Welcome AP Psychology, Students and Parents!

I look forward to a challenging year teaching AP Psychology, which I hope proves to be both rigorous and fun for everyone in the classroom! We will be exploring the entire College Board curriculum, so we will move quickly! Self-motivation and organizational skills are necessities to be successful in this course (and in life)! The College Board AP Psychology course is designed as an introductory study of the behavior and mental processes of human beings and other animals. Students will gain exposure to a multitude of psychological principles, theories, phenomena, facts, and experiments that are associated with the major subfields of psychology.

The AP Psychology course at Lowell High School has been audited by the College Board and meets the requirements outlined by the College Board. All students enrolled in the LHS AP Psychology course are required to take the College Board Exam on Monday, May 1, 2017 to complete the course in good standing. AP Psychology is a course that requires rigorous study and proper time management.

I hope this class paves the way for students to become accustomed to habits that are essential for further education at the college/university level. If you have any questions during the school year, please email me: [sszecskas@lowell.k12.ma.us](mailto:sszecskas@lowell.k12.ma.us). Also, students are more than welcome to come in for extra help any morning…just touch base with me and I will arrange a specific time for us to work together!

Looking forward to a great year!

**Mr. Szecskas Mr. “Z”**

AP Psychology Teacher

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**I have read and reviewed the class rules, course goals and requirements with my child and I understand the expectations in AP psychology class this year. In addition, I understand that my child must take the College Board AP Psychology Exam on Monday, May 1, 2017 to complete the course in good standing.**

**Parent/Guardian’s Name (Please Print): \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**Parent/Guardian’s Signature: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**Parent/Guardian’s email: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**I have read and reviewed the class rules, course goals and requirements, and I understand the expectations in AP psychology class this year. In addition, I understand that I must take the College Board AP Psychology Exam on Monday, May 1, 2017 to complete the course in good standing.**

**Student Name (Please Print): \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**Student Signature: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**Student email: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

LHS AP Psychology

**Instructor:** Steve Szecskas

**Email:** [sszecskas@lowell.k12.ma.us](mailto:sszecskas@lowell.k12.ma.us)

**Course: AP Psychology**

**COURSE DESCRIPTION:**

***WELCOME*** to the AP Psychology course! Psychology is the scientific study of behavior and mental processes…how people behave and function. Topics covered include: past and contemporary theorists, research methods, physiology of the brain, memory, learning, language, perception, lifespan changes, normality and abnormality, social interactions, group influences on individuals, and therapies.

**POST-REQUISITE:** All students enrolled in the AP psychology course are required to take the College Board, AP Psychology Exam on Monday, May 1, 2017 at noon. Students will be required to pay for the exam at the time of registration. Further information will be made available after first semester. Any student who does not take the College Board exam may lose the AP-weight on their transcript and colleges may be notified that the course was not completed in good standing.

**COURSE OBJECTIVES:**

We will be addressing psychology from many different perspectives, and in many different ways, throughout this course. Aside from lectures, you can expect to participate in class activities and demonstrations, watch videos, and group work. By the end of the course you will be able to:

1. List, describe and define major psychological theories, theorists, principles, and concepts; and you will be able to use these terms in your everyday vocabulary.
2. List and describe psychology from different schools of thought
3. Describe and compare research methods commonly used in psychology along with identifying the ethical standards that govern the work of psychologists.
4. Integrate the use and representations of statistical information in graphs and charts
5. Apply psychological principles learned in class to case studies, in addition to better understand yourself, others, and situations and events in your own life
6. Develop critical thinking skills by becoming aware of the danger of blindly accepting or rejecting any psychological theory without careful, objective evaluation.
7. Explore social and cultural diversity, individual differences and similarities using case studies, journal articles, and class discussions.
8. Build on their organizational, reading, writing, discussion, and test taking skills.
9. Prepare to do acceptable work on the College Board AP Psychology Exam.

**TEXT BOOK**

David G. Myers. **Psychology (Eight Edition),** Worth Publishers, 2007.

C:\Documents and Settings\jcarey\Local Settings\Temporary Internet Files\Content.IE5\K2O7DAZB\MC900188131[1].wmf This text is required and will be provided to you during the course. You will be required to return the issued textbook at the end of the school year. (If you lose the textbook, you will be required to pay the replacement cost per the policies of Lowell High School.) In addition to the textbook, you may be required to access the textbook’s companion website ([www.worthpublishers/myers](http://www.worthpublishers/myers)) to complete assignments. This website includes excellent supplementary course material, including practice quizzes, flashcards, and web links for each module in the textbook. This is a great tool for studying! You will receive further instructions on accessing the website in class. Besides the textbook, additional readings will be distributed in class throughout the school year.

Helpful hints in reading the text include:

1. Keep up with the reading assignments! Don’t fall behind! Set a schedule for yourself and be disciplined enough to stick to it. Be prepared in class to discuss the reading assigned for that day and/or take a quiz on the material.
2. Learn to read more effectively.
   1. Read actively; don’t just look at the words. If you spend a half hour “reading” but are unable to recall anything when you are done, you have wasted your time. Reading a college-level text requires a great deal more effort and concentration than the latest *Twilight* novel!
   2. Do not try to read the entire chapter at once. Each chapter of your text is divided into several major sections.
   3. Do not ignore pictures, diagrams, tables, sidebars, etc. in your textbook. These features were added to your text for a reason. They make the text more interesting and usually provide important information.
   4. Preview the chapter before you start reading. Read the chapter summary when you finish.
   5. Take notes as you read. If you can condense a 30-page chapter to a few pages of good notes, it’s going to be much easier to review.

**HOW TO REACH ME**

I do have a classroom in the old building of LHS, room 319, where the course is being held. I will be teaching in room 319 during periods 3, 4B,5B, and 6B.

**By Email:** [sszecskas@lowell.k12.ma.us](mailto:sszecskas@lowell.k12.ma.us) This is the best way to reach me! I typically check my email multiple times a day!!! If you email me, you can generally expect to get a response within 24-hours.

**INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS:** During our scheduled class meetings you can expect to listen to lectures, work in small-groups, engage in class discussions, and view relevant audio-visual materials. This course will take on more of a college/university approach. College courses are different from secondary education courses in that they require more independent student learning. Class lectures and activities highlight, supplement, reinforce and clarify knowledge you have acquired from a thorough and careful reading of the textbook. Lectures are not a substitute for reading and studying the course material on your own.

**IN THE CLASSROOM**

***You are expected to abide by the policies in the Lowell High School 2012-2013 Parent and Student Handbook. In addition, I have included some other areas that I hope to see on a daily basis.***

**ATTENDANCE & PARTICIPATION**

As a student enrolled in the LHS AP Psychology, it is expected that you attend each class period on time. You will be required to follow the LHS attendance policy for this class. You will not be allowed to accumulate more than eight unexcused absences in a semester; otherwise you may be in jeopardy of not receiving credit for this course. Field trips, college visits, and other school business are considered excused absences from class; however, you are still required to make up any missed work as if you were present in class. **It is your responsibility** to check in with me via email, in person, or by classroom phone to see what you will be missing and what is due the following day.

Many of the graded assignments depend on being in class...Note that approximately **30%** of your grade comes from a combination of your personal accountability (attendance, participation, preparation, behavior, homework), in-class assignments, and quizzes that are completed in class and that cannot be made up. **If you are consistently absent from class, you will have a lower grade due to missed assignments and quizzes.** Missing the quizzes and in-class assignments could negatively impact your final grade! It is my experience the students who do best in a course are generally the ones that attend class regularly, complete the required readings and notes, and show up on time!

Understandably, there may be times in which you will have to come in to class late; if you do come in to class late, please try to get to your seat as quietly as possible. **If you are late, please be sure to remind me after class so I can mark you as “tardy” instead of “absent.”**

You are **strongly encouraged** to ask questions and participate in class activities and discussions to facilitate both your own and other students’ learning. This classroom is based on a model of reciprocal respect. You or others may hold strong opinions about some of the things we discuss in class: please remember to be respectful of others’ opinions and values.

**STUDENT BEHAVIOR**

Your behavior must be respectful of others and allow for an atmosphere conducive to learning. Disrespectful or disruptive behavior or engaging in non-course related activities during class will not be tolerated. This includes cheating on written assignments (plagiarism) or during quizzes and tests. **Using cell phones, lap tops, electronic messaging devices are not allowed in class.** Please talk to me if you have some extenuating circumstance that requires you to have access to your phone.

There are many things you can do that will help you succeed in this class. Here are my some recommendations:

🟑 Always come to class and be prepared by reading the assigned material.

🟑Write down course due dates from your syllabus into your agenda book and check it out frequently.

🟑Set up a schedule for yourself where you regularly devote at least 4 hours a week to working on class assignments and studying (understand that some weeks will require more than four hours).

🟑Email me when you have problems or questions about the class.

🟑Find a classmate who you can contact for your help if you need to miss a class and who you can study with before exams

**ACADEMIC INTEGRITY**

I’m deeply convinced that integrity is an essential part of any true educational experience, integrity on my part as a faculty member and integrity on your part as a student.

To take an easy example, would you want to be operated on by a doctor who cheated his way through medical school? Or would you feel comfortable on a bridge designed by an engineer who cheated her way through engineering school?

Those are easy examples, but what difference does it make if you as a student or I as a faculty member violate the principles of academic integrity in a psychology course, especially if it is not something you plan to major in?

For me, the answer is that integrity is important in this course precisely because integrity is important in all areas of life. If we don’t have integrity in the small things, if we find it possible to justify plagiarism or cheating or shoddy work in things that don’t seem important, how will we resist doing the same in areas that really do matter, in areas where money might be at stake, or the possibility of advancement, or our esteem in the eyes of others?

Personal integrity is not a quality we are born to naturally. It’s a quality of character we need to nurture, and this requires practice in both meanings of that word (as in practice the piano and practice a profession). We can only be a person of integrity if we practice it every day.

Academic integrity basically requires the same things of you as a student as it requires me as a teacher.

1. **Preparation for Class**

With regard to coming prepared for class, the principles of academic integrity suggest that you have a responsibility to yourself, to me, and to the other students to do the things necessary to put yourself in a position to make fruitful contributions to class discussion. This will require you to:

* 1. Read the text before coming to class
  2. Clarifying anything you are unsure of (including looking up words you don’t understand)
  3. Formulate questions you might have so you can ask them in class
  4. Think about the issues raised in readings

1. **In Class**

With regard to class sessions, the principles of academic integrity require you to take both me and your fellow students seriously and to treat us with respect. This requires that you:

* 1. Show up for all class sessions, unless you are simply unable to do so
  2. Come to class on time and not leave early
  3. Make good use of class time by being engaged in what’s going on
  4. Ask questions about anything you don’t understand, and not just for your own sake but because other students might not realize that they also don’t understand
  5. Participate in class discussions so as to contribute your thinking to the shared effort to develop understanding and insight (remember that even something that’s clearly wrong can contribute to the discussion by stimulating an idea in another students that s/he might not otherwise have had)
  6. Monitor your own participation as to allow for and encourage the participation of others
  7. Respect the other students by not making fun of them or their ideas, and by not holding side-conversations that distract them (and me) from the class discussion.

1. **With Regard to Exams**

With regard to exams, the principles of academic integrity require you to:

* 1. Come to class having done your best to prepare for the exam, including seeking my help if you need it
  2. Make full use of the time available to write the best answers you can
  3. Accept your limitations and not to try to get around them by using cheat sheets, copying, texting, using the internet off your phone, Tweeting, posting on Facebook, or seeking help from another student
  4. Not giving help to other students, or making it easy for them to copy off of you.

**STUDENT & TEACHER GOALS**

1. Students will develop a deeper understanding of the human mind.
   1. My goal is to take the material beyond theory and illustrate to you how you can use scientific research to make positive changes in your own lives. The intellectual art of taking theory and research and using it to shape our own realities is a sign of thorough comprehension.
   2. Your goal is to take the material learned in class and use it to make your life better.
2. Students will pass the AP Examination given in May.
   1. The material learned in this course is equivalent to an introductory psychology course at the university level. The AP Psychology course is designed to introduce students to the systematic and scientific study of the behavior and metal processes of human beings and animals.
   2. Students will be exposed to the psychological facts, principles, and phenomena associated with each of the major sub fields within psychology.
   3. Students will also learn about the methods psychologists use in their science and practice.

**COURSE CHARACTERISTICS**

1. This is an AP-level course. AP level attitudes, work habits and products are expected of all students.
2. This is a full-year course! It is expected that if you take this course, you will finish through with it and take the College Board AP Psychology Exam on Monday, May 1, 2017!
3. This class requires more reading and note taking than the typical high school honors class. Students who want to do well must complete all assignments on time. Students are expected to take notes when reading is assigned for homework. The teacher will not check the homework on a daily basis, but will be checked randomly…it is the student’s responsibility to complete the assignments.
4. Class time is important. Students who want to do well must attend and participate in class regularly.
5. Grades are based on the mastery of the material.
6. Learning is ultimately the responsibility of the student. In an Advanced Placement course, students are expected to be interested in their own learning and willing to devote the time necessary to explore the course content as fully as possible. A reading schedule and calendar will be provided whenever possible, so students can plan and prepare for the classes.
7. Students MUST take the College Board AP Psychology Exam in May – the fee is approximately $89, unless the student qualifies for a waiver. If the college you attend recognizes AP exam scores, you could be saving up to $2500!
8. If a student does not to take the College Board AP Psychology Exam in May, the weight of the class may be dropped to the college-level on the final transcript and the college you plan to attend in the fall may be notified that you did not finish the course in good standing.

**MATERIALS NEEDED FOR EACH CLASS**

Students are expected to bring the following materials to class each day:

* Highlighters (if you like to use them when taking notes)
* Psychology notebook or binder
* Notes from assigned readings (to be done prior to class discussion)
* Assignments due on that particular day
* Folder for handouts ~ unless you are using a binder

**NOTEBOOKS/BINDERS**

Each student is to have a notebook/binder and bring it to class each day. Notebooks/binders may be collected at any point in the year so please keep them as neat as possible. Along with reading the textbook, taking notes is the primary way you will learn psychology. The points below may help you in your note taking.

1. Take complete, dated class notes.
2. Your notes should be more than just what items are listed on the blackboard or overheads.
3. Put the notes in your own words. Don’t write down something you don’t understand without asking about it.
4. Leave some blank spaces on each page to make additions and/or clarifications.
5. Review your class notes each day while they are fresh in your mind. Expand them, clarify them, and add examples so they will make sense when you go back to study them later. Note anything that doesn’t make sense and ask questions in class the following day.
6. Before class look over the notes from the proceeding class. This is especially important if a topic is presented over multiple days.
7. If you are absent on class note days, you are responsible for obtaining the notes from other students.

**Grading Policy**

AP Psychology is a semester course that runs all year. You must maintain an average of 65% for each semester to receive the 2.5 credits per semester. The grading breakdown is as follows:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| AP Psychology\*\* |  |
| Unit Tests\* and Common Assessment | 40% |
| Accountability/HW | 20% |
| Quizzes | 20% |
| Formative Classwork/FRQ’s | 20% |

**During fourth quarter, the students may not have as many grades to work with…with the AP Exams and MCAS interruptions I have found that the fourth quarter grades are minimal. Therefore, during fourth quarter all grades may be averaged and may not follow the above grading policy!!!**

**\*Unit Tests are subject to the new second chance learning policy. (See student handbook for policy)**

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

**Unit Tests:**

At the conclusion of each unit, a multiple choice and/or free-response test will be given to model the College Board® Exam. Tests are announced well in advance, therefore, only those absent the day of the test should need to take a make-up.

* **If you are present in school, you are expected to take the scheduled test…there will be no extensions due to forgetting there was a test, a test in another class, or just not feeling ready for the test…remember the tests are scheduled well in advance, it’s up to you to manage your time properly!**
* If a student is absent the day before a test and is only missing a review, they are expected to take the test with the class.
* If a student is absent on the test date, they will take the test on the first day they return to school…make-up exams will be administered before school beginning at 7:20 AM.
* Students missing a number of days of the class prior to the test date must arrange a make-up schedule with the teacher.
* We may also have a Research Paper this year (TBA)

**Accountability:**

Accountability ranges from readings, written assignments, PsychSim 5 assignments, videos analysis, and worksheets. Assignments are expected to be complete by the due date.

* You will be given ample notice for assignments through a unit syllabus that will be distributed in class the first day of each new chapter. The course will be broken up into units of varying lengths and it is critical that you do not fall behind in the course work. This is not a self-paced class; I will not accept late work. Therefore, due dates should be viewed as the last possible date assignments will be accepted. Feel free to pass in assignments prior to this date. **Late work is not accepted without a discussion with me** **first and a reduction of your grade may occur for the late work that is permitted.**
* There will be assignments that require correcting in class…you will not be allowed to turn in those assignments late since we will go over them in class.
* Students who are in school on the day that homework is due and will be missing the class, MUST stop by and turn in their work prior to leaving the school building or attending housemaster, guidance, nurse, mediation, GEAR UP, or any other appointments which cause you to be absent from class; otherwise, the work will be considered late.
* It is tempting to “borrow” someone else’s work to “get it done.” Remember, you are only robbing yourself of an education. Homework will be checked on a regular basis, not necessarily in all AP classes on the same day, and not necessarily on a daily basis!

**Quizzes and FRQ’s:**

**Quizzes:**

* Announced and unannounced quizzes may be given at any time during the year.
* Usually announced quizzes are based on the activities of the previous day or the assigned reading for the current day’s class; however, there may be times that we revisit material from previous classes.

**FRQs:**

The free-response questions evaluate students' mastery of scientific research principles and their ability to make connections among constructs from different psychological domains. Students may be asked to analyze a general problem in psychology (e.g., depression, adaptation) using concepts from different theoretical frameworks or subdomains in the field, or they may be asked to design, analyze, or critique a research study. FRQs may be given during class time or as an extended assignment beyond the classroom.

**Common Assessments:**

To help prepare for the College Board® AP Psychology Exam in May, cumulative exams will be given at the end the first, second, and third quarters and prior to the College Board® Exam. Each test will cover all the material from the beginning of the school year to the current point in the class and will mirror the College Board® AP Psychology format of multiple choice and free-response questions. The questions will be taken from previous quizzes, unit tests, and past College Board® AP Psychology Exams

**EXTRA CREDIT**

There are no extra credit assignments in this course.

**Final Note:**

Please don’t be afraid to get help if you do not understand something. The ultimate responsibility to learn psychology is yours, but I am willing to help you in any way. To get help you can:

1. Ask questions before, during, and/or after class.
2. See me before school. On most days, I am in the school building by 7:20 AM. If possible, try to coordinate a time with me so I can make sure I am available.
3. If you have access to email or the Internet, you can email me at [sszecskas@lowell.k12.ma.us](mailto:sszecskas@lowell.k12.ma.us)

I am looking forward to working with you this school year. It is my hope that we both learn from each other through class discussions, readings we share, and the struggles we work through. I welcome emails from you and your parents/guardians…feedback is always welcome!

**~Mr. Steve Szecskas**