

Psychology 210: Theories of Personality

Spring 2008, Tuesdays & Thursdays 12:30-1:45pm, Call #26224
University of Illinois at Chicago

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Prerequisites and Course Credit

To take Theories of Personality (PSCH 210), students are required to have completed Introduction to Psychology (PSCH 100). Theories of Personality fulfills the Understanding the Individual and Society general education category requirement. It may also be completed to contribute to the student's undergraduate psychology major coursework.

Course Description and Goals

On the one hand, consider a person who enjoys skydiving on weekends, going to parties and talking to tons of people, and taking adventure-packed vacations whenever possible. On the other hand, think of a different person who enjoys going to movies by himself on the weekends and rarely goes to parties, preferring instead to stay at home and engage in quiet, solitary activities. What makes these people unique and different from each other? Also, why might the skydiving adventurer be the "life of the party," but feel awkward when speaking in front of class? In other words, why does one person act differently in separate situations? Personality psychology is interested in precisely these questions.

Personality science is a contemporary field of psychology in which researchers investigate various models that attempt to understand what makes one person different from another and why persons display both coherence and variability across time and situation. Personality researchers develop theories that explain the phenomenon of human personality. Personality theories vary in certain key units of analysis, or conceptual tools, that are used for investigation. For example one theory may describe the quiet homebody above in terms of traits such as introversion and lack of openness to new experiences, whereas another theory may describe the same person in terms of his internal conflicts and the influence of his domineering and critical mother. Thus, the first goal of the course is for students to gain knowledge of the key units of analysis used in each theory of personality.

Whereas each theory looks at different aspects of human personality functioning and describes them in different ways, there is a common effort among personality theories to describe how human beings can exhibit both variable and consistent tendencies and behaviors across situations. A second goal of the course is to think critically about the

theories. This will involve developing a better understanding of how these approaches uniquely contribute to the science of personality and evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of each theory.

In addition to having distinct theoretical models and units of analysis, each theory of personality is embedded in an ongoing tradition of research. Thus, a third goal of the course is to become familiar with various research methodologies that have been used to investigate and test the viability of personality theories. In addition to becoming familiar with current research topics in personality, you will have the chance to compare theories and determine how to apply different theories to explain real-life situations.

Required Text and Readings

- Cervone, D. & Pervin, L. A. (Eds.). (2008). *Personality: Theory and research* (10th ed). Hoboken, New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

Please note that the textbook is essential for the course because much of the material that cannot be covered during lecture will be explained in the textbook. Furthermore, exam questions will draw directly from material in the textbook in addition to material from the lectures.

In addition to textbook reading, students will need to read a journal article that explores an aspect of contemporary personality research for the paper assignment. Students can search for journal articles using PsycInfo, an online search engine offered to UIC students through the UIC library and presented on the UIC library webpage. Students can usually obtain articles on the website; if the articles are not available electronically, however, students can obtain them in person at the library or through interlibrary loan.

Assignments

There are two writing assignments for the course. The requirements for the assignments are summarized below. Submit them via Safe Assignment on Blackboard. In addition, turn in a hard copy of each paper during class. Late papers will not receive the full points allotted on the assignment. Details of penalties are listed below.

- *Units of Analysis Paper, due February 7th*. This short paper asks you to briefly summarize the units of analysis used for the personality theories that we have discussed to date: Psychodynamic, Phenomenological, and Trait theories of personality. The paper has a 2-page limit (double-spaced), so you will want to be succinct in your descriptions. The paper is worth 20 points. Papers turned in after lecture on February 7th will be reduced by one point per day late. Papers will not be accepted after February 21st.
- *Research Paper, due April 10th*. The paper assignment is to compare the manner in which two personality theories address a particular topic, and to do so by drawing upon a specific piece of research that enables you to evaluate and compare the

theories. Specifically, you will describe the theories' units of analysis (your work on the previous paper will help you) and explore how they either help or do not help to explain the research in question. Details on paper topics, additional paper information, and a sample paper will be made available on the class website on blackboard during the first week of class. *You should read this material carefully before beginning your paper*, as it contains detailed guidelines and suggestions for the paper assignment. In addition, we will discuss the paper assignment in class. The paper should be approximately 5- to 7-pages in length, and it is worth 60 points. Papers turned in after lecture on April 10th will be reduced by two points per day late.

Grading

Your grade for the course will be based on your performance on two paper assignments and three exams (2 exams during the semester and one final exam during finals week). The paper assignments each have different point allotments, as detailed above. The exams are multiple-choice tests that are each worth 40 points. The exams are not cumulative; instead, each one covers material covered since the previous exam.

Altogether, there are 200 points possible in the class. Your grade will be based on the total of your scores on the paper assignments and exams. At any point during class, you can calculate your grade based on the total points that have been distributed to date. For example, if you would like to know your grade after the first exam, you could add the points you earned and divide by the number of possible points at that point in the semester. Your final grade for the class will be determined based on your percentage of the total points as follows:

- A = at least 90% of the possible points (179 or more)
- B = 80-89% of the possible points (159-178)
- C = 70-79% of the possible points (139-158)
- D = 60-69% of the possible points (119-138)
- F = less 59% of the possible points (less than 119)

The following is an example of how to calculate your grade. Suppose that one of your classmates, Person A. Lity, earned the following point scores during the semester: 12 points on the Units of Analysis paper, 36 points on the first exam, 50 points on the research paper, 39 points on the second exam, and 35 points on the final exam. Person's grade would be determined by adding all of her points together (172) and dividing by the total possible points (200), which would yield 86% and a "B" grade.

Other

- Please come to talk with me about class or ask any questions during my office hours. I would be happy to discuss class material with you, help you prepare for your paper, or answer any questions about psychology as a field of study.
- Your attendance in class is important to me! In addition to explaining and clarifying material about important personality theories, I will present research studies that

elucidate the theories. Therefore, you are strongly encouraged to come to each lecture.

- The instructor reserves the right to assign bonus points as she sees fit during the course of the semester.
- In fairness to the vast majority of students who take their educations seriously, no form of cheating will be tolerated in this class. If you cheat on any assignment in this class you will fail the entire class and judicial charges will be filed (see the UIC Student Disciplinary Handbook for details). Cheating includes, but is not limited to, any form of plagiarism, which includes taking others' ideas and claiming them as your own, copying the words or ideas of a fellow student or any other author in your papers, copying even short phrases from written work that you are using as a reference (even if you cite it properly), handing in work you have submitted for another class, handing in papers you've gotten from the internet or other students, etc. Cheating also includes looking on others' tests or letting them look on yours or copying or giving test answers.
- Please inform me as soon as possible if you have any disabilities that require accommodations. In keeping with university policy, those who require accommodations for access and participation in this course must be registered with the Disability Resource Center. Please contact Office of Disability Services (ODS) at 312-413-2183 (voice) or 312-413-0123 (TTY).

Tentative Course Schedule

Week 1:	Jan 15, 17	Chapters 1 & 2 What is a Personality Theory? How can persons be studied scientifically?
Week 2:	Jan 22, 24	Chapters 3 & 4 Psychodynamic Theories of Personality Movie Day (date TBA): Who was Sigmund Freud?
Week 3:	Jan 29, 31	Chapter 5 & 6 Phenomenological Theory of Personality
Week 4:	Feb 5, 7	Chapter 7 Trait Theories of Personality <i>Units of Analysis Paper due on February 7th</i>
Week 5:	Feb 12, 14	Chapter 8 Five-Factor Model of Personality
Week 6:	Feb 19, 21	Catch-up and exam review on February 19 th <i>1st Exam on February 21st</i>

Week 7:	Feb 26, 28	Chapter 9 Biological Foundations of Personality
Week 8:	Mar 4, 6	Chapter 10 Behaviorism and Learning Approaches to Personality
Week 9:	Mar 11, 13	Chapter 11 A Cognitive Approach to Personality Movie Day (date TBA): What is cognitive therapy?
Week 10:	Mar 18, 20	Chapter 12 The Social-Cognitive Theory of Bandura & Mischel
	Mar 25, 27	**NO CLASS ** SPRING BREAK**
Week 11:	Apr 1, 3	Catch-up and exam review on April 1 <i>2nd Exam on April 3rd</i>
Week 12:	Apr 8, 10	Chapter 13 Applications of the Social Cognitive Theory <i>Research Paper due on April 10th</i>
Week 13:	Apr 15, 17	Chapter 14 Personality across Culture and Lifespan Development
Week 14:	Apr 22, 24	Chapter 15 Assessing Personality Theory and Research
Week 15:	Apr 29, May 1	Conclusions and Final Exam Review <i>Research Papers returned on April 29th</i>

Final Exam during week of 5/5/07 to 5/9/07; Exact date to be announced at a later date