

**Social Studies Standards**

**Advanced Placement Psychology**

**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, treatment of abnormal behavior and social psychology. Throughout the course, students will employ psychological research methods, including ethical considerations, as they use the scientific method, analyze bias, evaluate claims and evidence, and effectively communicate ideas. Students will have the option of taking the Advanced Placement test in May. College credit can be earned with a score of 4, 5, or 6.

**Unit 1: History and Approaches (1 weeks)**

**Description:** In this unit, students will explore the potential benefits from studying psychology, describe the work that psychologists do and the research methods they use in their work, and describe how the work of pioneers in the field influence contemporary psychologists.

**Standards**

1. The student will define psychology as a discipline and identify its goals as a science.
2. The student will describe the emergence of psychology as a scientific discipline.
3. The student will describe perspectives employed to understand behavior and mental processes.
4. The student will explain how psychology evolved as a scientific discipline.
5. The student will discuss the value of both basic and applied psychological research with human and non-human animals.
6. The student will describe the major subfields of psychology.
7. The student will identify the important role psychology plays in benefiting society and improving people’s lives.

**Unit 2: Research Methods (3 Weeks)**

**Description:** In this unit, students will describe and use research methods and measurements used to study behavior and mental processes 

**Standards**

1. Students will define psychology as a discipline and identify its goals as a science.
2. Students will describe the emergence of psychology as a scientific discipline.
3. Students will describe perspectives employed to understand behavior and mental processes.
4. Students will explain how psychology evolved as a scientific discipline.
5. Students will describe the scientific method and its role in psychology.
6. Students will describe and compare a variety of quantitative (e.g., surveys, correlations, experiments) and qualitative (e.g., interviews, narratives, focus groups) research methods.
7. Students will define systematic procedures used to improve the validity of research findings, such as external validity.
8. Students will discuss how and why psychologists use non-human animals in research.
9. Students will identify ethical standards psychologists must address regarding research with human participants.
10. Students will identify ethical guidelines psychologists must address regarding research with non-human animals (E.12.9).
11. Students will define descriptive statistics and explain how they are used by psychological scientists.
12. Students will define forms of qualitative data and explain how they are used by psychological scientists.
13. Students will define correlation coefficients and explain their appropriate interpretation.
14. Students will interpret graphical representations of data as used in both quantitative and qualitative methods (E.12.14).
15. Students will explain other statistical concepts, such as statistical significance and effect size.
16. Students will explain how validity and reliability of observations and measurements relate to data analysis.

**Unit 3: Biological Bases of Behavior (4 weeks)**

**Description:** In this unit, students will describe and understand the structure and function of the nervous system in human and non-human animals, the structure and function of the brain, the structure and function of endocrine system, the interaction between biological factors and experience, and the methods and issues related to biological advances.

**Standards**

1. Students will identify the major divisions and subdivisions of the human nervous system.
2. Students will identify the parts of the neuron and describe the basic process of neural transmission.
3. Students will differentiate between the structures and functions of the various parts of the central nervous system.
4. Students will describe lateralization of brain functions (E.12.1).
5. Students will discuss the mechanisms of, and the importance of, plasticity of the nervous system.
6. Students will describe how the endocrine glands are linked to the nervous system.
7. Students will describe the effects of hormones on behavior and mental processes.
8. Students will describe hormone effects on the immune system.
9. Students will describe concepts in genetic transmission.
10. Students will describe the interactive effects of heredity and environment.
11. Students will explain how evolved tendencies influence behavior.
12. Students will identify tools used to study the nervous system.
13. Students will describe advances made in neuroscience.
14. Students will discuss issues related to scientific advances in neuroscience and genetics.

**Unit 4: Sensation and Perception (2 weeks)**

**Description:** In this unit, students will understand and describe the processes of sensation and perception, explore the capabilities and limitations of sensory processes, and examine the interaction of the person and the environment in determining perception.

**Standards**

1. Students will discuss processes of sensation and perception and how they interact.
2. Students will explain the concepts of threshold and adaptation.
3. Students will list forms of physical energy for which humans and non-human animals do and do not have sensory receptors.
4. Students will describe the visual sensory system (E.12.1).
5. Students will describe the auditory sensory system (E.12.1).
6. Students will describe other sensory systems, such as olfaction, gustation, and somesthesis (e.g., skin senses, kinesthesis, and vestibular sense) (E.12.1).
7. Students will explain Gestalt principles of perception.
8. Students will describe binocular and monocular depth cues.
9. Students will describe the importance of perceptual constancies.
10. Students will describe perceptual illusions.
11. Students will describe the nature of attention.
12. Students will explain how experiences and expectations influence perception.

**Unit 5: States of Consciousness (1 week)**

**Description:** In this unit, students will describe the relationship between conscious and unconscious processes, the characteristics of sleep and theories that explain why we sleep and dream, enumerate the categories of psychoactive drugs and their effects, describe other states of consciousness, describe the characteristics of sleep and theories that explain why we sleep and dream, and describe the categories of psychoactive drugs and their effects.

**Standards**

1. Students will identify states of consciousness (E.12.1).
2. Students will distinguish between processing which is conscious (i.e., explicit) and other processing which happens without conscious awareness (i.e., implicit).
3. Students will describe the circadian rhythm and its relation to sleep (E.12.1).
4. Students will describe the sleep cycle.
5. Students will compare theories about the functions of sleep.
6. Students will describe types of sleep disorders.
7. Students will compare theories about the functions of dreams.
8. Students will characterize the major categories of psychoactive drugs and their effects (E.12.1).
9. Students will describe how psychoactive drugs act at the synaptic level.
10. Students will evaluate the biological and psychological effects of psychoactive drugs (E.12.1) (E.12.16).
11. Students will explain how culture and expectations influence the use and experience of drugs (E.12.6).
12. Students will describe meditation and relaxation and their effects.
13. Students will describe hypnosis and controversies surrounding its nature and use (E.12.14).
14. Students will describe flow states.

**Unit 6: Learning (3 weeks)**

**Description:** In this unit, students will describe and apply the processes of classical and operant conditioning and explain the roles that observation and cognitive factors play in learning.

**Standards**

1. Students will describe the principles of classical conditioning.
2. Students will describe clinical and experimental examples of classical conditioning.
3. Students will apply classical conditioning to everyday life.
4. Students will describe the Law of Effect.
5. Students will describe the principles of operant conditioning.
6. Students will describe clinical and experimental examples of operant conditioning.
7. Students will apply operant conditioning to everyday life.
8. Students will describe the principles of observational and cognitive learning (E.12.1).
9. Students will apply observational and cognitive learning to everyday life (E.12.2).

**Unit 7: Cognition (3 weeks)**

**Description:** In this unit, students will explain how memories are encoded, stored and retrieved. They will describe why we forget and practice techniques for improving memory. Students will understand and explain the structural features of language, describe the theories and developmental stages of language acquisition, and explain the role that various brain structures play in language acquisition, development and use. Students will describe the basic elements comprising thought, and the obstacles related to thought as well as ways to avoid said obstacles in solving problems and making decisions.

**Standards**

1. Students will identify factors that influence encoding.
2. Students will characterize the difference between shallow (surface) and deep (elaborate) processing.
3. Students will discuss strategies for improving the encoding of memory.
4. Students will describe the differences between working memory and long-term memory.
5. Students will identify and explain biological processes related to how memory is stored (E.12.1).
6. Students will discuss types of memory and memory disorders (e.g., amnesias, dementias) (E.12.1) (E.12.9).
7. Students will discuss strategies for improving the storage of memories.
8. Students will analyze the importance of retrieval cues in memory.
9. Students will explain the role that interference plays in retrieval.
10. Students will discuss the factors influencing how memories are retrieved (E.12.1).
11. Students will explain how memories can be malleable.
12. Students will discuss strategies for improving the retrieval of memories.
13. Students will describe the structure and function of language.
14. Students will discuss the relationship between language and thought (E.12.2).
15. Students will explain the process of language acquisition (E.12.1).
16. Students will discuss how acquisition of a second language can affect language development and possibly other cognitive processes.
17. Students will evaluate the theories of language acquisition.
18. Students will identify the brain structures associated with language (E.12.1).
19. Students will discuss how damage to the brain may affect language (E.12.1).
20. Students will define cognitive processes involved in understanding information (E.12.1).
21. Students will define processes involved in problem solving and decision making.
22. Students will discuss non-human problem-solving abilities.
23. Students will describe obstacles to problem solving.
24. Students will describe obstacles to decision making.
25. Students will describe obstacles to making good judgments.

**Unit 8: Motivation, Emotion and Stress (2 weeks)**

**Description:** In this unit, students will explain various perspectives on motivation and emotion, describe the domains of motivated behavior in humans and non-human animals as well as the domains of emotional behavior.

**Standards**

1. Students will explain biologically based theories of motivation (E.12.1).
2. Students will explain cognitively based theories of motivation.
3. Students will explain humanistic theories of motivation (E.12.2).
4. Students will explain the role of culture in human motivation (E.12.2).
5. Students will discuss eating behavior (E.12.1).
6. Students will discuss achievement motivation (E.12.2).
7. Students will discuss other ways in which humans and non-human animals are motivated.
8. Students will explain the biological and cognitive components of emotion (E.12.1).
9. Students will discuss psychological research on basic human emotions.
10. Students will differentiate among theories of emotional experience.
11. Students will explain how biological factors influence emotional interpretation and expression (E.12.1).
12. Students will explain how culture and gender influence emotional interpretation and expression (E.12.2).
13. Students will explain how other environmental factors influence emotional interpretation and expression.
14. Students will identify biological and environmental influences on the expression and experience of negative emotions, such as fear (E.12.1) (E.12.2).
15. Students will identify biological and environmental influences on the expression and experience of positive emotions, such as happiness (E.12.1) (E.12.2).

**Unit 9: Developmental Psychology (4 weeks)**

**Description:** In this unit, students will describe the methods and issues in life span development, explore the theories of life span development, describe prenatal development and the newborn, and describe physical, emotional and social development in infancy, childhood, adolescence and adulthood.

**Standards**

1. Students will explain the interaction of environmental and biological factors in development, including the role of the brain in all aspects of development (E.12.1).
2. Students will explain issues of continuity/discontinuity and stability/change.
3. Students will distinguish methods used to study development.
4. Students will describe the role of sensitive and critical periods in development.
5. Students will discuss issues related to the end of life.
6. Students will discuss theories of cognitive development.
7. Students will discuss theories of moral development.
8. Students will discuss theories of social development.
9. Students will describe physical development from conception through birth and identify influences on prenatal development (E.12.1).
10. Students will describe newborns’ reflexes, temperament, and abilities.
11. Students will describe physical and motor development.
12. Students will describe how infant perceptual abilities and intelligence develop (E.12.1).
13. Students will describe the development of attachment and the role of the caregiver. Students will describe the development of communication and language. Students will describe physical and motor development.
14. Students will describe how memory and thinking ability develops (E.12.1).
15. Students will describe social, cultural, and emotional development through childhood.
16. Students will identify major physical changes.
17. Students will describe the development of reasoning and morality. Students will describe identity formation.
18. Students will discuss the role of family and peers in adolescent development.
19. Students will identify major physical changes associated with adulthood and aging.
20. Students will describe cognitive changes in adulthood and aging.
21. Students will discuss social, cultural, and emotional issues in aging.

**Unit 10: Personality (2 weeks)**

**Description:** In this unit, students will describe perspectives on personality, explain how personality is assessed, and discuss issues in personality.

**Standards**

1. Students will evaluate psychodynamic theories.
2. Students will evaluate trait theories.
3. Students will evaluate humanistic theories.
4. Students will evaluate social-cognitive theories.
5. Students will differentiate personality assessment techniques.
6. Students will discuss the reliability and validity of personality assessment techniques.
7. Students will discuss biological and situational influences.
8. Students will discuss stability and change.
9. Students will discuss connections to health and work.
10. Students will discuss self-concept.
11. Students will analyze how individualistic and collectivistic cultural perspectives relate to personality (E.12.6).

**Unit 11: Testing and Individual Differences (2 weeks)**

**Description:** In this unit, students will describe the leading perspectives on intelligence, explain how intelligence is assessed and issues in intelligence.

**Standards**

1. Students will discuss intelligence as a general factor.
2. Students will discuss alternative conceptualizations of intelligence (E.12.2).
3. Students will describe the extremes of intelligence.
4. Students will discuss the history of intelligence testing, including historical use and misuse in the context of fairness.
5. Students will identify current methods of assessing human abilities (E.12.2).
6. Students will identify measures of and data on reliability and validity for intelligence test scores.
7. Students will discuss issues related to the consequences of intelligence testing.
8. Students will discuss the influences of biological, cultural, and environmental factors on intelligence (E.12.1).

**Unit 12: Abnormal Behavior (3 weeks)**

**Description:** In this unit, students will describe the various perspectives on abnormal behavior and categorize psychological disorders.

**Standards**

1. Students will define psychologically abnormal behavior.
2. Students will describe historical and cross-cultural views of abnormality (E.12.2) (E.12.3).
3. Students will describe major models of abnormality (E.12.1) (E.12.16).
4. Students will discuss how stigma relates to abnormal behavior (E.12.3).
5. Students will discuss the impact of psychological disorders on the individual, family, and society.
6. Students will describe the classification of psychological disorders.
7. Students will discuss the challenges associated with diagnosis.
8. Students will describe symptoms and causes of major categories of psychological disorders (including schizophrenic, mood, anxiety, and personality disorders) (E.12.16).
9. Students will evaluate how different factors influence an individual’s experience of psychological disorders (E.12.1) (E.12.16).
10. Students will discuss the impact of psychological disorders on the individual, family, and society (E.12.9).

**Unit 13: Social Psychology (3 weeks)**

**Description:** In this unit, students will describe the factors that influence social cognition and explain how membership in a group and social norms influence individual behavior.

**Standards**

1. Students will describe attribution explanations of behavior.
2. Students will describe the relationship between attitudes (implicit and explicit) and behavior (E.12.3).
3. Students will identify persuasive methods used to change attitudes.
4. Students will describe the power of the situation.
5. Students will describe effects of others’ presence on individuals’ behavior (E.12.5) (E.12.6).
6. Students will describe how group dynamics influence behavior (E.12.6) (E.12.15).
7. Students will discuss how an individual influences group behavior (E.12.5) (E.12.6) (E.12.15).
8. Students will discuss the nature and effects of stereotyping, prejudice, and discrimination.
9. Students will describe determinants of prosocial behavior (E.12.2).
10. Students will discuss influences upon aggression and conflict.
11. Students will discuss factors influencing attraction and relationships (E.12.2) (E.12.3).