Course Summary

Why do people do what they do? In this class, we will tackle a few approaches to grappling with this question. In the first part of the course, we will emphasize the methods that psychologists use and ways of thinking about how people develop during their lives. In the second part, we will tackle the idea that “personality” affects what we do. In the third, we will consider what people do as a function of ordinary social situations. The last part of the course will tackle what we might mean when we talk about “mental disorder.”

General Education

This course is a foundation level course in Area 4, Cluster 2. It serves as a precursor to any of the following second level courses: EDU-205G Schools and Society; HFIT-245G Gender, Culture and Health; HIST-210G Ethnicity in America; HIST-220G Women in America; IDIS-210G Contemporary Multietnic Voices; JLS-200G Deprivation of Liberty; JLS-215G Violence and Institutions; JLS-235G Justice in America; JLS-245G Cities and Crime; PSYC-205G Social Psychology; PSYC-215G Abnormal Psychology and Society; PSYC-235G Theories of Personality; and SOCY-205G The Family. This course introduces you to approaches to understanding individual behavior, particularly in social contexts. The others, in general, look at one specific area of human social behavior, applying a variety of principles (some psychological, others derived from other disciplines) to that area.

Please remember that you can only take two courses from any given academic unit (e.g., Dept. of Psychology) for General Education credit. If you have any questions, please feel free to see me (Tony A.).
Schedule for Readings and Lecture/Discussion Topics

Part I: Methods and Development

8/25 (Tu) Introduction
Gleitman, Preface and Chapter 1, pages 1-13

8/28 (F) Doing psychology: Correlation, Cause, and Definition
Gleitman, Chapter 1, pages 13-33

9/1 (Tu) Social Development: Attachment
Gleitman, Chapter 11, pgs. 398-409

9/4 (F) Social Development: Moral Development
Gleitman, Chapter 11, pages 409-435

9/8 (Tu) Cognitive Development
Gleitman, Chapter 10

9/11 (F) TEST #1

Part II: Personality Psychology

9/15 (Tu) Intelligence and Psychological Testing
Gleitman, Chapter 14

9/18 (F) Freud
Gleitman, Chapter 15, pgs. 566-578

9/22 (Tu) Other Psychodynamic Thought/Trait Approaches
Gleitman, Chapter 15, pgs. 578-581, 554-566

9/25 (F) Learning Approaches
Gleitman, Chapter 6, pgs. 198-221

9/29 (Tu) Social Learning Theory/Humanistic Approaches
Gleitman, Chapter 15, pgs. 580-592

10/2 (F) Finish Personality Theories; Health Psychology

10/6 (Tu) TEST #2
Part III: Social Psychology

10/9 (F) Social Thought: Attribution and Heuristics
Gleitman, Chapter 12, pgs. 438-462

10/13 (Tu) Social Influence: Obedience and Conformity
Gleitman, Chapter 13, pgs. 480-497

10/16 (F) NO CLASS---FALL BREAK!

10/20 (Tu) Social Relations: Helping and Liking
Gleitman, Chapter 13, pgs. 497-513

10/23 (F) Social Psychology Applied: Cults
Gleitman, Chapter 12, pp. 457-461, revisited

10/27 (Tu) Social Psychology Applied: Prejudice
Gleitman, Chapter 12, pp. 444-447, revisited

10/30 (F) Social psychology Applied: Psychology and the Law

11/3 (Tu) Emotion
Gleitman, Chapter 12, pgs. 462-476

11/6 (F) TEST #3

Part IV: Abnormal Psychology

11/10 (Tu) What is Psychological Disorder? Different Approaches
Gleitman, Chapter 16, pgs. 596-605

11/13 (F) Psychopathology: Depression
Gleitman, Ch. 16, pgs. 613-620

11/17 (Tu) Psychopathology: Anxiety, Schizophrenia
Gleitman, Chapter 16, pgs. 605-612, 620-626

11/20 (F) Psychopathology: Other Disorders
Gleitman, Chapter 16, pgs. 626-633

11/24 (Tu) Systems of Therapy
Gleitman, Chapter 17

11/27 (F) THANKSGIVING BREAK—NO CLASS TODAY!

12/1 (Tu) Therapy: Is it effective? And what about prevention?
Gleitman, Chapter 17, continued

12/4 (F) Taking Psychology Back into the World

12/8 (Tu) TEST #4 11:20 am-1:50 pm (This test will only cover topics covered since the third test. It will be designed to take 1.25 hours, though you'll be allotted the entire 2.5 hours)
Review Sections

Before each exam, Erin (one of the Teaching Assistants) will offer optional review sections. During the section, she will go over the main points of the lectures and answer any questions that you might have about the lectures. The time and location of these sections will be announced as the semester progresses. We'll try to offer each section twice so that almost all of you will be able to go to one or the other of them. If you can't make the section and you would have wanted to, you can see either of the TAs or me during office hours with any questions you have. (Of course, you can see us during office hours if you CAN make it to the review sessions, too.)

Examinations, Papers, and Grades

There will be four noncumulative exams. The first will be a little bit shorter than the others. The first will carry about 20-21% of the weight for the course grade. Each of the others will carry about 26-27% of the weight for the course grade. The first three exams will be given in the regular class periods. The fourth will be given during the final exam period, though it will be roughly equal in length to tests two and three. Each will consist of multiple choice, short answer, and short essay questions. The multiple choice questions will carry about 2/3 of the weight of each exam. Questions will be taken from the lectures, the readings, and the text.

Your course grade will be determined by adding your four test scores and adjusting for papers and experiment extra credit, as described below. This score will be compared to the sum of the scales for the four tests. If the tests are harder, you'll need fewer points to get any given grade. If the tests are easier, you'll need more points.

There will be two extra credit papers, each one page long. These papers serve two functions. First, each will involve you in a particular task that psychologists routinely perform. Second, writing is one of the skills you are particularly likely to employ later in life. The papers will provide practice. Each paper will be graded on a scale of 0 to 3. The number of points you earn on the papers will be added to your test score total for determining your final grade. Paper due dates will be announced during the course. I will announce the assignments at least one week before the papers are due.

You may also earn extra credit by participating in research studies during the semester. You may participate in up to 3 hours of studies for extra credit. Any additional participation is encouraged, but will not count toward credit. Alternatively, you may write a paper on the experiences involved in and the ethics of a study I would have you read. This paper will be designed to take about the same length of time as the experiments.

These extra credit opportunities will mostly make a difference for students on the borderline between two grades. You can earn a maximum of 9 points through extra credit. For instance, one year, students who had between 290 and 306 points for the course earned a B+. If a student earned 298-306 points on the four exams, then the extra credit might be enough to raise the grade to an A-. If the student scored 290-297, the extra credit would have made no difference.

Interested in learning more?

You can learn more in any number of ways. Come to our office hours. Ask for readings on topics of interest to you. Here is an additional possibility:

Optional discussion on Blackboard. On Mondays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays, the teaching assistants will post news items on Blackboard in the discussion area. They will return to each topic at least once to follow up on the discussion. These will be psychology topics of general interest and will not be covered on the exams. Your participation is optional and will not be graded. This is the first time I have tried this, so it is possible that we will revise this process during the term.
Some Ground Rules

Make-up exams. Make-up exams are permitted only in the case of extreme illness or other disaster. I will require some form of verification for any excuse for missing an exam. Students who have been acknowledged to have a valid reason to take the make-up exam will take a different exam covering the same material that the missed exam would have covered. It will be an all-essay exam. If a student misses an exam for a reason I do not consider legitimate, I may or may not allow that student to take the make-up exam. If I do allow the student to take the exam (absent a legitimate excuse), his/her score for that test will be reduced AT LEAST one grade. If I do not allow the student to take the make-up, the score will be recorded as a zero.

Early exams: No "early" exams will be given. Test 4 will be on the December 8. Make your travel plans accordingly.

Pandemics: Professors have been asked to include the following statement in their syllabi: In the event of a declared pandemic (influenza or other communicable disease), American University will implement a plan for meeting the needs of all members of the university community. Should the university be required to close for a period of time, we are committed to ensuring that all aspects of our educational programs will be delivered to our students. These may include altering and extending the duration of the traditional term schedule to complete essential instruction in the traditional format and/or use of distance instructional methods. Specific strategies will vary from class to class, depending on the format of the course and the timing of the emergency. Faculty will communicate class-specific information to students via AU e-mail and Blackboard, while students must inform their faculty immediately of any absence due to illness. Students are responsible for checking their AU e-mail regularly and keeping themselves informed of emergencies. In the event of a declared pandemic or other emergency, students should refer to the AU Web site (www.prepared.american.edu) and the AU information line at (202) 885-1100 for general university-wide information, as well as contact their faculty and/or respective dean’s office for course and school/college-specific information.

Academic Integrity: Standards of academic conduct are set forth in the University's Academic Integrity Code. By registering, you have acknowledged your awareness of the Academic Integrity Code, and you are obliged to become familiar with your rights and responsibilities as defined by the Code. Violations of the Academic Integrity Code will not be treated lightly, and disciplinary actions will be taken should such violations occur. Please see me if you have any questions about the academic violations described in the Code in general or as they relate to particular requirements of the course.

Finally, enjoy the course! This is an opportunity to know and love some new material.