

Introduction to Psychology Course



Tbilisi Gestalt Institute
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Syllabus

Project Name	Introduction to Psychology
Lecturers	<p>Lana Ruadze is a Clinical Psychologist, Practicing Gestalt Therapist, Psychologist for the Psychiatric Community Mobile Team, Psychologist for the Children and Adolescents Crisis Intervention Service, Psychologist for the Mental Health Center of the "National Training Center of Family Medicine," and a Member of the Georgian Gestalt Therapists Association. She holds a Master's Degree in Clinical Psychology and a Master's Degree in Applied Psychology</p> <p>Mail: Lanaruadze02@gmail.com</p> <p>Mob: 577 300329;</p> <p>Mariam Machavariani is a Psychologist, Practicing Gestalt Therapist, Member of the Georgian Gestalt Therapists Association, Lecturer at Tbilisi Medical Academy, and Head of the Students' Consulting Service at Tbilisi Medical Academy.</p> <p>Mail: Mariammatchavariani9@gmail.com</p> <p>Mob: 596 10 10 07</p>
Course	11 months

Duration	One module per month, which includes 2 intensive meetings.
Day and Time Schedule	Saturday – Sunday (aprox. 3-4 hours)
Studying Method	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interactive lectures; • Seminar (short, interesting, with visual materials) • Demonstration method • Group activities (role-playing, experiments) • Discussion • Problem-based learning • Case analysis • Quizzes and presentations • Reflection (journals, self-assessments)
Study Goals	Introduction to the main fields of psychology, and the development of skills for the subject's research and real-world application
Target Group	People of any age and profession who are interested in studying psychology.
Why Students Should Choose This Course?	This course is a unique chance for those who wish to study psychology not only by listening to theory, but also through personal experience and practical activities. The learning process uses interactive methods: role-playing, group discussions, case analysis, simulations, and mini-studies, which facilitate the deep assimilation of knowledge and its application in real life.
Course	This course is designed to offer students a thorough and modern perspective on studying human mind and behavior. The course combines

Description	both theoretical foundations and practical experience, which ensures students' active involvement and the application of knowledge in real situations.
Learning Outcomes and Competencies	<p>After completing the course, the student will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Become familiar with the historical development of psychology, its main theories, and modern directions.• Will Be able to explain the structures and functions of the human brain and nervous system and connect them to behavior and psychological disorders.• Student will understand the main models of personality, cognitive, emotional, and social development.• They will explain the processes of learning, memory, and motivation and be able to connect them to everyday behavior.• Recognize the role of social influence, group dynamics, and stress in the life of the individual and society• Become familiar with the basic concepts of mental health and psychopathology, and the DSM-5-ICD-11 classifications, and be able to recognize and describe major disorders.• Master the use of basic psychological research methods and the consideration of ethical standards. <p>Competencies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Critical and reflexive thinking.• The ability to read and analyze scientific texts.• Preparation of structured notes and presentations.• Practical skills: case discussion, role-playing exercises; experimental activities.• Planning and implementation of a small research project.• Development of academic writing and presentation skills.

Why Is This Course Special?

In the Georgian educational space, psychology courses often either superficially cover the theoretical part or focus on only one specific approach. This course stands out by combining classic theories with contemporary research, and at the same time, it gives students the opportunity to practically test the acquired knowledge through interactive assignments, role-playing, and research projects. Its uniqueness also lies in the fact that it is based on international standards(DSM-5, ICD-11, modern research approaches), but is maximally adapted to the Georgian context, cultural characteristics, and local needs. In this way, the course offers students a unique balance of universal knowledge and consideration of local reality.

Learning Resources and Additional Activities

Throughout the course, students will be provided with a variety of learning resources and literature. For each module, they will receive both mandatory and additional reading materials, which include contemporary scientific articles, textbooks, and electronic platforms. In addition to readings, students will have work materials—exercises, cases, and interactive assignments—that will help them transfer theoretical knowledge into practice. The course also includes periodic surveys and quizzes that allow students to assess their own progress and better memorize the study material. Quizzes will be presented in both textual and open-question formats, ensuring the assessment of both factual knowledge and analytical skills. At the end of the course, the three best student papers will be published in the Georgian Gestalt Therapy Journal.

Course Topics by Module

Module 1 - Introduction to Psychology and Human Behavior

What is Psychology? - History (Philosophical Foundations)

- **Antiquity:** Socrates ("Know Thyself"), Plato (Tripartite Model of the Soul), Aristotle (De Anima), Stoics (Emotion Management).
- **Middle Ages:** Augustine (Introspection, Inner Experience), Thomas Aquinas (Christian Interpretation of Aristotle).
- **New Age:** Descartes (Mind-Body Dualism), Hobbes and Locke (Empiricism), Leibniz (Small Perceptions, Idea of the Unconscious), Hume (Associationism), Kant (Transcendental Consciousness).
- **The Birth of Scientific Psychology**
- **Fechner and Psychophysics** – Measurement of Sensations.
- **Wilhelm Wundt** – First Laboratory, Introspection Method.
- **The First Schools:**
 - **Structuralism** – Analysis of the Mind's Elements (Wundt, Titchener).
 - **Functionalism** – Consciousness as an Instrument of Adaptation (William James, Dewey).
- **Modern Directions in Psychology** (Behavioristic, Psychoanalytic, Humanistic, **Gestalt**, and Cognitive Psychology).
- **Psychology as a Science:** Theory vs. Practice.
- **Main Fields of Psychology:** Clinical, Social, Cognitive, Developmental, Biological.

Group Activity: Discussion – "Psychology in Everyday Life"; Analysis of short cases.

Outcomes: Perception of the stages of psychology's historical development and differentiation of main schools; Understanding of modern psychological directions and fields of application.

Competencies: Critical thinking and reflexive analysis; Connecting knowledge to everyday experience.

Module 2 - Brain, Mind, and Behavior

Biological Foundations

1. **Neuron Structure:** Dendrites, Axon, Synapse.
2. **Membrane Potential and Action Potential.**
3. **Synaptic Transmission:** Electrical vs. Chemical.
4. **Major Neurotransmitters:**
 - **Dopamine** (reward, motivation, schizophrenia, Parkinson's).
 - **Serotonin** (mood, depression).
 - **Acetylcholine** (learning, memory, Alzheimer's).
 - **Norepinephrine** (arousal, fight-or-flight).
 - **GABA and Glutamate** (inhibition/excitation).

Brain Structure and Function:

1. **Brainstem:** Breathing, heart rate, basic survival mechanisms.
2. **Cerebellum:** Movement coordination, motor learning.
3. **Limbic system:** Emotion, memory (Amygdala, Hippocampus).
4. **Basal ganglia:** Movement, motivation.
5. **Cerebral cortex:**
 - **Frontal lobe:** Executive functions, decision-making, motor skills.
 - **Parietal lobe:** Somatosensory sensation, spatial representation.
 - **Temporal lobe:** Hearing, language, memory.
 - **Occipital lobe:** Vision.
 - **Brain Hemispheres and Lateralization** (Broca's and Wernicke's areas).

Neuroplasticity and Development

- **Formation of neuronal connections.**
- **Critical periods (e.g., language development).**
- **Brain recovery after injury.**

Biological Rhythms and Consciousness

- **Circadian rhythms** – suprachiasmatic nucleus, melatonin.
- **Sleep Stages** (REM/NREM) and brain activity.
- **Consciousness:** Sleep, dreams, and altered states.

Biological Foundations in Psychopathology

- **Neurochemistry of Depression** (Serotonin Hypothesis).
- **Schizophrenia** and Dopamine Imbalance.
- **Neurodegenerative Diseases** (Alzheimer's, Parkinson's).

Activity: Perception illusions, reaction time experiments; Quiz on the covered material.

Outcomes: Description of the functions of the neuron, neurotransmitters, and major brain structures; Connecting biological foundations to behavior and psychological disorders.

Competencies: Ability to read and analyze scientific text; Interpretation of the results of experimental and demonstrational activities.

Module 3 - Personality and Development

- **Life Cycle:** From childhood to adulthood.
- **Cognitive Development** (Piaget, Vygotsky).
- **Personality Theories** (Freud, Jung, Trait Theory of Personality, The Big Five).
- **D. Uznadze's - "Psychology of Set (Attitude)"** – (Theory of Set)
- **Emotional and Social Development** (Attachment Theory (Bowlby), Erikson's Stages).

Activity: Role-playing on developmental stages, self-reflection on personality traits; Quiz on the covered material.

Outcomes: Understanding and explaining major developmental theories (Piaget, Vygotsky, Erikson); Applying personality theories and the Big Five in practical examples.

Competencies: Self-reflection and analysis of one's own development; Using mental maps and structured notes (Cornell system / mental maps).

Module 4 - Cognitive Psychology

Cognitive Functions:

- **Sensation and Perception** – How we perceive environmental stimuli and how we

create a holistic picture from them.

- **Attention** – How we concentrate on certain stimuli and filter out others.
- **Memory** – Structure and processes of short-term and long-term memory; Working memory.
- **Language Processes** – Language perception, comprehension, speech production, bilingualism.
- **Thinking and Problem Solving** – How we build hypotheses, plan, and find solutions.
- **Decision Making** – How we evaluate alternatives, the role of heuristics and biases.
- **Cognitive Development** – How cognitive functions change from childhood to adolescence and old age.
- **Metacognition** – Controlling and evaluating one's own thinking, learning, and memory.

Learning, Learning Mechanisms:

- **How We Learn:** Classical conditioning, Operant conditioning, Observational learning.
- **Memory Processes:** Encoding, storage, retrieval, forgetting.
- **Motivation and Emotion:** Why we behave the way we do.

Activity: Memory experiments, motivational games (goal setting, reward tasks); Quiz on the covered material.

Outcomes: Explanation of the basic learning mechanisms (classical, operant, observational); Familiarity with the main theories of memory processes and motivation.

Competencies: Delivering an academic presentation in a small group; Transferring theoretical knowledge into practice through experiments and assignments.

Module 5 - Mental Health and Psychopathology

- **Concepts of Mental Health, Nosology, DSM-5 and ICD-11.**
- **Stress, Coping, and an Introduction to Mental Health.**
- **Mental Disorders:**
 - **Mood disorders;**

- **Neurotic and psychotic spectrum disorders;**
- **Neurodevelopmental, personality, and substance-induced disorders.**

Activity: Role-playing exercises; Filling out questionnaires; Case discussion; Quiz on the covered material.

Outcomes: The student will be able to understand the basic concepts of mental health and psychopathology, recognize and describe disorders according to DSM-5 and ICD-11, and practically apply the acquired knowledge through case discussions and role-playing exercises.

Competencies: **Case discussion** and application of diagnostic criteria; Practical application of role-playing exercises and questionnaires.

Module 6 - Social Psychology

- **Group Dynamics, Conformity, Obedience** (Asch, Milgram, Zimbardo).
- **External and Internal Locus** (Locus of Control).
- **Priming.**
- **Prejudices, Stereotypes, and Prosocial Behavior.**

Activity: Social experiments (safe in-class simulations), debates on ethical issues; Quiz on the covered material.

Outcomes: Recognition of social influence, group dynamics, and stereotypes.

Competencies: Argumentative discussion and the application of critical thinking; Analysis of ethical issues using examples from social experiments.

Module 7 – Psychotherapy, Approaches, and Career Advancement

Orientation

- **History and Development of Psychotherapy**
- **Goals and Functions of Therapy**
- **Principles of the Therapeutic Relationship** (Empathy, Contact, Safety)

Psychoanalytic and Psychodynamic Approaches:

- Sigmund Freud's Psychoanalysis (The Unconscious, Defense Mechanisms, Transference);
- Object Relations Theories (M. Klein, W. Winnicott);
- Self Psychology (H. Kohut)
- Contemporary Psychodynamic Interventions

Behavioral Therapy

- Classical and Operant Conditioning (Pavlov, Skinner);
- Behavior Modification;
- Exposure Therapies and Systemic Desensitization;
- Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy (CBT);
- Aaron Beck's Cognitive Therapy;
- Albert Ellis's Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy (REBT);
- Contemporary CBT Models (Schema Therapy, ACT, DBT)

Humanistic and Existential Therapies

- Client-Centered Therapy (C. Rogers);
- Existential Psychotherapy (Yalom, Frankl, May);
- Personal Growth, Freedom, and Responsibility.

Gestalt Therapy

- Fritz Perls' Foundations (Cycle of Contact, "Here and Now");
- Field Theory and Phenomenology;
- Gestalt Techniques (Empty Chair, Experiments);

Systemic and Family Therapies

- Structural Family Therapy (Minuchin);
- Strategic Therapy (Haley, Milan group);
- Narrative Therapy;
- Family Interventions.

Integrative and Contemporary Approaches

- Integrative Psychotherapy;
- Emotion-Focused Therapy (EFT);
- Body-Oriented Therapies (Reich, Lowen, Somatic approaches);

- Trauma-Focused Therapies (EMDR, Somatic Experiencing);
- Brief Strategic Therapy.

Psychotherapeutic Ethics, Professional, and Personal Growth

- Psychotherapy for Depression, Anxiety, and Trauma;
- Group Psychotherapy;
- Ethics and Cultural Context;
- Therapist's Personal Development and Supervision.

Activity: Discussion; Role-playing and simulations: Establishing a therapeutic relationship, empathetic listening, "Empty Chair," behavioral interventions, modeling family sessions; Case analysis: Discussion of real or simulated cases from different therapeutic perspectives.

Outcomes: Knows the history and main theories of psychotherapy; Understands the significance and principles of the therapeutic relationship; Can explain and compare different therapeutic approaches; Possesses initial skills in practical interventions; Adheres to ethical principles and assesses cultural context.

Competencies: Integration of theoretical knowledge into practical work; Empathic communication and the creation of a safe environment; Case analysis using different models; Self-reflection and professional development skills; Ethical decision-making and responsibility.

Module 8 - Psychology as a Career and Research Skills

- **Psychological Research Methods:** Experiments, surveys, interviews, case analysis;
- **Ethics in Psychology;**
- **Application: Clinical psychology,** consulting, education, organizational, forensic expertise;
- **How to Read Academic Texts, How to Write Essays;**
- **Delivering Presentations.**

Activity: Mini-research project (developing a small study and planning its presentation); Quiz on the covered material.

Outcomes: Familiarization with psychological research methods (experiment, interview, case analysis); Knowledge of psychological ethical standards; Perception of career opportunities in the field of psychology.

Competencies: Planning and presenting a small research project. Development of fundamentals for reading academic texts and writing essays.

