

History of Psychology

Spring, 2026

Course: This is a survey course designed to provide you with a synthetic overview of the major people and ideas that have shaped psychology. In short, this course will be a whirlwind tour of the key events in the history of psychology "from Adam" up through about the 1990s.

"The fewer the words the better the prayer" Martin Luther

Text: *Hergenhahn's An Introduction to the History of Psychology*, Henley, 9th edition.

"The great use of life is to spend it for something that outlasts it" William James

The Basics: Do the reading. If you do I promise you will find this class both educational and easy (heck - maybe even entertaining!), if you don't—well—not so much. Let me be blunt, if you do not do the readings you almost certainly will fail this course. Indeed, and despite this class having a reputation for being hard - 100% of the people who did the reading and regularly attended have passed each term - most making an A or B.

Also, keep in mind that a syllabus sometimes shifts a little as the course unfolds - at some point we may get behind (or maybe ahead). I say that by way of noting the importance of class attendance, as you will be held responsible for any change in plans announced in class. The other basic admonition every syllabus must include is that cheating (broadly defined) is not allowed. In this class **that absolutely does include the use of AI technology** to write part or all of your assignments. Or, as the university likes me to say: "All students enrolled at the University shall follow the tenets of common decency and acceptable behavior conducive to a positive learning environment. (See Student's Guide Handbook, Policies and Procedures, Conduct)." If you have any questions about what constitutes cheating please see me. Also, note that "The Counseling Center at A&M-Commerce, located in the Halladay Building, Room 203, offers counseling services, educational programming, and connection to community resources for students. Students have 24/7 access to the Counseling Center's crisis assessment services by calling 903-886-5145. For more information regarding Counseling Center events and confidential services, please visit www.tamuc.edu/counsel." Last... Be advised that only qualified law enforcement officers or those who are otherwise authorized to carry a concealed handgun in the State of Texas are permitted to do so. Pursuant to Penal Code (PC) 46.035 and A&M-Commerce Rule 34.06.02.R1, even license holders may not carry a concealed handgun in restricted locations.

"When in doubt, tell the truth" Mark Twain

Format: In general this will be a lecture course, though I (seriously) encourage you to interrupt me with your thought-provoking questions at any time. Since this is an upper-division class I would be happy to see it materialize somewhat like a seminar, that is, with people jumping in with insightful observations frequently.

“Never interrupt your enemy while he is making a mistake” Napoleon

Grades: There will be three in-class tests and three short (10 page-ish) papers. The tests will be worth 50 total points and will be composed of roughly half multiple choice questions (mostly from the reading) and essay questions (equaling the other half of the points, and being drawn mostly from the lecture).

Final grades will be based on your 5 best scores from these 6 assignments, plus any extra-credit you may do. The grade scale is shown below. As for extra-credit, I am a believer in the idea. Traditionally students participate in research studies to earn extra-credit. If not many such studies are available we can make alternative arrangements like writing extra papers. Those interested in extra-credit should speak with me before doing something to ensure that it will count.

The Grade Scale will be:	A=	230 and above (~92%)
	B=	210 to 229 (~84%)
	C=	190 to 209 (~76%)
	D=	170 to 189 (~68%)

“I have worked as hard and as well as I could, and no man can do more than this” Darwin

Papers:

We will talk about the nuts and bolts here by-and-by, and these must be submitted via the course shell.

Paper 1 Topics - pick one of these three

Read one the Plato's Socratic dialogues. Extend that work after a "new sophist" who holds a position common to a famous psychologist (e.g., Piaget on child development, Skinner on learning), and who joins the conversation.

Read Marcus Aurelius' *Meditations*; write an essay on how it relates to one or more aspects of clinical or social psychology here in 2026 America.

Find an academic work (or works) from anthropology or archaeology about the Neolithic Age that gives you some insights about the "social psychology" of Stone Age peoples. Discuss that.

Paper 2 Topics - pick one of these three

Read Darwin's *Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals*, then write an essay on its importance for the history of animal psychology.

Read James' *Varieties of Religious Experience*, then write an essay on the relationship between its psychology and religion relevant for today.

Read Skinner's *Walden Two*, then write a speculative fiction story on what life would be like if Skinner were the World Overlord.

Paper 3 Topics - pick one of these three

Read either Freud's *Civilization and Its Discontents* or his *Psychopathology of Everyday Life*. Discuss how what Freud actually says therein differs from what you expected.

Read Frankl's *Man's Search for Meaning*. Discuss the relevance of his experience and existentialism for psychology in 2026.

Read *Gould's Mismeasure of Man*. Discuss how intelligence testing has been used, and how it *should* be used in the public schools here in 2026.

“You cannot teach a man anything: You can only help him find it within himself” Galileo

Late Penalties and Make-ups: Papers turned in late will be charged a late penalty. The first missed exam will become your drop grade. If you miss more than one exam, you will need to see me about what to do for a make-up.

“We judge ourselves by what we feel capable of doing, while others judge us by what we have already done” Longfellow

The Schedule of Events (have the reading listed that day done before class)

January

12 M	Course Overview	
14 W	Basic Issues in History	Chapter 1
16 F	Basic Themes and Issues in the Philosophy of Psychology	
19 M	NO CLASS	
21 W	In the beginning...	
23 F	Pre-Socratic Philosophy in Greece and Elsewhere	Chapter 2
26 M	Plato and Aristotle	
28 W	Later Greek thought and Rome	Chapter 3
30 F	The Middle Ages and Islamic Influences	

February

2 M	Renaissance Philosophy and Science	Chapter 4
4 W	Descartes and his contemporaries	
6 F	British Empiricism	Chapter 5
9 M	Associationism and French Sensationalism Positivism	
11 W	Early Rationalism: Kant and Hegel	Chapter 6
13 F	The Scottish School and German Faculty Theories	
16 M	Romanticism and Existentialism	Chapter 7
18 W	TEST-1 and PAPER-1	
20 F	Early Physiology and Phrenology	Chapter 8
23 M	Early Psychophysics	
25 W	Voluntarism and Wundt	Chapter 9
27 F	Structuralism and Titchener	

March

2 M	Phenomenological Alternatives to Structuralism	
4 W	Evolution and Animal Psychology	Chapter 10
6 F	Galton and British Psychology	
9-13	SPRING BREAK	
16 M	Individual Differences	
18 W	American Psychology through William James	Chapter 11
20 F	James' Contemporaries, then Functionalism	
23 M	Thorndike	

25 W	Russian Psychology	Chapter 12
27 F	Watson and Behaviorism	
30 M	Positivism Revisited & Guthrie Hull	Chapter 13
<i>April</i>		
1 W	Skinner	
3 F	Tolman and beyond	
6 M	TEST-2 and PAPER-2	
8 W	Gestalt Psychology	Chapter 14
10 F	Psychopathology before Freud	Chapter 15
13 M	Freud's Psychology	Chapter 16
15 W	More Freud...	
17 F	Freudians and Beyond	
20 M	Existential and Humanistic Alternatives	Chapter 17
22 W	Psychobiology	Chapter 18
24 F	Cognitive Psychology	Chapter 19
27 M	Social Psychology	
29 W	Cognitive Science	
<i>May</i>		
1 F	...and Beyond	Chapter 20

Final exam period **TEST-3 and PAPER-3**

“Chance favors the prepared mind” Louis Pasteur

The Instructor: I am Tracy B. Henley, PhD. I should generally be around the Department every class day from early morning until mid-afternoon. If that is not good for you, see me before/after class and we can find an alternative time for an appointment. You can also contact me at: tracy.henley@tamuc.edu

“We will either find a way, or we will make one” Hannibal
