



# **INTRODUCTORY PSYCHOLOGY**

**A GUIDE FOR THE BEGINNING PSYCHOLOGY STUDENT**

Course Textbook & Lecture Notes

**PRELIMINARY EDITION**

Dr. August John Hoffman



To My Darling Wife, Nancy and Our  
Beautiful Children, A.J. & Sara:

"Only through the Mysterious Equation of Love  
Can the Logic and Meaning of Life Be Discovered"

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**Course Textbook & Lecture Notes**

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Dr. August John Hoffman  
Compton College / California State University Northridge  
Spring 2004  
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## Introductory Psychology – Psychology 1a

### Introduction

This textbook is really a first attempt to combine psychological research conducted by the author with psychological theory in a comprehensive and interesting manner for undergraduate students – it is the link between psychological theory and human behavior. After twenty years of teaching a variety of students at the community college level as well as the graduate level, I still was not satisfied with the quality of texts within the discipline of psychology. Books were either too technical for the beginning psychology student, too costly (commonly cited among many students!), information was not relevant, outdated, or authors cited biased “politically correct” research in support of specific personal agendas. Notwithstanding these limitations, I made the decision to create my own version of what a psychological text should be and have structured this text with my own style of teaching. Additionally, the research and literature described in this text has been done as scientifically and objectively as possible, describing human behavior *de facto* rather than how others perceive it should be. What I have done in each chapter is to show how each chapter builds on preceding chapters – in other words, how previous information provides the foundation for the development of new information in future chapters. In my professional view, the most important characteristic of an introductory psychology textbook is two-fold: a) The accuracy of the information contained within the text; and b) How “readable” and relevant is the information for the student – in other words, can the student relate the information to his or her own personal and professional life? Is the information contained in the text *exciting*? Is it compelling? Can the student see how theory and practice actually relate to each other? After years of reading countless student evaluations regarding what they feel as important characteristics in a book, I have made the decision to incorporate these wishes of my students and put them into practice. I hope that the student finds this text relevant and interesting in the exploration of human behavior – a science that we today call *psychology*.

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## ***Chapter Preview – What Can We Expect In This Text?***

### **Chapter One**

The primary purpose of this text is to illustrate how the many concepts of psychology today remain applicable to the various facets of our daily lives. It has always remained a central thesis in courses to show students the relevance of what they learn within the classroom and how these concepts relate practically to what we do in our personal and professional lives. Psychology, therefore, should be a reflection of who we are as a society and can be viewed as an ever changing, living entity. The text is actually an overview of years of research and teaching a variety of psychology courses from the community college level through graduate level. I have written this text in what I feel to be the most “readable” format for the undergraduate student – The chapters have been divided into traditional sections, beginning with a basic preview of how psychology originally evolved from Aristotle and philosophical views into modern psychology from Western Europe. The classic schools of psychology are then described in detail, beginning with Structuralism, Functionalism, Gestaltism, Cognitive Psychology, Psychodynamic Psychology, Humanistic Psychology, and Neuropsychology. The text then progresses into more modern viewpoints regarding human behavior, by exploring Multicultural psychology and Sociocultural Psychology and how cultural and environmental variables may dramatically influence human behavior. The reason why this textbook is different from other textbooks has to do with the topics used – I have selected a number of very unique and challenging topics that are just now entering the academic world of psychology, and these chapters offer a rich description of psychology from the world of athletic competition and sports, ethology and evolution, the social world and gender issues, and so on. Perhaps the most controversial and newest area to debut in the world of psychology is the topic of evolutionary psychology. We shall explore this new area within the field of psychology and understand how our evolutionary history may influence our behaviors from a psychological perspective. The chapter then concludes by highlighting trends of future research, including neuropsychology and the brain as dominant features influencing behavior. The purpose of chapter one, therefore, is to offer the student an overview of how modern psychology

actually evolved as a science and to provide basic insight into the early history of psychology by reviewing the dominant themes since the late 17<sup>th</sup> century.

## Chapter 2

Chapter two explores current research trends in psychology and how research is conducted. We begin with the analysis of what “theory” is and how this differs from a hypothesis, through the various types of descriptive research methods, including the survey, naturalistic observation, case history design, and correlational research design. Correlational research has special implications in research methodology, as this can often become misunderstood with serious consequences. It is here where we take a closer look and explore the important relationship between “cause and effect.” For example, two variables (“x” and “y”) may be correlated with each other, but may *not* have a causal link with each other. Birds, for example, may fly south for the winter but this does not imply that the flying south somehow causes the winter to occur. Another example would include the 1994 earthquake in Los Angeles (Northridge), California. I noticed that a few days before the earthquake, our animals were responding very strangely (i.e., dogs barking and cats hiding under the dresser). While the variables (behaviors of the animals and the earthquake) may be linked, the cats hiding under the dresser by no means caused the earthquake to occur! While these two examples are offered lightheartedly, there are many more serious ramifications of misunderstanding cause and effect, such as with intelligence and race or ethnicity. We will explore these issues further in chapter two.

The “scientific method” is a term that we will explore in this chapter that is very important in all areas of psychological science and research. The scientific method refers to a method or approach of applying rules to scientific investigation that ensures objectivity in scientific research. We further discuss how we may interpret these scientific findings, with terms such as “internal validity”, “construct validity” and “external validity” referring to how we may interpret and apply our findings to the general population. Chapter two also provides a detailed description of the formal experimental design with the ethics involved with research and subject selection. Chapter two includes interesting data and research from a variety of sources that help to illustrate the concepts used in today’s version of an introductory psychology textbook. Chapter two

concludes with an important review of ethics in psychological research, and how ethics should apply to the protection and welfare of human subjects or animals in psychological research.

### Chapter 3

Chapter three has traditionally been a very interesting chapter in psychology because it is here where we actually explore the parts of the brain. We also explore the physiological and neurological components of human behavior and how these variables influence the cognitive processes. Chapter three begins with an in-depth microanalysis of the neuron and gradually explores the organic components of the brain itself. The concepts of neuropsychology and biological psychology have recently become popular areas of interest among students and researchers as we discover the dynamic relationships between genetic predispositions of specific behavior and the brain itself. We will briefly discuss the views and then describe how behavior can also be influenced by environmental variables and culture. We progress from the “micro” level to the “macro” level by exploring the roles of the neuron, synapses, central and autonomic nervous systems, endocrine system, the cerebral cortex and lobes of the cerebral cortex, and conclude with an analysis of some common psychological disorders (i.e., schizophrenia, Alzheimer’s disease, Attention Deficit Disorder) and how the brain may contribute to these disorders.

### Chapter 4

Chapter four explores sensation and perception – terms that really refer to how we use our senses to interpret information *from* the outside world to our brain. Sensation referring to various forms of energy contained within the “real world” and perception referring to how we actually process that energy into meaningful units of information. We will explore sensory adaptation and absolute thresholds for each of the senses. Here you will understand that the basic five senses: Vision, hearing, taste, smell and touch are actually units of measurement that become changed (transduction) from mechanical energy into neural impulses that are sent to the brain. We view the concept of pain, and how pain seems to have a wide margin of tolerance among various individuals. Certain substances (called neurotransmitters) can dramatically influence how sensitive we are to

pain and how these substances (i.e., epinephrine, norepinephrine, adrenalin) are introduced to the body. We also briefly discuss a highly controversial “sixth sense” (some call this intuition) that is explored in *parapsychology*. Key terms that will be discussed in this chapter include: Absolute threshold, psychophysics, sensory adaptation, and Weber’s Law. We conclude our chapter with an analysis of the arbitrariness of the term “reality” and how perceptions of reality are often influenced by cultural norms, values and mores

## Chapter 5

Chapter five explores concepts relative to states of consciousness and awareness. It is here where we really begin to see the connection between the early history of psychology and philosophy (i.e., “How do we know what we are thinking? How can we verify or question our own existence?”). We explore various levels of awareness – sharp or acute levels (direct consciousness) through indirect “flowing” levels of consciousness, and how these various levels of consciousness may impact our behavior, sleep, and even dreams. We also explore the uniquely human ability to focus on several topics simultaneously (divided consciousness) and still engage in various types of behaviors. An interesting component of chapter five explores the concepts of the four stages of sleep, dreams and dream analysis, and the classifications of drugs. Students have historically found dream analysis and dream interpretation to be very intriguing areas, and we will explore some of Freud’s early work on the role of the unconscious mind with dream interpretation. We will also explore the differences between the actual dream itself (manifest content) with what the dream symbolically represents (latent content). We investigate natural methods of influencing states of consciousness (i.e., hypnosis, meditation, and direct “focusing” methods commonly used in yoga exercises) as well as alternative methods in changing levels of consciousness and awareness. Chapter five concludes with a description of the various classifications of drugs (commonly used drugs as well as illicit drugs) and how these drugs impact various dimensions of human behavior.



## Chapter 6

Theories of learning play a very important role in psychology. How people learn (and unlearn) various types of behaviors, as well as the causal influences of those behaviors remains a critical component of psychology. If we can accurately understand the mechanics of behavior, we can dramatically improve the overall quality of life and mental health for many people. In this chapter, we explore the rich history of learning theory within psychology. We begin with the Laws of Association as provided by Aristotle and the great philosopher John Locke who was a pioneer in learning theory and empiricism. We begin our review of modern learning theory by taking a close look at classical conditioning theory (Pavlov) and how classical conditioning really changed the way psychologist's viewed human behavior. Related to Pavlov's theory of classical conditioning, we review the contributions of John Watson (and the infamous "Little Albert experiment in 1924) in the United States and modern behaviorism. B.F. Skinner and the tenets of Operant Conditioning have provided much information regarding our understanding of the roles of antecedent conditions and consequences of our behaviors as the *sine qua non* in predicting future behaviors. We then explore the beginning history of Max Wertheimer and the Gestalt school of thought in psychology. It is here where the famous statement: "the whole is more than the sum of the parts" is used to explain and understand human behavior within the entire context of the environment. We progress to other dominant theories of learning, including: The Cognitive Branch of psychology, Psychoanalysis and Sigmund Freud (the role of the unconscious mind), the Humanistic Branch of psychology and Carl Rogers (emphasizing free will and the human condition), Existential Psychology (Victor Frankl) and how meaningfulness plays a central role in the development of the psyche, Social Cultural theory and the environment, Social Learning Theory (Bandura's theory focusing on concepts such as self-efficacy and self-esteem), with a conclusion of learning theory addressing the contributions of minority psychologists.

## Chapter 7

Why is that sometimes we can remember names easily, and other times we have a very difficult time in recalling something that has just been told to us? The human

memory system has some remarkable information processing systems, and within this chapter we explore some of the responsibilities and functions of the information processing systems and human memory. We begin by exploring the classic study by Atkinson and Shiffrin (1968): “The Multistore Model” system. Here we first explore how information first enters our system of consciousness (input from the environment) and how this information becomes processed from short term memory through the long term memory. There are many theories describing how this information actually becomes processed, and we will describe some of the more recent theories. We will take a close examination of the processes that exist in the transfer from short term memory to long term memory, and what are some effective techniques people use to facilitate recall. Additionally, we will explore some of the ways in which people can store information for short (30 seconds) periods of time through indefinite periods (long term memory). We will also explore the role that cultures seem to play in either improving or decreasing the accuracy of memory recall (Judith Kearins, 1986).

## Chapter 8

Intelligence, cognition and information processing have become very interesting and important topics of research in psychology today for a number of reasons. Even today, with our advances in technology and assessment, we have had difficulty in agreeing upon an adequate description and function of intelligence. This chapter explores the history of intellectual assessment and development, and perhaps (more importantly) the political and economic ramifications of intelligence. We first explore the history of intelligence and the important assessment tools used in better understanding it’s development. We also discuss the important ramifications of what the term “IQ score” means, and how actually difficult it is to accurately identify the mechanisms of intellectual processes. We review the early history of intelligence, from the very beginning descriptions offered by Sir Francis Galton (first cousin of Charles Darwin) who described intelligence primarily as an inherited phenomenon, through some of the first standardized intelligence tests (Alfred Binet) and how they were introduced to this country. We then explore some of the more current theories regarding how we actually process various types of information (Atkinson and Shiffrin, 1968; The Multi-model

Stage Theory) and we also explore the importance of standardized testing today and what that actually means to you. For example, most colleges and universities today (as well as many professional work environments) base their acceptance or admissions criteria on some of these standardized test scores. In this chapter we will also explore the reliability and validity of these scores, as well as more progressive means of identifying intelligence and cognitive ability. Thus, when addressing controversial and arbitrary topics such as intelligence, we need to take a close look at the term “validity” because we are often measuring things other than the topic of research! We continue our discussion by exploring a more generalized approach to understanding intelligence (Gardener 1983), such as athletic and music skills and interpersonal skills. Finally, we look at more progressive views of understanding intelligence by exploring the role that the individual culture plays, as well as the mechanisms used in assessing intelligence and cognitive ability. The chapter concludes by offering you some samples of modern cognitive and intelligence tests that are described as “non-biased” or “culture-free” (i.e., the Raven Standard Progressive Matrices).

## Chapter 9

Developmental Psychology is one of the more interesting and popular chapters for many students because we look at infant and children’s behavior from the psychological perspective. In addition to exploring the physical growth process among infants through young adulthood, we explore related concepts to physical growth, such as moral reasoning, ethics and interpersonal development and communication throughout the growth process through late adulthood. This is a very important chapter for individuals who are pursuing careers involving child-care or patient care (i.e., nursing or children’s daycare employment). In this chapter, we explore some of the more traditional theorists (i.e., Piaget, Erikson and Kohlberg) and we will also introduce some of the more recent and newer theories in explaining children’s behavior. This chapter first explores conception and the factors related to prenatal care, and then progresses to childhood development. Important theorists that will be discussed include the classical psychologists (Jean Piaget, John Bowlby, Eric Ericson, Lawrence Kohlberg) to more progressive and innovative theorists (Vygotsky, Carol Gilligan, and David Elkind). We will attempt to describe behavior from a chronological and developmental perspective

(i.e., stages of physical development) and focus also on the moral, ethical and interpersonal factors associated with child development. We will conclude our chapter by revisiting the ageless controversy over the two primary and dynamic influences involving human behavior: Environmental variables (“nurture”) or genetics (“nature”) and the interaction of each variable.

## Chapter 10

Human Sexuality, gender identification and gender roles. Perhaps no other topic in psychology has become more prone to misinformation and confusion than human sexuality. This chapter hopes to address some of the confusion by presenting scientific information and theory in a clear and objective format. We hope to discuss a variety of topics, including the early historical development of human sexuality theory and the role that religion has played in distorting some of this information. We continue our discussion by reviewing common theories of gender identification, and thus we explore the controversial nature-nurture issue which seems to be especially sensitive in the human sexuality area. We also explore the role of biology and hormones, as more and more technology helps us to understand the delicate balance between sexual orientation, environmental forces and our genetic structure. We conclude our chapter by focusing on health trends and the rapid proliferation of sexually transmitted diseases.

## Chapter 11

Motivation and emotion have historically been important topics of discussion in psychology as researchers and educators have attempted to better understand the causal factors that are associated with human behavior. For example, can climate and temperature be factors attributed to various forms of behavior, such as aggression or altruism? To what degree are motivating factors an element of physiological responses (i.e., hunger and thirst) and to what degree are behaviors influenced by environmental variables? To what degree are psychological factors an element in motivation? In other words, if we provide the basics of survival (i.e., “food and water”) would we still feel that something is missing in our lives? Clearly, the answer is yes – we need other forms of stimulation to keep us motivated throughout our life. Other interesting topics to be discussed in this chapter include traits and dispositions that seem to influence our