

**SOFIA UNIVERSITY ST. KLIMENT OHRIDSKI
DEPARTMENT OF GENERAL, EXPERIMENTAL, AND
DEVELOPMENTAL PSYCHOLOGY
CONTINUING EDUCATION COURSES**

ASSOC. PROF. LUDMILLA ANDREEVA, PH.D.

**INTRODUCTION
TO
PSYCHOLOGY**

**A distance-learning
course**

Duration: 21 weeks

The Introduction to Psychology course has three main objectives: (1) to provide accurate, efficient and broad presentation of the field of psychology, to introduce learners to the theories, research and applications that build the science of psychology, (2) to provide an incentive for learners to start thinking as psychologists even after the actual content of the course has faded and to promote better understanding and appreciation of the basis of psychology, (3) to arouse the intellectual curiosity of learners and to help raise the awareness of how psychology can enhance their understanding of the world around them and their everyday interpersonal relationships. Of course, these goals are interdependent, because if the course content accurately represents the nature of psychology, learners' understanding and interest in the field will follow naturally. The aim is each topic to include the fundamental authors, research studies, and research results so that learners could appreciate and understand the everyday relevance of psychology and its potential to improve the quality of their lives. The aim is learners be exposed to the content - and promise - of psychology but also this to be done in a way that will trigger their interest in the area and, hopefully, will keep it alive.





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1. UNDERSTANDING PSYCHOLOGY – INTRODUCTION

What is psychology? Working Definition. Old traditions, new science. Contemporary psychology perspectives: behaviorism, cognitive psychology, neuropsychology, psychodynamic psychology, humanistic psychology. Theory and practice: main domains of specialization, basic research, applied research. Psychology and critical thinking. Eternal issues and modern psychology: nature vs. nurture, biological continuity and human uniqueness, conscious and unconscious experience; individual differences and universal principles; individual and society. Psychological research: theories and hypotheses; correlations; experiments. Ethics of psychological research.

2. SENSATION

Basic principles of the sensory system: sensory thresholds and signal detection. Weber's law; just-noticeable difference; sensory adaptation. Vision: the light; structure of the eye; sending signals to the brain; processing visual information; visual acuity; color vision – trichromatic theory of color vision and the theory of opponent-process theory. Hearing: sound waves; structure of the ear; processing of auditory information. Touch: skin receptors; temperature, pressure, pain. Smell. Spatial orientation and the vestibular system. Kinesthetic sense.

3. PERCEPTION

The active but selective nature of perception. The role of learning. Parts vs. the whole. Perceptual illusions. Bottom-up processing or top-down processing. Functions of perception: localization, movement, form. Changes in perception in the lifespan.

4. STATES OF CONSCIOUSNESS

Consciousness – objective and subjective. Brain and consciousness. Other levels of consciousness: preconscious and unconscious mind processes. Natural states of consciousness: daydreaming; sleep and dreaming (sleep stages, why do we sleep, sleep disorders, function of the REM sleep, dreams). Altered states of consciousness: meditation, hypnosis. Psychoactive drugs: marijuana, stimulants, depressants, hallucinogens.

5. LEARNING

What is learning: definition and perspectives. Classical conditioning: the dogs of Pavlov and what have we learned from them; principles of classic conditioning. Critical factors for classic conditioning: informational value of the conditioned stimulus, biological limitations on conditioning, physiological aspects. Instrumental (operant) conditioning: principles and aspects of reinforcement, reinforcements schedules, aversive reinforcement (flight and learning of flight reaction, punishment). Learning of skills and shaping of behavior. Cognitive maps. Observational learning (social learning). Classic experiments on observational learning and antisocial behavior.

6. MEMORY

The Nature of Memory. Memory Models. Sensory Memory. Short-Term Memory. Long-Term Memory. Improving Long-Term Memory. Biological Bases of Memory. How Are Memories Formed? Where Are Memories Located? Biological Causes of Memory Loss. Memory and the Criminal Justice System. Forgetting. How Quickly Do We Forget? Why Do We Forget? Key Factors in Forgetting.



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Cultural Differences in Memory and Forgetting. Using Psychology to Improve Our Memory. Understanding Memory Distortions. Tips for Memory Improvement.

7. LANGUAGE AND COGNITION

Language and Communication: Nothing's More Personal. The Complex Structure of Human Language. Language Development. Theories of Language Development. The Neurological Specialization That Allows Language to Develop. Can Other Species Learn Human Language? Does Bilingualism Interfere with Cognitive Development? Language and Thought: How Are They Related? Concepts and Categories: How We Think. The Organization of Concepts and Category-Specific Deficits. Psychological Theories of Concepts and Categories. Judging, Valuing, and Deciding: Sometimes We're Logical, Sometimes Not. Decision Making: Rational, Optimal, and Otherwise. The Neuroscience of Risky Decision Making. Other Approaches to Human Decision Making. Problem Solving: Working It Out. Means-Ends Analysis. Analogical Problem Solving. Creativity and Insight

8. INTELLIGENCE AND INTELLIGENCE TESTING

Testing for Intelligence. A Brief History of Intelligence Tests. Intelligence Tests Today. Aptitude and Achievement Tests.

Measuring the Quality of Tests. Reliability. Validity. Evaluating Intelligence Tests. The Reliability and Validity of Intelligence Tests. Emotionality and the Measurement of Cognitive Abilities. IQ Scores as a Measure of Innate Ability. Group Differences in IQ Scores. Conditions That Can Raise IQ Scores. IQ Scores in the Classroom. Are Intelligence Tests Unfairly Biased Against Certain Groups?

Understanding Intelligence. The Psychometric Approach. The Information-Processing Approach. The Triarchic Theory of Intelligence. Multiple Intelligences. Tracking Cognitive Abilities over the Life Span. Diversity in Cognitive Abilities. Creativity. Unusual Cognitive Ability.

9. MOTIVATION AND EMOTIONS

Concepts and Theories of Motivation. Sources of Motivation. Instinct Theory and Its Descendants. Drive Reduction Theory. Optimal Arousal Theory. Incentive Theory. Hunger and Eating. Biological Signals for Hunger and Satiety. Hunger and the Brain. Flavor, Cultural Learning, and Food Selection. Eating Disorders. Sexual Behavior. A Survey of Human Sexual Behavior. The Biology of Sex. Social and Cultural Factors in Sexuality. Sexual Orientation. What Shapes Sexual Orientation? Sexual Dysfunctions. Achievement Motivation. Need for Achievement. Goal Setting and Achievement Motivation. Achievement and Success in the Workplace. Achievement and Subjective Well-Being. Relations and Conflicts among Motives. Conflicting Motives and Stress. Opponent Processes, Motivation, and Emotion. The Nature of Emotion. Defining Characteristics. The Biology of Emotion. Theories of Emotion. James's Peripheral Theory. Cannon's Central Theory. Cognitive Theories. Communicating Emotion. Innate Expressions of Emotion. Social and Cultural Influences on Emotional Expression.

10. HUMAN DEVELOPMENT: INFANCY AND CHILDHOOD

Special Considerations in Human Development. Post Hoc Fallacy. Bidirectional Influences. Keeping an Eye on Cohort Effects. The Influence of Early Experience. Clarifying the Nature-Nurture Debate. The Developing Body: Physical and Motor Development. Conception and Prenatal Development: From Zygote to Baby. Infant Motor Development: How Babies Get Going. The Mozart Effect, Baby Einstein, and Creating "Superbabies". Growth and Physical Development throughout Childhood.



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Theories of Cognitive Development. Cognitive Landmarks of Early Development. The Developing Personality: Social and Moral Development. Social Development in Infancy and Childhood.

11. HUMAN DEVELOPMENT: ADOLESCENCE AND ADULTHOOD

Physical Maturation in Adolescence: The Power of Puberty. Cognitive Changes in Adolescence. The Developing Mind: Cognitive Development. Theories of Cognitive Development. Cognitive Changes in Adolescence. The Developing Personality: Social and Emotional Development in Adolescence. Physical Development in Adulthood. Evaluating Claims: Anti-Aging Treatments. Death and Dying.

12. PERSONALITY

Personality: What Is It and How Can We Study It? Researching the Causes of Personality: Overview of Twin and Adoption Studies. Birth Order: Does It Matter? Behavior-Genetic Studies: A Note of Caution. Psychoanalytic Theory: The Controversial Legacy of Sigmund Freud and His Followers. Freud's Psychoanalytic Theory of Personality. The Id, Ego, and Superego: The Structure of Personality. Stages of Psychosexual Development. Psychoanalytic Theory Evaluated Scientifically. Freud's Followers: The Neo-Freudians. Behavioral and Social

Learning Theories of Personality. Behavioral Views of the Causes of Personality. Social Learning Theories of Personality: The Causal Role of Thinking Resurrected. Behavioral and Social Learning Theories Evaluated Scientifically. Humanistic Models of Personality: The Third Force. Rogers and Maslow: Self-Actualization Realized and Unrealized. Humanistic Models Evaluated Scientifically. Trait Models of Personality: Consistencies in Our Behavior. Identifying Traits: Factor Analysis. The Big Five Model of Personality. Basic Tendencies versus Characteristic Adaptations. Can Personality Traits Change? Trait Models Evaluated Scientifically. Personality Assessment: Measuring and Mismeasuring the Psyche. Famous—and Infamous—Errors in Personality Assessment. Structured Personality Tests. Projective Tests. Common Pitfalls in Personality Assessment. How Accurate Is Criminal Profiling? Evaluating Claims: Online Personality Tests.

13. HEALTH PSYCHOLOGY: STRESS, COPING AND HEALTH

What Is Stress? Stress in the Eye of the Beholder: Three Approaches. No Two Stresses Are Created Equal: Measuring Stress. How We Adapt to Stress: Change and Challenge. The Mechanics of Stress: Selye's General Adaptation Syndrome. The Diversity of Stress Responses. The Brain–Body Reaction to Stress. The Immune System. Psychoneuroimmunology: Our Bodies, Our Environments, and Our Health. Stress-Related Illnesses: A Biopsychosocial View. Coping with Stress. Social Support. Gaining Control. Flexible Coping. Individual Differences: Attitudes, Beliefs, and Personality. Evaluating Claims: Stress Reduction and Relaxation Techniques. Promoting Good Health—and Less Stress! Toward a Healthy Lifestyle. Complementary and Alternative Medicine.

14. PSYCHOLOGICAL DISORDERS

Conceptions of Mental Illness: Yesterday and Today. What Is Mental Illness? A Deceptively Complex Question. Historical Conceptions of Mental Illness: From Demons to Asylums. Psychiatric Diagnoses Across Cultures. Special Considerations in Psychiatric Classification and Diagnosis. Psychiatric Diagnosis Today: The DSM-IV. Evaluating Claims: Online Tests for Mental Disorders. The Insanity Defense: Free Will versus Determinism. Anxiety Disorders: The Many Faces of Worry and Fear. Panic



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Disorder: Terror That Comes out of the Blue. Generalized Anxiety Disorder: Perpetual Worry. Phobias: Irrational Fears. Posttraumatic Stress Disorder: The Enduring Effects of Experiencing Horror. Obsessive–Compulsive Disorder: Trapped in One’s Thoughts. Explanations for Anxiety Disorders: The Roots of Pathological Worry and Fear. Mood Disorders and Suicide. Major Depressive Disorder: Common, But Not the Common Cold. Explanations for Major Depressive Disorder: A Tangled Web. Bipolar Disorder: When Mood Goes to Extremes. Suicide: Facts and Fiction. Personality and Dissociative Disorders: The Disrupted and Divided Self. Personality Disorders. Dissociative Disorders. The Enigma of Schizophrenia. Symptoms of Schizophrenia: The Shattered Mind. Explanations for Schizophrenia: The Roots of a Shattered Mind. Childhood Disorders: Recent Controversies. Autism Spectrum Disorders. Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder and Early-Onset Bipolar Disorder.

15. APPROACHES TO TREATMENT

Psychotherapy: Clients and Practitioners. Who Seeks and Benefits from Treatment? Who Practices Psychotherapy? Insight Therapies: Acquiring Understanding. Psychoanalytic and Psychodynamic Therapies: Freud’s Legacy. Humanistic Psychotherapy: Achieving Our Potential. Group Therapies: The More, the Merrier. Family Therapies: Treating the

Dysfunctional Family System. Behavioral Approaches: Changing Maladaptive Actions. Systematic Desensitization and Exposure Therapies: Learning Principles in Action. Modeling in Therapy: Learning by Watching. Operant Procedures: Consequences Count. Cognitive-Behavioral Therapies: Learning to Think Differently. Is Psychotherapy Effective? How Different Groups of People Respond to Psychotherapy. Common Factors. Empirically Supported Treatments. Why Can Ineffective Therapies Appear to Be Helpful? How We Can Be Fooled. Evaluating Claims: Psychotherapies. Are Self-Help Books Always Helpful? Biomedical Treatments: Medications, Electrical Stimulation, and Surgery. Psychopharmacotherapy: Targeting Brain Chemistry. Electrical Stimulation: Conceptions and Misconceptions. Psychosurgery: An Absolute Last Resort.

16. ATTITUDES, BEHAVIOR AND PERSUASION

The Nature of Attitudes: Attitude Formation. Attitude Strength. Attitude–Behavior Consistency. What Is Persuasion? Measuring Attitude Change. Dual Process Models of Persuasion: Two Routes to Change. The Goals of Persuasion: Why People Change Their Attitudes and Beliefs. Having an Accurate View of the World. Good Shortcuts to Accuracy. What Affects the Desire for Accuracy? Being Consistent in One’s Attitudes and Actions. Balance Theory. Cognitive Dissonance Theory. What Affects the Desire for Cognitive Consistency? Consistency and Culture. Gaining Social Approval. Self-Monitoring. Gender: Women, Men, and Persuasion. The Expectation of Discussion and Self-Monitoring. Self-Monitoring and the Expectation of Discussion.

17. SOCIAL COGNITION AND IMPRESSION FORMATION

The Social Thinker. Four Core Processes of Social Cognition. The Goals of Social Cognition. Conserving Mental Effort. Expectations. The Self-Fulfilling Prophecy. Dispositional Inferences. Other Cognitive Shortcuts: Heuristics. Arousal and Circadian Rhythms. Need for Structure. Complex Situations and Time Pressure. When the World Doesn’t Fit Our Expectations. Managing Self-Image. Cognitive Strategies for Enhancing and Protecting the Self. Threats to Self-Esteem. When Self-Esteem Is Fragile. How Culturally Universal Is the Need for Positive Self-Regard? Seeking an Accurate



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Understanding. Unbiased Information Gathering. Considering Alternatives. Attributional Logic: Seeking the Causes of Behavior. Mood. Need for Cognition. Unexpected Events. Social Interdependence. Accuracy Motivation Requires Cognitive Resources. Impression formation.

18. AGGRESSION AND VIOLENCE

What Is Aggression? Different Types of Aggression. Gender Differences in Aggression May Depend on Your Definition. The Goals of Aggressive Behavior. Coping with Feelings of Annoyance. The Frustration–Aggression Hypothesis. Feelings of Arousal and Irritability. Unpleasant Situations. Annoyance Leads to Changes in Perception of Situations. Some People Create Their Own Annoying Situations. Gaining Material and Social Rewards. Social Learning Theory: Rewarding Violence. Who Finds Rewards in Violence? Glamorized Violence in the Media. Violent Media Magnify Violent Inclinations. Gaining or Maintaining Social Status. Aggression and Sexual Selection. Sex and Testosterone. Insults and the Culture of Honor. When Status Matters. Protecting Oneself or Others. Self-Defenders. Perceived Threats. Self-Protective Aggression Can Increase Danger. Reducing Violence. Rewarding Alternatives to Aggression. Prevention by Removing Threats.

19. ALTRUISM AND HELPING BEHAVIOR

The Goals of Prosocial Behavior. Improving Our Basic Welfare: Gaining Genetic and Material Benefits. Insights into the Evolution of Help. Learning to Help. Similarity and Familiarity. Gaining Social Status and Approval. Social Responsibility: The Helping Norm. Desire for Approval. Effects of Those around Us. Gender and Help. Managing Self-Image. Personal Norms and Religious Codes. Labeling and Self-Focus. Deciding Not to Help Friends or to Seek Their Help. Failing to Seek Needed Help. Managing Our Emotions and Moods. Managing Emotional Arousal in Emergencies: The Arousal/Cost–Reward Model. Managing Mood in Non-emergencies: The Negative State Relief Model. Does Pure Altruism Exist? The Empathy–Altruism Sequence. An Egoistic Interpretation.

20. SOCIAL INFLUENCE

Conformity: When and Why. Informational Social Influence: The Need to Know What’s “Right”. The Importance of Being Accurate. When Informational Conformity Backfires. Informational Social Influence and Emergencies. Resisting Informational Social Influence. Normative Social Influence: The Need to Be Accepted. Conformity and Social Approval: The Asch Line Judgment Studies. The Importance of Being Accurate. The Importance of Accountability. The Consequences of Resisting Normative Social Influence. Unveiling Normative Social Influence by Breaking the Rules. Normative Social Influence in Everyday Life. The Power of Propaganda. When Will People Conform to Normative Social Influence? When the Group Size Is Three or More 264 When the Group Is Important. When One Has No Allies in the Group. When the Group’s Culture Is Collectivistic. Fashion: Normative Social Influence in Action. The Effect of Low Self-Esteem. Gender Differences in Conformity. Resisting Normative Social Influence. Minority Influence: When the Few Influence the Many. Using Social Influence to Promote Beneficial Behavior. The Role of Injunctive and Descriptive Norms. Obedience to Authority. The Role of Normative Social Influence. The Role of Informational Social Influence. Other Reasons Why We Obey. Conforming to the Wrong Norm. Self-Justification. It’s Not about Aggression.



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21. INTERPERSONAL ATTRACTION AND CLOSE RELATIONSHIPS

From First Impressions to Close Relationships. What Causes Attraction? The Person Next Door: The Propinquity Effect. Computers: Long-Distance Propinquity. Mapping the Effect of Propinquity in Your Life. Similarity. Opinions and Personality. Interpersonal Style. Interests and Experiences. Reciprocal Liking. Physical Attractiveness and Liking. What Is Attractive? 326 Cultural Standards of Beauty. The Power of Familiarity. Assumptions about Attractive People. Recollections of Initial Attraction. Theories of Interpersonal Attraction: Social Exchange and Equity. Social Exchange Theory. Equity Theory. Close Relationships. Defining Love. Companionate versus Passionate Love. Triangular Theory of Love. The Passionate Love Scale. Culture and Love. Love and Relationships. Evolution and Love: Choosing a Mate. Attachment Styles in Intimate Relationships. Attribution and Attachment Style. Social Exchange in Long-Term Relationships. Equity in Long-Term Relationships. Ending Intimate Relationships. The Process of Breaking Up. The Experience of Breaking Up.

References

- Schacter, D. L., Gilbert, D. T. & Wegne, D. M. (2009). *Psychology*. New York, NY: Worth Publishers.
- Bernstein, D. A., Penner, L. A., & Clarke-Steward, A. (2008). *Psychology*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company.

Standards of Academic Integrity

Generally, academic fraud and dishonesty include, but are not limited to the following categories: cheating, fabrication, plagiarism, multiple submissions, etc.

- **Cheating:** Using unauthorized notes, aids or information on an examination; altering a graded work prior to its return to a faculty member, allowing another person to do one's own work and submitting it for grading.
- **Fabrication:** Inventing or falsifying information, data or citation; presenting data gathered outside of acceptable professorial guidelines; failing to provide an accurate account of how information, data or citations were gathered; altering documents



affecting academic records; forging signatures or authorizing false information on an official academic document, grade, letter, form or any other university document.

- **Plagiarism:** Submitting material that in part or whole is not one's own work; submitting one's own work without properly attributing the correct sources of its content.

- **Multiple Submissions:** Submitting identical papers or course work for credit in more than one course without prior permission of the instructor.

A breach of ethics or act of dishonesty can result in:

- failure of an entire course (blatant plagiarism, cheating on a test or quiz);
- academic suspension or expulsion from the university.

APPLICATIONS:

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