Today’s Perspectives in Psychology:

* After much trial and error, psychologists have followed, embraced and then rejected many of the perspectives that have been developed in the past
* Today, the field of psychology includes seven major perspectives
* Each perspective emphasizes different aspect of behaviour and mental processes, each one takes our understanding of behaviour in a different direction
* Here is an analogy: you can use more than one map to find your way around a particular region – you’re still going to get there, but you might take a different route
  + **The Biological Perspective** – views behaviour from the perspective of biological functioning – how the characteristics we inherit from our parents and other ancestors influence our behaviour, what behaviours are instinctual
  + **The Psychodynamic Perspective** – believe that behaviour is motivated by inner forces and conflicts that we have little awareness of and little control over. Dreams and slips of the tongue are meant to be indicative of what you are truly feeling. Ever call your boyfriend by your ex-boyfriends name? Or worse, call him your Dad’s name? Sigmund Freud is the psychologist that this view is mostly linked with.
  + **The Cognitive Perspective** – focuses on how people think, understand, and know about the world. How do our ways of thinking about the world influence our behaviour. They look at how people take information, they input the information, they transform it, store it, and retrieve it when they need it. A little bit like a computer.
  + **The Behavioural Perspective** – the focus here is on observable behaviour – behaviour that you can see, or watch. They believed that you could get anyone to behave in a particular way just by controlling their environment. Genes, heredity, personality, mean nothing, you could control how a person would turn out just by controlling the environment that they grew up in.
  + **The Humanistic Perspective** – suggests that all individuals strive to grow, develop, and be in control of their lives and behaviours. They maintain that every human being has the capacity to seek and reach fulfillment. The emphasis here is on free will – the ability to freely make decisions about your own behaviour and life. This is a stark contrast to determination, which sees behaviour as caused, or determined by things that are beyond a person’s control.
  + **The Sociocultural Perspective –** combines social psychology studying groups, social roles, rules of social actions, and relationships, and cultural psychology studying cultural norms, values, and expectations. The effect that people have on one another either individually or in a group.
  + **The Evolutionary Perspective** – focuses on the biological bases for universal mental characteristics that all humans share. Seeks to explain general mental strategies and traits, such as why we lie, how attractiveness influences mate selection, and why the fear of snakes is so universal!