

**Introduction to Psychology**  
**Psy 1010**  
**Lecture 1**

I. INTRODUCTION

A. Why Take a Psychology Course?

- How many courses do you enter already being an expert?
  - Isn't Psychology one of them?
  - Aren't you already an expert in explaining how and why people behave the way they do?
- Request for a Volunteer.
  - Why did you raise your hand?
- **ON A PIECE OF PAPER WRITE DOWN AN EXPLANATION OF WHY YOU DID OR DID NOT RAISE YOUR HAND.**

I. INTRODUCTION

A. Why Take a Psychology Course?

- Can I tell you anything to make you think your decision to volunteer was for any other reason than what you just said?
- Can you imagine me convincing you that you raised your hand because:
  - you hate your mother?
  - you have a pathological problem and need to join hand raising anonymous?
- If you know why you do things, why are you take a course in psychology?

I. INTRODUCTION

A. Why Take a Psychology Course?

- The everyday way we explain our own and other's behavior is called *Folk Psychology*.
  - Many students expect an Introductory Psychology class to agree with their Folk Psychological beliefs about how and why people behave the way they do.
- This opening lecture is about whether this expectation is a good one or a bad one.
  - If it is a good assumption, you will learn nothing new about why you did nor did not raise your hand
  - If it is a bad assumption, you will learn something new about why you did nor did not raise your hand

## I. INTRODUCTION

### B. Definitions of the Discipline

- Maybe to answer the question “Why take a psychology course?” we need to better understand what psychology is about!
- David Myers (2009, p. 4), the author of your textbook defines psychology as:
  - **The science of behavior (what we do) and mental processes (subjective experiences).**
- Wade & Tavis (2004) defined psychology as:
  - **The discipline concerned with behavior and mental processes and how they are affected by an organism’s physical state, mental state, and external environment**

## I. INTRODUCTION

### B. Definitions of the Discipline

- Bob Sternberg (2006), another psychologist, defines psychology similarly. He writes:
  - **To study psychology, the study of the mind and of behavior, is to seek to understand how we think, learn, perceive, feel, act, interact with others, and even understand others or ourselves.**
- So it seems that psychology is a *science* that involves *explaining* and *understanding* how and why we act the way we do and experience things the way we do.

## I. INTRODUCTION

### C. Is Scientific Psychology Relevant?

- Who here has never been a *Scientific Psychologist* by correctly explaining and understanding one’s own or someone’s behavior?
  - Lets see how good you are at explaining and understanding behavior:
    - Why does a friend suddenly start avoiding you?
    - Why does a child look sad when getting a gift?
    - Why does a student not volunteer on the first day of class
- Have you ever been really wrong in explaining or understanding your own or other’s behavior

## I. INTRODUCTION

### C. Is Scientific Psychology Relevant?

- The fact that we all easily explain our own and others’ behavior raises one old question and a new one:
  - **OLD:** Why do you need to take a course in Psychology?
    - What can you hope to learn in this course that you don’t already know?
  - **NEW:** Why is Psychology a scientific discipline?
    - Why do you need a formal discipline of *scientific psychology* to explain behavior when explanations based on *folk psychology* (an intuitive everyday way of explaining ourselves and others) work just fine?

## II. REASONS FOR STUDING PSYCHOLOGY

### A. Introduction

- There are 3 arguments for why you should take a course in *scientific psychology*.
  - Which argument you think is best is going to make a difference in your experience in this class and in what you learn!
- Textbooks and I disagree about this too!
  - Textbooks seems to support the first or second of the three arguments.
  - I think that the third one is best.
- I will lay out the three arguments

## II. REASONS FOR STUDING PSYCHOLOGY

### A. Folk Psychology is Wrong

- **Folk psychology is wrong**
  - *Our everyday or "folk" psychology is wrong and is in need of a complete overhaul & correction by scientific psychology.*
    - To Myers, "Sometimes intuition, informed by countless casual observations, has it wrong. We will see how research has overturned popular ideas." (p. 11).
      - Research shows that Folk Psychological sayings like "opposites attract" and "spare the rod and spoil the child" may be incorrect.
    - By this logic, you should replace your Folk Psychology with ideas of Scientific Psychology learned in this class.
      - But, do you think you everyday way of explaining behavior is wrong and in need of a complete overhaul?

## II. REASONS FOR STUDYING PSYCHOLOGY

### C. Folk Psychology is Incomplete

- **Folk psychology is incomplete**
  - *Folk psychology is OK but needs expansion and refinement to make it fully agree with Scientific Psychology.*
    - Myers notes (p. 10) that *because we're all behavior watchers, it would be surprising if many of psychology's findings had not been foreseen.*
      - Research shows that the Folk Psychological sayings "out of sight out of mind" may be correct.
    - By this logic, you should revise your Folk Psychology with ideas of Scientific Psychology learned in this class.
      - But explaining how and why Folk Psychological beliefs are true Scientific Psychology challenges what is means to be human.

## II. REASONS FOR PSYCHOLOGY

### D. There are Alternatives to Folk Psychology

- **There are alternatives to Folk Psychology** (Amsel's argument).
  - *Everyday Folk Psychology is perfectly fine for many everyday uses, but it shouldn't be taken as the **only** or even the **best** way to understand people.*
  - There are at least three perspectives or WAYS TO EXPLAIN why people act they way they do
    - The three perspectives or ways to explain can be applied to the behavior of anything from alarm clocks to human beings.
  - Some explanations are used in *Scientific Psychology* and others used in *Folk Psychology*.

### III. 3 WAYS TO EXPLAIN ALARM CLOCKS

#### A. Physical Explanations

- **Physical Explanation:** An explanation which focuses on the physical material comprising the system.
  - Explain the behavior of the alarm clock by reference to the laws (mechanical or electrical) that govern the behavior of the machine.
  - My mechanical alarm clock was ringing because:
    1. the hour and alarm hand were in the same alignment which caused
    2. a switch to be tripped that released a spring to which
    3. a bar was attached, and
    4. the bar banged the bell until the energy in the spring dissipated.

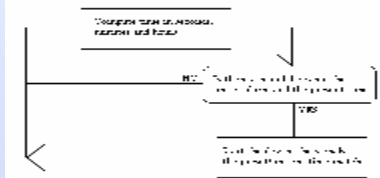
### III. 3 WAYS TO EXPLAIN ALARM CLOCKS

#### B. Design Explanations

- **Design Explanation:** An explanation which focuses on what the system is designed to do or its function.
  - Explain the behavior of the alarm clock by its design to signal a match between the time and the alarm.

This design explains how a mechanical or an electrical alarm clock works.

Design Explanations are NOT limited to the "stuff" in a clock.



### III. 3 WAYS TO EXPLAIN ALARM CLOCKS

#### C. Intentional Explanations

- **Intentional Explanation:** An explanation which focuses on the system's mental states (mental verbs: wanting, wishing, hoping, pretending, believing, feeling, desiring, etc.)
  - Explain the behavior of the alarm clock by reference to its mental states (e.g., alarm clock is ringing because it wants me to wake up).
  - We talk as if inanimate objects have mental states.
    - "My car wants me to be late." "My computer wants input."
  - Look for mental verbs in your explanation of why you did or did not volunteer.

### 3 WAYS TO EXPLAIN ALARM CLOCKS

#### D. Review

- There are three ways to explain the behavior of an alarm clocks or human beings:
  - **Physical Explanation:** Explanation of the behavior of a system by reference to what the system is made up of.
    - Alarm clocks composed of physical components (electronics and gears); humans composed of cells making up biological systems
  - **Design Explanation:** Explanation of the behavior of a system by reference to the function of the system
    - Alarm clocks designed to ring at designated times, Human designed to survive, learn, etc.
  - **Intentional Explanation:** Explanation of the behavior of a system by reference to the system's mental states
    - Alarm clock wants to wake us; humans have beliefs, desires, etc.

Scientific Psychology

Folk Psychology