

# Electives

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## Psychology

An experiential course designed to help students become more aware of themselves as unique individuals. Using their own experiences as a guide, students are encouraged to be scientists in the process of exploring themselves and their place in the universe as they examine such topics as love, beauty, joy, spontaneity, and self-actualization. Psychology is a **one-semester** course. The following books are required for this course:

- The Oak Meadow Psychology Syllabus
- *1984*, by George Orwell

### Outline of the Psychology Syllabus:

- Lesson 1:** An Introduction to Psychology  
Why Study Psychology?  
A Brief History of Psychology
- Lesson 2:** The Quest for Self-Understanding and Knowledge
- Lesson 3:** There is No Map  
Defensiveness: Protecting the Self-Concept  
Worksheet: Basic Questions about Human Nature
- Lesson 4:** Abraham Maslow  
Characteristics of Self-Actualizing Individuals  
Inventory of Self-Actualizing Characteristics
- Lesson 5:** Combating Destructive Cultural Attitudes
- Lesson 6:** Freud
- Lesson 7:** Carl Jung  
Carl Rogers
- Lesson 8:** B.F. Skinner  
*1984* by George Orwell
- Lesson 9:** The First Year of Life  
*The Lonely Child* by Clark Moustakas

- Lesson 10:** Early Childhood
  - Autonomy
  - Initiative
  - Middle Childhood
  - Adolescence
  - Intimacy
- Lesson 11:** Acting Out
  - Inventory of Anger Communication
- Lesson 12:** Gender
  - X: A Fabulous Child's Story* by Lois Gould
- Lesson 13:** Intimacy, Love, and Sex
  - Conflict Strategies
- Lesson 14:** Defense Mechanisms
  - Adjustment by Ailment
  - Displacement
  - Reaction Formation
  - Fantasy
- Lesson 15:** Communication
- Lesson 16:** Love and Marriage
  - Values Clarification
- Lesson 17:** Happiness
- Lesson 18:** Sleep

# Psychology ~~~~~ Lesson 8

## ***B.F. SKINNER***

For Skinner, *personality* is a convenient fiction we invent to pretend we have explained behavior that is actually controlled by the environment. Skinner believes that everything a person does is ultimately based on past and present rewards and punishment. We do what we get rewarded for doing and we refrain from doing what we get punished for doing. It's as simple as that - to Skinner.

So convinced was Skinner of his reward-and-punishment model of human behavior that he wrote a book called *Walden Two* which is a fictionalized account of a behaviorally engineered society where people only do what is good for them and have no desire to do what is not good for them. They seem to be happy, productive, creative people and the society functions very well.

### **George Orwell: *1984***

This book is similar to *Walden II* in that it presents the reader with a world distant enough from the reader's reality that he or she can scrutinize the actions that take place. However, where *Walden II* presents a utopia (a fictitious "perfect world"), *1984* presents a dystopia, which is the opposite of utopia. Orwell, writing around the time of World War II, imagined a world in which totalitarian regimes like those of Germany and Italy had taken hold over all the Earth. This results in a society which attempts to control every aspect of its citizens' lives, including their thoughts, and discourages dissent or individuality with threats of ostracism, imprisonment, and torture. Winston Smith, the main character, is "conditioned" to think and behave in a state-approved manner through various forms of psychological pressure.

**Assignment: Begin reading *1984* and do a book report on it. You will have two weeks to read this book. In your report, choose one of the questions below to answer.**

- 1. How is a society such as the one presented in *1984* created and maintained? Do you believe the people of this community lead happy, fulfilled, healthy lives?**

- 2. What is truth? How does Winston Smith's view of truth and reality change throughout the book? How does one's perception of reality play into one's view of truth? How do you decide for yourself what is true and real? Provide an example from your life when you struggled to decipher the reality of a situation.**
- 3. Skinner believed that individuals can be "conditioned," or trained, to behave in certain ways. In what ways did Winston Smith struggle to live in a society that was conditioned to operate in a particular manner? Be specific by offering examples from the book. In what ways do you believe our society is conditioned? Provide an example of a struggle you have with the conditioned state of our society. How did you address this struggle?**
- 4. Compare and contrast the world of Winston Smith and the world in which you live. In Skinnerian terms of conditioning, what can you learn from *1984*? Are people destined to do that for which they are conditioned? Is there an alternative course of action? How does one learn to think outside the conditioned norms? Provide a personal example.**
- 5. In Skinnerian terms of conditioning, what can you learn from this story? Are people destined to do that for which they are conditioned? Write an alternative ending to the book, offering your views on what would be necessary for Winston to overcome the conditioning to which he is subjected.**