

Personality Psychology

Psych 225 – Fall 2004

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Class time: T, Th 9:30 – 10:45 am

Class room: 123 Clough Hall

CRN: 10525

Office Hours:

Mondays 1:00-3:00 pm, Wednesdays 9:00 - 10:00 am, plus other times by appointment. As a general rule, the use of office hours and appointments is preferred over emails for significant communication needs.

Course Description:

This course is designed to introduce students to personality theory, research, and methodologies. Throughout the course of the semester students will explore various aspects of personality through lecture, case discussions, research reviews, theory debates, and exposure to personality assessment instruments. Class discussion/debate and student presentations are heavily emphasized in this course.

Primary Course Objectives:

- (1) To expose students to major theoretical approaches to explaining personality. (IDEA: learning fundamental principles, generalizations, or theories)
- (2) To aid the development of critical thinking skills, specifically in relation to the evaluation of the strengths and limitations associated with different theoretical approaches and their relevant research. (IDEA: learning to critically evaluate ideas, arguments, and points of view)
- (3) To aid the development of application skills, especially the ability to integrate theoretical and experiential learning in order to apply the concepts to real-life issues and examples. (IDEA: learning to apply course material)

Auxiliary Course Objectives:

- (4) To increase students awareness and understanding of current personality research
- (5) To provide opportunities to develop, practice, and/or hone important academic and personal skills via class participation and assignments. This course emphasizes oral communication skills.

Required Readings and Materials:

- (1) Burger, J. M. (2004). Personality (6th ed.). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth/Thompson Learning.
- (2) Ashcraft, D. (2003). Personality Theories Workbook (2nd ed.). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth/Thompson Learning.
- (3) Additional readings as assigned.

Supplemental Text:

- (1) American Psychological Association. (2001). Publication manual of the American Psychological Association (5th ed.). Washington, DC: Author. [Info also available at <http://www.lib.usm.edu/~instruct/guides/apa.html>]

Additional Expectations & Tips for Success:

- (1) Keep up with assigned readings (text & case readings) and come to class prepared to ask questions or raise issues on the readings.
- (2) Complete assigned exercises and assessment instruments in a timely fashion.
- (3) Have an open frame of mind and be willing to take risks via classroom discussions (i.e., ask questions, venture a different thought, etc.) and other participation.
- (4) Attend all classes and participate in classroom discussions/activities. (Excused absences need to be approved by the professor prior to the absence, excepting extreme unforeseen emergency. Unexcused absences will affect your grade.)
- (5) Show respect for one another AND OUR CASE SUBJECTS!!!
- (6) Show common courtesy in class, i.e. be on time, turn cellphones off, limit bathroom breaks, etc.
- (7) Abide by the Honor Code standards as outlined in the Student Handbook.
- (8) Double check assignment guidelines BEFORE you turn in an assignment... many points are lost due to lack of attention to the guidelines.
- (9) Brush up on APA style so as not to lose unnecessary points on written assignments.
- (10) Use office hours & appointments to consult with professor about presentations and assignments... students who do perform significantly better.

Tentative Course Outline:

| DATE (assignments due) | TOPIC | READING(S) |
|---|--|----------------------------|
| Aug. 26, 31 | Introduction, Overview, Planning "Normal" vs. Disordered Personality | Ch. 1 |
| Sep. 2, 7 | Review: Research Methods | Ch. 2 |
| Sep. 9 Sep. 14 Sep. 16 | Psychoanalytic (Freudian) Theory -- Debating the Pros/Cons/Etc. -- Case Analyses | Ch. 3, 4 Cases 1, 2 |
| Sep. 21 Sep. 23 Sep. 28, 30 | Psychoanalytic (Neo-Freudian) Theory -- Debating the Pros/Cons/Etc. -- Case Analyses (# 3-14 applicable) | Ch. 5, 6 Cases TBA |
| Oct. 5 Oct. 7 (Exam 1 due) Oct. 12 | Trait based Theory -- Debating the Pros/Cons/Etc. -- Case Analyses | Ch. 7, 8 Cases 25, 26 |
| Oct. 14 (EC #1 due) **Oct. 15-20** Oct. 19 Oct. 21 | Biologically based Theory ** Fall recess ** -- Debating the Pros/Cons/Etc. -- Case Analyses | Ch. 9, 10 Cases 27,28 |
| Oct. 26 | Theory Comparison Debate #1 | Cases TBA |
| Oct. 28 Nov. 2 Nov. 4 | Humanistic Theory -- Debating the Pros/Cons/Etc. -- Case Analyses (#15-18 applicable) | Ch. 11, 12 Cases TBA |
| Nov. 9 Nov. 11 (Exam 2 due) Nov. 16 | Behavioral & Social Learning Theory -- Debating the Pros/Cons/Etc. -- Case Analyses (#21-24 applicable) | Ch. 13, 14 Cases TBA |
| Nov. 18 | Activity: "Life As a Blackman" the Game | |
| Nov. 23 **Nov. 23-28** Nov. 30 Dec. 2 | Cognitive Theory ** Thanksgiving recess ** -- Debating the Pros/Cons/Etc. -- Case Analyses | Ch. 15, 16 Cases 19, 20 |
| Dec. 7 (EC #2 due) | Theory Comparison Debate #2 Closing Observations | Cases TBA Ch. 17 |
| Dec. 13 [Monday], 1:00 pm | Exam 3/Final | |

Assignments and Grading Criteria:

- (1) **Theory/ Contemporary Issues Debate** **100 pts**
 Each student will select a theory and review personality research that either supports or challenges the theory. Students will prepare a persuasive statement for the class and be prepared to argue either for or against the theory during class discussion. See handout for more details.
 - (2) **Case Conceptualization Discussion Leadership** **100 pts**
 Each student will be responsible for leading discussion of one case during the course of the semester. Cases will be selected from the Personality Theories Workbook, or a detailed current events article. See handout for more details.
 - (3) **Exams** **100 pts each** **300 pts total**
 There will be three take-home exams during this course. Exams may include multiple choice, fill in the blank, short answer, and/or essay questions. Essay questions focused on case conceptualization may be selected from the Personality Theories Workbook. Exams will be comprehensive, in that conceptualizations across theories may be required. More information will be provided prior to exam date. *[Note: Makeup exams will be permitted only for reasonable and documented absences. REASONABLE = medical or personal. DOCUMENTED = note from a health professional, university official, etc. with a phone number for verification. Unexcused absences on exam date or assignment due dates will result in a score of -0- for the exam/assignment.]*
 - (4) **Daily Attendance and Participation** **100 pts**
 Attendance and participation will be noted daily. Participation is based on active participation in discussions and activities and the timely completion of assigned assessments. Excessive absences will affect your grade such that you will lose points for every unexcused absence. (Excessive absences are defined as approx. 10% of scheduled classes, or 3+ absences). Note that frequent absences may result in your grade being reduced by one unit (i.e., from A to A-) or more.
 - (5) **Extra Credit: Personality in Real Life** **(5 pts ea.)**
 Twice during the semester, students may elect to complete an optional assignment for extra credit. See handout for additional details.
- Total** **600 pts**

Grades will be based on individual learning and participation. Grades will be assigned based on the percentage of total points earned on the exams and assignments as follows:

| Percent | Grade | Percent | Grade | Percent | Grade |
|------------|-------|-----------|-------|-----------|-------|
| 94.0-100.0 | A | 80.0-83.9 | B- | 67.0-69.9 | D+ |
| 90.0-93.9 | A- | 77.0-79.9 | C+ | 64.0-66.9 | D |
| 87.0-89.9 | B+ | 74.0-76.9 | C | 60.0-63.9 | D- |
| 84.0-86.9 | B | 70.0-73.9 | C- | 00.0-59.9 | F |

IMPORTANT NOTE:

Review the information in this syllabus and assignment handouts carefully. Ask questions about information that you do not understand as it is assumed that you have reviewed class information and are aware of the objectives and expectations of the class/assignments.

It is best to decide now if you have enough time and effort to devote to the course as lack of preparation and/or late assignments could significantly lower your final grade.

General Presentation Tips

- 1) *Dress appropriately and remember good posture*-- presenters should be dressed slightly above the level of their audience. Some experts suggest that dressing professionally encourages a more professional demeanor and presentation delivery. In addition, it tends to command respect from your audience.
- 2) *Speak clearly, project your voice, and use a comfortable rate of speech.* It helps to practice your presentation while speaking more slowly than normal since one's rate of speech tends to speed up due to nervousness during presentations,
- 3) *Look at and make eye contact with the audience* [the entire audience, not just the professor]. If the thought of looking into the eyes of your audience makes you too nervous, look above the heads of your audience. This avoids direct eye contact but still gives the illusion of contact thereby helping to engage and maintain the interest of your audience. Don't worry about the horrible faces of death and boredom worn by the audience. ALL AUDIENCES LOOK LIKE THIS, ITS NOT JUST YOU!
- 4) *DO NOT read word for word from a text.* Prepare an outline or use notecards to help organize your presentation and to make sure that you are covering what you have planned to cover.
- 5) *Don't use jargon or "buzz" words unless you define them.* Don't expect your peers to have previously learned vocabulary that you have just learned. Even if you define new vocabulary don't expect your audience to remember terms ten minutes later. It is best to use more common language than specific jargon if one can, however, should defining terminology be necessary, it will help to remind the audience what the term means or to provide a short vocabulary list.
- 6) *Avoid the excessive use of fillers*, such as "umm" and "you know". Also avoid statements that make the audience question your competence, such as "I don't know, but..." or "I really didn't understand this, but..." Practicing will help.
- 7) *Smile and be confident.* You've studied, researched, you analyzed, and prepared, and you know the material – at least better than the rest of the class, that's why YOU are presenting. Try not to be thrown off by questions or comments, even from the professor. At times professors may ask questions that you won't know the exact answer to in order to assess how you are thinking about the issue – breath deeply and answer confidently based on the knowledge that you've gained.
- 8) *Show some excitement in your topic.* Audiences will often pick up on and respond to this excitement.

A Note on the Use of Props and Illustrations

Illustrations can add great clarity to your presentations as well as introduce variety and excitement into a standard lecture... if they are well planned and use properly. Below are a couple of points that may help:

- 1) *Keep illustrations simple and large!* Illustrations and diagrams that cannot be seen at the back of the room add nothing and can actually detract from your presentation. Test them out before your presentation!
- 2) *Re-draw, blow-up, or highlight* complex illustrations or tables to show clearly and in a large format only the information which is important.
- 3) *Remember to orient your audience to a figure or diagram* before you discuss its content. Point out and explain the key scales, axes, data, trends, objects, etc.
- 4) *If you use a pointer, hold it stationary* so as not to distract your audience. Linear movements appear to be less distracting than circular movements.

“Practice Makes Perfect”

Use your friends as an audience and run through a complete, practice talk, without any stops, or apologies, as if it were the real thing. Have your friends make notes of comments to help you. Your practices will be the best help you can find. It is very hard to do a practice talk seriously and without stopping. You may take comfort in knowing that it is probably harder to give these practice talks in front of a few friends than to give the talk in front of a larger formal group. Admittedly, it is harder to get up and walk to the front of the "real" talk, but once you get started that it is easier than the practice in front of a few folks.