
MODULE 1

The Story of Psychology

Module Preview

Psychology traces its roots back to Greek philosophers' reflections on human nature. Psychologists' initial focus on mental life was replaced in the 1920s by the study of observable behavior. As the science of behavior and mental processes, psychology has its origins in many disciplines and countries.

Psychology's most enduring issue concerns the relative contributions of biology and experience. Today, psychologists recognize that nurture works on what nature endows. The biopsychosocial approach incorporates biological, psychological, and social-cultural levels of analysis. Although different perspectives on human nature have their own purposes and questions, they are complementary and together provide a fuller understanding of mind and behavior.

Some psychologists conduct basic or applied research; others provide professional services, including assessing and treating troubled people. With its perspectives ranging from the biological to the social, and settings from the clinic to the laboratory, psychology has become a meeting place for many disciplines.

Mastering psychology requires active study. A survey-question-read-rehearse-review study method boosts students' learning and performance.

Module Guide

- ▶ Introductory Exercise: Fact or Falsehood?

What Is Psychology?

- ▶ Lectures: Aristotle's Psychology; Psychology's First Experiments; History of Psychology; William James—Founding Father of American Psychology
- ▶ Exercises: Eminent Psychologists; Psychologist as Scientist; Psychology as Science (PAS) Scale
- ▶ PsychSim 5: Psychology's Timeline
- ▶ Videos: *Discovering Psychology, Updated Edition: Past, Present, and Promise*; *Discovering Psychology, Updated Edition: Applying Psychology in Life*
- ▶ Project: Interviewing a Psychologist
- ▶ Project/Lecture: The Twentieth Century's Most Eminent Psychologists

1-1. *Describe the evolution of scientific psychology from its early pioneers to contemporary concerns.*

Early philosophers, such as Aristotle, theorized about learning and memory, motivation and emotion, perception and personality. Their thinking about thinking continued until Wundt established the first psychological laboratory in 1879 in Leipzig, Germany. He sought to measure the fastest and simplest mental processes. His student Edward Titchener introduced structuralism, which also used *introspection*—self-examination of one’s own emotional states and mental processes—to search for the basic elements of the mind. However, self-reports proved somewhat unreliable, varying from person to person and from situation to situation. Under the influence of evolutionary theorist Charles Darwin, William James thought it more fruitful to study how consciousness serves a purpose. Thus, **functionalism** focused on how mental and behavioral processes enable the organism to adapt, survive, and flourish. James also wrote a textbook for the new discipline of psychology. He mentored Mary Whiton Calkins, the first female president of the American Psychological Association. Margaret Floy Washburn was the second female president of APA.

► Lecture: Challenges to Psychology’s International Development

1-2. *Describe the evolution of psychology as defined from the 1920s through today.*

Psychology developed from the more established fields of philosophy and biology. Its pioneers included Russian physiologist Ivan Pavlov, Austrian personality theorist Sigmund Freud, and Swiss biologist Jean Piaget. Until the 1920s, psychology was defined as the science of mental life. Wundt’s basic research tool was introspection. From the 1920s through the 1960s, American psychologists, led by John Watson and later by B. F. Skinner, both **behaviorists**, dismissed introspection and redefined psychology as the science of observable behavior. In responding to Freudian psychology and behaviorism, **humanistic psychology** emphasized our growth potential and the importance of meeting our needs for love and acceptance. In the 1960s, **psychology** began to recapture its initial interest in mental processes. Cognitive psychology and **cognitive neuroscience** explore scientifically the ways we perceive, process, and remember information. Today, **psychology** is defined as the scientific study of behavior and mental processes. Behavior is anything an organism does. Mental processes are the internal subjective experiences we infer from behavior, for example, perceptions, thoughts, and feelings. Psychology is growing and globalizing.

► Exercises: Self-Assessment on Psychology’s Big Issues; Is Human Nature Fixed or Changeable?

1-3. *Summarize the nature-nurture debate in psychology, and describe the principle of natural selection.*

Psychology’s biggest and most persistent debate concerns the **nature-nurture issue**: the controversy over the relative contributions of genes and experience to the development of psychological traits and behavior. Included in the history of this debate is Charles Darwin’s concept of **natural selection**, which states that among the range of inherited trait variations, those contributing to reproduction and survival will most likely be passed on to succeeding generations. Evolution has become an important principle for twenty-first-century psychology. Today, contemporary science recognizes that *nurture works on what nature endows*. Our species is biologically endowed with an enormous capacity to learn and adapt. Moreover, every psychological event is simultaneously a biological event.

► Lectures: Illustrating Psychology’s Complementary Perspectives: The Case of Andrea Yates; The Biopsychosocial Approach and Obesity; The Allure of the Neuroscience Perspective; Complementary Perspectives; Human Freedom and Choice; Social Cognitive Neuroscience

► Exercises: The Scientific Approach; Applying Psychology’s Specific Theoretical Perspectives

► Instructor Video Tool Kit for Introductory Psychology: *Why Do People Help? Explaining Behavior; Postpartum Depression: The Case of Andrea Yates*

- 1-4. *Identify the three main levels of analysis in the biopsychosocial approach, and explain why psychology's varied perspectives are complementary.*

The different systems that make up the complex human system suggest different **levels of analysis**: biological, psychological, and social-cultural. Together, these levels form an integrated **biopsychosocial approach**. Psychology's varied perspectives therefore complement each other. Someone working from the

neuroscience perspective studies how the body and brain work to create emotions, memories, and sensory experiences.

evolutionary perspective considers how the natural selection of traits promoted the survival of genes.

behavior genetics perspective considers how heredity and experience influence our individual differences.

psychodynamic perspective views behavior as springing from unconscious drives and conflicts.

behavioral perspective examines how observable responses are acquired and changed.

cognitive perspective studies how we encode, process, store, and retrieve information.

social-cultural perspective examines how behavior and thinking vary across situations and cultures.

► Lectures: Psychology's Important Role in Basic Scientific Research; Psychology's Applied Research

► Videos: *The Many Faces of Psychology*; *Psychology: The Human Experience*, Module 42: *Psychological Principles in Everyday Life*

- 1-5. *Identify some of psychology's subfields, and explain the difference between clinical psychology and psychiatry.*

Some psychologists conduct **basic research**. For example, biological psychologists explore the link between brain and behavior, developmental psychologists study our changing abilities from womb to tomb, and personality psychologists investigate our persistent traits.

Other psychologists conduct **applied research**. For example, industrial-organizational psychologists study behavior in the workplace and suggest ways of boosting morale and performance.

Psychology is also a helping profession. **Counseling psychology** assists people with problems in living and in achieving greater well-being. **Clinical psychology** involves mental health professionals who study, assess, and treat people with psychological disorders. **Psychiatry** sometimes involves medical treatments as well as psychological therapy.

Psychology relates to many disciplines, by connecting with fields ranging from mathematics to philosophy and by aiding those disciplines.

(Close-Up) Tips for Studying Psychology

► Exercise: Eliciting "Metaphors" for Learning and Teaching

- 1-6. *Describe several effective study techniques.*

To master information, one must actively process it. People learn and remember material best when they put it in their own words, rehearse it, and then review and rehearse it again. An acronym for Survey, Question, Read, Rehearse, and Review, **SQ3R** is a study method that encourages active processing of new information. Distributing study time, learning to think critically, listening actively in class, overlearning, and being a smart test-taker will also boost learning and performance.

