

# Psychology

Winthrop High School

Mr Dixon

Course Syllabus (2018-19)

Our objective this year is to gain a deeper understanding of human behaviors, beliefs, and learning. To get there, we get to look at some things that might challenge, disturb, or just plain amaze us. I'm organizing this class to avoid psychobabble, focus on active learning demonstrations ("demos"), and spend most of our time on the issues that directly affect your lives as students and young adults.

Note that our syllabus is APPROXIMATE. Flexibility and imagination are important tools in a psychologist's inventory, so expect a little "flex" in this schedule. Usually, you can count on having a unit exam on the final date listed for each unit.

Units:

1. **Methods:** an overview of psychological experimentation. I'm not asking you to become scientists; I'm asking you to understand some of the pitfalls and wrong turns that psychological research can take. We will focus on examples from Social Psychology. (05 – 20 SEP).
2. **Biopsychology:** this is the "nuts and bolts" of what you are and how you act. We'll look at the brain, its neurons, the nervous system, and the importance of the difference between genetic "predisposition" and "determinism." (21 SEP - 05 OCT).
3. **Sensation and Perception:** simply put, "sensation" involves your physical information-gathering systems. "Perception" talks about how you interpret the stimuli that result. This unit will open your eyes (literally) and help you understand your own body. (09 – 25 OCT).
4. **States of Consciousness:** here, we'll look briefly at sleep cycles, theories and disorders, dream theory, and the effects of drugs and alcohol. (26 OCT – 14 NOV)
5. **Cognition and Memory:** lots of active demonstration and mnemonic development will give you some idea of why you remember certain things, and how you can improve your memory. (15 - 28 NOV).
6. **Learning Theory:** a special study of classical and operant conditioning. You will learn how your environment "programs" you to do certain things, with an eye toward figuring out how you can overcome some of those inputs. (29 NOV – 12 DEC).
7. **Motivation and Emotion:** why do you do the things you do? Motivation will start to explain the answer. Aggression, sex, eating, and greed all play a part;

- when in conflict, your brain must determine which of these or several other factors affect your behavior. (13 – 21 DEC).
8. **Testing and Individual Differences:** how can we make sure that standardized tests, like the SAT and the MCAS, are fair and reliable? For that matter, how do we ensure that diagnostic tests are accurate? (02 – 11 JAN).
  9. **Review and Makeup** for the midterm (14 – 18 JAN).
  10. **MIDTERM:** Comprehensive. (Week of 21 JAN).
  11. **Developmental Psychology:** we never stop learning. You will accept, interpret, and act on stimuli from the day you're born until the day you die. You'll study childhood, adolescent, and lifelong development, and you'll dig into the famous "nature/nurture" question. Also, we'll study the roots of language and communication. (28 JAN – 15 FEB).
  12. **Personality Theory:** this unit overlaps with much of the rest of the course. We'll look at major schools of thought (psychoanalytic, behaviorist, archetypical, biological) in psychology. (25 FEB – 15 MAR).
  13. **Abnormal Psychology:** we look at psychological disorders, their causes, and their effects through case studies and demos. This will answer many questions about things like schizophrenia, multiple personality disorder, anxiety, and developmental disorders. Along the way, you'll ask, "What is *normal*?" (18 MAR – 12 APR).
  14. **Social Psychology:** this, in a nutshell, is the explanation for some of the things you've gone through in your life. It focuses on group pressure and group behavior, obedience and compliance, bias and prejudice, and organizational behavior. (22 APR – 16 MAY).<sup>+</sup>
  15. **Applied Psychology in Popular Media:** this is the culmination of the course for non-seniors. Juniors will work on their final project, and will also examine classic films for psychological content in direction and interpretation. (28 MAY – 14 JUN).
  16. **FINAL PROJECT AND EXAM.**

#### Major Projects and Films

<u>UNIT</u>	<u>ASSIGNMENT/FILM</u>
Methods	Research Study Layout
Sensation and Perception	Pattern Recognition in Islamic Art
States of Consciousness	<i>Trainspotting</i> (Socioeconomic case study)
	Drug Effects Group Presentation
Learning Theory	<i>Full Metal Jacket</i> (Military conditioning case study)
Abnormal Psychology	<i>Asylum</i> (HBO – Criminal case study)
	DSM-IV Diagnosis
Applied Psych	<i>Grosse Pointe Blank</i>
	<i>The Shining</i>
	TBA/TBD

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<sup>+</sup> Dates may vary based on last day for seniors/final exam scheduling.