

Andrei Popa

Teaching Philosophy

In my view, the overarching goal of higher education is to help students become better decision-makers, a responsibility I embrace with the same dedication that fuels my research interests. Between Emory, Georgia State University, and Agnes Scott College, my teaching experiences have been intellectually rewarding. I have taught a variety of class sizes and topics, have mentored undergraduate students, and I have developed my own courses and seminars. My goal as a teacher is to help students develop a scientific attitude, a skeptical stance that empowers and enriches beyond academia.

CRITICAL THINKING, APPLIED

My classes are designed to engage students' creativity, challenge preconceptions, and trigger scholarly dialogues. I emphasize the importance of psychology as a science and applying critical thinking to everyday life by focusing the discussions on famous studies, cutting-edge findings, and modern events. For example, I use the public coming-out announcements made by [Ellen Page](#) and [Michael Sam](#) to illustrate the real-world consequences of relying on "statistical deviance" as a guideline for "abnormality". When discussing humanism, I use the same examples to contextualize Carl Roger's view of psychological wellbeing as alignment between who we are (true self) and how we feel we must present ourselves (social self).

I complement lectures with active-learning exercises, in-class written assignments, and group activities. In my Introduction to Psychology courses, for example, I used the now-famous "four prisoners, four hats" puzzle (https://www.mycoted.com/Four_Men_in_Hats) to introduce the concept of "theory of mind" and to demonstrate how this special ability facilitates access to information that otherwise would have remained concealed. It often happens that students become fascinated with certain topics and wish to explore them further. I meet their curiosity by making available a diverse collection of academic articles, which I constantly refine and expand. For fast updates on scientific breakthroughs I use free third-party tools, such as Pinterest® (<https://www.pinterest.com/andreipopa515/>).

As a researcher, I learned that understanding is a private act, greatly facilitated by guided solitary effort. The homework assignments I incorporate in my courses serve a variety of purposes: to contextualize high-level concepts (e.g., emergence; assn. [sample A](#)), to gain a broader perspective by drawing connections between various topics/concepts ([B](#)), or to practice critical thinking by approaching the traditional from a new perspective ([C](#)). Sometimes, I found, a good way to highlight the importance of having a good theoretical foundation is to examine the real-world implications of not-so-good ones ([D](#)).

MENTORSHIP

My appreciation for mentorship was instilled in me since grad school, when I had the privilege of holding an interdisciplinary teaching fellowship called [O.R.D.E.R.](#) (On Recent Discoveries by Emory Researchers; 2011-2012). It entailed co-teaching an interdisciplinary course - with fellows from physics, women studies, anthropology, and epidemiology - and guiding students in developing research projects. The team I mentored, first-year students at the time, carried out an ingenious study, which showed that conforming to the group (Asch, 1955) did not require the presence of others; simply knowing their preferences sufficed to produce strong conformity effects. My efforts and contribution were recognized with the Emory/Hughes Medical Institute Teacher-Scholar Award (2012) and an invitation to serve on the O.R.D.E.R. 2012-13 advisory board, which I gladly accepted.

Since then, involving students in my work has become a priority, and I am committed to offer *each mentee* a meaningful, comprehensive research experience. The procedure I used to verify computational predictions (Popa, 2013) can be easily modified to accommodate virtually any experimental design that can be arranged in real operant chambers (and some that can't; [see Adekunle, SpARC 2016](#)). My students and I (senior seminar) used variations of this procedure to examine the effects of extinction on escape behavior (Popa & Grissom, 2017), behavioral variability in unsignaled environments, choice and preference in concurrent schedules of reinforcers *and* response-cost events, etc. (SpARC 2016; see all [seven abstracts below](#)).

COURSES

Given my research interests and teaching experience, I am well equipped to teach a variety of courses including Research Methods, Introduction to Psychology, Learning (with/without a lab), Explanatory Models (or Perspectives, or Systems), Abnormal Psychology, Behavior Principles (the basic science and its applications), and Social Psychology. In addition to traditional courses, I look forward to the opportunity to develop courses and seminars in my area of expertise, such as Computational Psychology, The Emergence of Personality, or the Use and Misuse of Philosophy of Science.

DIVERSITY AND INCLUSIVENESS

Over the course of 10 semesters at Georgia State University, I have taught thousands of students from a mosaic of ethnicities, sexual orientations, nationalities, ages, faiths, and socio-economic backgrounds. My students come to class with many things on their mind that are unrelated to the course material- some struggle with poverty, some with social inequality, some have children, some are on active military duty, some battle mental illness, some live in violent households, some work two jobs, some are ridiculed because of their accent. Despite these challenges, they show up to class prepared most days, and I feel it is my duty as a teacher to not let life circumstances erode their determination and halt their intellectual development. I don't give away grades, but I try to create opportunities to earn them. Such efforts include making course materials widely available online, arranging make-up examinations when the situation requires it, or Q&A sessions held via Skype the weekend before exams, to name just a few. Beyond my experience as a teacher, my own life experiences have also enabled me to identify and relate to other's struggles. For example, my experiences as an international, ESL student have broadened my perspective and instilled in me a strong sense of empathy for the students in my classroom.

One of my main priorities as a teacher is to create an inclusive environment *for everyone*. I feel it is my responsibility to actively erode stereotypes and prejudices, which is why I encourage my students to acknowledge themselves and their peers as unique, multi-dimensional *individuals*. I address such issues whenever the topic invites the conversation. For example, the historical moment of [landing on a comet](#), sparked interesting discussions about the value of basic science, but also about [cultural \(in\)sensitivity and feminism](#). Our perception of the world is heavily influenced by what we repeatedly see and hear. When possible, I use visuals to shake stereotypes in subtle ways. In my discourse, there are no "moms and dads", but "parents" (gay couples are a given). Some of the scholars I frequently invoke in class discussions are Marie Curie, Michael Feynman, and Neil DeGrasse Tyson. And since I invoke them for their scholarly merits, I see no reason to point to incidental features, such as gender ("amazing female scientist"), concentration of melanin ("gifted white physicist"; *right?!*) or height ("brilliant tall astrophysicist!").

SpARC 2016

The Spring Annual Research Conference is held at Agnes Scott each April to provide students and faculty with an opportunity to present their work to the campus community. As an interdisciplinary conference, SpARC fosters essential connections across academic disciplines and encourages an ongoing dialogue between the liberal arts and sciences. (<https://www.agnesscott.edu/sparc/>)

My mentees (bold font) and I contributed 5 posters and 3 talks, counting towards ~15% of all research projects presented at SpARC 2016. Note that all eight were novel contributions to the field. I would like to take this opportunity to thank my former students and research assistants, **Alessandra Xi Zhang** and **Olivia Zivot**. Without their contribution, managing this enterprise would have been challenging at best.

Adekunle, O. & Popa, A. *Higher Payoff or More Options?*

[poster] Abstract. Having multiple options is appealing in our everyday lives, arguably because it allows for a flexible future. Some studies, however, showed that people may be less satisfied when presented with multiple options. This project investigated whether people preferred to keep their options open (so to speak) by arranging an asymmetrical, continuous choice environment. It was hypothesized that people will work to keep their options open even if it limits acquiring the maximum number of points. Seven Agnes Scott students responded on concurrent Random Interval (RI) schedules of reinforcement. The overall rate of reinforcement was constant, but one target class delivered higher-magnitude reinforcers (5 points vs. 1 point). However, the target class with the lower reinforcer magnitude (1 reinforcer = 1 point) shrank in size when not selected for ten or more consecutive seconds. Every ten-second interval would reduce its size by one fourth of its original size and every new response would increase its size by one fourth (or, if at original size, reset the ten-second interval). Results showed preference for the shrinking class ($b \sim 0.9$), even though reinforcer magnitude on this class was five times smaller. This suggests that participants preferred to keep their options open, even if meant acquiring a lower overall payoff.

O'Lisa Yaa Waithe. *The Effects of Imagery on Psychological Discomfort.*

[talk] Abstract. This study examines the effectiveness of art by means of geometric and spatial relations as a means of therapy for anxiety-based disorders. Recent studies on the nature of trypophobia (fear of holes) suggest that specific geometrical arrangements, such as high contrast midrange spatial frequency images, may automatically trigger feelings of discomfort (Cole & Wilkins, 2013). The purpose of this study is twofold: to replicate the findings reported by Cole and Wilkins (2013) and to explore the extent to which the phenomenon can be reversed. Participants will be exposed to similar stimuli as those used by Cole & Wilkins (2013) via a computer program. They will be asked to rate their level of discomfort and provide a short explanation of why. They will then be asked to manipulate the images using (i.e., re-arrange the elements) using the mouse until the level of discomfort decreases. Each resulting image, as well as the stroke paths, will be recorded and analyzed for concurrences of basic geometric shapes and/or arrangements that help reduce anxiety. The overarching goal is to be able to produce personalized visual stimuli that reduce anxiety, thus increasing the level of personalization and effectiveness of therapeutic approaches to anxiety.

Forbes, V., & Popa, A. *Human Choice Behaviors Before and After Extinction.*

[poster] Abstract. One way to eliminate behaviors from an organism's repertoire is to identify and remove the reinforcing contingencies that maintain them. This procedure is referred to as extinction. Extinction is known to be accompanied by a short increase in behavior frequency, intensity, and variability. In this project, we examined various properties of choice behavior before and after extinction was implemented. Preliminary results showed that the frequency of both target and extraneous (non-target) responses increased during the extinction phase. The effect was more

pronounced for extraneous responses, possibly for their exploratory potential. Future analysis will focus on various measures of variability before and after reinforcement is withdrawn.

Shen, R. & Popa, A. *Is Competition Sufficient to Increase the Motivation to “Do Well”?*

[talk] Abstract. In concurrent schedule procedures, humans exhibit lower sensitivity to reinforcement than non-humans (McDowell, 2013), possibly because points may not be as reinforcing for humans as food is for non-humans. We hypothesized that an environment that creates the impression of competition may increase the reinforcing value of points. Two groups of participants (competition vs. non-competition) responded for 18 minutes in a continuous-choice procedure that arranged concurrent, independent Random Interval (RI) schedule; the target classes were invisible to both groups. Preliminary analyses showed that sensitivity to reinforcement, contrary to our hypothesis, was not noticeably higher in the competition condition. These results showed that competition by itself may not be sufficient to increase motivation. Several potential explanations are discussed, including the perceived relevance (or lack thereof) of the activity.

Tang, X., & Popa, A. *Choice Behavior in Low Discriminability Conditions: Effects of the Operant Class Size.*

[poster] Abstract. The purpose of the study was to explore basic properties of choice behavior when the target classes varied in size, in low-discriminability conditions (invisible target classes). 24 Agnes Scott students responded in environments that arranged symmetrical, concurrent, Random Interval (RI) schedules of reinforcement. The target regions (or classes) were hidden. In one condition ($N = 12$) the target classes were small (about 4% of the experimental area). In the second condition the target classes occupied approximately 20% of the experimental area. Sensitivity to reinforcement was larger when the classes were small ($a \sim 0.70$) than when they were large ($a \sim 0.19$). The same was true for spatial variability, but not for temporal variability, which was larger when the target classes were small.

Booher, C. & Popa, A. *Choice Behavior With and Without Immediate Feedback.*

[poster] Abstract. The purpose of this study was to explore properties of choice behavior when the target classes that have the potential for reinforcement were hidden. Twenty-four Agnes Scott students were randomly assigned to two experimental conditions. In one condition an unpleasant sound was made contingent on each response that occurred outside a target region. In the second condition, extraneous responses were not signaled. In both conditions, reinforced responses resulted in one point and a pleasant sound. Target responses that were not reinforced were never signaled. We hypothesized that the condition with feedback 1) will elicit higher accuracy in locating the target classes and 2) will produce lower levels of behavioral variability. Preliminary results appear to confirm the hypotheses.

Grissom, MK., & Popa, A. *Negative Reinforcement, Superstition, and Apathy**

[talk] Abstract. The purpose of this study was to explore the effects of negative reinforcement on the frequency and variability of continuous choice behavior. The concurrent-schedule procedure was implemented via a computer program developed by the second author. Participants began the experiment with a fixed number of points (e.g., 1,000). As time passed, the number of points decreases at a rate of 4 points per second. Responses (mouse clicks) on two target regions stopped the loss of points for a small amount of time (e.g., 4 seconds). The first specific aim was to verify if *escape* behavior (stop the loss of points) become *avoidance* behavior (prevent loss of points). The second was to observe if avoidance behavior continued when it was no longer necessary. The third specific aim was to verify to what extent responding continued when it was no longer adaptive (i.e., when loss of points could not be avoided). The fourth specific aim was to observe if responding resurged once its adaptive function - preventing loss of points - was restored. The fifth aim was to explore possible relations between specific, low-level properties of choice behavior (e.g., bout frequency, variability in inter-response intervals) and personality traits (e.g., conscientiousness).

(*manuscript in preparation: *Effects of Extinction on Human Escape Behavior*)

Assignment samples

A: Emergence

(Theories of Personality, 50 students, 4th level course)

Complex Systems and their Emergent Properties

Material: Muro, C., Escobedo, R., Spector, L. and Coppinger, R. P. (2011). Wolf-pack (*Canis lupus*) hunting strategies emerge from simple rules in computational simulations. *Behavioural Processes*, 88, 192- 197. (available on D2L)

Directions. Write an essay (500 - 1,000 words) that addresses questions 1 - 6. Question 7 (the summative question) should be addressed at the end, as a separate, independent question.

Guiding questions:

1. What is the focus of this article? What is the phenomenon to be explained?
 2. The traditional explanations depart from several observable behaviors (e.g. hunting patterns), facts that are used to infer certain hidden characteristics of wolves. What are these facts/behaviors? What are the hidden characteristics inferred from these facts?
 3. What are the authors' views on traditional explanations? What is the alternative they propose?
 4. How did the authors verify their theory?
 5. What did the authors conclude?
 6. **Constructive criticism.** (Convinced? Intrigued? Do you agree with the authors' conclusion? Does it follow from the data? Would you like to see additional studies, control groups, etc.? What would convince you, one way or the other?
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7. **Summative question (two sentences max).** What is the **system** the authors attempt to explain? What are **its elements**, what is the system made of? What are **the rules/processes** hypothesized to guide the relations between its elements? What are **the emergent properties** hypothesized to emerge from these simple processes?

B: Psych. Disorders Analysis

(Abnormal Psychology, 75 students, 3rd level course,)

Psychological Disorders Analysis

DIRECTIONS. The available textbooks, including the one used in this class, provide us with a lot of facts about psychological disorders (e.g. description of symptoms, correlations between various variables, comorbidity, etc.), which are very useful. The purpose of these assignments is to take the analysis one step further, to reflect deeper about these collections of facts and the way they fit together. **My suggestion is to approach these assignments not as “homework”, but as opportunities for reflection.** For this reason I prefer not to make the instructions too precise. Let the questions in each sub-section guide you, but don't let them confine you.

IMPORTANT! If you find yourself having fun while working on these assignments, do not panic: wrestling with challenging questions does not have to be a painful process. **Enjoying it is perfectly normal!** 😊

DISORDER: _____ see list below _____

Symptoms . What are the maladaptive patterns of feelings, thoughts, or behaviors that cause problems?)

Causes. What are some proposed causes for this disorder? Are there proposed causes that seem more plausible than others? Please provide your arguments for supporting one position or another.

Treatment/Prevention. How could we change the problematic patterns of behaving, thinking, and feeling that trouble individuals affected by this disorder?

Relevant Relation with other disorders discussed so far. How is this disorder similar (mechanisms, causes, treatment) to other disorders discussed so far? How does it differ? Could it cause (or be caused by) another disorder, in the way in which, for example, *social anxiety* may lead to sexual dysfunctions? Or perhaps may co-occur with other disorders, suggesting common causes?

Feel free to speculate! After all, this section is a thought experiment.

Due in class		Topics (when applicable, choose the topic you find more interesting)
1	Sep 12	OCD or Social Phobia
2	Sep 17	PTSD or DID
3	Sep 22	Depression or Suicide
4	Oct 06	Illness Anxiety Disorder
5	Oct 10	Anorexia or Bulimia
6	Oct 17	Substance use
7	Oct 24	Premature Ejaculation or Female Orgasmic Disorder
8	Oct 31	Schizophrenia
9	Nov 10	Psychopathic or Narcissistic or Borderline PD
10	Nov 19	SAD or RAD
11	Dec 01	ODD or ADHD or Autism
12	Dec 05	Substance use (elderly)

C: Epigenetics

(Abnormal Psychology, 75 students, 3rd level course, *extra credit assignment*)

Epigenetics and the Cause of Psychological Disorders: A Thought Experiment

- December 2014 -

Premise. One general model that explains the emergence of psychological disorders is the diathesis-stress model, which asserts that psychological disorders emerge when a biological vulnerability (diathesis) comes in contact (so to speak), with environmental stressors. Such predisposing factors may include higher levels of cortisol, a low threshold for amygdala activation, etc.

As it turns out, identifying the exact causes of biological vulnerabilities is quite difficult. For example, although most scholars agree that PTSD has a biological component, identifying the exact genes that predispose to (or protect from) PTSD is still a work in progress. In fact, scholars who study epigenetics, without denying that such biological predispositions are inherited, suggest that their causes will not be completely understood only by examining an individual's genetic sequence.

Directions. Write a short essay (500-1000 words) that addresses the following questions. Try to limit the use of the word "epigenetic". In fact, challenge yourself to use it only once, at the very beginning.

1. What is epigenetics?
2. Can epigenetic changes be transmitted across generations? Provide an example.
3. What does this mean for the "nature vs. nurture" debate, in the context of mental illness?

Sources:

1. Moshe Szyf on Epigenetics: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fYMmwa2oWyQ>
2. class slides (references included)

D: Psychology of Women

(Most courses, all levels)

The Psychology of Women: Characteristics and their Causes

Directions. Write an essay (500 - 1,000 words) in which you compare and contrast the perspectives presented in each paper. Make sure you address questions 1 - 4. Please submit your responses in Word format (.doc or .docx) via DropBox (the "Freud and Adler" folder), no later than Wednesday, October 15, 2014 (11:59 pm).

1. What are some characteristics of adult women? Do Adler and Freud have different views?
2. What is causing these characteristics? Do Adler and Freud have different views? (broadly speaking, I am not looking for a detailed analysis of the "psyche")
3. From the information presented in these papers, can these outcomes be changed/prevented? Compare and contrast the implications of Adlerian and Freudian views on the matter.
4. When discussing Freud's views of women some scholars argued that "*he was a man of his times*", and therefore we should not judge him too harshly.
 - i. What are your thoughts on the matter? What "*times*" would those be? Consider both the social and scientific context of Europe in 1920 - 30s.
 - ii. How about Adler, was he "*a man of his times*"? If yes, why yes? If not, why not?

Resources (available online):

Adler, A. (1927). The Alleged Inferiority of Women, in A. Adler (Ed.) *Understanding Human Nature*. New York: Greenburg. (pages 110 - 114)

Freud, S. (1925). Some Psychological Consequences of the Anatomical Distinction between Sexes. In J. Strachey (Ed.) *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*. London: The Hogarth Press, 1961.

Student evaluations

Georgia State University

The tables show the averages scores for three representative courses taught at GSU during the 2014 calendar year. The fourth (D) shows the most recent evaluations (Spring 2015), averaged across four (4) sections. The scale goes from 1 (not at all) to 5 (very much).

Course	Overall average
A - Theories of Personality (Spring 2014)	4.3
B - Introduction to Psychology (7-week, Summer 2014)	4.7
C - Abnormal Psychology (3-week Maymester course)	4.5
D - Theories of Personality (averaged across 4 sections; Spring 2015)	4.6

Individual items		A	B	C	D
1	Explained the goals of this course clearly.	4.2	4.7	4.3	4.6
2	Explained the grading system clearly.	4.3	4.8	4.7	4.8
3	Gave assignments related to the goals of this course.	4.2	4.8	4.8	4.7
4	Followed the plan for the course as established in the syllabus.	4.4	4.6	4.6	4.8
5	Was well prepared.	4.4	4.6	4.6	4.7
6	Spoke in a way that communicated the subject in an understandable manner.	3.8	4.4	4.2	4.4
7	Responded constructively and thoughtfully to questions and comments.	4.3	4.4	4.1	4.7
8	Used class time effectively.	4.2	4.6	4.2	4.6
9	Had designated office and student appointment hours and was available to students during these times.	4.6	4.7	4.5	4.8
10	Assigned grades fairly.	4.5	4.8	4.8	4.8
11	Returned test results and evaluations of my work in a reasonable period of time (typically, 7-10 days or less is considered a reasonable College benchmark).	4.6	4.8	4.9	4.8
12	Met the class according to the published Schedule of Classes.	4.7	4.8	4.9	4.8
13	Stimulated my thinking and gave me new insights into the subject.	4.1	4.7	4.4	4.6
14	Related well to students.	4.3	4.6	4.2	4.6
15	Motivated me to learn.	3.9	4.6	4.1	4.5
16	Assigned readings (including the text(s)) that contributed to what I learned.	4.3	4.8	4.7	4.6
17	Considering both the limitations and possibilities of the subject matter and course, how would you rate the overall teaching effectiveness of the instructor?	4.0	4.4	4.2	4.4
Overall averages		4.3	4.7	4.5	4.7

Open-ended Comments

Theories of Personality (Spring 2015)

I loved professor Popa. He was amazing at taking boring and repetitive information and looking at it from differently angles, creating stimulating classes. He was extremely knowledgeable and my favorite professor by far here at GSU.

This class was, by far, the most interesting class of psychology I ever had!

This professor went above and beyond to help me successfully complete the course and graduate on time after I faced a personal tragedy this semester that almost kept me from finishing. I appreciate his professionalism, attentiveness, and empathy.

I loved taking this class! Popa was amazing, he introduced me to new ideas and explained them in a way that helped me understand in very simple terms. I would take any of his courses.

A proper lecturer, very interesting and thought provoking. Forget grading, forget tests, you learn material and learn to think more about relevant topics. Great teacher.

Dr. Popa was very interested in what he was teaching and it showed during class, making it easier to learn and gain from this course. I really enjoyed taking this course with him!

Very intriguing class! The teacher introduced some very interesting stuff on topics ranging from human behavior to theories regarding human personality proposed by different psychological perspectives. As well as talking about past perspectives, the teacher also discussed present perspectives on the human mind that may determine how we think of personality in the future. Overall, fantastic class!

Professor Popa is a great professor because he loves the material he teaches and helps students understand it at a basic level.

I have never been a fan of standardized learning. This professor was able to teach the course in such a way that it wasn't as if I was just hearing what I read in the textbook. That is how most classes are and it makes for uninterested learning. I enjoyed coming to class knowing that something other than black and white text was going to be taught.

Enjoyed the class immensely. I appreciated that Dr. Popa actually challenges students. I did find it difficult to follow the material at points, and to study the appropriate material in the appropriate manner, given the layout of lecture.

Absolutely phenomenal instructor; stimulated my thinking and was very well informed.

Very energetic in the way he portrayed the life related theories. He took the abstract out of this course and related it to our daily life. I enjoyed every bit minute of our class time.

Theories of Personality (Spring 2014)

He was a brilliant instructor. He always tied what we learned into the big picture, which is an invaluable additional emphasis. He clearly has a passion for science, the scientific method, and the Socratic method. He was very inspirational.

A. Popa is a highly capable instructor and an asset to any program that he is employed. His insights into the subject matter are well-rounded and take into perspective, not only the information in the book, but also the more general literature of psychology; demonstrating a high proficiency and understanding of how the information in the course is situated in the broader field. The class time is allocated appropriately and he answers questions in a timely and thorough manner. I would definitely take another class of his if I was able. Andrei Popa meets and exceeds my expectations for professors at GSU and I recommend him to other students who are thinking of taking a section that he instructs. 10/10

I have never had a professor at gsu anything like Dr. Popa. Instead of simply memorizing slides, he found a way to incorporate psych, philosophy, math, and physics into one class and made it work. This class should be required for everyone at gsu. Give him a raise.

I really enjoyed this class and I learned a lot. One reason I learned so much was because Professor Popa really pushed me to think critically about psychology, science, and personality theory. He introduced exciting new concepts (e.g., emergence theory) and I felt that I was learning about cutting-edge research and ideas. I appreciate that I had him as a professor. I will remember many of the theories and critical thinking skills.

Intro

A very good instructor. Psychology is a simple subject to learn, yet I was able to think more critically about the subject.

Dr. Popa makes the topics concise in his power points and gives examples that relate to our thinking. He also adds humor to his lectures, which is a great thing rather than continuous long lectures.

Abnormal Psychology

The professor is very interesting and makes the concepts very easy to understand. He is more than fair in his grading system, and shows compassion towards the students.

Mr. Popa was an excellent instructor that knew the material well and was able to easily convey the information to the students. He made the class interesting and I looked forward to what I would learn everyday. I also loved his tests and I thought they accurately reflected what we learned in class.

Mr. Popa is excellent when it comes to discourse and analysis! The discussions in his class were really enjoyable and he made the information pertinent and applicable. He is a very eloquent speaker and does a great job answering questions. His grading is stern but fair. Show up to class and listen and you do well.

Emory University

Evolution of Acquired Behavior

- Spring 2013 -

Comparison Key:

- A - Same size (46 - 100; 57 sections)
- B - Same level (300; 287 sections)
- C - Same format (LEC; 733 sections)
- D - Same subject (PSYC; 38 sections)

*On a scale from 1 (poor) to 9 (excellent)

Evaluations of the instructor (Items 1 - 10)*		Avg	Med	A	B	C	D
1	How well organized was the class?	6.8	7.0	8.0	8.0	8.0	8.0
2	Was the instructor enthusiastic about the material?	8.3	9.0	9.0	9.0	9.0	9.0
3	How concerned was the instructor with what the students learned from the course?	6.4	8.0	8.0	9.0	8.0	8.0
4	How clearly did the instructor explained specific concepts relevant to the course?	7.4	8.0	8.0	8.0	8.0	8.0
5	How clearly did the instructor communicate course objectives and requirements?	7.0	8.0	8.0	8.0	8.0	8.0
6	How well did the instructor respond to the students' questions?	7.2	7.0	8.0	9.0	9.0	8.0
7	How accessible was the instructor for individual discussion about the course?	7.0	7.0	8.0	9.0	8.0	8.0
8	How well did the exams/assignments reflect the course material?	7.5	8.0	8.0	8.0	8.0	8.0
9	Was feedback on the exams, papers, performance useful?	6.8	8.0	7.0	8.0	8.0	7.0
10	Were the grading criteria for the course clear?	7.4	8.0	8.0	8.0	8.0	8.0
How much did the course promote your progress on these learning objectives? (Items 11 - 15)		Avg	Med	A	B	C	D
11	Acquiring factual knowledge.	7.7	8.0	8.0	8.0	8.0	8.0
12	Understanding basic principles and concepts.	7.7	8.0	8.0	8.0	8.0	8.0
13	Being able to apply facts, concepts, and principles to specific questions.	7.6	8.5	8.0	8.0	8.0	8.0
14	Being able to assess or critique ideas and arguments.	7.8	9.0	8.0	8.0	8.0	8.0
15	Being able to integrate and synthesize information.	7.5	8.0	8.0	8.0	8.0	8.0
Instructor (1 - 10)		7.3	7.8	8.0	8.4	8.2	8.0
Learning (11 - 15)		7.6	8.3	8.0	8.0	8.0	8.0
Overall		7.5	8.1	8.0	8.2	8.1	8.0

*On a scale from 1 (poor) to 9 (excellent)

Syllabus Sample

Theories of Personality

(PSYC 4160, CRN 10920)

- GSU, Spring 2015 -

CLASS TIME: TUESDAY/THURSDAY, 11:00 AM -12:15 PM

LOCATION: Langdale Hall 521

INSTRUCTOR: Andrei Popa, Ph.D.

OFFICE: Urban Life (UL) 1190

EMAIL: apopa@gsu.edu (please refer to the communication policy outlined below)

OFFICE HOURS: Tuesday/Thursday, 1:00 PM - 2:00 PM, and by appointment

Teaching Assistant: Sangina Bristi (sbristi1@student.gsu.edu)

COURSE OVERVIEW AND OBJECTIVES:

This course represents a broad overview of the classic theories of personality (e.g. psychodynamic, humanistic, existential, environmental, cognitive, etc.), with an emphasis on their scientific status. Their major contributions and shortcomings will come under scrutiny, in an effort to differentiate between story-telling, science, and philosophy, and to correctly place this research enterprise in a broader scientific context. In the last part of the semester you will become acquainted with the so-called Complexity Paradigm, a different way of thinking about the causes of complex phenomena, like brain functioning or personality development. You will learn about its theoretical and philosophical foundations, its relevance for social sciences, and its potential to inform personality research. You will also learn about computational modelling, as a research method. We will not be writing code; instead, we will focus on the rationale, advantages, and pitfalls of computational modelling and we will explore their potential relevance to fields like personality development, mental health, etc. Students successfully completing this course should be able to:

- Describe the various ways psychologists have conceptualized and attempted to explain personality development
- Compare and contrast various schools of thought and the theories they generated
- Evaluate claims about personality development (and psychological phenomena in general) and their place in the scientific enterprise
- Describe the basic tenets of complexity science
- Describe the concept of emergence and its relevance to personality development
- Explain in everyday terms the logic of using computational models (why do it?)
- Explain in everyday terms how computational theories are verified (the general logic)
- Discuss the relevance (or lack thereof) of complexity science to personality development

PREREQUISITE: Psyc1101 with grade of C or higher, or equivalent.

NOTE: The GoSOLAR registration system will not allow students to register without having completed the prerequisites. Waivers for prerequisites will not be considered for regular students. Only post-baccalaureate and transient (visiting) students may request a prerequisite waiver through Tenagne Mulugeta in the main office of the Department of Psychology. No other requests for waiver of prerequisites will be considered.

REQUIRED READINGS:

It is expected that you will complete the assigned chapters (schedule at the end of the document) **before** each class; this will help you master material presented in lecture more easily.

Textbook:

Ryckman, R. H. (2012), (10th Ed.). *Theories of Personality*. New York: Wadsworth/Thomson Learning.

Book sections and journal articles (support for homework assignments):

Adler, A. (1927). The Alleged Inferiority of Women, in A. Adler (Ed.) *Understanding Human Nature*. New York: Greenburg. (p. 110 - 114)

Ferguson, A. (1767). The evolution of political establishments. In *An Essay on the History of Civil Society* (A. Finley Ed. 8 ed.). North-East Corner of Chestnut and Fourth Streets: William Fry, Printer. **(Section 2. p.220 - 244)**
(<http://oll.libertyfund.org/titles/ferguson-an-essay-on-the-history-of-civil-society>)

Freud, S. (1925). Some Psychological Consequences of the Anatomical Distinction between Sexes. In J. Strachey (Ed.) *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*. London: The Hogarth Press, 1961.

Mayr, E. (2001). *What evolution is*. Basic Books.
Chapter 4. How and why does evolution take place?
Chapter 5. Variational evolution.

Muro, C., Escobedo, R., Spector, L. and Coppinger, R. P. (2011). Wolf-pack (*Canis lupus*) hunting strategies emerge from simple rules in computational simulations. *Behavioural Processes*, 88, 192- 197.

Popa, A., & McDowell, J, J. (2016). Behavioral Variability in an Evolutionary Theory of Behavior Dynamics. *The Journal of the Experimental Analysis of Behavior*, 105 (2), 270-290.

Popper, K. (1963). Conjectures and Refutations. In K. Popper (Ed). *Conjectures and Refutations: The Growth of Scientific Knowledge*. New York: Harper Torchbooks. (pp. 33 - 39, 52 - 55).

Smith, C. H. L. (1997). What's the use of basic science? Retrieved:
http://www.jinr.ru/section.asp?sd_id=94

Skinner, B. F. (1953). *Science and Human Behavior*. New York: Macmillan
Chapter 1. Can science help? (p. 4-22)
Chapter 18. The Self (p. 283-294)

FORMAT OF COURSE: You will be responsible for material presented in lecture as well as all required readings and videos shown. Class time will include lecture, discussions, and written in-class assignments. Participation in this course includes formal exams, homework assignments, in-class discussion, required readings, etc.

GENERAL COURSE AND ATTENDANCE POLICY. This course syllabus provides a general plan for the course; deviations may be necessary. Any changes will be announced in class and posted on Desire2Learn. Each student is responsible for all information related to this course, including both administrative and subject matter information. Some of the material presented in class will not be available in other formats, and class material will be heavily represented on exams. Although attendance is not taken formally, it is to your advantage to attend all classes. Students are responsible for obtaining all information presented during missed classes, including notes and announcements, from classmates. Students who miss in-class writing assignments (if any) by arriving late, leaving early, or missing class will not be given the opportunity to make up this work.

DESIRE2LEARN. This course has a companion Desire2Learn site. This is where you will see your grades, receive notifications about the course, access administrative documents (e.g. syllabus), class slides, videos, and extra readings. Access this site by selecting the Desire2Learn icon in the upper right corner of GSU's homepage. I will occasionally post announcements on our webpage. You are responsible for all information posted on this website.

COMMUNICATION. The best way to address any issues is in person, either during office hours or by appointment. If, for some reasons, you cannot meet, please do not use D2L. I do not use D2L for electronic communication, unless I need to send mass-emails (D2L is the only way to do that). Email me at apopa@gsu.edu from your GSU student account (e.g. jsmith1@student.gsu.edu). Please be specific (subject field, last name, course, etc.), to make it easier (or possible) for me to address the issue. Also, please check the syllabus or the notifications, it's likely that you may find the answer there. Remember: coming to office hours (or setting up an appointment) is the best way to address any issues that might arise!

GSU Email. All students are required to activate and monitor their (free) university e-mail accounts. Your *student.gsu.edu* account is the medium through which GSU distributes announcements and other information to you, and you are responsible for any and all school-related information sent to this account. Check your account regularly and be sure your inbox is not full. If you have any questions about how to activate or use your university account, go to: <http://www.student.gsu.edu/network/email.html>

COURSE GRADING: Course grades will be based on the following:

	% of final grade	Date	Covers
Exam 1	One third (33.67%)*	Tuesday, February 24	Study guide on D2L
Exam 2	One third (33.67%)*	Tuesday, March 31	
Exam 3	One third (33.67%)*	Thursday, April 23	
Homework Assignments	One third (33.67%)*	Due in class; see schedule for dates and topics (at the end, there is a schedule just for the assignments)	
Extra Credit	5%	Class notes (details on the next page)	

***lowest exam score is dropped**

Please note:

- **This class is not graded on a curve.** Final grades are calculated solely based on your performance, and will adhere to the system outlined below. There will be no negotiation (or rounding), even if a total score is very close to the cutoff for a higher grade.

- **Class performance can boost your grade.** Meaningful participation (e.g. class discussions, etc.), although not formally graded, it is used by the instructor (along with your overall performance) to boost up final letter grades when very close to the cutoff for a higher grade. In contrast, disruptive behavior will result in a 5% penalty (from the final grade). Continued violations will result in formal disciplinary action at the University level, starting with administrative removal from the course.
- **The lowest exam grade is dropped;** it can be any of the three exams.
- **Information about grades and the Hope Scholarship** can be found at: <http://sfs.gsu.edu/scholarships-grants/hope-scholarship/>.

EXAMS: Exams will consist primarily of multiple choice questions, but may also include short answers and definitions. They cover the assigned readings as well as other information covered in class. If I talk about it in class, it's fair game for the exam. **A study guide** will be made available via D2L in the first week of the semester.

- **All phones, PDAs, laptops, etc. must be turned off and put away during exams.** Any student who looks at or uses one of these devices during an exam will receive a grade of 0 for that exam. Any electronic device that sounds during an exam is considered disruptive behavior, and you may be asked to leave the classroom. Please remember to mute your devices before exams start!
- **Early or make-up examinations** will not be administered, except under extraordinary circumstances (e.g., death of a close relative, serious illness, etc.). There will be *no* exceptions to this policy. In the event of illness, you must supply appropriate medical documentation. *Also, if you do not show up for an exam and fail to contact the instructor in advance, you will automatically be assigned a grade of zero for the exam.* Be certain to make appropriate arrangements in advance to avoid exam conflicts. *There will be no grade changes (unless a clerical or grading error has been made).* This is an ironclad policy designed to ensure equity in grading for everyone.

HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENTS. They serve a variety of purposes: practice scientific thinking, emphasize similarities and/or differences between various theories, critically examine different perspectives, and serve as basis for meaningful class discussions. **All assignments are due in class**, typed and printed. Please note that each assignment serves a special purpose in the grand scheme of this course. A useful way to think of them is as pieces of a puzzle, each homework contributing to the overall goal of this course. The assignments weigh one third of the overall grade and this percentage (33.67%) is distributed equally among them (they are all equally important). **They are graded on a submitted/not-submitted basis**, but please note that I reserve the right to reject assignments that reflect little (or no) effort and/or interest. I will provide some examples in class, during the first week. **As a general guideline for what constitutes a strong, well-argued paper (in general)**, please refer to the scoring guide used to assess the GRE® (Graduate Record Examination) Analytical Writing section. I am not using this rubric officially, but it offers a useful framework in which to assess your own work.

<https://www.ets.org/gre/>
https://www.ets.org/gre/revised_general/prepare/analytical_writing/issue/scoring_guide

The details for each assignments, including deadlines, will be made available in D2L in the first week of class. The deadlines will also be included in the course schedule. Emailed or late assignments will not be accepted unless under extraordinary circumstances.

Extra Credit (5%). Taking notes in class is a useful practice. In addition to the obvious ones, this semester it comes with a bonus: 5% will be added to your final grade if, at the end of the semester, you bring forward a fairly complete (85% attendance rate is acceptable), organized, collection of class notes (they will be returned to you). The format has little relevance (computer notes, notebook, etc.), so feel free to use the one that works for you. Generally speaking, a good predictor for obtaining these 5% is your level of satisfaction. If you're satisfied with your notes, you'll most likely receive the credit for it.

STUDY SUGGESTIONS: This course covers a lot of material, and requires students to integrate concepts, think critically, and memorize new information. Recommendations for studying include:

- The act of understanding is a private act. Nothing can entirely replace individual study.
- Do the readings before the class and take notes.
- Take notes during class and, if necessary, ask for clarifications.
- Study each topic as it is presented in class, rather than waiting until just before the exam.
- The expression "*if you want to verify your understanding, try to explain it to someone else*" is a cliché because it is true. Therefore, try to explain the material to someone who is not familiar to the topic.

FEEDBACK. Please allow 1-7 business days for the grades to be uploaded in D2L.

CONVERSION OF COURSE POINTS TO FINAL GRADE: This course uses plus/minus grading. Final course grades will be assigned as follows:

A+	97.00% <	B	83.00-86.99%	C	73.00-76.99%
A	93.00-96.99%	B-	80.00-82.99%	C-	70.00-72.99%
A-	90.00-92.99%	C+	77.00-79.99%	D	60.00-69.99%
B+	87.00-89.99%			F	< 60.00%

POLICY ON ACADEMIC HONESTY. The Department of Psychology follows the University System policy on academic honesty, available at <http://www2.gsu.edu/~wwwfhn/sec409.html>. This policy represents a core value of the university and all members of the academic community are responsible for abiding by its rules. Lack of knowledge of this policy is not an acceptable defense to any charge of academic dishonesty. All members of the academic community (students, faculty, staff, etc.) are expected to report violations of these standards of academic conduct to the appropriate authorities. The minimum penalty for cheating and all other forms of academic dishonesty in this class is a grade of "F" for the course. For a full explanation of academic dishonesty, see the GSU student code of conduct at: <http://codeofconduct.gsu.edu/>. The most common types of academic dishonesty are *plagiarism*, *cheating on assessments*, and *unauthorized collaboration*.

GSU Department of Psychology Definition of Plagiarism. If a student uses or relies on others' work in preparing any academic materials (e.g. written assignments, posters, presentations) the student must cite the source correctly according to the directions provided by the instructor. Failure to do so is plagiarism. Copying and pasting even part of a sentence or phrase is plagiarism, even when the source is cited correctly. Paraphrasing a source in a way that copies the phrase or sentence structure of a source is also plagiarism. To avoid plagiarism, students are expected to properly paraphrase others' ideas. Quotes in scientific writing should only be used when the wording of the original source is critical to the student's argument. Whether quoting is appropriate in a given instance is at the discretion of the

instructor, not the student.

Cheating and Unauthorized Collaboration. Cheating includes the use or sharing of any unauthorized materials and/or assistance before, during, or after an assessment (e.g. exams, tests, quizzes). Unless otherwise specified by your instructor, you may not discuss an assessment or share materials or information with any other student at any time. Unauthorized collaboration occurs under the same circumstances as cheating, but involves assignments outside of the classroom (e.g. papers, projects, presentations) rather than assessments.

Multiple Submissions. It is a violation of academic honesty to submit substantial portions of the same work for credit more than once without the explicit consent of the faculty member(s) to whom the material is submitted for additional credit. In cases in which there is a natural development of research or knowledge in a sequence of courses, use of prior work may be desirable, even required; however the student is responsible for indicating in writing, as a part of such use, that the current work submitted for credit is cumulative in nature.

POLICY ON DISRUPTIVE BEHAVIOR: Students are expected to be familiar with GSU's policy on disruptive behavior found here: <http://www2.gsu.edu/~wwwsen/minutes/2002-2003/disrupt2.html>. In addition to being asked to leave the classroom, repeated transgressions can result in administrative withdrawal. Please see exam section above regarding use of phones, PDAs, and laptops during exams. Examples of disruptive behavior include:

- cell phones/pagers ringing during class
- attending to personal hygiene during class (e.g., brushing hair, clipping finger nails)
- talking during class
- behavior that is disrespectful to instructor or classmates
- use of laptop computers for anything other than viewing slides or taking lecture notes
- use of phones, smart phones, PDAs, or other electronic devices during class time. This means no texting, emailing, internet browsing, making or accepting phone calls, etc. during class
- any other behavior that causes the instructor to interrupt the lecture

WITHDRAWAL DATE: A student may voluntarily withdraw from a class on or before the midpoint of the semester (please see GSU calendar for details). Please note the following changes to the GSU Withdrawal Policy, also found at <http://registrar.gsu.edu/registration/withdrawals/>. Undergraduate students are allowed to withdraw with a grade of W a maximum of six times. If you exceed your limit of six, you will receive a grade of WF, which will count toward your GPA. Withdrawals before the Fall Semester 2006 are not included in the W count. Hardship withdrawals, military withdrawals, or withdrawals at other institutions do not count against your limit. Please note that students may drop a course during the first week of class using GoSOLAR, which is not a withdrawal and does not affect your grade.

STUDENT EVALUATION OF INSTRUCTOR. Your constructive assessment of this course plays an indispensable role in shaping education at Georgia State. Upon completing the course, please take time to fill out the online course evaluation.

ACCOMMODATIONS FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES. Students who wish to request accommodation for a disability may do so by registering with the Office of Disability Services. Students may only be accommodated upon issuance by the Office of Disability Services of a signed Accommodation Plan and are responsible for providing a copy of that plan to instructors of all classes in which an accommodation is sought.

Note: the schedule below provides a general plan for the course; deviations may be necessary. Any changes will be announced in class and posted on Desire2Learn.

Course schedule

Theories of Personality 10920
TR, 11:00 - 12:15 (Langdale 521)

Day	Topic	Readings
Tue Jan 13	Course overview (expectations, structure, content)	Syllabus
TR Jan 15	Main psychological perspectives and evaluation criteria (biological, psychodynamic, behavioral, cognitive, humanistic-existential)	Ch. 1
Tue Jan 20	Traits 1 - Allport	Allport Ch.
TR Jan 22	Traits 2 - Cattell	Cattell Ch.
Tue Jan 27	Traits 3 - Eysenck ASSN. 1 (Popper/Falsifiability)	Eysenck Ch.
TR Jan 29	The Biological Model, Part 1 - Darwin's Evolutionary Thought	Mayr (Darwin's 5 main theories)
Tue Feb 03	The Biological Model, Part 2 (a critical overview of its application to personality traits)	n/a
TR Feb 05	Freud	Freud Ch.
Tue Feb 10	Jung	Jung Ch.
TR Feb 12	Adler	Adler Ch.
Tue Feb 17	Horney ASSN. 2 (Freud & Adler)	Horney Ch.
TR Feb 19	Erikson	Erikson Ch.
Tue Feb 24	Exam 1	
TR Feb 26	Exam 1 - Discussion Intro to Skinner	
Tue Mar 03	Skinner's Radical Behaviorism, part 1 (basic principles of learning and their biological mechanisms)	Skinner Ch.
TR Mar 05	Skinner's Radical Behaviorism, part 2 (behaviorism and personality development) ASSN. 3 (Behavioral Evolution)	Skinner Ch.
Tue Mar 10	The Cognitive Revolution - Bandura	Bandura Ch.
TR Mar 12	The Cognitive Revolution - Kelly	Kelly Ch.
Tue Mar 17	Spring Break	
TR Mar 19	Spring Break	
Tue Mar 24	Humanism 1 - Maslow ASSN. 4 (Evolution of Personal Constructs)	Maslow Ch.
TR Mar 26	Humanism 2 - Rogers	Rogers Ch.
Tue Mar 31	Existentialism - Rollo May	Rollo May Ch.

TR	Apr	02	Exam 2 (Skinner, Bandura, Kelly, Maslow, Rogers)	
Tue	Apr	07	Introduction to Complexity Theory (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UkLLnvGXN9M)	Watch Neil DeGrasse Tyson (Nova Documentary)
TR	Apr	09	Computational models, their logic, and verification An example: Emergence of collective behaviors in <i>Canis Lupus</i> (wolves) ASSN. 5 (Emergence)	Muro et. al. (2010)
Tue	Apr	14	An Evolutionary Model of Continuous Choice - a brief overview Supporting material: https://prezi.com/gc8_lokksmk0/computational-darwinism/	Popa & McDowell (2016)
TR	Apr	16	Three Levels of selection: Behavior, Brain, and Culture ASSN. 6 (Complexity, Emergence, and the Evolution of Cultural practices)	Ferguson, (1767)
Tue	Apr	21	Consciousness, Choice, and the dynamics of Personality Development	The Darwin Day Lecture
TR	Apr	23	Exam 3	
TR	May	7	Grades Due	

Deadline	Assignment	Sources/Readings (on D2L)
Tue Jan 27	Assn. 1 (Popper/Falsifiability)	Popper (1963)
Tue Feb 17	Assn. 2 (Freud & Adler)	Freud (1925) and Adler (1927)
Tue Mar 03	Assn. 3 (Behavioral Evolution)	Textbook, plus Skinner (1953, Ch. 18).
TR Mar 12	Assn. 4 (Evolution of Constructs)	Mayr, E. (2001)
TR Apr 09	Assn. 5 (Emergence)	Muro et. al. (2010)
TR Apr 16	Assn. 6 (The Emergence of Social Establishments)	Ferguson, A. (1767).