

**Subject group and course title: Individuals and Societies-Psychology**

**Course purpose:**

**Aims and objectives**

- Understanding of human mental processes and behavior from a biological, cognitive and sociocultural approach through the study of different research studies, theories and models.
- Application of the above understanding to at least one area of study.
- Understanding in general, that human psychology (mental processes and behavior) is a complex, dynamic phenomenon which can be studied from different perspectives and disciplines.
- Understanding of the different research methods and ethical considerations in psychological research
- Application of the above understanding in their own inquiry.
- Ability to evaluate research studies and develop critical inquiry skills based on their understanding of research methods and ethical considerations.

**Curriculum outline:**

- Biological approach to understanding behaviour
- Cognitive approach to understanding behaviour
- Sociocultural approach to understanding behavior
- Psychology of human relationships

The **HL** students will **additionally** cover the following the following topics:

- Health Psychology
- the role of animal research in understanding human behaviour
- cognitive processing in the digital world
- the influence of globalization on individual attitudes, identities and behavior
- Qualitative and quantitative research methods (as there will be direct assessment of their understanding through Paper 3)

**Topics covered (in order taught during the two years)**

### **First Year SL and HL:**

-Research methodology: Quantitative research, some basic concepts of qualitative research, ethics in psychological research

- Biological approach to understanding behavior: Localization, neuroplasticity, neurotransmitters and behavior, techniques to study the brain in relation to behavior, hormones and behavior, pheromones and behavior, genes and behavior, evolutionary explanation of behavior.

- Cognitive approach to understanding behavior: Concepts and principles of the cognitive approach, schema theory, reliability of cognitive processes: reconstructive memory.

-Overview of the requirements of internal assessment, on planning the investigation, on writing the introduction, exploration and appendices.

### **First Year HL (in addition to the above):**

\_ Qualitative research methods (as there will be direct assessment of their understanding through Paper 3).

- The role of animal research in understanding human behavior (from Biological approach to behavior)

-From Health Psychology: Determinants of Health, Health problem 1: obesity and being overweight.

### **Second Year SL and HL:**

- Overview of the requirements of internal assessment, on conducting the analysis, on writing the evaluation and references.

-Cognitive approach to behavior: Models of memory, thinking and decision making, biases in thinking and decision making, emotion and cognition

- Sociocultural approach to behavior: cultural influences on individual attitudes, identities and behavior-culture and cultural norms, cultural origins of behavior and cognition-cultural dimensions, the individual and the group-social cognitive theory, social identity theory and stereotyping

-Psychology of human relationships: Personal dynamics, group dynamics, prejudice and discrimination, origins of conflict and conflict resolution, social responsibility

### **Second Year HL (in addition to the above):**

The **HL** students will **additionally** cover the following the following topics:

-Health Psychology: Social cognitive explanations of health problems, promoting health, health problem 2: stress.

- Cognitive processing in the digital world (from Cognitive approach to behavior)

- The influence of globalization on individual attitudes, identities and behavior (from Sociocultural

approach to behavior)

### Assessment model

1. All (SL and HL) students will need to demonstrate

- knowledge and comprehension of key terms, concepts, theories and research studies in psychology.
- knowledge and comprehension of the biological, cognitive and sociocultural approaches to mental processes and behaviour.
- knowledge and comprehension of research methods used in psychology.

2. The students will also need to demonstrate

- an ability to use examples of psychological research and psychological concepts to formulate an argument in response to a specific question.
- application and analysis of a range of psychological theories and research studies.
- application and analysis of the knowledge relevant to areas of applied psychology.

3. All students will also need to show an ability for synthesis and evaluation of the contribution of psychological theories, research to understanding human and applied psychology.

4. Finally, students will also need to

- Demonstrate the acquisition of skills required for experimental design, data collection and presentation, data analysis and the evaluation of a simple experiment while demonstrating ethical practice.
- Work in a group to design a method for a simple experimental investigation, organize the investigation and record the required data for a simple experiment.
- Write a report of a simple experiment.

**HL** students will **also** need to demonstrate adequate analytical skills of qualitative and quantitative research in psychology and an ability to evaluate research scenarios from a methodological and ethical perspective.

### Assessment

Frequent assignments after the coverage of a chapter or of some basic concepts –with detailed feedback back- constitute one main type of formative assessment. Discussions in class, activities, group or individual projects and flipped classroom constitute additional types of formative assessment. Quizzes and exams contribute mostly to summative type of assessment.

Through Paper 1, section A, the students are assessed for the ability to focus on the question, knowledge and understanding and use of research studies to support their argument, while through Paper 1, section B, and Paper 2, the students are additionally assessed for their critical thinking, clarity and organization. It is through paper 3 that the HL students will demonstrate their analytical skills of qualitative and quantitative research in psychology and their ability to evaluate research scenarios from a

methodological and ethical perspective.

Through the choice of their own experiment and careful methodology, the students will demonstrate their understanding and ability to apply their research skills.

**How are key concepts served (methodology)?** Key concepts are first defined. Then examples are presented. Afterwards, the students are asked to present their own examples, as close as possible to real life situations. Activities are used to demonstrate better the key concepts and related research studies are presented so that the students get a clear understanding of how key concepts are investigated in a scientific way. The results and evaluation of the related research studies demonstrate often the complexity a key concept.

**How does the course foster international mindedness?**

The whole material of this course fosters international mindedness through the exposure of the students to research studies conducted at different parts of the world. The students come even more in contact with international mindedness through the topics on “Sociocultural approach to behavior”, “Psychology of Human relationships” and “Health Psychology”, but also through the concept of Schemas (among others) from the “Cognitive approach to behavior”. By studying the above topics, the students acquire a basic understanding of how humans are affected by their culture and society and how in turn, themselves too, affect their own culture and society. Simultaneously, the students are able to recognize through the whole material, but especially through the “Biological approach to behavior” and the basic concepts of the cognitive and social approaches, that human beings behaviors’ are defined by common physiological, cognitive and social principles. Related discussions and activities in class as well as attendance of related videos increase the fostering of international mindedness in class.

**How are IB Learner Profile attributes promoted?** The students are required to regularly inquire by themselves sources, especially research studies related to specific key concepts. The concepts inquired are also explored from different perspectives (e.g. physiological, cognitive, social), disciplines and sometimes across different cultures promoting open mindedness and a balanced, synthetic way of dealing with the world. Moreover, the students are required to analyze the methodology of the studies, critically think about it as well as about the results of each study and make comparisons with the methodology and results of similar studies. The above gives the students the opportunity to reflect on the progress, difficulties and endeavors of social sciences as well as of themselves as possible, future, social scientists, while conducting their own experiment and writing their own paper. It is mainly through in class activities and group projects as well as through their IA, that the students learn to collaborate, take initiatives, communicate effectively. The experiences of others are appreciated both through the readings of the course but also through the actual interaction with classmates and teachers. The same with caring, respect and integrity. The above values are cultivated both through the actual material, where the students are exposed to studies aiming towards the improvement of humanity, finding solutions to

problems, but also through their interaction for projects with their own classmates. Integrity is further promoted through their interactions with classmates for projects as well as through their exposure to the transparency of the methodology of the research studies they study. Learning about the ethical considerations while conducting an experiment and reporting the results and implementing them in their own assignments and paper (IA) constitute probably more official proofs that the students learn to pursue the value of integrity.

**How does the course meet student needs via ATL?** The students are often asked throughout the course and after a few concepts are covered, to answer questions, comparing e.g. concepts, promoting the Research ATL skill. The Self –Management skill is practiced through activities, where the students have to read e.g. a tutorial and practice related exercises or noting down studies which use a specific brain imaging technology. The Thinking ATL skill is practiced when students are asked to look for overlaps between concepts or conduct a cost-benefit analysis of conducting an ethically challenging research study. The Social ATL skill is practiced through some role play activities, when e.g. the students are asked to play the “investor” game in class or collaborate with classmates on how to decide about the methodology of a study to achieve a specific goal. The Communication ATL skill is practiced through flipped classrooms or asking students to explain, presenting their arguments clearly, why they would choose one study vs. another. Most of the times, more than one ATL skills are practiced simultaneously.

**Describe connections with CAS** The students often become enthusiastic while studying some experiments (e.g. Glanzer and Cunitz, 1966) and/or learning some new information (e.g. about the determinants of obesity) and take the initiative to experiment with other non-psychology classmates and/or present material from the psychology course in school events.

**Describe connections with TOK** The students throughout each chapter are asked questions where inductive or deductive reasoning are used as well as experimentation and observation as additional ways of obtaining knowledge. The students e.g. are asked to discuss how some psychology concepts are used in other disciplines, explore concepts from a philosophical point of view, discuss the scientific methods in relation to Karl Popper and Thomas Kuhn theories or discuss to what extent the results of a study on human relations and hormones can be extended to relations between countries (e.g. De Dreu et al., 2012). Experimenting themselves too by playing e.g. the “Prisoner’s dilemma” constitute the main way to understand the game theory.

**Recommended resources** <https://www.ibo.org>

**Instructor’s name** Tina Stathopoulou

Platon Diploma