

Winter term, 2005

Psychology 356

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Personality Theory

Course Introduction

Note on avoidance of academic offences: All students registered in the courses of the Faculty of Arts are expected to know what constitutes an academic offence, to avoid committing academic offences, and to take responsibility for their academic actions. When the commission of an offence is established, disciplinary penalties will be imposed in accord with Policy #71 (Student Academic Discipline). For information on categories of offences and types of penalties, students are directed to consult the summary of Policy #71 (Student Academic Discipline) which is supplied in the Distance Education Calendar. If you need help in learning how to avoid offences such as plagiarism, cheating, and double submission, or if you need clarification of aspects of the discipline policy, ask your course instructor for guidance. Other resources regarding the discipline policy are your academic advisor, the Undergraduate Associate Dean, and the Ombudsperson.

Introduction and Overview to Personality Theory

Psychology 356 reviews the most influential personality theories from Freud's to the recent theories of our own era. We'll set the stage in the first module on science and the nature of human nature, and the scientific study of personality. A module on genes, behaviour, and personality follows. Then, there two modules on psychoanalysis, hugely influential and controversial. Next are three modules on the revisions of classical psychoanalytic theory introduced by the neo-Freudians and ego psychoanalysts. We now take up the massive amalgam of psychology, myth, and mysticism, Carl Gustav Jung's Analytic Psychology. North American learning and behaviour theories have made major contributions to the understanding of human personality. Two modules cover them. The next module is devoted to the phenomenologists Carl Rogers and George Kelly. Movements originating in Europe brought phenomenology and existentialism to personality psychology. We shall cover these themes in a module on existentialism. The following module considers theories of personality traits, from the father of trait theory, Gordon Allport, to the modern Big Five. The last module gives a perspective on personality theory.

Objectives

The major objective of Psychology 356 is to acquaint you with the dominant ideas in the psychology of personality. As you come to understand them, you will begin to be able to think like a personality psychologist and to appreciate, more than you have before, both the richness and complexity of human behaviour and our growing ability to understand why we behave as we do.

Course Professor's Biography



I was educated in the United States at Antioch College (B.A., 1951), the University of Rochester (Ed.M., 1956), and Purdue University (Ph.D., 1959). I taught at Ohio State University, Northwestern University, and the University of Connecticut before coming to the University of Waterloo in 1971, where I am now Distinguished Professor Emeritus.

My graduate education was in clinical and personality psychology, and I have long had an interest in theories of personality. I was strongly influenced by Julian Rotter, one of the theorists we shall study. We were colleagues at Ohio State University and the University of Connecticut.

For something of my work, you might like to see:

Crowne, D.P. 2003. *In Search of Psyche*. Philadelphia, PA: Xlibris.

Crowne, D.P. 1979. *The Experimental Study of Personality*. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

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Organization of the Course

Text: Funder, D.C. 2004. *The Personality Puzzle* (3rd Ed.). New York: Norton. ISBN: 0-393-97996-2

Modules and Readings

A point of view for personality theory

Module 1: The scientific study of personality

Reading: Funder, Chs. 1-3

Behaviour genetics and personality

Module 2: Genes, behaviour, and personality

Reading: Funder, Chs. 8 & 9

Psychoanalysis – Part I

Module 3: Psychoanalysis: Beginnings, to a theory of personality structure

Reading: Funder, Ch. 10

Psychoanalysis – Part II

Module 4: Psychoanalytic Theory: implications and research

Reading: Funder, Ch. 11; Ch. 12 (pp. 356-371)

The neo-Freudians and ego psychologists

Module 5: The Neo-Freudians: Alfred Adler and Erich Fromm

Reading: Funder, Ch. 12 (pp. 347-350)

Module 6: The Neo-Freudians: Harry Stack Sullivan and Karen Horney

Reading: Funder, Ch. 12 (pp. 352-353)

Module 7: Ego psychology in psychoanalysis

Reading: Funder, Ch. 12 (pp.353-355); Ch. 14

Analytic psychology but not psychoanalysis

Module 8: The Analytic Psychology of Carl Gustav Jung

Reading Funder, Ch. 12 (pp. 350-352)

Learning and behaviour theory approaches to personality

Module 9: Learning theory approaches to personality – Part I

Reading: Funder, Ch. 15

Module 10: Learning theory approaches to personality – Part II

Reading: Funder, Ch 15-17

Phenomenology

Module 11: Phenomenology: Carl R. Rogers and George A. Kelly

Reading: Funder, Ch. 13 (pp. 385-401)

Existentialism

Module 12: Existentialism – R.D. Laing

Reading: Ch. 13 (pp. 375-385)

Personality traits

Module 13: Trait theory

Reading: Funder, Chs. 4 & 5

Personality theory in perspective

Module 14: The current status of personality theory and some perspectives

Reading: Funder, Ch. 18

Assignments

3 essays, 7-10 typewritten pages in length, due in the following time slots:

Essay **1**, due Monday, January 31

Essay **2**, due Friday, March 11

Essay **3**, due Friday, April 1

The 3 essays are worth **50%** of your grade.

The essays are to be based on the set of questions following. Each essay should be a critical examination of **one** question. There are **25** questions in all, out of which you need to choose the **3** for your essays. I strongly suggest that you choose a question from the first third of the course for your first essay, one from the middle third for the second, and a question from the last third for your final essay.

In each of your essays, consider the important issues and present your own conclusions. You may draw on the text, the lectures, and other readings. Please note that consulting sources outside the required readings and the lectures is optional. You are encouraged to do that, but there is no penalty if you do not. The purpose of the essays is to help you to think through some of the major questions in the study of personality. Please develop and present your own ideas, based on the material you have drawn upon, **in your own words**. Copying or close paraphrases from the text, lectures, or other sources will not help you to understand the issues, and they constitute plagiarism (see above).

Each essay will be marked using an **Assignment Review Sheet** and will include comments from the marker.

Marking

Assignments and the final examination are marked according to the numerical grading system of the Faculty of Arts. For further details, including such non-graded standings as FTC, please consult the university calendar.

Essay Questions

Question 1: What do **you** think is the most fruitful definition of personality? What are the major issues in the study of personality as you see them?

Question 2: Contrast the clinical and experimental methods. What does each have to offer? What are the limitations of each? Hint: Why do many clinicians insist that only through the clinical method can we truly understand personality, while some experimental personality psychologists spurn the clinical study of persons, insisting that only the experiment can disclose reliably observable features of personality?

- Question 3:** How did the clinical origin of personality theory shape its development in both content and method? How would contemporary personality theories be different if they had developed out of experimental psychology?
- Question 4:** Suppose behaviour genetics had been well developed in Freud's time, and suppose Freud knew about it. How would that have affected the development of personality theory? Consider how personality theories might have developed on the basis of the heritability of personality traits. Does this question apply to what contemporary personality theories might have to do to adapt to behaviour genetics research?
- Question 5:** Imagine that you are a behaviour geneticist interested in the heritability of personality attributes. Describe how you would go about studying the genetic basis of personality. What would your basic procedure be? What measurement issues would you face? How much would you draw on psychological theories of personality? Which theories?
- Question 6:** What was the evidence that made Freud come to the view that a concept of unconscious processes was absolutely necessary? How adequate is that evidence? Can you see any possibilities for an alternative theory that would place more emphasis on conscious processes?
- Question 7:** Critically evaluate the theory of psychosexual stages, giving particular emphasis to Freud's theory of moral development, the theory of superego formation.
- Question 8:** Critically review the research of the psychoanalysts themselves. What research methods do they consider appropriate to investigate psychoanalytic hypotheses? What are the strengths and weaknesses of these methods? Which of their findings do you think stands up? Why?
- Question 9:** Did Freud lose his nerve when he abandoned the seduction hypothesis? If you can, read a bit of Masson's accusation that Freud threw out a hypothesis that had evidence going for it (Masson, J.M. 1984. *The Assault on Truth: Freud's Suppression of the Seduction Theory*. New York: Farrar, Straus, & Giroux.). Compare with Peter Gay's conclusion that Freud was right to abandon a wrong hypothesis (Gay, P. 1988. *Freud: A Life for Our Time*. New York: Norton.). What do you think of the evidence? Does Freud's old hypothesis bear on the contemporary problem of child sexual abuse? What do you think about repression and the problem of false memories? What is your conclusion?

- Question 10:** Which of the neo-Freudian theorists provides the fullest and most general understanding of adult personality – not just disordered personality, but the full range of adult behaviour?
- Question 11:** How does Erikson's view of life cycle development help us to understand adult behaviour? Does it improve on theories that regard personality development as essentially completed sometime in childhood? How? What aspects of adult life does Erikson help us to better understand?
- Question 12:** Which of the neo-Freudian and ego psychology theorists has the most complete approach to the processes of childrearing? Which of these theories has the most clear and explicit implications for parent-child relations, childrearing practices, and the growth and development of the child? Explain. Which theorist in this group most clearly and adequately accounts for the kinds of problems met in the education of children, in the classroom, and other educational institutions? Same or different theorists?
- Question 13:** Jung's Analytic Psychology introduces ideas to personality theory that no other personality theorist includes. Critically evaluate Analytic Psychology, noting its strengths and areas in which it is deficient or, frankly, out to lunch. In your answer, deal specifically with Jungian concepts, showing that you understand them.
- Question 14:** Let's suppose that you take the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator test. The results characterize you exactly as you thought of yourself. What questions about assessment with this test might the close correspondence of its categorization of you and your own self appraisal raise? Suppose the test's categorization of you did not agree at all with your own view of yourself? What questions about the test would this raise? Show that you understand the basic issues in personality assessment.
- Question 15:** Compare the analyses of disturbed behaviour of Dollard and Miller, Rotter, Skinner, and Bandura. How do each of these theorists approach the psychological treatment of behaviour disorders?
- Question 16:** Among the learning and behaviour theorists, which one deals most effectively with the processes of childrearing (a science of personality development) and the processes of learning in the classroom?
- Question 17:** How do each of the learning and behaviour theorists account for neurotic defences and defence mechanisms? Compare these theories in the way each accounts for responses to fear and conflict. How do

they treat fear and conflict motivated behaviour?

- Question 18:** What kinds of social behaviour does the expectancy concept of internal versus external control of reinforcement enable us to understand? To what kinds of problems should research on the concept turn next? Why?
- Question 19:** Critically evaluate the modeling hypothesis and its implications. What do you think of Bandura's claim that observational learning is a key to understanding personality development? What about the comparison of the observational learning and catharsis hypotheses?
- Question 20:** Take either a hypothetical person or a child or someone of whom you have knowledge and present a Rogerian "analysis" of him or her.
- Question 21:** Give a good, thorough critical analysis of George Kelly's Personal Construct Theory. What is your judgment? Show that you understand the concepts of the theory. Do you believe that one can change his or her personality by changing his or her construct system? Why or why not?
- Question 22:** What does existentialism have to contribute to personality theory? Have the existentialists given us anything of value? What about their rejection of determinism and scientific ideas of causation? Can theories that have such a dark view of humankind's prospects really be good for people?
- Question 23:** Does existentialism contribute to the understanding of schizophrenia? If so, what does it offer? If not, in what ways does it fail to reveal the nature of schizophrenia? What existential concepts might apply to schizophrenia, and how might the disorder of schizophrenia inform us about being and existence?
- Question 24:** Trait theories have been around for a long time. They offer a very systematic view of personality, strong grounding in research, biological processes, and they are highly compatible with the heritability of personality attributes. Critically evaluate the trait theories, noting their strengths and weaknesses. Is their view of a few fundamental dimensions of personality correct in your judgment? Why or why not?

Question 25: Do you think the demise of the “Age of Theory” has been a good thing? How do you evaluate the developments it has brought in research and in clinical practice? Are miniature theories a good substitute for inclusive personality theories? What can they offer that major personality theories can’t? What drawbacks do you see to miniature theories?

Exams

Midterm

The midterm exam (date to be announced) will be a 1-hour **short essay** examination, written in class. This exam will count **20%** of your grade.

Final

There is a final examination at the end of the course. It is a 3-hour **short essay** examination and will cover the **entire course**. This examination will count **30%** of your grade. If you keep up with the lectures and readings and give yourself time for final review, the exam won’t present any problem. There will be **nine** questions on the exam, of which you will choose **six** to answer. Each of the questions will call on your understanding of theories and your ability to use their concepts appropriately.

A sample question

Freud’s concept of the unconscious reflects the origin of psychoanalysis in the study and treatment of neurotic persons. The scope of psychoanalysis, however, is the entire spectrum of human behaviour, normal as well as neurotic. How does the concept of the unconscious apply to and help us understand the normal person?