Advanced Placement Psychology Course Syllabus

Course Title: Advanced Placement Psychology

Department: Social Studies Chelmsford High School


Course Description: This full-year, college level course, for seniors and juniors, is designed to introduce students to the biological and theoretical foundations of Psychology. The course will cover material ranging from the historical roots of this social science to the anatomical structure and function of the brain and sensory organs. Emphasis will be placed on investigative research, analysis, interpretation and writing skills. Students will explore the concepts that today’s psychologists are continuing to investigate. Students will be expected to take on the demands of a college level course, including additional reading assignments during the summer and throughout the school year. Students are required to purchase a copy of Lauren Slater’s Opening Skinner’s Box and read the book prior to the first class meeting in September. Test taking and writing skills will be addressed throughout the course to prepare students for the Advanced Placement Psychology Exam in May.

Essential Questions:
What is Psychology and what is not?
What are Psychology’s historical roots?
What are the Perspectives used in Psychology Today?
How do Psychologists develop new knowledge?
How do we make sense of data?
How are genes and behavior linked?
How does the body communicate internally?
How does the brain produce behavior and mental processes?
How does stimulation become sensation?
How are the senses alike and how are they different?
What is the relationship between sensation and perception?
How is consciousness related to other mental processes?
What cycles occur in our everyday consciousness?
What other forms can consciousness take?
What sort of learning does classical conditioning explain?
How do we learn new behaviors through operant conditioning?
How does cognitive psychology explain learning?
What is memory?
How do we form memories?
How do we retrieve memories?
Why does memory sometimes fail us?
How do children acquire language?
What are the components of thought?
What abilities do good thinkers assess?
What do our emotions do for us?
Where do our emotions come from?
How much control do we have over our emotions?
Motivation: What makes us act as we do?
How are achievement, hunger, and sex alike? Different?
How and why do we experience stress?
How do psychologists explain development?
What capabilities does the child possess?
What are the developmental tasks of infancy and childhood?
What changes mark the transition of adolescence?
What developmental challenges do adults face?
What forces shape our personalities?
What persistent patterns are found in personality?
What “theories” do people use to understand each other?
How do we measure individual differences?
How is intelligence measured?
What are the components of intelligence?
How do psychologists explain IQ differences among groups?
What is a psychological disorder?
How are psychological disorders classified?
What are the consequences of labeling people?
What is therapy?
How do psychologists treat psychological disorders?
How is the biomedical approach used to treat psychological disorders?
How does the social situation affect our behavior?
What are the roots of violence and terrorism?


Course Objectives: (what students will know and be able to do)

1. Develop questions that guide inquiry and research in class work
2. Analysis of effective argument and critical thinking from scientific research
3. Express oneself clearly and effectively through writing and speaking
4. Critical analysis of statistics and graphic representations of data

Common Goals:

Thinking and Communicating
1) ☒Read information critically to develop understanding of concepts, topics and issues.
2) ☒Write clearly, factually, persuasively and creatively in Standard English.
3) ☒Speak clearly, factually, persuasively and creatively in Standard English.
4) ☒Use computers and other technologies to obtain, organize and communicate information and to solve problems.
5) ☒Conduct research to interpret issues or solve complex problems using a variety of data and information sources.
Gain and Apply Knowledge in and across the Disciplines
6) Gain and Apply Knowledge in:
   a) Literature and Language
   b) Mathematics
   c) Science and Technology
   d) Social Studies, History and Geography
   e) Visual and Performing Arts
   f) Health and Physical Education

Work and Contribute
7) Demonstrate personal responsibility for planning one’s future academic and career options.
8) Participate in a school or community service activity.
9) Develop informed opinions about current economic, environmental, political and social issues affecting Massachusetts, the United States and the world and understand how citizens can participate in the political and legal system to affect improvements in these areas.

Concepts and Skills from the National Standards for Psychology
I. Methods Domain
   A. Introduction and Research Methods
II. Biopsychological Domain
   A. Biological Bases of Behavior
   B. Sensation and Perception
   C. Motivation and Emotion
   D. Stress, Coping, and Health
III. Developmental Domain
   A. Life Span Development
   B. Personality and Assessment
IV. Cognitive Domain
   A. Learning
   B. Memory
   C. Thinking and Language
   D. States of Consciousness
   E. Individual Differences
V. Variations in Individual and Group Behavior Domain
   A. Psychological Disorders
   B. Treatment of Psychological Disorders
   C. Social and Cultural Dimensions of Behavior

Additional Learning Skills Beyond the Curriculum Framework

Instructional practices support the achievement of 21st C. Learning Expectations by:
(check those that apply to the Course)

_____ personalizing instruction
___x__ engaging students in cross disciplinary learning
___x___ engaging students as active and self-directed learners
___x___ emphasizing inquiry, problem solving, and higher order thinking
___x___ applying knowledge and skills in authentic tasks
___x___ engaging students in self-assessment and reflection
___x___ integrating technology

Content: National Standards for Psychology

Content Standards Unit 1 Historical Roots and Methods of Psychology
After concluding this unit, students understand:
IA-1. Contemporary perspectives used by psychologists to understand behavior and mental processes in context
IA-2. Major subfields and career opportunities that comprise psychology
IA-3. Research strategies used by psychologists to explore behavior and mental processes
IA-4. Purpose and basic concepts of statistics
IA-5. Ethical issues in research with human and other animals that are important to psychologists
IA-6. Development of psychology as an empirical science

Content Standards Unit 2 Biological Basis of Behavior
After concluding this unit, students understand:
IIA-1. Structure and function of the neuron
IIA-2. Organization of the nervous system
IIA-3. Hierarchical organization of the structure and function of the brain
IIA-4. Technologies and clinical methods for studying the brain
IIA-5. Structure and function of the endocrine system
IIA-6. How heredity interacts with the environment to influence behavior
IIA-7. How psychological mechanisms are influenced by evolution

Content Standards Unit 3 Sensation and Perception
After concluding this unit, students understand:
IIB-1. Basic concepts explaining the capabilities and limitations of sensory processes
IIB-2. Interaction of the person and the environment in determining perception
IIB-3. Nature of attention

Content Standards Unit 4 States of Consciousness
After concluding this unit, students understand:
IVD-1. Nature of consciousness
IVD-2. Characteristics of sleep and theories that explain why we sleep
IVD-3. Theories used to explain and interpret dreams
IVD-4. Basic phenomena and uses of hypnosis
IVD-5. Categories of psychoactive drugs and their effects

Content Standards Unit 5 Learning
After concluding this unit, students understand:
IVA-1. Characteristics of learning
IVA-2. Principles of classical conditioning
IVA-3. Principles of operant conditioning
IVA-4. Components of cognitive learning
IVA-5. Roles of biology and culture in determining learning

**Content Standards Unit 6 Cognition, Language and Memory**
After concluding this unit, students understand:
IVB-1. Encoding, or getting information into memory
IVB-2. Sensory, working or short-term, and long-term memory systems
IVB-3. Retrieval, or getting information out of memory
IVB-4. Biological bases of memory
IVB-5. Methods for improving memory
IVB-6. Memory constructions
IVC-1. Basic elements comprising thought
IVC-2. Strategies and obstacles involved in problem solving and decision-making
IVC-3. Structural features of language
IVC-4. Theories and developmental stages of language acquisition
IVC-5. Links between thinking and language

**Content Standards Unit 8 Motivation and Emotion**
After concluding this unit, students understand:
IIC-1. Motivational concepts
IIC-2. The role of biology and learning in motivation and emotion
IIC-3. Major theories of motivation
IIC-4. Interaction of biological and cultural factors in emotions and motivations
IIC-5. Role of values and expectancies in determining choice and strength of motivation
IIC-6. Physiological, affective, cognitive, and behavioral aspects of emotions and the interactions among these aspects
IIC-7. Effects of motivation and emotion on perception, cognition, and behavior
*Additionally during this unit the following information is covered:*
IID-1. Sources of stress
IID-2. Physiological reactions to stress
IID-3. Psychological reactions to stress
IID-4. Cognitive and behavioral strategies for dealing with stress and promoting health

**Content Standards Unit 9 Development**
After concluding this unit, students understand:
IIIA-1. Development as a lifelong process
IIIA-2. Research techniques used to gather data on the developmental process
IIIA-3. Theories of development
IIIA-4. Issues surrounding the developmental process (nature/nurture, continuity/discontinuity, stability/instability, critical periods)

**Content Standards Unit 10 Personality and Assessment**
IIB-1. How to distinguish between personality and personality constructs
IIB-2. Personality approaches and theories
IIB-3. Assessment tools used in personality
IVE-1. Concepts related to measurement of individual differences
IVE-2. Influence and interaction of heredity and environment on individual differences
IVE-3. Nature of intelligence
IVE-4. Nature of intelligence testing

**Content Standards Unit 11 Mental Disorders**
After concluding this unit, students understand:
VA-1. Characteristics and origins of abnormal behavior
VA-2. Methods used in exploring abnormal behavior
VA-3. Major categories of abnormal behavior
VA-4. Impact of mental disorders

**Content Standards Unit 12 Treatment of Mental Disorders**
After concluding this unit, students understand:
VB-1. Prominent methods used to treat individuals with disorders
VB-2. Types of practitioners who implement treatment
VB-3. Legal and ethical challenges involved in delivery of treatment

**Content Standards Unit 13 Social Psychology**
After concluding this unit, students understand:
VC-1. Social judgment and attitudes
VC-2. Social and cultural categories
VC-3. Social influence and relationships

**Major Evaluation Strategies:**

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