“Abnormal Psychology/Treatment of Abnormal Behavior” Unit Summary

Our last unit can be thought of having two parts. The first half will cover “Abnormal Psychology.” All year we have been talking about typical human thought processes and behavior. Of course not everyone thinks and behaves in the same way. Is that OK? At what point do psychologists consider thoughts and/or behaviors “abnormal?” And how does this differ from “insanity?”

Once we consider how psychologists differentiate between “normal” and “abnormal”, we will investigate how different disorders are classified. After that, we will dive deeper into the major diagnostic categories. To wrap up this part, we will discuss the issues around psychiatric labeling.

The second half will cover “Treatment of Abnormal Behavior.” During this part we will investigate the different therapeutic approaches and when each is appropriate.

Combined these two units comprise 12 to 16 percent of the AP exam. Don’t lose focus now – this is the last the last unit before the AP exam!

Unit Objectives

The following is a description of learning objectives for the major content areas covered in the AP Psychology Exam during this unit, as well as the approximate percentages of the multiple-choice section devoted to each area. This listing is not intended to be an exhaustive list of topics. All of these topics are likely to appear on the AP exam in some way, shape, or form. Other material we talk about and/or in your reading could also find its way on the unit assessment.

Abnormal Psychology (7-9% of AP exam)

In this portion of the course, students examine the nature of common challenges to adaptive functioning. This section emphasizes formal conventions that guide psychologists’ judgments about diagnosis and problem severity.

AP students in psychology should be able to do the following:

- Describe contemporary and historical conceptions of what constitutes psychological disorders
- Recognize the use of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-IV-TR) published by the American Psychiatric Association as a the primary reference for making diagnostic judgments
- Discuss the major diagnostic categories, including anxiety and somatoform disorders, mood disorders, schizophrenia, organic disturbance, personality disorders, and dissociative disorders, and their corresponding symptoms
- Evaluate the strengths and limitations of various approaches to explaining psychological disorders; medical model, psychoanalytic, humanistic, cognitive, biological, and sociocultural
- Identify the positive and negative consequences of diagnostic labels 9e.g., the Rosenhan study)
- Discuss the intersection between psychology and the legal system (e.g., confidentiality, insanity defense)

Treatment of Abnormal Behavior (5-7% of AP exam)

This section of the course provides students with an understanding of empirically based treatments of psychological disorders. The topic emphasizes descriptions of treatment modalities based on various orientations in psychology.

AP students in psychology should be able to do the following:

- Describe the central characteristics of psychotherapeutic intervention
• Describe major treatment orientations used in therapy (e.g., behavioral, cognitive, humanistic) and how those orientations influence therapeutic planning
• Compare and contrast different treatment formats (e.g., individual, group)
• Summarize effectiveness of specific treatments used to address specific problems
• Discuss how cultural and ethnic context influence choice and success of treatment (e.g., factors that lead to premature termination of treatment)
• Describe prevention strategies that build resilience and promote competence
• Identify major figures in psychological treatment (e.g., Aaron Beck, Albert Ellis, Sigmund Freud, Mary Cover Jones, Carl Rogers, B.F. Skinner, Joseph Wolpe)

Key Terms
You should eventually be able to properly and accurately use the terms at the beginning of Chapters 12 & 13 of Barron’s, as well as the terms in bold interspersed throughout the pages assigned in Coon, in written and verbal communication.

Text Readings
• Coon Chapters 14 & 15
• Barron’s Chapters 12 & 13

Planned Assignments & Assessments (subject to change)
• Do the quizzes on your own. They will not be collected for a grade, but I strongly recommend completing them anyway.
  o “Normality, Psychopathology, Psychosis, Delusional Disorders, & Schizophrenia” Reading Quiz (Coon p.459-476)
  o “Mood Disorders, Anxiety-Based Disorders, Personality Disorders, & Disorders in Perspective” Reading Quiz (Coon p.476-494; Barron’s Chapter 12 – it covers some stuff in from the first one, but anything new will be here)
  o “Psychotherapy, Psychoanalysis, Insight Therapies, Behavior Therapies, & Operant and Cognitive Therapies” Reading Quiz (Coon p.495-512)
  o “Group Therapy, Helping Skills, & Medical Therapies” Reading Quiz (Coon p.512-528; Barron’s Chapter 13 – it covers some stuff in from the previous one, but anything new will be here)
• “Abnormal Psychology Case Study” assignment and activities
• Abnormal Psychology/Treatment Unit Collaborative Assessment
• Abnormal Psychology/Treatment Independent Investigation

Current Timetable (subject to change)
• Last day of unit planned for Tuesday April 28

IMPORTANT NOTE!
• The “Pre-AP Final” is scheduled for Thursday April 30/Friday May 1 in class. The AP exam is scheduled for Monday May 4 at 12 noon. Mr. Roy and I will be providing our students AP exam review materials concurrently with our last units. WE EXPECT YOU WILL START STUDYING FOR THESE ASSESSMENTS AS SOON AS POSSIBLE. You will be sorry if you leave them until the last minute – trust us.