

Psychology 471: PERSONALITY

4:00 - 5:20 pm, Tuesdays and Thursdays

Class meets in 112 Lillis Hall

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Text: Funder, D. C. (2007). The personality puzzle (4th ed.). New York: Norton (*plus other readings listed on class schedule at end of syllabus, made available via blackboard*)

Course Objectives: What's the Purpose of This Course?

Welcome to Psychology 471: Personality. The study of personality addresses how and why *individuals differ in their behavior patterns*, if we define 'behavior' broadly to include thoughts, feelings, motives, intentions, and action tendencies. Personality concerns human behavioral tendencies at a rather broad level, and the purpose of this course is to help you learn ways of thinking usefully and critically (i.e., carefully) about human behavior, through the most important concepts and findings of personality psychology. The course has two interlinked goals: promoting knowledge of personality and sharpening thinking skills. Knowledge of personality psychology can aid one in thinking usefully and critically about human behavior patterns, useful not only in psychology and human services professions, but also in any pursuit in life that deals with people,

Personality psychology is a "crossroads" field with links to many other disciplines. It includes both the study of individual differences and the study of the processes within a person that lead to stable behavioral patterns. This course addresses both. Biological and social antecedents of personality are emphasized about equally in this course. The course format is primarily a series of talks (i.e., lecture), with some discussion, in-class exercises, and some student presentations. *This course has extensive readings; you're expected to read everything assigned.*

Assignments and Grading

Your **final course grade** is based on the following:

- 6% ...credit for two "connecting with readings" responses
- 10% ...for an exploratory paper
- 6% ...grade on outline/abstract of your research paper
- 20% ...grade on final version of research paper
- 1% ...class attendance credit
- 2% ...panel presentation credit
- 20% ...score on the midterm quiz

35% ...score on final exam

What follows is more detail on each of these components (a guide to doing well in the course).

The exams – both midterm quiz and final – consist of a multiple choice section (40% of the point total for the exam) concentrating on key concepts (definitions and examples of them), followed by a set of mini-essay questions (60% of the point total for the exam). The mini-essay questions are drawn from among the “big questions” listed at the end of this syllabus. In fact, they are the exact questions, except they could be revised during the term to make them clearer to students. The mini-essay questions on the midterm exam will be drawn from among the first five big questions. Those on the final exam will be drawn from all of the big questions that did not appear on the midterm. Mini-essay responses typically fill one page or less (unless one has very large handwriting). No dictionaries, thesauruses, calculators, or electronic devices can be used during the exams, except that translating dictionaries can be allowed for those with English fluency issues, conditional on instructor permission. Multiple-choice items especially emphasize material covered both in the assigned readings and in class.

The exploratory/insight paper is intended to help you develop a more personal connection to the subject matter, applying concepts learned in the course to your personal experience of other people. Papers will have two parts: The first involves your comments on personality assessment, based on an experience assessing your own personality. The second will involve any one of several alternatives (you choose). Instructions will be placed on blackboard by Jan. 9. The paper should have complete sentences, good grammar, reasonable organization, and at least 3 complete double-spaced pages of text. It is due on January 22.

The research paper is designed to better traditional term papers in terms of advancing student learning. I have found that students learn more from the writing experience when they have the opportunity to make use of feedback and to present or at least be part of a presentation to an “audience.” The topic for the paper is chosen by you, within the constraints that you must choose a topic from a limited “menu,” and there will be no more than approximately ten different topics done by members of the whole class. Having a limited number of topics allows us to have some student presentations at the end of the course, encouraging greater depth of exploration.

Research-paper topics will be focused on some issue on which there are different points of view or approaches that can be compared. For each topic, typically two articles will be assigned, and at least two additional articles are chosen by you. Multiple students will be working on the same topic, but there is no joint or group product and no group grade for the research paper. Because papers on one topic are evaluated simultaneously, be sure that, if you are influenced by the thoughts of other students, you acknowledge that contribution accurately and openly (so as to avoid “plagiarism” – see note below). Originality is one of the grading criteria (see below).

The first step is to read the assigned articles. You might develop a very carefully thought-out response to it (or them) – what you agree with and don’t, what you think is well-supported by evidence and what isn’t, what seems logical or illogical, what might be left out. In your best judgment, identify what you think is the most essential issue on your topic that is incompletely addressed by the assigned article(s). Next, find other sources, and for each source (article) ask

similar questions about each of them. Having done this, you are ready to start working on your research-paper outline or abstract. This outline must all fit on one side of one sheet of paper. For the outline/abstract only it is OK to use single-spacing if you wish. In all other respects, the same criteria as for the final research-paper are useful to determine how good your outline is.

As for the final research-paper, bear in mind what Gracián wrote in 1647: “good things, when short, are twice as good.” The aim is to create a paper that packs a lot of valuable thinking into a relatively brief space. It should be a minimum of three full double-spaced pages in length (not counting reference list), and at a maximum it should not exceed 7 full double-spaced pages in length, not counting reference list, it must be double-spaced throughout, and with a size 12 font. You should include (cite, discuss) also the two best additional journal articles you could find; you are free to change what you identify as the best additional articles after you turn in the outline. These must be journal articles, not a book, book chapter, or internet site or page (Why? Because you should identify a scientifically peer-reviewed source.). You can include more than two additional articles or sources, but especially important for grading purposes is quality of the first two, best additional ones you introduce, so it pays to consult multiple articles and choose or prioritize the two that do the most for your paper. But this is not a “critique the article” assignment – instead you are to use these articles in the course of trying to answer in the best possible way the basic question posed by the research-paper topic. Keep focus on that question.

The final research-paper is graded on the following criteria:

1. Is typed, readable, free of gross spelling and typographic errors
2. Is well-organized and focused (not rambling, or with irrelevant sections)
3. Addresses what makes this issue (or paper topic) important, practically and/or scientifically
4. Defines key terms clearly, especially ambiguous terms, and/or identifies key assumptions
5. Considers a plurality of views, that is, identifies differing points of view, or a major issue that is unresolved or on which there is disagreement. Sets out clearly and effectively the arguments in favor of and against varying (at least two) approaches, or varying different ways of thinking about an issue, or varying ways of answering the main question.
6. Applies critical thinking to the research approaches described. This might include: how good is the supporting evidence (or the rationale), how good (relevant, reliable, large effect size, large sample, etc.) is this evidence (or rationale) is, whether some other reasonable interpretation of findings is plausible but has not been ruled out, and other issues.
7. Attempts to synthesize and (even better) actually effectively synthesizes the arguments and evidence, combining all of the discussion into a reasonable conclusion (which may include recommendations for future research work)
8. Originality – indications are that (at least) the thinking is your own and (at best) it goes beyond and even challenges the “conventional wisdom” or “commonsense view” on aspects of the topic
9. Includes use of the assigned articles and two additional journal articles
10. The citations and reference list in APA style; see

<http://libweb.uoregon.edu/guides/psychology> for help on APA styles and on finding articles –on the more mundane side, do not include binders or covers on the papers when you turn them in, and no title page is necessary.

Papers above (exploratory paper, or the outline/abstract or final version of the research paper) turned in **late** lose 10% of their points for each weekday they are not turned in (starting with the due date). In general, with *some* course requirements, alternative arrangements for due dates

may be possible with an authoritative excuse *if* presented in advance of an absence.

“Connecting with reading” responses are responses to assigned readings. Their purpose is to stimulate students to actively engage with readings and thus also be earlier and better prepared for class (and exams). To get full credit, you must complete two of these satisfactorily during the term. The length for a Connecting response is exactly one (full, can be single- or double-spaced) page of typed, machine-printed, or clearly handwritten text for each. Each Connecting response must be based on the assigned readings corresponding to a due date for the Connecting response.

For each Connecting response, you must refer to the content in the assigned reading for that due date (citing specifically one or more pages in the reading). You are free to choose what you write about, *but here are some suggestions of things that work well for this assignment* – any of these approaches might work well for structuring one Connecting response:

- a. Think about how content in readings can be applied to understanding the motivational and emotional patterns of significant others in your life (boyfriend, girlfriend, spouse, partner, etc.) both in present and in past (i.e., those with whom your relationship ended) – or the motivational and emotional patterns of the person you know best (who may be a friend, parent, or sibling).
 - b. Think about times, moments, or situations in your life when you had a very clear motivation that led you to a clear course of action or reaction, and describe how something in the reading can help in understanding the reactions and actions you had.
 - c. Think about times, moments, or situations in your life when you had a very strong emotion, and describe how something in the reading can help in understanding that emotion.
 - d. Think about times, moments, or situations in which you misjudged another person’s motivation or emotion, or those in which someone else misjudged your motivation or emotion, and describe how something in the reading can help in understanding what was going on.
 - e. Describe an idea or finding you think is very important and explain why you think it important.
 - f. Describe an idea or finding that you think is very questionable and what makes it questionable.
- It will help you in preparing these assignments if you approach your reading for this course continually asking yourself “How does this apply to my life experience, the experience of those I know well, and my experience in human relationships, and how does it relate to what I already know?” Obviously, you can use personal anecdotes in Connecting responses. It is often useful to compare two people, or two times or situations or emotions; you need not focus on just one.

You are assigned to turn in two (2) Connecting responses. The due dates for these are provided in the syllabus (there are *nine* due dates -- you need only get in a Connecting response in on time to the course TA for *two* of these dates). These papers should have complete sentences, good grammar, reasonable organization, at least two paragraphs, and fill a page (but not go beyond one page); you are free to use single- or double-spacing (or anything in between, such as 1.5 spacing, etc.). Connecting responses are graded on a “pass versus no-pass” basis. Late Connecting responses are not accepted for credit, since a late paper would defeat part of the purpose of a Connecting response as defined above. If you miss the deadline for one Connecting response, you are advised to simply prepare a Connecting response for the next due-date deadline.

Participating in the panel presentation means being part of a panel of people with your same topic talking to the class briefly about your research paper (in the last two weeks of class). You are encouraged to provide a one- to two-minute presentation that focuses on identifying some issue or finding that you think is very important, with the goal of stimulating thinking and

discussion among class members. Such a presentation does not summarize your paper, but rather extracts some key idea or two from it, that you think the class might find interesting. To get credit, you must physically appear in front of the class with other panel members and be/appear willing to talk or answer questions. Panel-presentation participation itself is 2% of the course grade. If you would like to discuss the panel presentation with other members of your panel, there will be a discussion forum set up about a week prior to the panel on blackboard to facilitate this.

There is a small bit of credit for attendance (1% of course grade). You get this credit automatically, unless the instructor experiences repeated (that is, on three or more occasions) difficulties finding you in class sessions.

Your **final grade** in the course will be based on the total of your points from papers, exams, and sufficient participation. **A** range is 90% or better, **B** range is 80% to 90%, **C** range 70% to 80%, **D** range 60% to 70%, **F**s are less than 60%. '+' and '-' are added to grades if they fall in the top 1/3 or bottom 1/3, respectively, of A, B, C, and D range.

Special Requirements for Graduate Students (Psychology 571)

There will be special requirements for graduate students taking the course as Psychology 571. 571 students will meet at additional times outside the class time, either in-person or electronically. 571 students are expected to attend an in-person graduate student meeting with the instructor early in the quarter (typically in about the third week of the term).

Academic Integrity

This instructor takes academic integrity seriously. Insuring the "validity" of grades requires seeing that they reflect honest work and learning rather than cheating. **Cheating** is defined as providing or accepting information on an exam, plagiarism or copying anyone's written work. Students caught cheating will be given an "F" for the course, and UO's student conduct coordinator will be informed. The instructor retains the right to assign seats for tests, to change individual's seating for test security purposes, to require and check ID for admission to tests. **"Plagiarism"** is basically a form of theft: putting your name on work that is (in any part) not yours, where you have not fully identified the source from which you borrowed. Even taking someone else's ideas or paraphrasing their expression, without acknowledgment, is plagiarism. Be aware that the instructor is knowledgeable about computer-age plagiarizing techniques and how to diagnose their use. "Your responsibility, when you put your name on a piece of work, is simply to distinguish between what is yours and what is not, and to credit those who in any way have contributed" (quote is from Nancy Cotton of Wake Forest U.).

List of Psych. 471/571 additional readings in order, in general these are made available via blackboard. These references provide an example of APA style.

Larsen, R. J., & Buss, D. M. (2008). *Personality psychology: Domains of knowledge about human nature* (3rd ed.). Boston: McGraw-Hill. [sections from chapters 5 and 13]

Bouchard, T. J. (2004). Genetic influence on human psychological traits. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 13, 148-151.

Turkheimer, E. (2000). Three laws of behavioral genetics and what they mean. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 9, 160-164.

Saucier, G. (in press). What are the most important dimensions of personality? Evidence from studies of descriptors

in diverse languages. *Social and Personality Psychology Compass*.
 Carver, C.S. & Scheier, M. F.. (2008). *Perspectives on personality* (6th ed.). Boston: Pearson Education. ([parts of ch. 5, 7, and 16])
 Riggio, R. E. (2000). *Introduction to industrial/organizational psychology*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
 Friedman, H. S., et al. (1995). Psychosocial and behavioral predictors of longevity: The aging and death of the "Termites." *American Psychologist*, 50, 69-78.

PSYCHOLOGY 471 SCHEDULE: What's Happening When

January 6	Syllabus; overview of the course <u>Reading Assignment</u> (i.e., for session listed on next line): Funder chs. 1-2
January 8	Studying individuals; the crucial, basic sources of data <u>Reading Assignment</u> : Funder chs. 3-4
January 13*	Design of research; cross-situational consistency <u>Reading Assignment</u> : Funder ch. 6
January 15	Everyday personality judgments and their accuracy <u>Reading Assignment</u> : Funder ch. 5 and 7; Saucier (in press)
January 20*	Tests of personality; which variables are "personality" and which are most important <i>EXPLORATORY/INSIGHT PAPER is due January 22!</i> <u>Reading Assignment</u> : Funder ch. 18
January 22	The structure of personality dispositions and their relation to disorder tendencies <u>Reading Assignment</u> : if any, TBA
January 27	Attachment tendencies; generalized attitude dispositions; review <u>Reading Assignment</u> : Larsen & Buss (2008) ch. 5
January 29*	Personality dispositions: stability/change over time, potential sources of change
February 3	<i>MIDTERM QUIZ</i> <u>Reading Assignment</u> : Funder ch. 9; Bouchard (2004); Turkheimer (2000)
February 5*	Genetic and environmental influences on personality; molecular genetic findings <u>Reading Assignment</u> : Funder ch. 8; Carver & Scheier (2008) ch. 7
February 10	Personality, biology, physiology, and the brain <u>Reading Assignment</u> : Funder ch. 10-11
February 12*	Psychodynamic personality concepts, with some focus on defense mechanisms <i>OUTLINE/ABSTRACT OF RESEARCH PAPER is due February 17!</i> <u>Reading Assignment</u> : Funder ch. 12-13
February 17	Post-Freudian psychodynamic personality concepts; humanistic/existential concepts <u>Reading Assignment</u> : Funder ch. 15
February 19*	Behaviorism and social learning; fundamental motive systems involved <u>Reading Assignment</u> : Funder ch. 16; Larsen & Buss (2008) ch. 13
February 24*	Emotion, its relation to motivation and to personality <u>Reading Assignment</u> : Carver & Scheier (2008) ch. 5; Riggio (2000)
February 26	Motivation, explicit and implicit motives, and the 'personality system' <u>Reading Assignment</u> : Carver & Scheier (2008) ch. 16; Funder ch. 17;
March 3*	Self and cognitive processes as part of the personality system; panel presentations <u>Reading Assignment</u> : Funder ch. 14
March 5	The relation between culture and personality; panel presentations <u>Reading Assignment</u> : Friedman et al. (1995)
March 10	Personality applied to work and health; panel presentations <i>FINAL VERSION OF RESEARCH PAPER is due March 12 at beginning of class period!**</i> <u>Reading Assignment</u> : Funder, ch. 19
March 12*	Personality and personal relationships; panel presentations
March 16 (Monday), 1 pm, FINAL EXAM	

** dates when you could turn in a Connections to Reading response, based on the assigned reading for that day, or for some future assigned reading (only two need to be completed for credit during term)*
*** unless you present in-class March 12 on your paper topic, in which case it's due 3/13 by noon*

Big questions: The pool of potential mini-essay items for midterm and final exams

1. Personality is best defined as _____

but there are controversies about whether the scientific concept of “personality” should include _____.
2. Given what we know (about when personality judgments are most and least accurate, about the relative advantages of different assessment methods and types of data), the best way to measure personality characteristics would be the following _____
_____.
3. The strongest argument in the “situationist” critique of the concept of “stable personality traits” is that _____. The strongest argument in favor of stable dispositions is that _____. Considering these two contrasting arguments, the best conclusion is that _____.
4. The most important dimensions on which individuals differ from one another, in what might be considered personality attributes, are _____
_____. ; these dimensions are related to psychological disorders in that _____.
5. The most important findings to date on personality *stability* over time and on the reasons why personality *change* occurs are _____
_____.
6. People have often argued about the question “does personality has a genetic basis or an environmental basis?” Given how heritability is accurately defined and the way personality is best defined, the best answer to this question is to say that _____
_____.
7. Based on evidence to date, the two most important ways in which personality characteristics reflect individual differences in biology (nervous-system function, hormones, molecular genetics) have to do with _____
and _____.
8. In accounting for why people differ in personality attributes, the two most important aspects of the psychological functioning (among the parts or mechanisms in the “personality system,” which might include processes related to learning and conditioning, motivation, emotion, conscious or automatic mental activity, and aspects or effects of culture) are _____
_____ and _____.
9. In terms of helping us understand personality, the most important contributions from psychodynamic (psychoanalytic) theory and/or from humanistic (or existential) theory are _____
_____ and _____.

Mini-essays should first have a single sentence completing blanks, then a longer description (1-2 paragraphs) explaining why you think that’s the best way to complete the sentence. Numbers 1-5 above are candidates to be on

the midterm. Any of the questions above that are *not* included on the midterm are candidates to be on the final exam.