# Personal Psychology 1: The Road To Self-Discovery Course Syllabus

## What you will learn in this course

## PERSONAL PSYCHOLOGY: THE ROAD TO SELF-DISCOVERY

Self-knowledge is the key to self-improvement! Psychology is a subject that can be applied to everyday life. New research and ideas will change the way we view ourselves and each other. This course offers exciting online psychology experiments about our own behavior and how we behave with other people.

## Unit 1: Personal Psychology Begins

The human psyche is fascinating and tremendously complex. Why is it that some people are naturally shy, while others are more outspoken? Why do we sometimes say things "without thinking?" Why do people react the way they do in certain situations? All of these questions (and many more) can be answered through a scientific study of the human mind known as psychology. By studying the details of this compelling field, we give ourselves the tools to better understand our own feelings, reactions, and motivations. And, as a result, we are able to govern ourselves more wisely and develop healthier mental habits. All of this knowledge leads to improved learning, increased engagement, and healthier personal relationships. Psychology is the key to illuminating the shadows of the human mind, and the best way to learn who you really are. Are you ready?

### What will you learn in this unit?

- Describe the role of psychologists and how they differ from psychiatrists
- Explain the importance of psychology, including its history
- Compare six current psychological perspectives
- Understand the origins and subfields of psychology

## Unit 2: Research and Ethics in Psychology

While the field of psychology seeks to help people through therapy, a large part of its value comes from the theories developed through research and data collection. Using various methodologies, psychologists increase their knowledge about human behavior, consciousness, and emotions by examining case studies and conducting trials. Of course, there are pros and cons to all psychological approaches. The most important thing to remember is how psychology can focus on the scientific process as a way to illuminate the motivations behind human behavior and cognition. In this way, psychology can offer new ways to tackle happiness and understanding to those who suffer from mental illness.

### What will you learn in this unit?

- State reasons psychologists do research, and list the steps of the scientific method
- Define theory and hypothesis, and explain how the two concepts are related
- Explain how researchers undertake surveys and distinguish between correlation and cause and effect, as well as understand how researchers do experiments, and state the pros and cons of experimental studies
- Describe naturalistic studies, and identify their advantages and drawbacks
- Describe case studies, and list their uses and limitations
- State how researchers analyze data, test hypotheses, and communicate results and identify ethical guidelines for the conduct of psychological research

## Unit 3: Infancy and Childhood

Development of the human psyche is a complex and compelling process with many different phases. From the moment we are born, our minds are continually expanding and making us stronger. This happens in many ways—through the people who care for us and the places we go—but it also follows an innate blueprint of human development that has been studied extensively for a long time. Understanding these processes and how they contribute to our intelligence, compassion, and overall cognition can help us understand both ourselves and the larger world more clearly.

**What will you learn in this unit?**

- Describe longitudinal and cross-sectional studies, and explain the nature-nurture debate
- Outline physical developments that occur during the prenatal period, infancy, and childhood
- Identify Piaget's stages of cognitive development, explain assimilation and accommodation, and describe how infants and children develop language
- List Erickson's stages of psychosocial development, and explain the roles of temperament and parenting style in emotional and social development
- Understand Kohlberg's stages of moral reasoning, and explain why Kohlberg's theory may have gender and cultural biases

## Unit 4: Adolescence

Adolescence is the period of life between childhood and adulthood. It can be a time of "storm and stress" for some, but not necessarily for all young people. During adolescence, teens go through puberty and develop the physical ability to reproduce. They also experience changes in cognitive skills and moral reasoning, often related to an emerging sense of identity and independence. Many teens adopt risk behaviors that jeopardize their health. Depression and eating disorders are relatively common in teens as well, and suicide is the third-leading cause of teen deaths. Several factors—such as having caring relationships with adults and a sense of purpose in life—promote high self-esteem and resilience in adolescents. These traits, in turn, help protect adolescents from engaging in risk behaviors and developing mental health problems.

**What will you learn in this unit?**

- Define adolescence, and describe how different experts view this stage of life; as well as the physical changes that occur and the possible consequences of early or late maturation
- Identify cognitive and moral developments that typically occur during adolescence
- Define identity, and describe Marcia's states of identity formation
- Explain how social relationships normally change during adolescence, and describe peer pressure
- Identify risk behaviors that many adolescents adopt, and explain how adolescents may learn behaviors from other teens
- Name mental health problems that are relatively common in adolescents and identify warning signs of suicide; list protective factors for adolescents and explain how the factors relate to self-esteem and resilience

## Personal Psychology Midterm Exam

- Review information acquired and mastered from this course up to this point.
- Take a course exam based on material from the first four units in this course (Note: You will be able to open this exam only one time.)

## Unit 5: Adulthood and Aging

**Adulthood** is the period of life between adolescence and death. Most psychologists think that psychological development continues during adulthood. For example, Erik Erikson divided adulthood into three stages, each with a different psychosocial task that people must accomplish to become emotionally healthy and well-adjusted. During young adulthood (ages 19–39), people are physically in the prime of their lives. Young adults face new challenges, such as finishing their schooling and starting full-time work. Many young adults also marry. During middle adulthood (ages 40–65), people start to show some declines in physical abilities, and women lose the ability to have children. Some middle adults have a hard time accepting these changes. During late adulthood (above age 65), people continue to decline in physical abilities and start to decline in cognitive abilities. Facing their own death or the death of a loved one is difficult for virtually everyone. Most people go through five stages of grief as they come to accept these losses.

**What will you learn in this unit?**

- Define adulthood, and outline psychological theories of adult development.
- Identify life challenges and physical changes of young adulthood, and list strategies for making young adulthood the best it can be.
- State how people choose spouses, why couples divorce, and how divorce affects couples and their children.
- Identify physical changes and life challenges of middle adulthood, and list strategies to make middle age a great age.
- Describe physical and cognitive changes of late adulthood, and list strategies for making late adulthood healthy and happy.
- Explain how people come to accept their own death or the death of a loved one.

## Unit 6: Brain, Body, and Behavior

The nervous system is the body's control system. It receives and processes information and "tells" the body how to respond. Neurons are the cells of the nervous system. They rapidly send and receive messages called nerve impulses. The brain is the most important organ of the nervous system. It is composed of three major parts: the cerebrum, cerebellum, and brain stem. Each part of the brain has different functions. Scientists learn about the functions of the brain from patients that have had brain injuries or brain surgery, and from brain images such as PET scans. The endocrine system is a communication system like the nervous system. It uses chemical messengers called hormones to communicate with other organs and regulate body functions. The endocrine system is controlled by the hypothalamus, which is part of the brain. The nervous and endocrine systems are the biological basis of psychological traits such as intelligence. Psychologists study twins and adopted children to learn about the influence of heredity and environment on psychological traits.

**What will you learn in this unit?**

- Distinguish between the central and peripheral nervous systems, and identify their functions
- Describe the structure of neurons, and explain how neurons carry nerve impulses
- Distinguish between the parts of the brain, and identify their functions
- Explain how scientists study the structure and function of the brain
- Understand the endocrine system, and explain how the hypothalamus provides a link between the nervous and endocrine systems
- Explain how psychologists study the influences of heredity and environment on psychological traits

## Unit 7: Sensation and Perception

Sensation is the process of taking in information with the five senses of vision, hearing, taste, smell, and touch. Perception is the process of interpreting this sensory information and is an additional step our brain takes to understand the information we receive from the world. It's very different from mere sensation. For example, our eyes sense the world as two-dimensional images, but we perceive the world in three dimensions. Optical illusions show that we sometimes perceive sensations incorrectly. We may see things that are not really there. Subliminal messages show that we sometimes fail to perceive sensations entirely. We may not see things that are really there. Many people believe in extrasensory perception, or the ability to perceive with a sixth, unknown sense. However, extrasensory perception has never been proven to exist.

**What will you learn in this unit?**

- Describe how humans sense stimuli
- Explain how perception differs from sensation
- Outline aspects of visual perception, such as depth perception
- Describe the nature of subliminal messages
- Define extrasensory perception

## Unit 8: States of Consciousness

A state of consciousness is the type of mental condition a person is experiencing at a given time. States of consciousness include states of intense concentration and daydreams. Sleep is also a state of consciousness. Sleep occurs in phases that repeat throughout the night. Dreams occur during the phase of sleep called rapid eye movement (REM) sleep. Both sleep and dreams are needed for normal functioning. States of consciousness can be intentionally altered, or changed, through hypnotism, meditation, or biofeedback. Psychoactive drugs, such as alcohol and marijuana, also alter states of consciousness.

**What will you learn in this unit?**

- Define consciousness and altered states of consciousness
- Describe the sleep cycle, and explain why humans need sleep
- State the nature of dreams, and list possible reasons that people dream
- Describe hypnosis, meditation, and biofeedback
- Identify categories of psychoactive drugs, and describe their effects

## Personal Psychology Final Exam

- Review information acquired and mastered from this course up to this point.
- Take a course exam based on material from units five to eight in this course – the last four units. (Note: You will be able to open this exam only one time.)