders.
- Describe historic and contemporary uses of hypnosis (e.g., pain control, psychotherapy).
- Explain hypnotic phenomena (e.g., suggestibility, dissociation).
- Identify the major psychoactive drug categories (e.g., depressants, stimulants) and classify specific drugs, including their psychological and physiological effects.
- Discuss drug dependence, addiction, tolerance, and withdrawal.
- Identify the major figures in consciousness research (e.g., William James, Sigmund Freud, Ernest Hilgard).

Textbook Reading: *Myers*, Unit 5

### **Unit VI: Learning**

**AP students in psychology will be able to do the following:**

- Distinguish general differences between principles of classical conditioning, operant conditioning, and observational learning (e.g., contingencies).
- Describe basic classical conditioning phenomena, such as acquisition, extinction, spontaneous recovery, generalization, discrimination, and higher-order learning.
- Predict the effects of operant conditioning (e.g., positive reinforcement, negative reinforcement, punishment, schedules of reinforcement).
- Predict how practice, schedules of reinforcement, and motivation will influence quality of learning.
- Interpret graphs that exhibit the results of learning experiments.
- Provide examples of how biological constraints create learning predispositions.
- Describe the essential characteristics of insight learning, latent learning, and social learning.
- Apply learning principles to explain emotional learning, taste aversion, superstitious behavior, and learned helplessness.
- Suggest how behavior modification, biofeedback, coping strategies, and self-control can be used to address behavioral problems.
- Identify key contributors in the psychology of learning (e.g., Albert Bandura, John Garcia, Ivan Pavlov, Robert Rescorla, B. F. Skinner, Edward Thorndike, Edward Tolman, John B. Watson).

Textbook Reading: *Myers*, Unit 6

### **Unit VII: Cognition**

**AP students in psychology will be able to do the following:**

- Compare and contrast various cognitive processes:
  - effortful versus automatic processing;
  - deep versus shallow processing;
  - focused versus divided attention.
- Describe and differentiate psychological and physiological systems of memory (e.g., short-term memory, procedural memory).
- Outline the principles that underlie effective encoding, storage, and construction of memories.
- Describe strategies for memory improvement.

- Synthesize how biological, cognitive, and cultural factors converge to facilitate acquisition, development, and use of language.
- Identify problem-solving strategies as well as factors that influence their effectiveness.
- List the characteristics of creative thought and creative thinkers.
- Identify key contributors in cognitive psychology (e.g., Noam Chomsky, Hermann Ebbinghaus, Wolfgang Köhler, Elizabeth Loftus, George A. Miller).

Textbook Reading: *Myers*, Unit 7A, 7B

### **Unit VIII: Motivation and Emotion**

**AP students in psychology will be able to do the following:**

- Identify and apply basic motivational concepts to understand the behavior of humans and other animals (e.g., instincts, incentives, intrinsic versus extrinsic motivation).
- Discuss the biological underpinnings of motivation, including needs, drives, and homeostasis.
- Compare and contrast motivational theories (e.g., drive reduction theory, arousal theory, general adaptation theory), including the strengths and weaknesses of each.
- Describe classic research findings in specific motivation systems (e.g., eating, sex, social)
- Discuss theories of stress and the effects of stress on psychological and physical well-being.
- Compare and contrast major theories of emotion (e.g., James–Lange, Cannon–Bard, Schachter two-factor theory).
- Describe how cultural influences shape emotional expression, including variations in body language.
- Identify key contributors in the psychology of motivation and emotion (e.g., William James, Alfred Kinsey, Abraham Maslow, Stanley Schachter, Han Selye).

Textbook Reading: *Myers*, Unit 8A, 8B

### **Unit IX: Developmental Psychology**

**AP students in psychology will be able to do the following:**

- Discuss the interaction of nature and nurture (including cultural variations) in the determination of behavior.

- Explain the process of conception and gestation, including factors that influence successful fetal development (e.g., nutrition, illness, substance abuse).
- Discuss maturation of motor skills.
- Describe the influence of temperament and other social factors on attachment and appropriate socialization.
- Explain the maturation of cognitive abilities (e.g., Piaget's stages, information processing).
- Compare and contrast models of moral development (e.g., Kohlberg, Gilligan).
- Discuss maturational challenges in adolescence, including related family conflicts.
- Characterize the development of decisions related to intimacy as people mature.
- Predict the physical and cognitive changes that emerge as people age, including steps that can be taken to maximize function.
- Describe how sex and gender influence socialization and other aspects of development.
- Identify key contributors in developmental psychology (e.g., Mary Ainsworth, Albert Bandura, Diana Baumrind, Erik Erikson, Sigmund Freud, Carol Gilligan, Harry Harlow, Lawrence Kohlberg, Konrad Lorenz, Jean Piaget, Lev Vygotsky).

Textbook Reading: *Myers*, Unit 9

### **Unit X: Personality**

**AP students in psychology will be able to do the following:**

- Compare and contrast the major theories and approaches to explaining personality: psychoanalytic, humanist, cognitive, trait, social learning, and behavioral.
- Describe and compare research methods (e.g., case studies and surveys) that psychologists use to investigate personality
- Identify frequently used assessment strategies (e.g., the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory [MMPI], the Thematic Apperception Test [TAT]), and evaluate relative test quality based on reliability and validity of the instruments.
- Speculate how cultural context can facilitate or constrain personality development, especially as it relates to self-concept (e.g., collectivistic versus individualistic cultures).
- Identify key contributors to personality theory (e.g., Alfred Adler, Albert

Bandura, Paul Costa and Robert McCrae, Sigmund Freud, Carl Jung, Abraham Maslow, Carl Rogers).

Textbook Reading: *Myers*, Unit 10

### **Unit XI: Testing and Individual Differences**

**AP students in psychology will be able to do the following:**

- Define intelligence and list characteristics of how psychologists measure intelligence:
  - abstract versus verbal measures;
  - speed of processing.
- Discuss how culture influences the definition of intelligence.
- Compare and contrast historic and contemporary theories of intelligence (e.g., Charles Spearman, Howard Gardner, Robert Sternberg).
- Explain how psychologists design tests, including standardization strategies and other techniques to establish reliability and validity.
- Interpret the meaning of scores in terms of the normal curve.
- Describe relevant labels related to intelligence testing (e.g., gifted, cognitively disabled).
- Debate the appropriate testing practices, particularly in relation to culture-fair test uses.
- Identify key contributors in intelligence research and testing (e.g., Alfred Binet, Francis Galton, Howard Gardner, Charles Spearman, Robert Sternberg, Louis Terman, David Wechsler).

Textbook Reading: *Myers*, Unit 11

### **Unit XII: Abnormal Behavior**

**AP students in psychology will be able to do the following:**

- Describe contemporary and historical conceptions of what constitutes psychological disorders.
- Recognize the use of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM) published by the American Psychiatric Association as the primary reference for making diagnostic judgments.
- Discuss the major diagnostic categories, including anxiety and somatoform disorders, mood disorders, schizophrenia, organic disturbance, personality disorders, and dissociative disorders, and their corresponding symptoms.
- Evaluate the strengths and limitations of various approaches to explaining

psychological disorders: medical model, psychoanalytic, humanistic, cognitive, biological, and sociocultural.

- Identify the positive and negative consequences of diagnostic labels (e.g., the Rosenhan study).
- Discuss the intersection between psychology and the legal system (e.g., confidentiality, insanity defense).

Textbook Reading: *Myers*, Unit 12

### **Unit XIII: Treatment of Abnormal Behavior**

**AP students in psychology will be able to do the following:**

- Describe the central characteristics of psychotherapeutic intervention.
- Describe major treatment orientations used in therapy (e.g., behavioral, cognitive, humanistic) and how those orientations influence therapeutic planning.
- Compare and contrast different treatment formats (e.g., individual, group).
- Summarize effectiveness of specific treatments used to address specific problems.
- Discuss how cultural and ethnic context influence choice and success of treatment (e.g., factors that lead to premature termination of treatment).
- Describe prevention strategies that build resilience and promote competence.
- Identify major figures in psychological treatment (e.g., Aaron Beck, Albert Ellis, Sigmund Freud, Mary Cover Jones, Carl Rogers, B. F. Skinner, Joseph Wolpe).

Textbook Reading: *Myers*, Unit 13

### **Unit XIV: Social Psychology**

**AP students in psychology will be able to do the following:**

- Apply attribution theory to explain motives (e.g., fundamental attribution error, self-serving bias).
- Describe the structure and function of different kinds of group behavior (e.g., deindividuation, group polarization).
- Explain how individuals respond to expectations of others, including groupthink, conformity, and obedience to authority.
- Discuss attitudes and how they change (e.g., central route to persuasion).
- Predict the impact of the presence of others on individual behavior (e.g., bystander effect, social facilitation).

- Describe processes that contribute to differential treatment of group members (e.g., in-group/out-group dynamics, ethnocentrism, prejudice).
- Articulate the impact of social and cultural categories (e.g., gender, race, ethnicity) on self-concept and relations with others.
- Anticipate the impact of behavior on a self-fulfilling prophecy.
- Describe the variables that contribute to altruism, aggression, and attraction.
- Discuss attitude formation and change, including persuasion strategies and cognitive dissonance.
- Identify important figures in social psychology (e.g., Solomon Asch, Leon Festinger, Stanley Milgram, Philip Zimbardo).

Textbook Reading: *Myers*, Unit 14

**Review for AP Exam:**

Selected Activities (not limited to)

Students will be attending structured lunch study group meetings.

Students will be attending a Saturday or after school review session.

Students will be encouraged to use posted review materials on the class webpage.

Students will be using released AP Psychology practice tests – both multiple choice and essays.

Students will be working in small groups to complete review guides.

**Key Assignments/Projects include, but are not limited to:**

All students will be required to maintain an individual notebook. Notebooks will be organized by unit/topic. The notebook will contain class notes, book notes, handouts, journal articles, class exercises, homework, assessments, special projects, and other materials in the preparation for the AP Exam.

Students will regularly be given AP style questions relating to textbook reading, classroom discussions, and supplemental readings. These questions will be in either multiple choice form, essay form, or both.

Students will be assessed at the end of each unit with a test and/or project. Projects can include class presentations and research papers.

### **Naturalistic Observation**

Each student completes a 15-minute observation of a human participant in a naturalistic setting. The purpose is to familiarize students with this method, to improve their powers of observation, and to help them distinguish between subjective and objective records.

### **Experimental Design**

Students are given a hypothetical research problem and told to write a proposal for a controlled experiment to solve it. The exercise serves to improve their understanding of research methodology.

### **Behavior Modification**

Each student designs an application of operant conditioning principles to modify a human participant's behavior. After receiving approval, students attempt the modification over a three-week period. The project develops firsthand experience of Skinner's theory.

### **Applications of Developmental Psychology**

Students work in small groups to research a recent topic related to the unit on development (e.g., the benefits of Head Start programs, effectiveness of sex or drug education programs, effects of divorce on children) and then present their findings to the class in an oral report of 15 to 20 minutes. The project provides an introduction to library and online research tools in psychology as well as APA documentation.

### **Controlled Experiment**

Students research a topic of their choice, subject to approval. The final project must incorporate a review of literature, discussion of method, presentation and evaluation of results, and a conclusion.

### **Review of Literature**

Students research a topic of their choice. The final paper must develop an original thesis on a controversial topic.

### **Brain Superhero/Villain Project**

Students make up a superhero, villain, or sidekick for the following 18 areas of the human brain. Students design what that character would have as their special power and or special weakness if that part of their brain was 'super'.

### **Dream Journal/Analysis/Theory**

Students will keep a dream log, write a research paper analyzing their research, and come up with a dream theory based on their findings.

## **Writing Assignments:**

Students will write IDs for every Unit/exam (10 terms total for each unit/exam) that are designed to help them concisely define and apply key psychological terms as practice for the AP exam.

Students will write a free-response for every Unit that relates to our topic of study for that Unit. The format follows previously released AP examination FRQ.

Students will write take-home free-responses to previously released FRQ from released AP exams.

Students will write a 5-6 page research paper relating to the Dream Analysis Unit project.

Students will discuss and report in writing on current psychological issues in the media, as assigned.

\*\*\*This listing of assignments is always subject to change based on the needs of our class. Please stay posted on our current work using your materials and the class website.

## **REMEMBER:**

This class will be incredibly rewarding and useful, as long as you are willing to put in the required effort to make it worth your while! I am here to be your coach and guide this year; it is your responsibility to let me know when you need help or clarification.

I look forward to working with you this year!

Mrs. Krnich

## **CONTACT INFO:**

Location: Room 30 (all periods)

Email: [krnichj@mdusd.org](mailto:krnichj@mdusd.org)

Website: [www.mrskrnichnhs.weebly.com](http://www.mrskrnichnhs.weebly.com)

**OFFICE HOURS**

Thursdays 3:10-4:15 pm or by appointment as needed

**SIGNATURES:**

By signing, I state that I understand the requirements of this course as presented in the above syllabus:

STUDENT: \_\_\_\_\_

PARENT/GUARDIAN: \_\_\_\_\_