# Experimental psychology

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***COURSE AIMS AND INTENDED LEARNING OUTCOMES***

The course aims to provide an introductory overview of general psychology, with particular reference to the elements that characterize the discipline as a science, providing an overall picture of mental functions and deepening some of them. At the end of the course, the student will be able to know the nature and functioning of the main psychological processes relevant to both the cognitive and emotional-motivational spheres. Furthermore, (s)he will be able to re-read events and experiences of daily life in light of the theories on the mental processes learned.

***COURSE CONTENTS***

MODULE 1

Unit 1

*Course introduction and The Nature of Psychology*

The scope of psychology

Historical origins of psychology

Contemporary psychological perspectives

How psychological research is done

Unit 2

*Sensory Processes*

Characteristics of sensory modalities

Vision

Audition

Other senses

Unit 3

*Perception*

The use of perception

Attention

Localization

Recognition

Abstraction

Perceptual constancies

Division of labor in the brain

Perceptual Development

Unit 4

*Consciousness*

Aspects of consciousness

Sleep and dreams

Meditation

Hypnosis

Psychoactive drugs

Unit 5

*Learning and conditioning*

Perspectives on learning

Classical conditioning

Instrumental conditioning

Learning and cognition

Learning and the brain

Learning and motivation

Unit 6

*Memory*

Three Important Distinctions

Sensory Memory

Working Memory

Long-term Memory

Implicit Memory

Constructive Memory

Improving Memory

MODULE 2

Unit 7

*Language and thought*

Language and communication

The development of language

Concepts and categorization

Reasoning and decision making

Thought in action: problem solving

Unit 8

*Motivation*

Drives and Homeostasis

Incentive Motivation and Reward

Psychological approaches to motivation

Unit 9

*Emotion*

Components of Emotion

Cognitive Appraisal and Emotion

Subjective Experiences and Emotion

Thought and Action Tendencies and Emotion

Bodily Changes and Emotion

Communication and Emotion

Emotion Regulation

Emotion, Gender, and Culture

Positive Psychology

Unit 10

*Stress, Health, and Coping*

Physiological Reactions to stress

Stress and Physical health

Stress and Psychological health

Appraisal, coping and health

Managing Stress

Unit 11

*Intelligence*

Assessment of Intellectual Abilities

Contemporary Theories of Intelligence

Genetics and Intelligence

Emotional Intelligence

General Learning Disability

***READING LIST[[1]](#footnote-1)***

- Susan Nolen-Hoeksema, Barbara L. Fredrickson, Geoff R. Loftus, Christel Lutz: Atkinson & Hilgard's Introduction to Psychology 16th Edition. Wadsworth Pub Co, 2014 (Chapters excluded: 2,3, the sections *Hunger, eating and eating disorders and Gender and Sexuality* of 10, 13,15,16,17,18)

- Marvin M. Chun and Jeremy M. Wolfe, *Visual Attention*, in: Blackwell Handbook of Sensation and Perception Edited by E. Bruce Goldstein, 2005, Blackwell Publishing Ltd (pdf provided by the instructors on blackboard)

- Slides and articles uploaded on Blackboard are considered as additional course materials.

***TEACHING METHOD***

The classroom lessons - which will consist of explanations, examples, and practical activities - will be enriched by the materials made available online on the Blackboard platform.

The course includes 10 hours of practical activities designed to complement the traditional lecture format. These activities may include group work, case studies, and simulations, and are intended to deepen students' understanding of the course material and foster active engagement with the subject matter.

***ASSESSMENT METHOD AND CRITERIA***

Te exam is split in two mandatory steps:

1. a written test composed by the following sections: section A- 10 multiple-choice questions and Section B- 2 open questions. Multiple-choice questions are scored with 0 points for wrong or missing answers and 2 points for the correct response. Therefore Section A score ranges from 0 to 20 points. Open questions receive a score ranging from 0 (for missing response or response completely wrong) and 5 points (for exemplary responses). Section B score, indeed, ranges from 0 and 10 points. The written test is passed when the student reaches a sufficient score in both the sections (12/20 in A; 6/10 in B). The sum of scores obtained in Section A and Section B is the starting grade with which the student accesses the oral exam

2. an oral exam upon passing the written test. The final grade is calculated as follows: written test score +/- 3 points.

The outcomes of the practical activities will be evaluated and factored into the final grade. The assessment criteria and methods will be explained in detail during class.

For the purpose of the evaluation, the relevance of the answers, the appropriate use of specific terminology, the reasoned and coherent structuring of the speech, the ability to create connections, and the critical re-reading of the topics will be crucial.

***NOTES AND PREREQUISITES***

Given the introductory nature of the course, previous knowledge of the contents is not required.

*Contact*

Teachers meet students by appointment before or after lessons (to make an appointment please write an email to federica.biassoni@unicatt.it or claudia.repetto@unicatt.it).

1. I testi indicati nella bibliografia sono acquistabili presso le librerie di Ateneo; è possibile acquistarli anche presso altri rivenditori. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)