

SYLLABUS

PSYCHOLOGY 111

SPRING 2008

INSTRUCTOR: JOHN PERCH

PSY K111 General Psychology I

Instructor: John Perch (LPC) Licensed Professional Counselor

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Disability Support

Students with diagnosed disabilities should see me immediately, if you wish to exercise your right to accommodations. You will also have to meet with the disabilities specialist on the Mohegan Campus (892-5751) to provide proof of disability and to decide which accommodations are appropriate for this kind of class. I cannot make accommodations without this recommendation. I have advocated for students with disabilities for many years and I am completely committed to supporting you in meeting course objectives.

Course Description

(See catalogue) Special emphasis will be on the relevance of topics to daily living. You will not be expected to discuss sensitive personal issues in class. However, because the relevance of ideas to personal experience enhances learning, you are encouraged to make note of examples in your study guide, notebook, or personal journal. These notations will be for private use only.

Learning Objectives

The course will be taught with short lectures, discussion, media use and any method which promises to stimulate thinking, reflection, and personal application.

Learning more effectively is a major goal of this course and you will be asked to base your reading and study methods on established principles of learning theory covered in Modules 24-28.

You will be asked to at least try to take notes in class and from readings using the double column, or "Cornell" note-taking method. Those of you who have found note taking difficult in the past, may find this method made to order. Those of you who use the Cornell Method throughout the course, will be granted extra points in determining the final grade.

You will be encouraged to digest reading material using a "Survey, Question, and Review" method, which improves comprehension and retention.

You may resist trying new techniques. This is perfectly normal and you will discover why in this course! Behavior change can be uncomfortable, but your growth as a person depends on it. Taking the initiative in advancing your self interest by trying new things can be worth the effort. In the case of new learning techniques, once you are rewarded by saving time, learning more, and performing better on examinations, you will be glad you gave these methods a chance.

Attendance

The community college classroom is a special place in higher education, where adults (teachers) are guiding fellow adults (students). I have heard it said by students many times in my career, "... I feel respected as an adult and it makes me want to do my best." In recognition of your self interest and mature sense of responsibility, I will not take attendance. I can honestly say, however, that with more than three absences, your chance of passing the course plummets, since many exam questions will be based on in-class experience and non-textbook assigned reading.

Punctuality

Out of respect for those who get to class on time, class will begin on time. I will not repeat material either in class or after class for those who are late. Ask classmates for assistance, if occasional lateness is unavoidable. See me if you have a practical problem that will force you to be late more than occasionally.

Grading

There will be six (6) quizzes, each worth 100 points. Questions will be taken directly from the Student Study Guide, the publisher's test bank, and from class notes and presentations.

The final grade will be the average of five (5) quizzes. **The lowest score of six, zero (0) for a missed quiz, will be dropped.** The final average will be the average of five quizzes plus points for presentations (ranging from 5-20) and using the Cornell Method (10), divided by five (5).

You will know your score immediately following each quiz and you can tell how well you are mastering the material by keeping track of your average and using the standard score ranges, for example, 70-72 = C-, 73-77 = C, 78-79 = C+ etc.

My general policy is that there will be no make-ups for missed quizzes. It has been my experience that circumstances resulting in missing more than one quiz are rare. Dropping the lowest score takes care of 99% of misses. I will deal with exceptions on an individual basis. **Quiz #6 must be taken by everyone.**

Withdrawing from class

If you cannot complete the course for any reason, **WITHDRAW** by contacting the registrar's office in person or by phone (1-860-892-5756)

April 29 is the last day to withdraw from class. If you are receiving financial aid you must fill out paperwork with that office.

FAILURE TO WITHDRAW PROPERLY WILL RESULT IN AN AUTOMATIC "F", which will stay of your transcript until hell freezes over. Since you don't want to have to explain a grade like this to a future employer, do your utmost to comply with these requirements.

Assignments:

Reading psychology for the beginning student can be like reading an unfamiliar foreign language. Notice the vocabulary highlights in each chapter of your text. They are there for a reason. The author knows you have to learn basic terms in order to understand broader concepts. Try not to turn away from these unfamiliar words. Look them up in the text glossary. If you can't decipher concepts after a few tries, make a special attempt to discuss them in class. This is where some real learning takes place with the help of the instructor and/or fellow students. It takes effort and a little courage, but this is the way some permanent learning takes place. It can be very satisfying.

Also, the amount of detail in your text is intimidating. I know from experience that most students of Psychology only start to reach a confident level of learning and understanding after completing several courses! The introductory text is a mini encyclopedia. All the basic facts are there, but not in the depth required to master the subject. Therefore, the essence of my job, as instructor, is to highlight and explain key ideas. Understanding these will help you form a base to build on.

It is my bias that these ideas be useful to the general student, as well as the Psychology major. The general student may not pursue Psychology further than a course or two, but their awareness of essential principles will enhance everyday living and complement other subjects.

The schedule for the semester is tentative, because flexibility is important to keeping a class moving forward. Changes will be announced promptly.

This is a very strong suggestion. Keep up with the assignments and workbook reviews. Better yet, push a week ahead and stay that way for the semester. You will feel in control and learn more when reviewing familiar material several times. Remember, the experience of control is naturally rewarding in all your endeavors and keeps stress and anxiety to a minimum.

Personalizing Learning: Using the SQ3R Method to engage my interest in what I was reading.

As I surveyed (S) modules 5 and 6, I made a short list of topics I didn't know much about. I made up some relevant questions (Q) about each based on my personal experience.

For example, in the module on the nervous system, I found the phrase "neural communication" confusing. First, what did neural mean? I had to look it up (glossary or dictionary). Communication? I thought of interpersonal interaction and talking. I thought of telephones, the internet, satellites, cell phones, the way whales, dolphins and sharks signal under water. Neural communication. Information being transmitted by our nerves? Are we wired like a house or a telephone switchboard? Are the same physics involved? Was there more to it than simple mechanics?

Lately, at age 62, I notice my grip on objects isn't as automatically strong as it used to be and I drop things occasionally. I can consciously exert more grip pressure and this solves the problem. I wonder what's going on here, something I have always taken for granted (gription) as my wife refers to it, and the willful compensation that can be made. Will there be a day when my conscious will power won't work?

In sum, I had a bunch of personally important curiosities about the nervous system and how parts of the body communicate and what the brain had to do with it. I went on to do the same exercise with other topics, for example:

The chemicals of neural transmission: the "neurotransmitters"
The brain's natural opium
"street drugs" and the brain
The nervous system parts
peripheral network
Central system: spinal cord and brain
Endocrine system-home of hormones
Brain tests: EEG, PET, MRI

It took a few minutes to generate a list of a dozen questions or so for the two modules.

Only then did I start to read for understanding (R), making note of details, and after some time away from reading (perhaps I had been at it for 20 minutes to a half hour, when I usually start to fatigue and my attention wanders), I coming back to it and reviewing (R#2) what I had already read. Finally, after another break, I came back to use a vocabulary list I had made, to recite(R#3) what I remembered. Whoa.... There were big holes in my recall and I realized that I knew more than when I started, but I really hadn't learned the material thoroughly enough to recall specifics. And this is what exams would require.

Finally, I kept going back to my "cue" words to review and recite until I got it. The number of times? It depended on how much I wanted a good grade, performance that reflected my ability. Trust me, the older I got, the more I worked at really learning.