

Psychology 211 - Personality: Theory and Research

Tues & Thurs, 11:00 – 12:15

132B Severance

There are two statements about human beings that are true: that all human beings are alike, and that all are different. On those two facts all human wisdom is founded.

—Mark Van Doren, American poet (1894-1972)

Course description and objectives

This course is an introduction to the theory and research that guides psychologists to understand the functioning of human beings of all backgrounds across all environments. Fortunately, personality psychology is an area that is readily accessible to beginning psychologists; we all have personalities and have thought about them (and probably others' personalities too) from time to time. This reflection provides us with a knowledge base to think about such questions as, "Why do people behave as they do?" and "What makes people different from each other?" In examining these questions, we will rely on our experiential knowledge, the theories of the experts, and the findings of empirical work.

Although each of us is a unique human being, our personalities share common features. The goal of personality psychology is to account for the uniqueness of the individual while learning what qualities and processes are universal to humankind. To that end, we will study personality across several domains of knowledge including the biological, cognitive, social, and cultural realms. We will consider current and classic theories of personality and read research from primary and secondary sources.

Our objectives are:

- 1) *To learn to think critically about human behavior* to determine what we know about personality from personal experience, philosophical musings, cultural assumptions, and empirical investigation
- 2) *To become familiar with the concepts and processes* that psychologists use to describe and explain personality, that is, to learn the language of personality psychologists
- 3) *To understand the methods of knowledge-generation* in personality psychology in order to appreciate and critique contributions of research and theory
- 4) *To learn how to apply* the concepts and processes of personality to real lives.

Course format and requirements

Format

We will follow primarily a lecture-discussion format; some classes will be more heavily weighted towards lecture, others towards discussion. Your participation will result in a more interesting course, enhance your understanding of the material, and may provide you with insights into your own and others' personalities. Here are guidelines that will help you to contribute effectively and get the most out of discussions:

- Come to class having read the assigned readings.
- Bring your exercise materials and research articles to class
- Think about the readings. Ask yourself, "What are the implications of these findings?" or "What are the weaknesses of this study?" or "Does this conclusion resonate with my personal experience?"
- Ask and answer questions in class. It's likely that if a question occurs to you, it's also on your classmates' minds.

Readings

Course readings come from a text, scientific journals, and selections on classic theories. The text, Larsen, R.J., & Buss, D.M. *Personality psychology: Domains of knowledge about human nature*, 4th Ed., Boston, MA: McGraw-Hill, is on reserve but it should be purchased. It can be easily obtained over the internet either new or used at a substantially discounted cost. Other readings are available on the course website on Blackboard. Material covered in class and in readings may not overlap; you are responsible for both. Lecture outlines will be available on Blackboard after class. However, outlines cannot substitute for class attendance.

Journal articles

You will read research articles from scientific journals to acquaint you with the way personality psychologists investigate their subject matter. For four of the articles, you will write a **brief** response (two pages, max) to questions posted on BB. I do not expect you to read and understand the statistics section. However, if you are not familiar with scientific research methods, you may need some extra help. Please bring this to my attention.

Exercises

You are also required to complete several exercises designed to give you first-hand experience with the measures, methods, and questions of personality psychology. We will use class data as the basis for discussion. You can enter your personal data **anonymously** into a Google Doc and run basic statistics on them. If you are not familiar with basic statistics, you may need some extra help. Please bring this to my attention.

Exams

There will be three, noncumulative exams consisting of both multiple choice questions and essays. You will have some choice of questions. The third exam will be given during the final exam time period. Dates for assignments and exams are indicated on the class schedule. The final exam can only be rescheduled by the Dean of Studies (kathryn.stuart@oberlin.edu, 58450). Be warned, Dean Stuart may not grant a request for a schedule change so speak to her before making travel arrangements.

Class attendance

Attendance is expected and important. If you miss a class, find out from a classmate what you missed.

Grading

Grades will be computed as follows:

Responses to journal articles: 20% of final grade
Exercises: 20% of final grade
Three exams: 50% of final grade
Class participation: 10% of final grade

Along with other members of the Psychology Department, I follow College guidelines for grade distribution.

Miscellaneous procedures and policies

Handing in assignments

With the exception of the personality test scores that you submit online, **do not email me your assignments; print them out. Assignments must be typed and double-spaced with standard margins and fonts.** Double-sided printing is fine.

Using a pseudonym

I ask that you submit all papers and exams under a pseudonym. I do this for two reasons: it allows me to grade blindly to avoid any possibility of bias and it assures that your personality test data for the exercises is anonymous. **Thus, do not put your name on anything you hand in. Instead, choose a pseudonym and use it for all assignments throughout the semester including the test scores you submit electronically.** I assign grades at the end of the semester by pairing up your pseudonym and your real name once everything is graded.

Disability accommodations

Students needing academic accommodations are urged to meet with the Coordinator of Services for Students with Disabilities (Peters Office G27, 775-8467) to make arrangements.

Late Paper/Make-up Exam Policy

College policy requires that extensions and make-up exams requested for illness or family emergencies be approved by your class dean. If you know you

will have three exams on the same day or a cross-country meet will take you out of town before an exam, speak to me beforehand so we can make alternative arrangements. Do not send me an emergency email the night before a due date; I will not get it and we will not be able to arrive at an alternative. Late assignments will be downgraded by full grade (an A paper will become a B), by two full grades if more than a week late (an A paper will become a C).

Honor Code

The College's honor code can be found at: www.oberlin.edu/students/links-life/rules-regs/06-HonorCode.pdf. I encourage you to read it. Simply stated, it requires that work you submit must be your own or, if another person's (e.g., something you read or work with a partner), the person must be acknowledged. It further states that if you know that another person has violated this policy, you are obligated to report them. However, this policy does not rule out working with another student on some assignments. If you have a question about how the honor code applies to a particular assignment, please ask for clarification.

Electronic devices

Please turn off cell phones before class. You may use a laptop for taking notes. However, students using their laptops to check email, play games, surf the web, etc., will not be permitted to bring a laptop to class again.

To contact me

Please contact me by email: karen.sutton@oberlin.edu. However, please be warned that I do not check my email more than once a day and I never check it from Friday afternoon to Sunday morning. My office hours are M, 1:30-2:30 and Th 1: 30- 3:30 PM.

Psychology 211 - Personality: Theory and Research
Spring, 2013, Required readings

TEXT

Larsen, R.J., & Buss, D.M. *Personality psychology: Domains of knowledge about human nature*, Boston, MA: McGraw-Hill. (4th Ed.). [A copy is on reserve. You can purchase it from the Bookstore or on the internet.]

ADDITIONAL READINGS The following articles are posted on the course website.

Beck, L. & Clark, M. (2009). Choosing to enter or avoid diagnostic social situations. *Psychological Science*, 20, 1175-1180.

Cieslak, R., Benight, C., & Lehman, V. (2008) Coping self-efficacy mediates the effect of negative cognitions on posttraumatic distress. *Behavior Research and Therapy*, 46, 788-798.

Dunning, D., Heath, C. & Suls, J. (2004). Flawed self-assessment: Implications for health, education and the workplace. *Psychological Science in the Public Interest*, 5(3) 69-106.

Johnson, W., McGue, M., Krueger, R., Bouchard, T. (2004). Marriage and personality: A genetic analysis. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*. 86, 285-294.

Jordan, A., Monin, B., Dweck, C., Lovett, B., John, O., Gross, J. (2011). Misery has more company than people think: Underestimating the prevalence of others' negative emotions. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 37, 120-135.

Kasser, T. & Sheldon, K. (2000). Of wealth and death: Materialism, mortality salience, and consumption behavior. *Psychological Science*, 11, 348-351.

Lyons, M. York, T., Franz, C., Grant, M., Eaves, L., et al. (2009). Genes determine stability and the environment determines change in cognitive ability during 35 years of adulthood. *Psychological Science*, 20, 1146-1152.

Mayer, S. & Sutton, K. (1995). *Personality: An integrative approach*. Prentice Hall: New Jersey.

Shu, I., Gino, F., & Bazerman, M. (2011). Dishonest deed, clear conscience: When cheating leads to moral disengagement and motivated forgetting. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 37, 330-349.

Vazire, S. & Gosling, S.D. (2004). e-Perceptions: Personality impressions based on personal websites. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 87, 123-132.

SEMESTER SCHEDULE

Date	Class topic	Reading for class	Assignment to be handed in
The Study of Personality			
Feb 5	Introduction to course and personality psychology		
Feb 7	Personality assessment Doing research on personality	L&B, Ch 1, 2	Vazire & Gosling, 2004
The Dispositional Domain			
Feb 12	Measuring personality – <i>No class; work on exercise on your own.</i>	L&B, Ch 3	
Feb 14	Measurement concepts	L&B, Ch 4	
Feb 19	Measurement issues		
Feb 21	Traits and trait taxonomies		Exercise 1: Personality Inventories
The Biological Domain			
Feb 26	The genetics of personality	L&B, Ch 6 Johnson et al, 2004	
Feb 28	Physiologically-based personality	L&B, Ch 7	Exercise 2: Physiologically-based personality
Mar 5	The evolutionary perspective: Theory	L&B, Ch 8	
Mar 7	The evolutionary perspective		
Mar 12	First Exam		
Personality Development			
Mar 14	Stability and change in personality	L & B, Ch 5 Lyons et al, 2009	
The Intrapsychic Domain			
Mar 19	Psychoanalytic Theory	L&B, Chs 9 M & S, Ch 3, Pps 53-96	Shu et al, 2011
Mar 21	Social and cultural influences	L&B, Ch 11	
Mar 26/28	Spring break		
Apr 2	Anxiety and defense Motives	L&B, Ch 10	Exercise 3: Intrapsychic Defense Mechanisms

Great Theories that Larsen & Buss omit			
Apr 4	The Humanistic perspective	M & S, Ch 4, Pps 118-127 Kasser & Sheldon, 2000	
Apr 9	Behavioral approach	M & S, Ch 5, Pps 130-152	
Apr 11	Second Exam		
The Cognitive-Experiential Domain			
Apr 16	Cognitive Approaches	L&B, Ch 12	Cieslak et al, 2008
Apr 18	The Cognitive Self	L&B, Ch 14	
Apr 23	Emotions and Personality	L&B, Ch 13	Jordan et al, 2011
The Social and Cultural Domain			
Apr 25	The interpersonal domain: Relationships, love and sex	L&B, Ch 15 Beck & Clark, 2009	
Apr 30	The interpersonal domain: Relationships, love and sex	L&B, Ch 16, 17	Exercise 4: Attachment Style
The Adjustment Domain			
May 2	Stress, coping, and health	L&B, Ch 18 Dunning et al, 2004	
May 7	Personality Disorders	L&B, Ch 19	
May 9	Personality Disorders		
May 15	Third Exam, 2-4 PM		