Syllabus

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Department: Psychology

Course Number and Title:

2210 - Theories of Personality

Bulletin Description: An introduction to significant theories of personality and a critical evaluation of these theories.

Prerequisites: None

Corequisites: None

Number of Credits: 3

Course Description: The course is an introduction to the scientific study of personality as manifested through the study of major theories of personality. After an introduction to the study of personality and scientific theory, the course deals with particular personality theories and theory types. The major theories might include those often described with such labels as psychodynamic (including Psychoanalytic and related theories), social theories, holistic and organismic theories, self theory, person centered theory, self-actualization theories, trait theories, factor theories, learning theories, social learning or cognitive learning theory, cognitive theories, existential theories, field theory, need theory, and constitutional theory.

General Learning Objectives/Goals:

- To provide a foundational survey of major personality theories for both general student interest and the interest of the psychology major.

- To provide for both the general and major student a basis for understanding the influence of modern personality theory upon the thinking and intellectual life of the 20th and beginning of the 21st century.

- To provide for psychology majors the basis for a clearer understanding of such theories as they might encounter them in their studies of various areas within the domain of their chosen major, such as abnormal, clinical, and developmental psychology.

- To expose students to various theoretical approaches in the study of personality and allow them, to the extent they might wish, to apply the ideas surveyed to their own experience as persons and their own personalities.
Course Outline and Units of Instruction:

It is to be understood that the topic designations listed below indicate possible categorizations of theories concerned and do not preclude the possibility of using alternate descriptions. It is to be understood also, that categorizations are often artificial and might overlap when used to refer to particular theories. Except for the introductory concepts and Psychoanalytic theory, the order of presentation as stated need not necessarily be followed exactly. In a similar manner, it is not intended to prescribe the precise weight that should be given to a particular topic, although suggestions are sometimes given.

1. Introductory concepts.
   - Meaning of personality.
   - Meaning of theory.
   - Critique of the formal aspects of personality theories.
   - Comparison and contrast of content elements and issues found in modern personality theories.

2. Psychodynamic theories.
   - Freud -- Psychoanalytic theory.
   - Jung -- Analytic theory.
   - Adler -- Individual psychology (Social psychological theory).
   - Horney -- (Neo-analytic, Social psychological theory).
   - Erikson -- (Neo-analytic, Social psychological, Psychoanalytic ego theory).
   - Sullivan -- (Interpersonal theory) – suggest minor exposure.
   - Fromm -- (Social psychological theory) – suggest minor exposure.

3. Trait theories.
   - Allport -- (Humanistic trait theory, Psychology of the individual).
   - Cattell -- (Factor theory).
   - Eysenck -- (Factor theory – suggest minor exposure).
   - Five Factor theory (Factor theory – suggest brief coverage).

4. Organismic - Holistic theory.
   - General introduction.
   - Maslow -- (Self-Actualization, Humanistic theory).

5. Rogers – (Self, Person-centered, Self-actualization, Phenomenological-existential, Humanistic theory).

   - Skinner -- (Radical Behaviorism, Learning theory).
• Dollard & Miller -- (Cognitive behavioral, Learning, Stimulus-Response theory).
• Bandura -- (Cognitive behavioral, Social learning, Cognitive learning theory).


8. May -- (Existential, Humanistic theory – suggest minor exposure)
   (Other Existential theories might be presented as well or instead – suggest minor exposure).


Mapping of Goals and Objectives

Goal 1: Demonstrate a knowledge base in psychology.

Learning Objective A: Introduce students to the study of personality as an empirical scientific discipline with emphasis on the theoretical attempts to describe, understand, predict and, sometimes, attempt to control behavior based upon theory.

Learning Objective B: Many major personality theories are presented with at least enough exposure to demonstrate essential components of each personality theory or perspective presented.

Learning Objective C: The study of personality theory is introduced to acquaint the student with major issues, terminology, and concepts related to this subject matter, including the study of scientific theory itself. Such exposure allows the well prepared student to identify, describe, as well as to compare and contrast issues pertinent to personality theories, using the vocabulary and concepts found in modern theories of personality. In addition, such a student should begin or continue the process of understanding and interpreting behaviors within the framework of particular personality theories.

Learning Objective D: The study of many personality theories representing different perspectives and variations within perspectives allows the well prepared student to begin to describe, compare, and contrast these theories on several dimensions. Special attention is paid to critiquing theories with respect to limitations, controversies, and their contributions to the understanding of behavior.

Goal 2: Demonstrate understanding of research methods in psychology.

Learning Objective A: Although formal presentation of research methods is not part of the course content, assigned reading and lecture material related to the various theories will include reference to the ways in which data used to derive and support them were
gathered. In addition, there will be opportunity for class discussion, as well as class demonstrations with student participation, that can illustrate the empirical nature of scientific psychology.

**Learning Objective F:** Especially, in their assigned reading, students are expected to pay special attention to critical evaluations of the types of research typical of the theories studied.

**Goal 3: Demonstrate critical thinking skills in psychology.**

**Learning Objective A:** The theories presented in the course are always presented as entities for critical consideration. While it is not a major objective of this course to teach critical thinking, per se, students are encouraged to think, in a critical manner, about the theories presented in the course. In presenting some of the concepts discussed, students are encouraged to participate in class demonstrations and assume the role of a person advocating the theory to make interpretations or analyses of the presented material.

**Learning Objective C:** Students are exposed early in the course to the formal requirements of a scientific theory. They are also made aware of many important issue dimensions by which modern personality theories can be compared. By means of this preparation they have a minimum preparation, at least, to look at the presented theories in a critical way. Critical evaluations of theories are also presented to the students for their consideration by means of class lecture and assigned reading material.

**Goal 4: Demonstrate effective application of psychology.**

**Learning Objective A:** While it is not an objective of the course to describe major applied areas of psychology, the course does touch upon the application of theories to the types of problems often subsumed under such applied area designations as clinical, counseling, and educational psychology.

**Learning Objective B:** Explaining social issues and informing public policy is not a major objective of this course, although such issues might be treated in a passing and cursory manner. When such issues arise great care is taken to carefully distinguish valid psychological science from value judgments and political opinion.

**Learning Objective C:** The possible application of different theoretical concepts to problems of everyday living experiences and situations is covered in both assigned reading and in class lectures. Some examples of application areas include: psychological adjustment (both abnormal and more fully functioning behaviors), dreaming behavior, defensive behaviors, interpreting literature and art, work and labor, child rearing, and interpersonal relations.
Goal 6: Demonstrate sociocultural and international awareness.

**Learning Objective A:** This objective is of special importance in evaluating some of the personality theories presented, particularly as they reflect the sociocultural values and attitudes related to particular theoretical content issues.

**Learning Objective B:** A major purpose of the course is to demonstrate that individual differences in behavior reflect the types of experiences people have in their lives from life through death. Students are exposed to theories that hold as a major premise, that individuals are unique entities. Differences among theories related to the ways in which sociocultural concerns are emphasized or ignored by such theories is treated as part of the course content.

In addition, through their reading and class lecture material, students have attention called to the relationship that often exists in the experiential background of the personality theorist and the type of theory he/she constructs. Special attention is paid to such things as the basic underlying philosophies of different personality theorists, their values, and social climates during the times of their active theory production.

**Learning Objective C:** This objective is treated in a peripheral manner as incident to and reflected in the differential treatment accorded gender roles by different theories in particular cultural and historical settings.

**Assessment Strategies:** This is primarily a knowledge based course and as such the acquisition of content is assessed by employing examinations covering a sampling of the universe or domain of that content. Examinations are constructed to assess aspects of basic terminology, concepts, applications of theoretical concepts to specific situations, contrasts and comparisons among theories, as well as recognized problems and critiques of different theories. The format, number, and weighting of the examinations is left to the discretion of the instructor.

Also, at the discretion of the instructor, other assessment measures such as papers and operationally defined measures of class participation might be employed with weighted values given to each measure decided by the instructor and clearly made manifest to the students.

**Proposed Time Distribution of Contact Hours:**
Three hours lecture for 15 weeks and 2 hour final examination. 45 Hours

**Supplementary Time:**
Reading, other discretionional assignments, and examination preparation. 81 Hours

Grand Total 126 Hours
Suggested Textbooks:


Bibliography:


