

A-Level Psychology

Welcome to the Alevel Psychology course. This course will make you think about how people behave and interact, as well as how the brain works. Most importantly, it's a course that makes you evaluate the information you're given, allowing you to make your own judgements of existing research and theories.

We will study a range of topics including social influence, memory, biopsychology and forensic psychology. These topics will be supported by understanding how psychologists design and run experiments, as well as looking at issues and debates in psychology. Questions such as the role of nature vs nurture in determining behaviour, how cognitive behaviour therapy can be used to treat schizophrenia, why police interview witnesses in a particular way, and why we follow rules in social situations will all be addressed in the next two years.

This qualification will allow you to demonstrate a range of skills that will be applicable to your next steps in life, whatever they might be. Critical thinking, data analysis, communication with your peers, decision making and literature reviewing are all areas that you will be developing.

I am really looking forward to starting this course with you in September.

Mrs Watson

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Understanding the course

Specification	AQA Psychology A Level
Exams	All exams are at the end of Y13 Paper 1: Introductory ideas in Psychology (2 hours) Paper 2: Psychology in context (2 hours) Paper 3: Issues and options in psychology (2 hours)
Teacher	Mrs C Watson

Course requirements

Please come prepared to your first lesson with the following materials:




- Pencil case with black pens, pencils, ruler, rubber
- A scientific calculator
- 1 folder (you will also need a lever arch folder for organising your notes at home)
- Lined paper or a lined exercise book for independent study
- A diary

In September, you will be issued with a text book that covers the Year 12 content.

Summer bridging work

To ensure you start the year as successfully as possible, please come to your first lesson having completed the following tasks.

Consolidate

Task	Time expected	Complete
<p>Maths booklet</p> <p>Complete the booklet to practise some GCSE maths skills that will be relevant to the Alevel Psychology course</p>	1 hour	
<p>Skills booklet</p> <p>Complete the booklet to practise some GCSE science skills that will be relevant to the Alevel Psychology course</p>	1 hour	
<p>Learn about bias and representation in psychological research. This will build on topics you have learnt about in PSHE.</p> <p>After accessing the following resources, summarise the main points (4-8 bullet points per resource)</p> <p>WEIRD Psychology – YouTube (8 minutes) This video is about the way that the bias towards subjects who are Western, Educated, Industrialized, Rich and Democratic affects how we understand human psychology.</p> <p>https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=460knOSnYak</p>  <p>Read this interview with Steven Roberts where he discusses racism in psychological research (Stanford News; 5 minutes)</p> <p>https://news.stanford.edu/stories/2020/06/psychological-research-racism-problem-stanford-scholar-says</p>  <p>Ted Talk: How to overcome our biases? Walk boldly toward them: Verna Myers</p> <p>https://www.ted.com/talks/verna_myers_how_to_overcome_our_biases_walk_boldly_toward_them?language=en</p> 	40 minutes	

Read this article on bias provides an overview of what unconscious biases are and why it is important to uncover them.

<https://www.learningforjustice.org/professional-development/test-yourself-for-hidden-bias>



Apply

Read the two reports on factors affecting social influence
Answer the questions below

Minority Influence - Consistency and Commitment (Tutor2U)

Social influence can occur when a minority (small group) changes the attitudes, beliefs and behaviours of a majority; this is known as minority influence.

Psychologists have identified different factors that can enhance the effectiveness of a minority, including: consistency, commitment and flexibility.

One of the most influential experiments of minority influence was conducted by Moscovici (1969). He wanted to see if a consistent minority could influence a majority to give an incorrect answer, in a colour perception task.

His sample consisted of 172 female participants who were told that they were taking part in a colour perception task. The participants were placed in groups of six and shown 36 slides, which were all varying shades of blue. The participants had state out loud the colour of each slide.

Two of the six participants were confederates (people working for the experimenter) and in one condition (consistent) the two confederates said that all 36 slides were green; in the second condition (inconsistent) the confederates said that 24 of the slides were green and 12 were blue.

Moscovici found that in the consistent condition, the real participants agreed on 8.2% of the trials, whereas in the inconsistent condition, the real participants only agreed on 1.25% of the trials. This shows that a consistent minority is 6.95% more effective than an inconsistent minority and that consistency is an important factor in minority influence.

Note: It is important to note that consistency and commitment are linked. If a minority is consistent in their view then they also are showing commitment to their cause. Another way a minority can show commitment is through sacrifices, which will be examined in the next section

Evaluation:

Moscovici used a bias sample of 172 female participants from America. As a result, we are unable to generalise the results to other populations, for example male participants, and we cannot conclude that male participants would respond to minority influence in the same way. Furthermore, research often suggests that females are more likely to conform and therefore further research is required to determine the effect of minority influence on male participants.

Moscovici has also been criticised for deceiving his participants, as participants were told that they were taking part in a colour perception test. This also means that Moscovici did not gain fully informed consent. Although it is seen as unethical to deceive participants, Moscovici's experiment required deception in order to achieve valid results. If the participants were aware of the true aim, they might have displayed demand characteristics and acted differently.

Minority Influence – Flexibility – Tutor2U

Moscovici demonstrates that consistency is an important factor for minority influence, however research also suggests that minorities require a degree of flexibility to remain persuasive and that rigid and dogmatic minorities are less effective.

Nemeth (1986) investigated the idea of flexibility in which participants, in groups of four, had to agree on the amount of compensation they would give to a victim of a ski-lift accident.

One of the participants in each group was a confederate and there were two conditions: 1) when the minority argued for a low rate of compensation and refused to change his position (inflexible); 2) when the minority argued for a low rate of compensation but compromised by offering a slightly higher rate of compensation (flexible). Nemeth found that in the inflexible condition, the minority had little or no effect on the majority, however in the flexible condition, the majority was much more likely to compromise and change their view.

Nemeth's research highlights the importance of flexibility but questions the idea of consistency. On the one hand, Moscovici shows that minorities need to be consistent, whereas Nemeth shows that minorities need to be flexible.

Questions

1. Briefly define "social conformity" in your own words
2. Moscovici investigated minority influence. Write a hypothesis for his study
3. Why weren't his results applicable to all populations?
4. Why didn't Moscovici gain fully informed consent from the participants?
5. Write a hypothesis for Nemeth's study
6. Did Nemeth's work support that of Moscovici? Why or why not?

Extend

RECOMMENDED Additional Prep:	
Online Articles / Journals	<p>https://openpsychologyjournal.com/</p> <p>https://www.tutor2u.net/psychology/blog</p> <p>Psychology Now (available for free on the BorrowBox app – you'll need an account with South Glos libraries)</p>
Podcast(s)	<p>PsychCrunch</p> <p>All in the Mind (BBC)</p> <p>TedTalks Psychology</p>
Films / Documentaries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ 12 Angry Men ✓ A Beautiful Mind ✓ The Blind Side ✓ Driving Miss Daisy ✓ Good Will Hunting ✓ Rain Man ✓ Regarding Henry ➤ Child of Our Time ➤ The Secret Life of Four Year Olds ➤ The Mind, Explained ➤ Limitless with Chris Hemsworth
Websites to explore	<p>https://www.nature.com/subjects/psychology/srep</p> <p>https://www.psychologytoday.com/gb/news</p>
Wider Reading (please do not buy these books, find them in a library if you are interested in the topics)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ The Man Who Mistook His Wife For a Hat and Other Clinical Tales (Oliver Sacks) ✓ 50 Great Myths of Popular Psychology: Shattering Widespread Misconceptions About Human Behavior (Scott O. Lilienfeld, Steven Jay Lynn, John Ruscio & Barry Beyerstein) ✓ The Social Animal (Elliot Aronson) ✓ Influence: Science and Practice (Cialdinin)