

**J. Sargeant Reynolds Community College**  
**Course Content Summary**

**Course Prefix and Number:** PSY 200

**Credits:** 3

**Course Title:** Principles of Psychology

**Course Description:**

Surveys the basic concepts of psychology. Covers the scientific study of behavior and mental processes, research methods and measurement, theoretical perspectives, and application. Includes biological bases of behavior, learning, social interactions, memory, and personality; and other topics such as sensation, perception, consciousness, thinking, intelligence, language, motivation, emotion, health, development, psychological disorders, and therapy. Prerequisite: Placement in ENG 111 or placement in co-requisites ENG 111 and ENF 3. Lecture 3 hours per week.

**General Course Purpose:**

PSY 200 provides the student with an introduction to important psychological concepts and principles. A transferable course to four-year colleges and universities, PSY 200 meets a general education elective requirement for the Social/Behavioral Sciences and also meets a requirement for the Approved Humanities and Social Sciences Electives for the Liberal Arts AA and Social Sciences AS degrees. The course should be completed by any student intending to major in psychology at a four-year institution.

**Course Objectives:**

PSY 200 covers student learning outcomes in the following domains: Scientific Inquiry, Biopsychology, Development and Learning, Sociocultural, Cognition, Individual Variation, and Applications of Psychological domain. Upon completing the course, the student will be able to know and do the following:

**Scientific Inquiry Domain**

**Content Area: Perspectives in Psychological Science**

1. Define psychology as the scientific study of behavior and mental processes.
2. Identify and explain the primary objectives of psychology (e.g. describing, understanding, predicting, and controlling behavior and mental processes).
3. Describe how psychology emerged and evolved as a scientific discipline.
4. Identify overarching themes, persistent questions, or enduring conflicts in psychology, such as the interaction of heredity and environment.
5. Identify and describe the major contemporary perspectives of psychology (e.g. psychodynamic, behavioral, humanistic, biological, and cognitive).

**Content Area: Research Methods and Measurement**

1. Describe the scientific method and its role in psychology.
2. Explain the strengths, limitations, and conclusions that can be drawn from various research designs and data collection methods (including case study, observation, survey, correlational, and experiment).
3. Describe systematic procedures used to improve the credibility of research findings (e.g. blind or double-blind designs, control or placebo groups, peer-review, and replication).
4. Explain the ethical obligations of researchers toward their research participants, both human and animal.

**Content Area: Critical Thinking**

1. Discern differences between personal views and scientific evidence in understanding behavior.
2. State connections between diverse facts and theories.
3. Identify arguments based largely on anecdotal evidence, personal experience, and poorly supported assertions regarding behavior.
4. Describe attitudes associated with critical thinking such as tolerance of ambiguity and skepticism.
5. Apply psychological concepts, theories, and research findings as these relate to everyday life.

## **Biopsychological Domain**

### **Content Area: Biological Bases of Behavior**

1. Identify the major divisions and subdivisions of the human nervous system.
2. Identify the parts of the neuron and describe the basic process of neural transmission.
3. Differentiate between the structures and functions of the various parts of the central nervous system.
4. Discuss the mechanisms of, and the importance of, plasticity of the nervous system.
5. Describe concepts in genetic transmission.
6. Explain how evolved tendencies influence behavior.
7. Identify tools used to study the nervous system.

### **Content Area: Sensation and Perception**

1. Describe processes of sensation and perception and how they interact.
2. Explain the concepts of threshold and adaptation.
3. Describe the capabilities and limitations of sensory processes.
4. Explain the interaction of the person and the environment in determining perception.

### **Content Area: Consciousness**

1. Identify states of consciousness.
2. Distinguish between processing which is conscious (i.e. explicit) and other processing which happens without conscious awareness (i.e. implicit).
3. Describe characteristics of sleep and theories that explain why we sleep and dream.
4. Characterize the major categories of psychoactive drugs and their effects.
5. Describe other states of consciousness such as meditation, hypnosis, and flow states.

## **Development and Learning Domain**

### **Content Area: Life Span Development**

1. Discuss theories of cognitive, moral, and social development.
2. Identify influences on prenatal development.
3. Describe the role of sensitive and critical periods in development.
4. Identify the major physical, cognitive, and socio-emotional changes across the lifespan.
5. Explain the interaction of environmental and biological factors in development.

### **Content Area: Learning**

1. Describe the principles of classical conditioning (e.g. acquisition, extinction, generalization, discrimination).
2. Describe the principles of operant conditioning (e.g. reinforcement, punishment, shaping, reinforcement schedules, and extinction).
3. Describe cognitive approaches to learning (e.g. observational learning, social learning).
4. Describe applications of learning theories in real life (e.g. phobias, animal training, and habit change).

### **Content Area: Language Development**

1. Describe the structure and function of language.
2. Discuss the relationship between language and thought.
3. Describe theories and developmental stages of language acquisition.
4. Explain the relationship between language and the brain.

## **Sociocultural Context Domain**

### **Content Area: Social Interactions**

1. Identify relationships between thought processes (e.g. attributions, attitudes, bias, and perception) and social behavior.
2. Discuss obedience, conformity, and compliance in relation to behavior and their impact on the power of the situation.

3. Describe how group dynamics influence behavior.
4. Discuss the nature and effects of stereotyping, prejudice, and discrimination.
5. Discuss influences upon pro-social (e.g. altruism) and anti-social (e.g. aggression and conflict) behaviors.
6. Discuss factors influencing attraction and relationships.
7. Identify factors involved in influencing and persuading others.

**Content Area: Sociocultural Diversity**

1. Discuss social and cultural diversity.
2. Discuss psychological research examining diversity among individuals.

**Cognition Domain**

**Content Area: Memory**

1. Describe the differences between working memory and long-term memory.
2. Discuss types of memory and memory disorders.
3. Identify factors and strategies influencing how memories are encoded, stored, and retrieved.
4. Explain how memories can be malleable.

**Content Area: Thinking**

1. Define processes involved in problem solving and decision making.
2. Describe obstacles to problem solving and decision making.
3. Describe aids to problem solving and decision making.

**Content Area: Intelligence**

1. Discuss different perspectives on intelligence (e.g. general intelligence, multiple intelligences).
2. Discuss the history of intelligence testing, including historical use and misuse in the context of fairness.
3. Identify current methods of assessing human intelligence.
4. Discuss issues related to the consequences of intelligence testing.
5. Discuss the influences of biological, cultural, and environmental factors on intelligence.

**Individual Variation Domain**

**Content Area: Motivation**

1. Describe biologically based theories of motivation.
2. Describe cognitively based theories of motivation.
3. Describe humanistic theories of motivation.

**Content Area: Emotion**

1. Describe the biological and cognitive components of emotion.
2. Differentiate among theories of emotional experience.
3. Describe how culture and gender influence emotional expression.

**Content Area: Personality**

1. Compare and contrast the major theoretical approaches to personality (e.g. psychodynamic, trait, humanistic, and social-cognitive theories).
2. Identify techniques of personality assessment.
3. Discuss biological and situational influences on personality.
4. Discuss stability and change of personality.
5. Explain how culture and gender influence personality.

**Content Area: Psychological Disorders**

1. Define psychologically abnormal behavior.
2. Describe major models of abnormality.
3. Describe the classification of psychological disorders.

4. Describe symptoms and causes of major categories of psychological disorders (including schizophrenic, mood, anxiety, and personality disorders).

### **Applications of Psychological Science Domain**

#### **Content Area: Treatment of Psychological Disorders**

1. Explain different perspectives on treatment of psychological disorders.
2. Explain why psychologists use a variety of treatment options.
3. Identify biomedical treatments.
4. Identify psychological treatments.
5. Evaluate the efficacy of treatments for particular disorders.
6. Identify ethical challenges involved in delivery of treatment.

#### **Content Area: Health**

1. Define stress as a psychophysiological reaction.
2. Identify and explain potential sources of stress.
3. Identify and explain physiological, cognitive, and behavioral strategies to deal with stress.
4. Identify behaviors and attitudes that promote health.

#### **Major Topics to be Included:**

1. The scientific study of behavior and mental processes
2. Research methods and measurement
3. Theoretical perspectives and application
4. Biological bases of behavior
5. Learning
6. Social interactions
7. Memory
8. Personality
9. Other topics such as sensation, perception, consciousness, thinking, intelligence, language, motivation, emotions, health, development, psychological disorders, and therapy

**Effective Date of Course Content Summary:** January 1, 2013