BIRKBECK, UNIVERSITY OF LONDON

Module/Occurrence Code: FFPS023S4ACB
Subject Area: Psychology
Module Title: FOUNDATIONS OF MODERN PSYCHOLOGY
Award Designation: Psychology (Certificate of Higher Education)
Level/credits: Level 4, 30 credits
Venue: Central London
First Meeting: Tuesday 27th September 2016, 7-9pm
No of Meetings: 22 meetings
Class Dates: 27/09/16-6/12/16, 10/01/17-21/03/17

Please note that this syllabus is provisional and subject to change prior to the class start date. Enrolled students will be notified of any changes by e-mail.

ENTRY REQUIREMENTS
The course is open to all. Students may wish to consider undertaking some preparatory reading, details of which are given below.

AIMS
To introduce students to the discipline of psychology; to prepare students to make an informed choice of options within the Certificate of Higher Education in Psychology.

OBJECTIVES
- Give an overview of the different approaches within Psychology;
- Give an overview of the research methods used within psychology including a basic evaluation of the advantages and disadvantages of each;
- Identify the ethical issues when conducting research in psychology (with particular consideration of harm);
- Focussing on 6 key approaches:
  - Introduce the key assumptions of each;
  - Explore which research methods might be appropriate to each topic;
  - Explore the practical applications of each topic;
- Use this knowledge to explore key themes, issues and current debates within psychology;
- Support and develop students’ study skills, including note taking and essay writing;
- Support students to take part in the assessment process;
- Build students’ confidence in presenting their own ideas and in critical thinking.

LEARNING OUTCOMES
On successful completion of this course you will be able to:
- Identify the key assumptions within 6 approaches within psychology;
- Discuss the differences between 6 approaches within psychology;
- Demonstrate an understanding of the development of ideas within this field;
• Describe, discuss and evaluate a range of research methodologies that might be appropriate to the study of psychology (identifying strengths and weaknesses of core methodologies, including both qualitative as well as quantitative approaches);
• Identify the ethical issues when conducting psychological research (with particular consideration of harm);
• Illustrate the practical applications of research findings;
• Take part in the discussion of a range of issues and debates within contemporary psychology;
• Think critically about the subjects covered;
• Present your own ideas about issues addressed on the course;
• Discuss and implement a range of strategies to support your learning;
• Successfully plan and write essays or other assignments which have been set to support your learning on this course.

CONTENT

Part 1 - Approaches and Methods within Psychology
In this introductory part of the course we will look at different approaches to psychology. We will also look at the purpose of research in psychology including the difference between common-sense explanations and systematically acquired knowledge and between objectivity and subjectivity. We will outline the range of research methods most commonly used in psychology including a basic evaluation of the advantages and disadvantages of each method. Finally, we will consider changing attitudes towards the well being of participants and the way that this is reflected in ethical guidelines currently in force.

Part 2 - The Approaches in Focus
In this part of the course we will focus on 6 of the key approaches in psychology. For each approach, we will:

• consider a number of key assumptions of the approach;
• explore the research methods which might be used within the approach, including any relevant ethical issues raised by such research, and
• explore key applications of the findings from such research.

The Cognitive Approach
In studying this approach we may explore each of the issues above by focussing in depth on one topic or we may illustrate these issues by drawing on different topics commonly addressed within the cognitive approach. So, for example, we might focus on Memory - looking at a number of theories of memory and forgetting, considering appropriate research and research methods. We will study a key application of memory research, for example, eyewitness testimony.

The Social Approach
In studying this approach we may explore each of the issues above by focussing in depth on one topic or we may illustrate these issues by drawing on different topics commonly addressed within the social approach. So, for example, we might focus on Prejudice - looking at a number of theories and considering appropriate research and research methods. We will study a key application of social psychology research, for example, the reduction of prejudice.

The Psychodynamic Approach
In this section we will consider the general assumptions of the psychodynamic approach, including the importance of the unconscious mind and of early experience, considering appropriate studies and research methods. We will study a key application of the approach, for example, understanding mental health issues, such as the link between early trauma and later mental disorders.
**Physiological Psychology**
In this section we will consider the general assumptions of the physiological approach, including the importance of genetic, physiological and neurobiological factors and processes. We will explore in some depth the research methods might be used within this approach and key applications of the findings from such research. For example, we could focus on stress, considering the consequences of prolonged stress and strategies for reducing stress.

**The Learning Approach**
In studying this approach we will consider the general assumptions of the learning approach, focusing on Classical Conditioning and Operant Conditioning and exploring the acquisition of phobias and gender-specific roles as examples of each one respectively. We will evaluate these explanations of human behaviour and consider appropriate studies and research methods. We will study a key application of the learning approach, for example, in behaviour modification techniques.

**The Humanistic Approach**
In this section we will consider the general assumptions of the humanistic approach, including the importance of free will and self-actualisation. We will explore the research methods which might be used by this approach and consider key applications of the findings from such research. For example, we could focus on an aspect of mental health, such as the implications of denying part of the self.

**Part 3 - Issues and Debates**
In this final section of the course we will use what we’ve learned about the different perspectives to consider how psychology might inform our understanding of one or more current issues in psychology. Possible examples include the “nature/nurture” debate, the notion of free-will, the cultural bias within psychological theory, ethical considerations in psychological research or how much we can really learn from psychological research.

It is expected that 75% of the syllabus content will be covered.

**TEACHING AND LEARNING METHODS**
A range of teaching methods may be used e.g. lectures on the area being studied - students are encouraged to ask questions and discuss points throughout. There may also be small group exercises with feedback to the large group to provide an opportunity for clarification of ideas and discussion. Other methods may include: videos, experiments, student presentations, discussion of published articles, etc. Students will be given help with study skills.

Credit points are used to summarise and describe the amount of learning taking place for a given module. For a 30 credit point module this equates to 300 hours most of which is comprised of independent learning. Normally 44 hours would be delivered in the classroom but it may sometimes be necessary to cover a small part of the learning by other means such as directed independent learning.

As such students should also expect to build on their learning in class by undertaking guided independent study including appropriate reading and research. Further details can be found in the appropriate Course Handbook as detailed below.

**METHODS OF ASSESSMENT**
The assessment process gives students important opportunities to learn, to check their learning and to discuss their progress with the tutor. Consequently, students will be expected to prepare four pieces of coursework for assessment, two of which will be written under timed conditions in the classroom. The other two may take a variety of
forms such as essays, case studies, reports and possibly class presentations. Each piece will be 1,500 words in length (or the equivalent). You are encouraged to discuss with your tutor the particular topics and the type of assignment you would like to focus on in your assessments. It may be possible to accommodate your personal interests within the syllabus.

1st Timed Essay:
W/b 28 November 2016

2nd Timed Essay:
W/b 13 March 2017

Regulations regarding assessment are detailed in the appropriate Course Handbook, which will be circulated electronically prior to the course start date. Students are strongly advised to read the Course Handbook prior to commencing their studies.

The course is part of the Certificate of Higher Education in Psychology. If the course is completed successfully, 30 credit points will be awarded, which may be transferred to some degree courses.

READING

This reading list offers a selection of books which are particularly appropriate for this module. It is not expected that students will read them all. Weekly readings will be provided by your course lecturer, who will also recommend other reading during the course.


Please note: Psychology books are frequently revised and updated. Any recent edition would be suitable to use.

STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES

The My Birkbeck website ([http://www.bbk.ac.uk/mybirkbeck/](http://www.bbk.ac.uk/mybirkbeck/)) is your gateway to accessing all student support services at Birkbeck.

You may find the following links particularly useful:-

- Obtaining your library/ID card:
  [http://www.bbk.ac.uk/mybirkbeck/services/you/cards](http://www.bbk.ac.uk/mybirkbeck/services/you/cards)
• Accessing IT Services:  
  [http://www.bbk.ac.uk/mybirkbeck/services/facilities/computing/username](http://www.bbk.ac.uk/mybirkbeck/services/facilities/computing/username)
• Contacting our disability office:  
• Study skills support:  
  [http://www.bbk.ac.uk/mybirkbeck/services/facilities/support/study-skills](http://www.bbk.ac.uk/mybirkbeck/services/facilities/support/study-skills)

You can visit the My Birkbeck helpdesk on the ground floor of the main Birkbeck building on Malet Street (entry via Torrington Square). For details of opening hours visit:  
[http://www.bbk.ac.uk/mybirkbeck/services/facilities/helpdesk/](http://www.bbk.ac.uk/mybirkbeck/services/facilities/helpdesk/)

You can also call the helpdesk on 020 7631 6316.

**LIBRARY AND STUDY SKILLS RESOURCES**
Once you have your ID card, you may use the Birkbeck library and associated resources. You may find the following web links helpful:

• For information on how best to access the resources available for psychology students through **Birkbeck College Library**, students may wish to work through the tutorial available at [http://www.bbk.ac.uk/lib/life/](http://www.bbk.ac.uk/lib/life/)
• For specific guidance for psychologists and psychology students on getting the best out the internet go to:[http://www.vtstutorials.co.uk/](http://www.vtstutorials.co.uk/) - and search for ‘Psychology’
• For specific guidance on how to avoid plagiarism in your course work go to [https://connect.le.ac.uk/p50066682/](https://connect.le.ac.uk/p50066682/) and press the ‘play’ button.

**COURSE EVALUATION**
During the course students will be asked to complete an evaluation form which gives the opportunity to provide feedback on all aspects of their learning.

**WHAT CAN I DO NEXT**
It is important you are clear which award the module you are enrolled on counts towards. Our website provides an overview of each Certificate award so you can decide which best suits your needs:  
[http://www.bbk.ac.uk/study/2014/certificates/subject/psychology/](http://www.bbk.ac.uk/study/2014/certificates/subject/psychology/)

Information is available on core and option modules for each Certificate. Your choice of subsequent modules you take should be informed by this information. Modules can be taken in any order although it is recommended that certain core modules are taken first. Not all core modules have to be taken in the same year. If you need further advice you can contact the department by telephone on 0207 631 6669 or by e-mail:  
[psychologycert@bbk.ac.uk](mailto:psychologycert@bbk.ac.uk)

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