BIRKBECK, UNIVERSITY OF LONDON

Module/Occurrence Code:  FFPS023S4BCB

Department:  Psychological Sciences

Module Title:  FOUNDATIONS OF MODERN PSYCHOLOGY

Award Designation:  Psychology (Certificate of Higher Education)

Level/credits:  Level 4, 30 credits

Venue:  Central London

First class:  Wednesday 10th January 2018, 7-9pm

No of classes:  22

Class Dates:  10/01/18 - 21/03/18, 25/04/18 - 04/07/18

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. However, students will need sufficient fluency in written and spoken English to undertake undergraduate study and assessments. Students may wish to consider undertaking some preparatory reading, details of which are given below.

AIMS
The primary aim of this module is to introduce students to the discipline of psychology as a science. It also provides an overview of the way in which current thinking within the discipline has developed over time. British Psychological Society identifies the following as key areas for undergraduate study biological psychology, cognitive psychology, developmental psychology, individual differences, and social psychology. The module gives particular attention to the theories and models within cognitive and social psychology.

Note: Students will gain more detailed knowledge of biological psychology on the core module ‘Biological Basis of Behaviour’. Students joining the second year of the part-time BSc (Hons) Psychology will take course in developmental psychology and individual differences in their second year. Certificate students not progressing onto the degree may also choose developmental psychology and individual differences as optional modules when completing their Certificate

* For developmental psychology: The Developing Child – A Psychological Perspective. For individual differences: Psychology of Mental Health; and Understanding Human Personality.
OBJECTIVES

- Identity the different conceptual and historical issues within Psychology; including
  - the major historical perspectives and early theories that help shaped psychology as a discipline (evolutionary psychology, behaviourism, psychoanalysis and humanistic psychology)
  - explore the development and rationale for the scientific basis of Psychology
- Explore the major areas of study in classical and contemporary cognitive psychology
- Explore the major areas of study in classical and contemporary social psychology
- Examine the strengths and weaknesses of these different perspectives and approaches
- Give an overview of the research methods used within psychology including a basic evaluation of the advantages and disadvantages of each;
- Identify the political and ethical issues when conducting research in psychology (with particular consideration of harm);
- 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 main conceptual and historical paradigms and models that shape psychology (behaviourism, cognitive psychology, psychoanalysis, humanistic, biological psychology, social psychology, developmental psychology and individual differences)
  - Identify the key assumptions within these approaches within psychology;
  - Discuss the differences between approaches within psychology;
  - Demonstrate an understanding of the development of ideas within this field;
- Identify the main concepts, models and research that shaped classical and contemporary cognitive and social psychology
- Discuss what is means for a discipline to be a science, and debate the status of psychology as a science
- 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 political and ethical issues when conducting psychological research (with particular consideration of harm);
- Illustrate the practical applications of research findings;
- Debate the impact of culture on the research conducted in psychology and the theories produced
- Explore ways of integrating multiple perspectives to address various issues
- 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 – Psychology as a science**

In this introductory part of the course we will look at scientific status and basis of 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 explore the way in which culture has affected the way in which research has been conducted in psychology and the impact of this on the theories produced. We will also consider how evolving debates about ethics and politics have shaped the ethical guidelines that are currently in force.

**Part 2 – Conceptual and historical paradigms and models**

In this part of the course we will outline the major historical paradigms that have shaped psychology today. These will include genetics and early Darwinism; classic behaviourism; psychoanalysis and humanistic psychology. For each approach, we will:
- consider the 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
- Critical evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the psychological models provided

**Part 3: The Cognitive Approach**

Cognitive Psychology

In studying this approach, we will firstly explore the historical rise of the cognitive approach, before moving on to explore in depth some of the common topics addressed within the cognitive approach. We will also compare the explanations offered by cognitive psychology to some of the theories and models covered in part 2. These will include
- Thinking, schemas and information processing
- Attention and perception
- Learning and learning styles
- Human memory

**Part 4, The Social Approach**

In studying this approach, we will firstly explore the fundamental assumptions of the social approach, before moving on to explore in depth some of the common topics addressed within the social approach. We will also compare the explanations offered by social psychology to some of the theories and models covered in part 2. These will include
- Heuristics and social cognition
- Attribution and attitudes
- Conformity, compliance and obedience
- Intergroup relations
- Close relationships
• Social constructionism

Part 5 - Issues and Debates
In this final section of the course we will use what we’ve learned about the different perspectives and models to consider how psychology might inform our understanding of one or more current issues in psychology. We will also explore how and whether it is possible to integrate these approaches and the different methodologies. We will also consider questions of the cultural bias within psychological theory and explore these issues in terms of the political and ethical considerations in 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. short lectures on the area being studied - students are encouraged to ask questions and discuss points throughout. There will also be small group exercises, sometimes 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 module this equates to 300 hours, most of which is comprised of independent learning. Normally 44 hours would be delivered in the classroom. Students MUST 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. 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 will be completed outside the class and may take a variety of forms such as essays, case studies, reports and possibly class presentations. Each of these pieces 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.

Each piece of assessment is worth 25% of the total module mark. To pass the module students must achieve a mark of 40% overall with at least 40% in one of the timed tests.

Dates of the assessments:
1st Timed Essay:
w/b 12th March 2018

2nd Timed Essay:
w/b 25th June 2018
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.

Students who complete the core modules on the Certificate of Higher Education in Psychology may be considered for entry onto the second year of Birkbeck’s part-time BSc Psychology programme. For more information see: http://www.bbk.ac.uk/study/2017/certificates/programmes/UEHPSYCH/

READING

Preparatory reading
You will find it useful to read an introductory text that outlines the main schools of thought within psychology and the main approaches to research methods. Particularly useful are:


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.

Recommended reading


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

**STUDENT SERVICES**

The Student Advice Centre is located on the ground floor of the main Birkbeck building on Malet Street (entry via Torrington Square).

For more information about Birkbeck’s range of student support services visit: http://www.bbk.ac.uk/student-services/

**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/
- For specific guidance for psychologists and psychology students on getting the best out the internet go to: http://www.vtstutorials.co.uk/ - and search for ‘Psychology’

Please refer to the Course Handbook for more information.

**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/2017/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

Revised August 2017