Personality
Psychology 252 Syllabus (Winter 2017)

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I. Readings: The following books are recommended for purchase. These are good books and we'll make extensive use of them.


Additional course readings--marked as [CR] on the reading list--will be made available through web links on Moodle.

The following books on personality have been placed on open reserve in the library. Please consult these to review course topics, to clarify confusing material, to pursue interesting ideas or lines of research, or to wander aimlessly through the field of personality.


II. Classes. We will meet in LDC 104 from 8:30-9:40 on Mondays and Wednesdays, and from 8:30-9:30 on Fridays. Class sessions will combine lecture, discussion, and group work. I expect you will complete the readings prior to the class for which they are assigned and you will come to class prepared with questions and comments about the material. Please note that if you choose to bring a computer or other electronic device to class, I expect that you restrict your use of that resource to course-related activity during class meeting times. To help you review what we have covered in class, I will post slides from my presentations on Moodle after each class session. The official course office hour is Friday, 9:40-10:40, but I would be happy to meet at other times. Feel free to e-mail me.

III. Assignments and Exam. There will be examinations on Friday, February 3 and Monday, March 6. A copy of the exam question will be made available to you prior to each exam. In addition, I expect you to complete two assignments: a poster presentation on research using the Five Factor Model of personality on Friday, January 27 and weekly posts to the course Moodle discussion forum due by 6:00AM usually every Friday (but see January 18 and February 1). Specific information on each of these two assignments will be presented in class. Your final grade for the course will be based on the following weights: constructive class participation (10%), poster presentation (20%), Moodle posts (20%), and exams (25% each).
Finally, Carleton's ASC wants you to remember the following: "All assignments, quizzes, and exams must be done on your own. Note that academic dishonesty includes not only cheating, fabrication, and plagiarism, but also includes helping other students commit acts of academic dishonesty by allowing them to obtain copies of your work. You are allowed to use the Web for reference purposes, but you may not copy material from any website or any other source without proper citations. In short, all submitted work must be your own. Cases of academic dishonesty will be dealt with strictly. Each such case will be referred to the Academic Standing Committee via the Associate Dean of Students or the Associate Dean of the College. A formal finding of responsibility can result in disciplinary sanctions ranging from a censure and a warning to permanent dismissal in the case of repeated and serious offenses. The academic penalty for a finding of responsibility can range from a grade of zero in the specific assignment to a 'F' in this course."

IV. Introductory Comments. Because we employ assumptions about the nature of personality in almost every sphere of our personal, intellectual, and creative lives, you may find our formal study of personality to be one of the most exciting and significant endeavors you undertake at Carleton. It is almost impossible to be intellectually vital without wondering about the nature and sources of our own and others' behavior and personal experience and then about how human personality has been understood in culture, history, art, science, and literature.

Personality science offers one approach to the quest for human and self understanding. That approach is centered on a commitment to certain standards of knowing. These emphasize the application of a critical perspective in publicly replicable tests of any claim to knowledge that may be made. Although this may limit what we may come to know about personality in a scientific way—a choice that we must not fail to acknowledge—it may offer a firmer foundation for our understandings in those domains we are able to explore. These considerations suggest the study of personality psychology may not only challenge our knowledge of personality but also our comfort with the means of knowing personality upon which we typically depend.

My claim is that personality science is a manifestation of a critical approach to knowing; it is not the ultimate embodiment of that approach. This course, accordingly, can offer descriptions of the questions and answers about personality that psychologists have presented, but it remains our responsibility to evaluate these critically in our own investigations. In this sense, personality psychology is an open endeavor, requiring our participation as evaluators, theorists, and researchers.

V. Course Topic and Reading Schedule.

"...our emotional and psychological lives may have hidden algorithms. A few simple rules, and, like a wind-up toy, we're off and running, colliding into friends, lovers and family. Our emotional make-up, so complex when viewed from the outside, may, from a structural perspective, be completely determined by a few simple rules." (David Byrne, Envisioning Emotional Epistemological Information)

A. Introduction to Personality

1/4 Reflections on the tasks and realities of personality psychology. What does it mean to claim that some thing (e.g., a person, an institution) has "a personality"? What is "Personality" as a focus of formal inquiry? What specific questions about the nature, organization, content, and development of personality drive this area of study in psychology? What methods or investigative traditions have contributed to personality psychology?

"As the weaver elaborated his pattern for no end but the pleasure of his aesthetic senses, so might man live his life, or if one was forced to believe that his actions were outside his choosing so might a man look at his life, that it made a pattern...Out of the manifold events of his life, his deeds, his feelings, his thoughts he might make a design regular, elaborate, complicated, or beautiful. In the vast warp of life...a man might get a personal satisfaction in selecting the various strands that worked out the pattern." (W. Somerset Maugham, Of Human Bondage)
B. Personality in the Measurement and Research Traditions

1/6 Trait approaches to personality. How are individual differences and structures of personality represented in trait theory and research? What are the assumptions of a trait conception of personality? What traits appear to be most characteristic of human personality, and how have those traits been identified? What, precisely, do the five factor domains represent? What is the Five Factor Model failing to cover in human personality?

"All the dictionaries put together don't contain half the terms we would need in order for us to understand each other." (J. Saramago, The Double)

G. Allport, What is a trait of personality? [CR]
R. McCrae & P. Costa, Personality in Adulthood, pp. 20-36.

1/9 Traits and their assessment. How can traits be measured? What are common tests of personality? What psychometric standards are used to evaluate the success of personality measurement, and how do standard tests typically fare when they are re-evaluated? What do scores on trait tests represent, and how would we know? What critical questions have been raised about the attempt to understand personality via traits?

"When you cannot measure it, when you cannot express it in numbers, your knowledge is of a meager and unsatisfactory kind." (Lord Kelvin)

R. McCrae & P. Costa, Personality in Adulthood, pp. 36-57.

1/11 Temperament and the biological bases of personality. Do non-human animals have personalities? Do developmental studies document individual differences in temperament related to the Five Factor Model? What is the basic logic and design of twin comparison studies in psychology? What evidence exists in such studies to support the contention that personality diversity reflects genetic variability? What are some of the methodological complications of twin comparison studies in contemporary behavioral genetics? Via what biological processes is genetic variation linked to behavior?

"I have no patience with the hypothesis occasionally expressed, and often implied, especially in tales written to teach children to be good, that babies are born pretty much alike, and that the sole agencies in creating differences...are steady application and moral effort." (Francis Galton, Hereditary Genius)

R. McCrae & P. Costa, Personality in Adulthood, pp. 184-197.
S. Gosling & O. John, Personality dimensions in nonhuman animals, pp. 69-75. [CR]
T. Bouchard, Genes, environment, and personality. pp. 201-205. [CR]

1/12 Corey Keyes talk (Olin 141, 7:00-8:30): Flourishing at Carleton.

1/13 Personality fit and fits: The example of introversion in an extraverted world. Does social life and culture favor certain personality traits over others? If so, why is there variation on given trait dimensions? How might people whose traits are less immediately rewarded navigate and cope with social expectations and pressures? What does the use of compensatory strategies for trait tendencies suggest about the role of self-control over personality? [Moodle post due 6:00AM]

"I speak and speak but the listener retains only the words he is expecting. It is not the voice that commands the story; it is the ear." (Italo Calvino, Invisible Cities)
S. Cain, *Quiet*, pp. 1-94.

**1/16 Personality (the FFM) in cross-cultural perspective.** Does the basic structure of personality vary across culture or is the structure of personality universal? Are people living in different cultures more or less likely, on average, to manifest particular personality traits? Is personality differentially important cross-culturally? What characteristics of culture influence the development of personality?

"No one today is purely one thing. Labels like Indian, or woman, or American, are no more than starting points." (Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism*)

M. Katigbak et al., Are indigenous personality dimensions culture specific? pp. 89-101. [CR]

**1/18 Discussion of biological and environmental influences on personality. [Moodle post due 6:00AM]**

"Travel shakes up the mind. It forces us to reappraise our lives. We become a different person. We are thrown into situations we could never have planned, and what we do plan often goes surprisingly wrong." (Harriet Walter, *Other People's Shoes*)

S. Cain, *Quiet*, pp. 97-129.

**1/20 No class: Society for Personality and Social Psychology annual meeting.**

**1/23 Applications of trait psychology.** What is the relationship between personality and health? In what other domains has research shown personality trait differences to be important? What personality traits best predict these significant outcomes? How much of the variability in the outcome is predicted by trait differences? How do traits make a difference when they do?

"When health is absent, wisdom cannot reveal itself, art cannot manifest, strength cannot fight, wealth becomes useless, and intelligence cannot be applied." (Herophilus)

H. Friedman, Long-term relations of personality and health. pp. 635-682. [CR]

**1/25 Personality across the lifespan.** How consistent and stable are personality trait measurements, specific consistencies, and adaptational strategies over time? What are the major contexts through which an individual moves during his or her life? How do individuals choose and create the circumstances of their lives, and how are they created and recreated by those circumstances?

"Shall I sing when I am her age, if I ever am? No. Did I sing as a boy? No." (Samuel Beckett, *Krapp's Last Tape*)


**1/27 Poster session: Research on personality traits.**

**1/30 Controversies over the Five-Factor approach and traits of personality in general.** What conceptual and empirical considerations have challenged trait approaches to conceptualizing personality? Do trait-like personality differences manifest themselves consistently over situations? Is the five-trait model sufficient to capture the most important dimensions of personality variability? If not, what aspects of personality does it miss?
"The more I see of the world, the more I am dissatisfied with it, and every day confirms my belief in the inconsistency of all human characters, and of the little dependence that can be placed on the appearance of either merit or sense." (Jane Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*)

W. Mischel, Consistency and specificity in behavior. pp. 13-39. [CR]
A. Duckworth & J. Gross, Self-control and grit. pp. 319-325. [CR]

2/1 Trait psychology in perspective. What do we currently know and not know about personality traits? Does trait psychology provide a comprehensive approach to personality psychology? If not, what about personality remains to be addressed? [Moodle post due 6:00AM]

"Experts can explain anything in the objective world to us, yet we understand our own lives less and less...By day, we work with statistics; in the evening, we consult astrologers." (Vaclav Havel)

D. McAdams, What do we know when we know a person? pp. 365-396. [CR]

2/3 First examination.

2/6 Midterm break.

C. Personality in the Clinical Tradition

2/8 The origins of psychoanalysis. What was Freud's early personal experience, cultural and intellectual background, and professional training? How did these manifest themselves in the development of psychoanalysis? What was hysteria? How did Freud's understanding and treatment of hysteria evolve? Are early childhood traumas fantasized or real?

"...many of the things we value most--the gods and God, love and sexuality, mourning and amusement, character and inspiration, the past and the future--are neither measurable or predictable." (Adam Phillips)

J. Breuer, Anna O. In *DSM Case Book*, 3 pp. [Handout]

2/10 Dreams, errors, and the psyche. What was Freud's interpretation of human erring, and what were its implications for his developing model of the human psyche? What method did Freud use to analyze errors and to uncover their hypothesized meanings? What elements and processes mold the final content of a dream, and how are these reversed in the process through which dreams may be interpreted? How did Freud employ dream analysis in his psychoanalytic investigations? What do dreams and their meaning purportedly tell us about the human psyche and about individual personality? [Moodle post due 6:00AM]

"I reflected that dreams would sometimes in this way bring me nearer to truths or impressions which would not come through my own unaided effort or even through natural contingencies, and that they would awaken in me a desire, a longing for certain nonexistent things, which is the prerequisite for creative work." (M. Proust, *Remembrance of Things Past*)

S. Freud, The Aliquis error. 1 pp. [Handout]

2/13 Freud's models of the human psyche. What evidence supports the psychoanalytic hypothesis of
a psychical unconscious? What are the attributes of this unconscious? What were Freud's formal models of the human psyche? How and why did these models change? What are the ego defense mechanisms, and what challenge do they pose for our understanding of ourselves and others? What is Freud's stage model of sexual and psychological development, and how plausible is it? How does psychosexual development attempt to account for individual differences in normal personality, human interests, and psychopathology?

"...birth, death, and erotic love might be said to be primitive, and force our reluctant acknowledgment that the most profound experiences of our lives are physical events--though we believe ourselves to be, and surely are, essentially spiritual beings." (Joyce Carol Oates, *On Boxing*)


2/15 Psychoanalysis in empirical perspective. What contemporary research evidence can be cited in support of psychoanalytic claims? How compelling is that evidence, and what are some of its key shortcomings? Why do most personality scientists (and most academic and applied psychologists) reject psychoanalytic ideas?

"It is a mistake to believe that a science consists in nothing but conclusively proved propositions, and it is unjust to demand that it should. It is a demand only made by those who feel a craving for authority in some form and a need to replace the religious catechism by something else, even if it be a scientific one. Science in its catechism has but few apodictic precepts; it consists mainly of statements which it has developed to varying degrees of probability. The capacity to be content with these approximations to certainty and the ability to carry on constructive work despite the lack of final confirmation are actually a mark of the scientific habit of mind." (S. Freud)

D. Weston, The scientific legacy of Sigmund Freud. 38 pp. [CR]

2/17 The application and practice of psychoanalysis. How is psychoanalysis being employed therapeutically (if it is)? Why, from a psychodynamic point of view, does therapeutic insight and progress occur? How are transference and the disciplined neutrality of the analyst thought to facilitate therapy? What are major current controversies in psychoanalytic approaches to therapy? [Moodle post due 6:00AM]

"We may insist as much as we like that the human intellect is weak in comparison with human instincts and be right in doing so. But, nonetheless, there is something peculiar about this weakness. The voice of the intellect is a soft one, but it does not rest until it has gained a hearing. Ultimately, after endlessly repeated rebuffs, it succeeds." (S. Freud)


2/20 Approaches in the psychoanalytic tradition: Jung's analytical psychology. What were some of the major revisions and repudiations of psychoanalysis furthered by later psychodynamic theorists? In what ways do controversies within psychoanalysis illuminate cultural, personal, philosophical, or scientific influences on clinical theories? What are the primary tenets of Jung's analytical psychology? Why has Jung's approach and, especially, the measurement approach associated with it--the MBTI--had appeal as a more humanistic (and mystical) form of psychoanalysis?

"There is a common saying that we should learn from our enemies. I confess I have never succeeded in doing so." (Sigmund Freud)

C. Jung, Psychological types. 5 pp. [Handout]
C. Jung, An interpretation of a dream. 6 pp. [Handout]

2/22 Personality in cognition. How has personality psychology adapted to the cognitive revolution? What varies, cognitively, between individuals—intelligence, favored constructs, how persons use cognitive constructs? How is the self represented in cognition, and what are the consequences of representations of the self? How can cognition serve as a vehicle for personality change?

"People are disturbed not by things, but by the views which they take of them." (Epictetus)

G. Kelly, Personal construct theory and the psychotherapeutic interview. pp. 224-232. [CR]
W. Mischel, Personality coherence and dispositions in a cognitive-affective personality system. pp. 37-60.

2/24 Narratives of personality. What is the role of the understandings we construct about ourselves in the functioning of personality? To what extent are these stories reflective of personality, culture, or interpersonal relationships? How are goals and projects integrated into narratives of personality, and how do they influence behavior? [Moodle post due 6:00AM]

"...just sitting back trying to recapture a little of the glory of, well time slips away and leaves you with nothing mister but boring stories of glory days." (Bruce Springsteen, Glory Days)


2/27 Positive psychology and the humanistic tradition in personality psychology. What assumptions about human nature do humanistic psychologists make? What is the role that the self and personal authenticity are thought to play in personality? Why is the attainment of self-knowledge and self-direction thought to be so problematic? What personality characteristics have captured the interest of the new scientific positive psychology? To what extent and via what methods can we influence our own happiness? How well-grounded is positive psychology?

"Point me out the happy man and I will point you out either extreme egotism, evil—or else an absolute ignorance." (G. Greene, The Heart of the Matter)

C. Rogers, Some observations on the organization of personality. pp. 358-368. [CR]

3/1 & 3/3 Existential personality theory. What does existential psychology see as the fundamental challenges of the human condition? What defenses do persons typically erect in response to the root threats of existence? What is the existentialist critique of psychoanalytic personality theory and the science of personality? Does existentialism offer an atheoretical approach to personality and, if not, how can its claims be further articulated and assessed? What does it all mean anyhow? [Moodle post due 3/3, 6:00AM]

"I don't want to achieve immortality through my work. I want to achieve it through not dying." (Woody Allen)

I. D. Yalom, Love's Executioner, pp. 3-14. [CR]
S. Koole, J. Greenberg, & T. Pyszczynski, Introducing science to the psychology of the soul. 5 pp. [CR]

3/6 Closing discussion.

3/8 Second examination.