What Is Psychology?

• **Outline for the unit:**
  1. Defining psychology
  2. What kinds of work do psychologists do?
  3. History of psychology
  4. Modern approaches to psychology

What Is Psychology?

• **Comes from Greek**
  psykhe + logia
  “mind” “study of”

What Is Psychology?

• **DEFINITION**
  the scientific study of behavior and mental processes

• **Science**
  a way of getting knowledge about the world based on observation

What Is Psychology?

• **Behavior**
  an observable action
  —public

• **Mental processes**
  all the things we can do with our minds
  —private

What Is Psychology?

• **The Goals of Psychology**
  1. Observe behavior & mental processes
  2. Describe
  3. Explain
  4. Predict
  5. Control

What Is Psychology?

• **Social science**
  Focus on societies and the individuals in them
  Examples:
  • Psychology
  • Sociology
  • Political science
  • Economics

What Is Psychology?

• **What is a theory?**
  —Set of statements about why something is the way it is and happens the way it does
  • For a theory to be “good” or useful, it must allow for predictions
  • For a theory to be scientific, it must be testable

What Psychologists Do

• Psychology is 2nd most popular major
• 93,000 psychologists in U.S.
• You must have a “graduate degree” (e.g., Ph.D., Masters)
What Psychologists Do

- Three main fields
  1. Human services
  2. Applied psychology
  3. Research psychology

What Psychologists Do

- **Human Services**
  - Involves helping people with mental health problems

Human Services: Clinical Psychologist

- Most common Ph.D. in psych
- Greatest career options
- Very competitive
- Serious mental illness
- Psychological testing, psychotherapy, research
- Work in private practice, hospitals, colleges

Human Services: Counseling Psychologist

- Usually deal with “day to day” problems (i.e., adjustment problems)
- Typical problems involve relationships, like marriage and family problems, parenting, etc.

Human Services: Psychiatrist

- A medical doctor (M.D.) who specializes in mental disorders
- Tend to focus on the biological causes of mental problems
- Many use psychiatric medications to treat disorders

Human Services: School Psychologist

- Focus on problems that interfere with learning
- Give tests to identify learning disabilities

Applied Psychology

- Using psychology to solve problems in real world situations

Applied Psychology: Sports Psychologist

- Tries to understand and improve sports performance
- Topics of interest:
  - Relaxation
  - Visualization
  - Coaching styles
  - Exercise and mental health

Applied Psychology: Forensic Psychologist

- Work within legal system
  - Police selection
  - Eyewitness testimony
  - Expert witnesses in insanity trials

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Applied Psychology: Consumer Psychologist
- Study behavior of consumers
  - How environment influences consumers
  - How marketers can persuade consumers

Research Psychology
- Interested in learning about behavior, but not necessarily applying what they learn

Research Psychology
- Developmental Psychologist
  - Studies how people change throughout the life span
- Cognitive Psychologist
  - Studies mental processes such as memory, perception, and learning
- Social Psychologist
  - Studies how an individual is affected by other people, and how people interact

History of Psychology
- Goes back thousands of years
- Emphasis on supernatural
- Skulls from 6500 BC have holes put in them to release "evil spirits"

History of Psychology
- Ancient cultures
  - Thoughts, dreams sent by gods
  - 6th Century B.C.
  - "The mind"

History of Psychology
- Greeks
  - Socrates
    - "Know thyself"
  - Aristotle
    - Peri Psyches (About the Mind)
  - Hippocrates
    - Abnormal behavior caused by abnormal brain

History of Psychology
- Middle Ages
  - Demonic possession
  - "Water-float test" torture, exorcism
  - Still drilling holes in head!

History of Psychology
- Early Treatments for Mental Illness
  - The Circulating Swing
  - The Tranquilizing Chair
  - The Crib

History of Psychology
- 17th Century: Scientific Revolution
  - Focus on observations, not superstitions
- 19th: Phrenology
  - Examining shape of head or skull could tell about a person's mental abilities
**History of Psychology**
- 1879: Leipzig, Germany
  - Year psychology was “born”
  - **Wilhelm Wundt** founded first lab for scientific study of mental processes

**Early Approaches to Psychology**
- **Structuralism**
  - Wilhelm Wundt
  - Studied **objective sensations and subjective feelings**
  - Used introspection (1832-1920)

- **Functionalism**
  - William James
  - Studied how the mind used its abilities to function in environment (1842-1910)

- **Psychoanalysis**
  - Sigmund Freud
  - Unconscious conflicts influence behavior
  - Sex and aggression are important drives (1856-1939)

- **Gestalt Psychology**
  - Max Wertheimer, et al.
  - Studied the person’s whole experience, not just pieces of it (1880-1943)

- **Behaviorism**
  - John B. Watson
  - Psychology must be defined as the study of observable behavior (1878-1958)

- **Behaviorism**
  - B.F. Skinner
  - Many believe he’s the most influential psychologist ever
  - All behavior is based on rewards and punishments (1904-1990)

**Biological Perspective**
- How do the brain, nervous system, and hormones affect behavior?

**Learning Perspective**
- How do our experiences and the environment affect our behavior?
  - habits, effects of media on behavior
Cognitive Perspective
• How do our thoughts affect our behavior?
  – emotions, memory, language

Humanistic Perspective
• How does our self-concept affect our behavior?
  – Stresses free will

Psychodynamic Perspective
• How do unconscious motives and early childhood experiences affect us?
  – More focus today on conscious choice

Sociocultural Perspective
• How does culture affect behavior?
  – gender, ethnicity, bilingualism