

Lecture # 1

INTRODUCTION TO PSYCHOLOGY

What is psychology?

Beginning with the first psychological laboratory, founded in 1879 by German philosopher and physiologist Wilhelm Wundt, modern psychology's can be traced in many disciplines and countries. Psychology's historical perspectives and current activities lead us to define the field as the science of behavior and mental processes.

Theoretical perspectives of psychology:

There are many disciplines that study human nature. Psychology is one. Within psychology, the biological, behavioral, psychoanalytic, cognitive and social- cultural perspectives are complementary. Each has its own purposes, questions, and limits; together they provide a fuller understanding of mind and behavior.

Why do we study psychology?

Scientific inquiry begins with an attitude of eagerness to skeptically investigate competing ideas, with an open- minded approach. Putting ideas to the test helps us in fully understanding them. The curiosity that drives us to test ideas, and to expose their underlying assumptions, can be experienced in every day life as critical thinking.

Course Description

- **The course will encompass basic concepts of psychology:**
Concepts like learning, memorizing, retention, emotions, process of thinking, how do Our sense organs work etc will be discussed.
Also, issues like what is normal and what is abnormal behavior, the interventions used For treating psychological problems, along with an overview of main and popular Areas of psychology will also be tackled.
- **The main focus of the course will be on introducing essential terminology, theories, themes, concepts, and trends relevant to modern day psychology:**
The main focus is to help students to learn and understand what are the essential and important areas of study in psychology. Also students will be enabled to understand and learn the basic concepts which psychology is mainly based on.
- **Practical application of knowledge, besides a know how of theoretical constructs, will be encouraged:**

How to use psychology and psychological concepts in every day life is an essential component, besides having a basic understanding of the theoretical part of it. It is expected that after completing this course, the student will be able to use the psychological concepts for resolving problems, or at least identifying, problem areas and situations where psychological intervention is required.

- **The course will be taught bilingually:**

Course Objectives

By the end of the term the students will be able to:

- **Understand and use basic terminology of psychology;** Terms, concepts and processes when we are studying and applying psychology's principles in daily life tasks
- **Understand and identify the various applications of the discipline as well as its scientific nature:** Understanding of how to conduct psychological research is very important and it needs thorough study of research techniques of how to conduct research, what are the basic steps involved, how to verify the findings; and most importantly, whether it is ethical as well as applicable to humans or not; The students will get a feel of it. The scientific methodology will not be discussed in detail since this is an introductory, foundation, course.
- **Choose areas of their interest for higher academic qualification in future:**

The students will be familiarized with a number of areas of psychology. After completing this course you may feel that you have developed a keen interest in psychology and want to carry on with studying this discipline; at that point the knowledge from this course will help you in to choosing the desired field in which you want to specialize. Also the knowledge and information gained from this course will help you in understanding the concepts in courses like organizational behavior, management, consumer behavior, and research methods.

- **Identify situations where psychological intervention may be required:** While studying psychology, you come to know that psychology's applications are not limited to curing mental problems only, but have wide range of applications from the minor to the most extensive tasks in which psychological principles can be used. Here it is important for you to identify situations where psychology's principles and interventions can be used in order to resolve the issue.

Some Additional Advantages:

Besides these basic objectives, there are many other advantages that the students will, or may, enjoy. Knowledge of psychology affects your personality also by enriching your intellectual life and enlarging your vision to see and observe things around you. We will discuss a lot of things, and they will be explained in such a manner that they will add some skills and a better understanding to your present intellectual caliber. For example, if you want to enhance your learning by studying psychology, there are some important and useful tips for you:

Distribute your study time:

One of the psychologists' oldest findings is that "spaced practice" promotes better retention than "massed practice". You will remember material better if you space your time over several study periods rather than overcrowding your memory store house with information over load at one time for longer durations.

Learn to think critically:

Whether in class, or at home, or somewhere else, note people's personality, habits, assumptions and values and critically evaluate. What perspective or bias underlies an argument? Evaluate evidence. Is it anecdotal? Co incidental? Experimental? Based upon facts? Is what I see the only truth, or can there be other possible explanations?

Listen actively to lectures:

According to psychologist William James “no reception without reaction, and no impression without expression.” Listen to the main and sub- ideas of the lecture, and after listening, process information by which you can understand and retain the material well.

Over learn:

“Over learning improves retention”. Read, recite and over learn the material that you cover. Do not overestimate what you know. Rethink and review the lecture, and give some extra time to what you think you already know. It enhances your knowledge and the material will be better retained.

Carefully accessing questions while taking tests/ exams:

Read the question to be attempted carefully, think what you have to write and then start attempting questions

While exploring psychology, you will learn much more than effective study techniques. Psychology polishes and sharpens our understanding of how people perceive, think, feel and act. By doing so, it definitely enriches our lives and enlarges our vision.

Misconceptions about psychology and psychologists:

○ **Anybody who has studied psychology can read people's personality:**

This is the most frequent thought that comes into the mind of people who believe that psychologists are like magicians who can tell every thing about any person, his thoughts, feelings emotions, personality and all that other people cannot tell. This actually is not the case, because psychologists are not the magicians or something like that. They are professionals and their area of interest is basically the study of human behavior and mental processes; and this requires good observation as well as good prediction. Another important thing that has to be kept in mind is that not all of those who have a degree in psychology can understand, explain, and predict the personality or behavior of a person, because it mainly requires not just good observation but proper training as well.

○ **Psychologists can predict fate or destiny:**

This is not actually the case. Lay people have these views because they see that psychologists are capable of accurately telling what type of people others are, what they are capable of doing, what are their potentials and capacities etc. In reality, the case is different since psychologists can only predict not the destiny but the direction that one may adopt in future; psychologists can assess and predict personality and behavior because they get professional training for studying human

behavior and that is why they can easily tell what type of a person one is, what might be his potentials, and how much he/ she is capable of performing certain tasks.

○ **Psychologists are doctors:**

Another very common misconception is that psychologists are doctors. Psychologists are not at all doctors; they are specially trained people who deal with the psychological problems and not the medical problems. Psychiatrists, on the other hand, are doctors who have a professional degree in medicine as well as training in treating those suffering from psychiatric/ psychological problems.

○ **Psychologists give medicines:**

Not psychologist, but psychiatrists are the ones who prescribe medicine to the mentally ill patients, as they have a professional degree in medicine that authorizes them to prescribe medication.

Definition:

“Psychology is the scientific study of behavior and mental processes Human or Animal”

Behavior is overt, manifest, obvious, and easy to study; the mental processes that help carryout these behaviors are covert, underlying, hidden, and not easy to study. Besides behavior, what causes these behaviors to occur and the mental processes involved in it is an important area of interest for a psychologist.

Psychologists study animals' behavior too; to better understand and predict human behavior, the study of animal behavior becomes essential at times, especially because some researches cannot be carried out with humans due to safety reasons or ethical issues

Goals of Psychology:

Main and important goals of psychology, or in other words of understanding human behavior and mental processes, are;

- To understand the nature and mechanisms of behavior and mental processes
- To develop an understanding of the relationship between behavior and mental processes
- To apply this understanding to real life situations and, on the basis of this understanding, predict for the future
- To employ the scientific approach for developing this understanding

In short, the main goals of psychology are the:

- a) **Observation,**
- b) **Description,**
- c) **Understanding,**
- d) **Explanation,**
- e) **Prediction, and**
- f) **Control of human behavior and mental processes.**

Scientific nature of Psychology

○ **Psychology is a science.**

It employs the scientific method for gathering knowledge and information. It uses scientific procedure that is essential to be adopted in order to carry out psychological research; otherwise the research will not be considered authentic, reliable, or scientifically valuable.

- **“Scientific method is a systematic and organized series of steps that scientists adopt for exploring any phenomenon in order to obtain accurate and consistent results. These steps involve observation, description, control, and replication”.**

These are the main components of any science or scientific discipline. The methods of how to gather, process, and analyze information properly and accurately are very important in psychology as well.

○ **Remember! Science does not deal with the supernatural;**

A number of people commonly believe, and they did more so in olden times, that the evil spirits, demons, or ghosts are the root cause of mental illness. Therefore, for them, psychology may be the approach that can free man of the supernatural possessions, which is a wrong belief. Psychology does not deal with the supernatural phenomena like any other science; it deals with only those behaviors that are overt can be experienced by our senses, that can be understood in psychological/scientific terms, and that can be dealt with through psychology interventions.

Scope of psychology

After doing a degree course in psychology one may join a variety of work settings, the most common being:

- Education/teaching
- Research
- Hospitals/clinics
- Recruiting/screening agencies
- Specialized professional settings e.g. armed forces, social welfare etc.

- **Popular areas of psychology**

- **Clinical Psychology:**

A branch of psychology concerned with the study, diagnosis, and treatment of abnormal behavior. It is the oldest as well as the most well known branch of psychology. Clinical psychologists are trained to diagnose and treat problems ranging from the every day crises of life such as grief due to the death of a loved one, to more extreme conditions, such as a loss of touch with reality. Some clinical psychologists also conduct research, investigating issues that range from identifying the early signs of psychological disturbance, and studying the relationship between how family members communicate with one another, to the understanding of a wide variety of psychological disorders.

- **Industrial / Organizational Psychology:**

A branch of psychology that studies the psychology in action at the workplace, including productivity, job satisfaction, and decision-making.

- **Health Psychology:**

The branch of psychology that explores the relationship of psychological factors and physical ailments or disease e.g. Health psychologists are interested in how the long- term stress (a psychological factor) can affect physical health. They are also concerned with identifying ways of promoting behaviors related to good health (such as exercise) or discouraging unhealthy behaviors (such as smoking, drinking etc).

- **Consumer Psychology:**

A branch of psychology that studies and explains our buying habits and our effects of advertising a buying behavior. Mainly dealt with the likes and dislikes and preferences of people.

- **Environmental Psychology:**

A branch of psychology, that focuses upon the relationship between people and their physical environment. It is one of the newly emerging, and in-demand, areas of psychology. Environmental psychologists have made significant progress in understanding how our physical environment affects the way we behave toward others, our emotions, and how much stress we experience in a particular setting.

- **Sport Psychology:**

The branch of psychology, that studies the psychological variables that have an impact upon the sportspersons' performance; e.g. how stress can affect sport performance, how morale can be boosted, the role of self-concept and esteem, the impact of crowd behavior etc.

- **Forensic Psychology:**

The branch of psychology that investigates legal issues and psychological variables involved in criminal behavior ; e.g. what factors determine criminal tendencies, how criminals be reformed, deciding what criteria indicate that a person is legally insane, and whether larger and smaller juries make fairer decisions.

- For more details see the website of **American Psychological Association:**
www.apa.org/about/division.html